

FUTUREFRONT

Transforming vacant storefronts through researching the past.

Crowd Sourced City Spring 2013

Bernard Harkless, Alexis Howland, Alicia Rouault, Qian Qian Zhang

FUTUREFRONT



discover the past, define the future
using texting surveys and online forms



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CLIENT: miLES

activate vacant storefronts on the LES



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PROJECT GOALS

raise awareness of miles

generate community input for vacant spaces



photo credit: vivienne gucwa

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miLES MISSION



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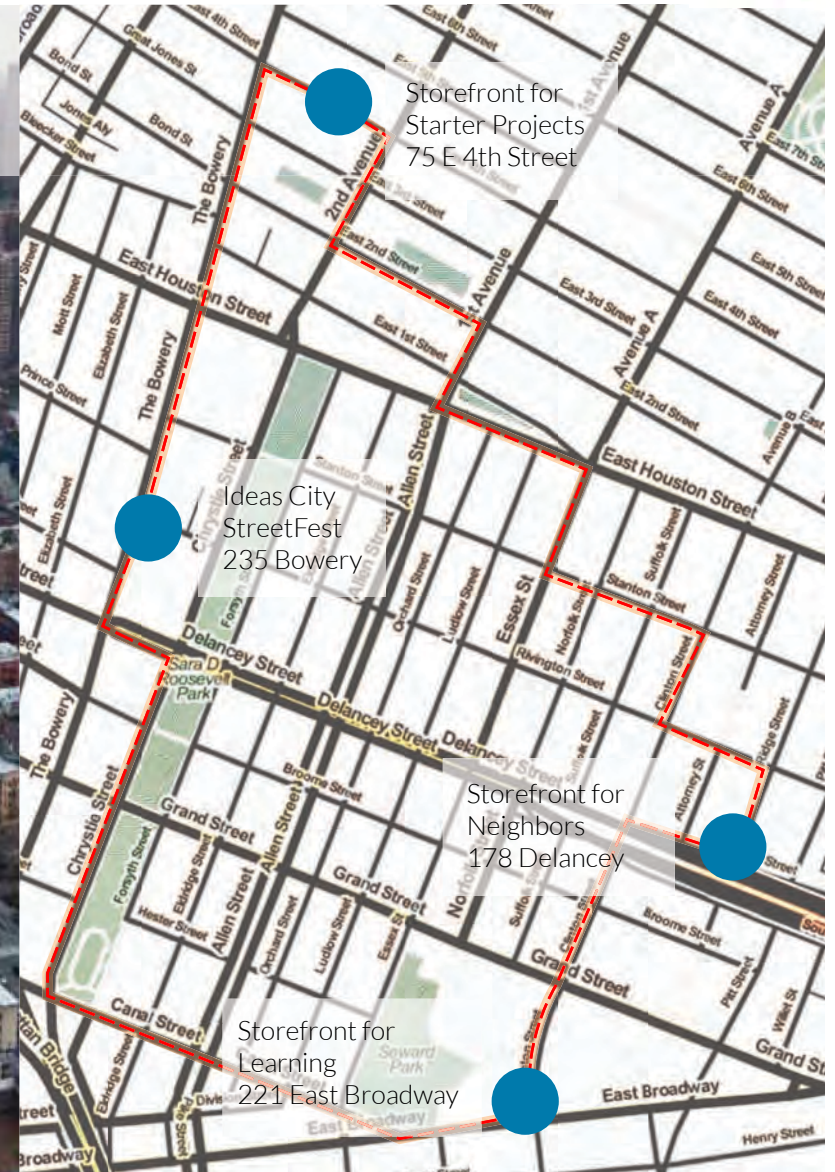
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OBJECTIVE

IDEAS CITY

FESTIVAL GUIDE
NEW YORK
MAY 1-4, 2013



FUTUREFRONT



INSPIRATION

community input, accessing history, texting



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INSPIRATION



Neighborland

Cities ▼

[What is Neighborland?](#)

[Sign In](#) or

[Sign Up](#)



I want

100

in my neighborhood.

[Create Idea](#)

Sign in with [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)

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INSPIRATION




Neighborland Houston ▾ Handbook Sign Up Sign In

[What is Neighborland?](#) Sign In or Join to suggest, support, and discuss new ideas in your neighborhood.

