

Town & Village

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Incomplete pedestrian plaza already an attraction

By Sabina Mollot

The pedestrian plaza currently being built north of the Flatiron Building is already becoming just as much of a tourist attraction as the historic, cake-shaped building itself.

By last Thursday, what was formerly part of the street between Madison Square Park and Fifth Avenue was already an island covered in rock benches and greenery, not to mention people utilizing the space for picture taking or just taking a break.

German tourists Joerg Feldman and Reka Laszlo Feldman were doing the latter, sitting on a rock bench and watching the world go by.

“It’s very nice,” said Joerg. “It’s a nice view. I want to put my tripod here and set it up and just look.”

Also on hand was the designer of the plaza itself, who also designed the look of the city’s other recent and ongoing pedestrian plaza projects, including the one at Ninth Avenue and 14th Street and Broadway and 47th Street.

“It’s exciting, because it’s an important location for New Yorkers and for tourists,” said Raisa Saratovsky, a project designer with the Department of Transportation. “A lot of people are taking pictures—it’s the most photographed place in the city. There were a number of fatalities here, because it was a very long crosswalk and people were not aware of the traffic. It was really dangerous.”

The idea to build a car-free zone with greenery, which will also soon have tables and chairs, was eagerly embraced by the local Flatiron/23rd Street BID and the Madison Square Park Conservancy. Upon completion of the Madison Square Pedestrian Project, both agencies will be working alongside the DOT as maintenance partners. The plaza is scheduled for completion by the end of this month or the beginning of September. It will consist of three main sections between 22nd and 24th Streets west of the Flatiron Building, will also have tables, chairs and large shade umbrellas. It may also become a place to hold events and run some sort of concession stand.

“People are so enthusiastic, the community board, the (Flatiron) BID, it was a pleasure to work with them,” said Saratovsky.



Raisa Saratovksy, Department of Transportation designer of the Madison Square Pedestrian Project



German tourists Joerg Feldman and Reka Laszlo Feldman admire the view as cars and buses whiz by.