Houston


Popular Ideas ▾ Search ▾ Neighbormoods ▾ Questions




“I want a streetcar from downtown to Memorial Park at Washington Ave.”

37 want it [Me Too](#)

9 comments
Transit

 says Washington Ave Livable Centers in Houston, TX.



“I want more local, independently owned businesses at Washington Ave.”

27 want it [Me Too](#)

5 comments
Shopping Culture

FUTUREFRONT

INSPIRATION



Pittsburgh, PA, USA **GO** *follow us* [f](#) [t](#) [Explore Photos](#) [Upload Photos](#) [My Photos](#) [About](#)

89 NEARBY

- 1912 Forbes Field 1912
- 1909 Entrance to Forbes Field
- 1900s Schenley Hotel
- 1900s Carnegie Institute
- 1900s Thaw Hall - University of Pittsburgh

1912 Forbes Field 1912 X

VIEW PHOTO DETAILS GOOGLE STREET VIEW

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INSPIRATION



City of Memory

— ZOOM + ADD STORY FAQ STORY DIRECTORY SEARCH

BRONX

MANHATTAN

BROOKLYN

STATEN ISLAND

In the Wake of 9/11: Labib's Cafe

After 9/11, Egyptian cafe owner Labib Salama didn't think things could get much worse...

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HEY COMMUTERS:

**Would you use a rapid
transit line along the
Boulevard to get to
Center City?**

Text **Yes** or **No** to:

215-987-5444

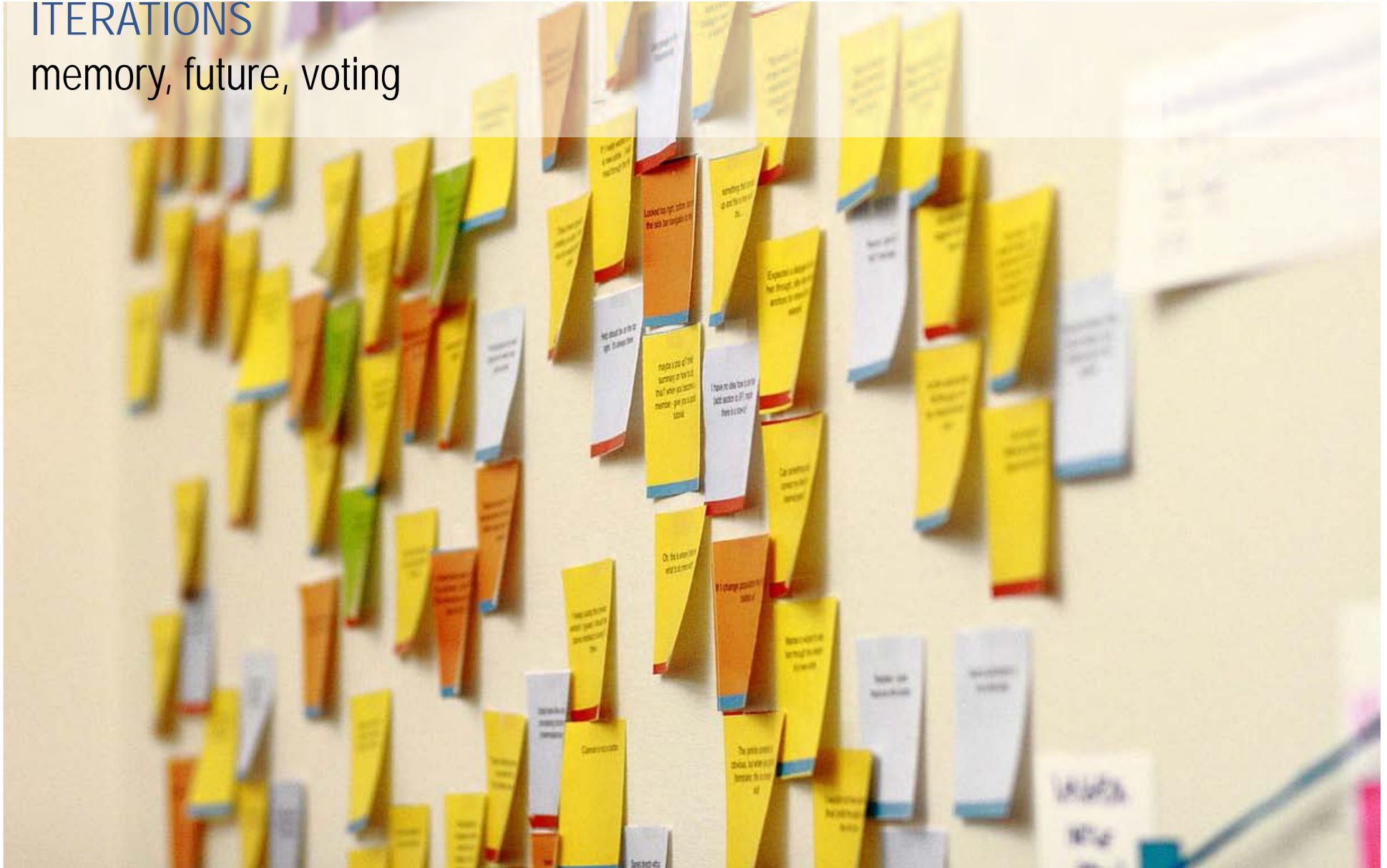


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ITERATIONS

memory, future, voting



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PLACE MEMORY

Exploring vacancy through Jane's Walk and historical memory mobile application.

A virtual snapshot of past use

Concerns: difficulty in collecting content, just creating an archive

FUTURE VISION APP

What can happen here? Crowd source future happenings

Festival event-based visioning contest, idea aggregation

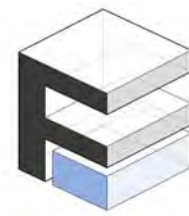
Concerns: not a new concept

VOTE FOR TOMORROW'S USE

Focused on IDEAS CITY events, activate existing vacant space with new uses everyday. Translate crowd sourced ideas into rapid prototypes in vacant spaces

Concerns: logistics of rapidly implementing crowd sourced ideas

FUTUREFRONT

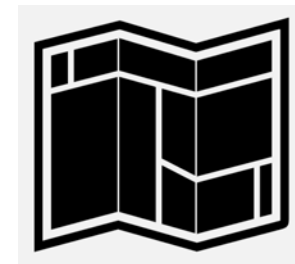


FINAL CONCEPT: FUTUREFRONT

What was here yesterday?
What can be here tomorrow?



Historical uses suggest future possibilities
Crowd sources community input for visioning program
Manifests crowd sourced ideas spatially
Uses analog and digital methods to raise awareness

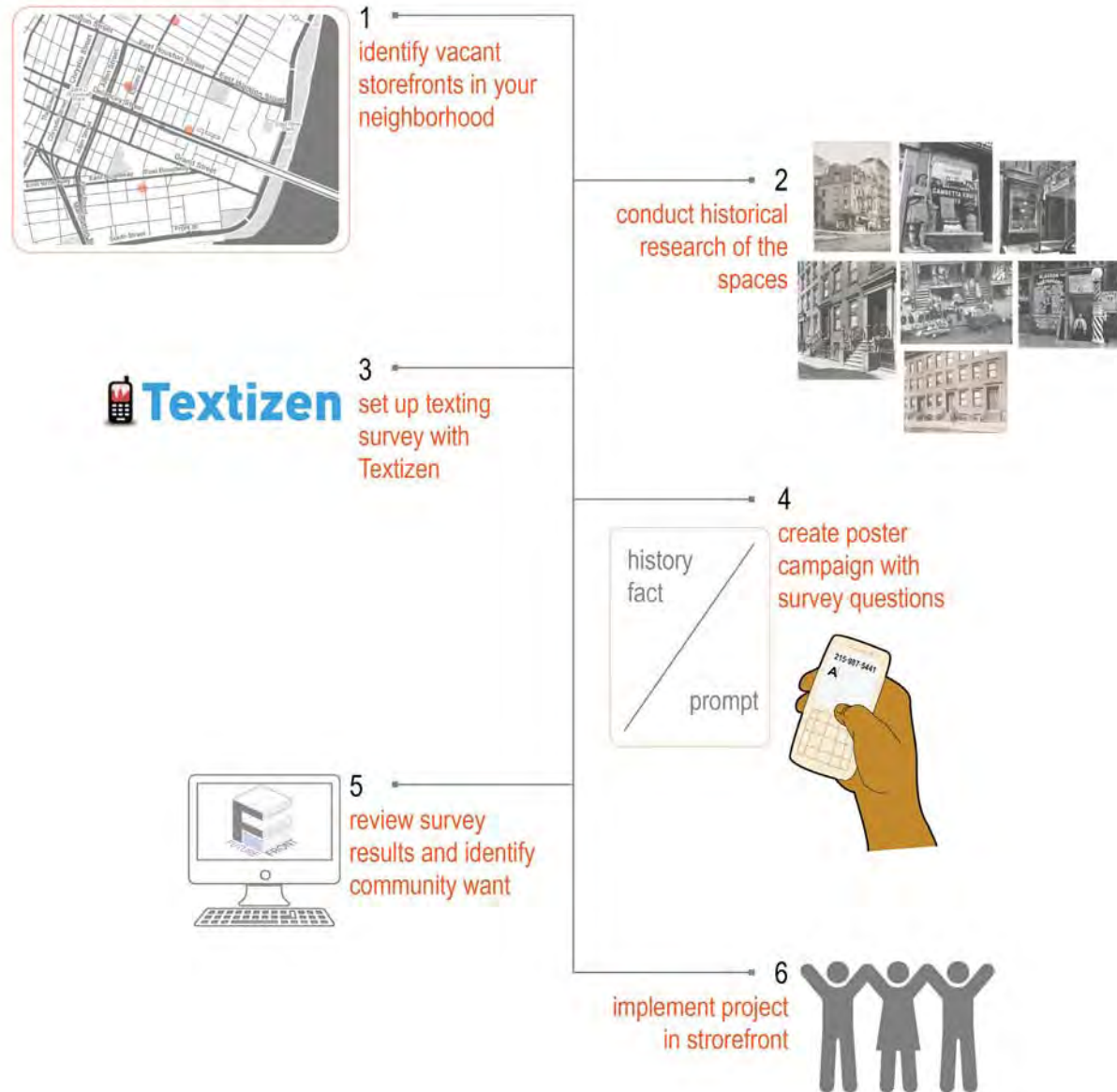


TECHNOLOGY

On-the-street community engagement through texting
Website provides information and outreach to online visitors



FUTUREFRONT COMPONENTS



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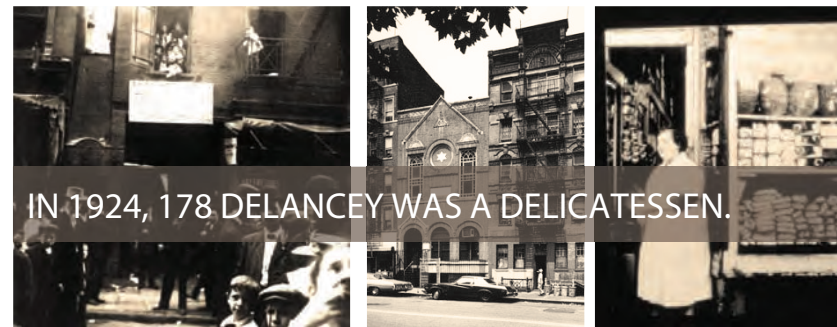


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FINAL POSTER



IN 1924, 178 DELANCEY WAS A DELICATESSEN.

DURING THE IDEAS CITY FESTIVAL, THERE WILL BE NEIGHBORHOOD EVENTS HERE.

WHAT KIND OF EVENTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HERE IN THE FUTURE?



- A Walking tours
- B Potluck dinners
- C Round table discussions
- D Film screenings
- E Neighborhood workspace
- F Suggest your own idea

TEXT YOUR ANSWER TO:

917-397-3269



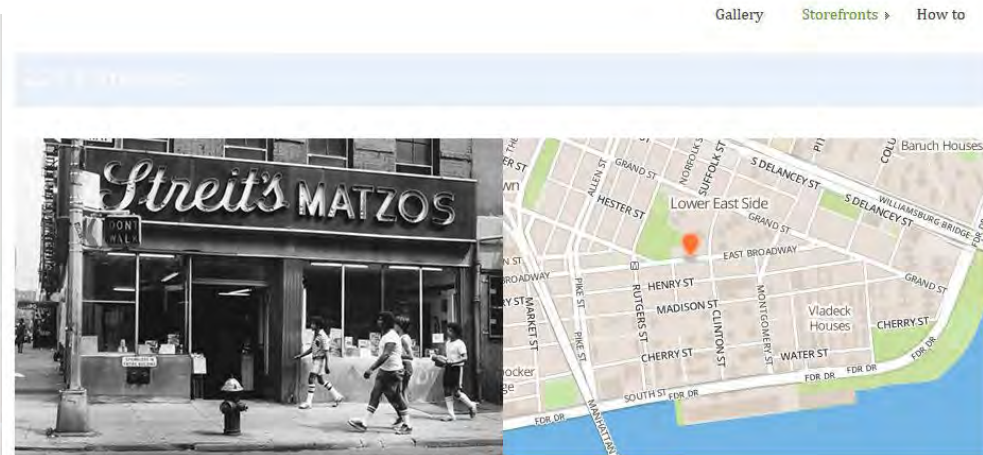
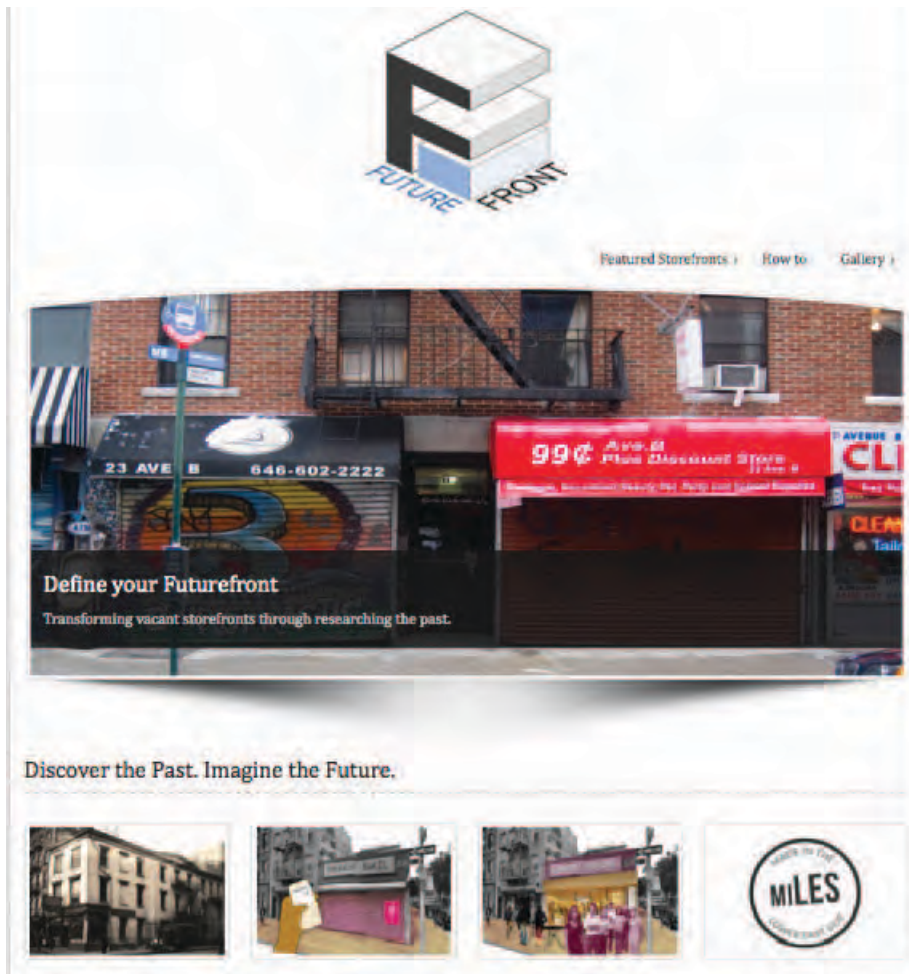
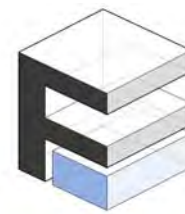
MIT miLES Textizen More information, visit futurefront.org

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WEBSITE



221 E Broadway

The area surrounding East 4th street is currently thought of as a hub of arts, cultural events, and creativity in the City. Historically this was true as well. In the early 1900s, this area was place of production and entertainment. The block of 75 ast 4th Street at the turn of the century contained a bakery, a brewery (Weiss Beer, to be exact), a bowling alley, a provisions store, a paper bag firm, and a stable.

What would you like to see here in the future?

- Art or music classes
- Web or programming classes
- Writer's workshop
- Children's workshop
- Cooking classes
- Other:

How often are you in the Lower East Side?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Not often

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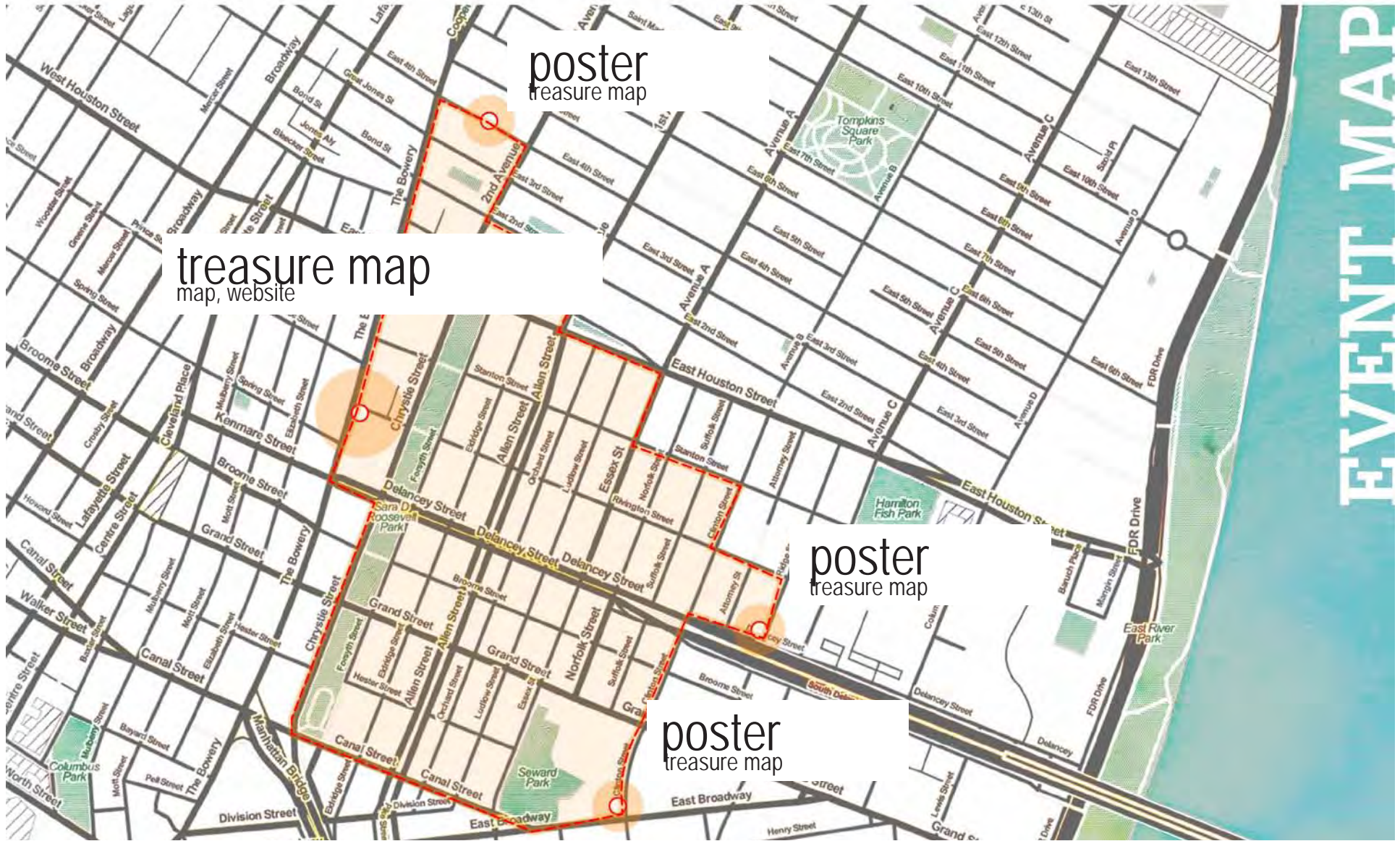
May 4th. IDEAS Festival



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poster
treasure map

treasure map
map, website

poster
treasure map

poster
treasure map

EVENT MAP

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At the Booth



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TREASURE MAP



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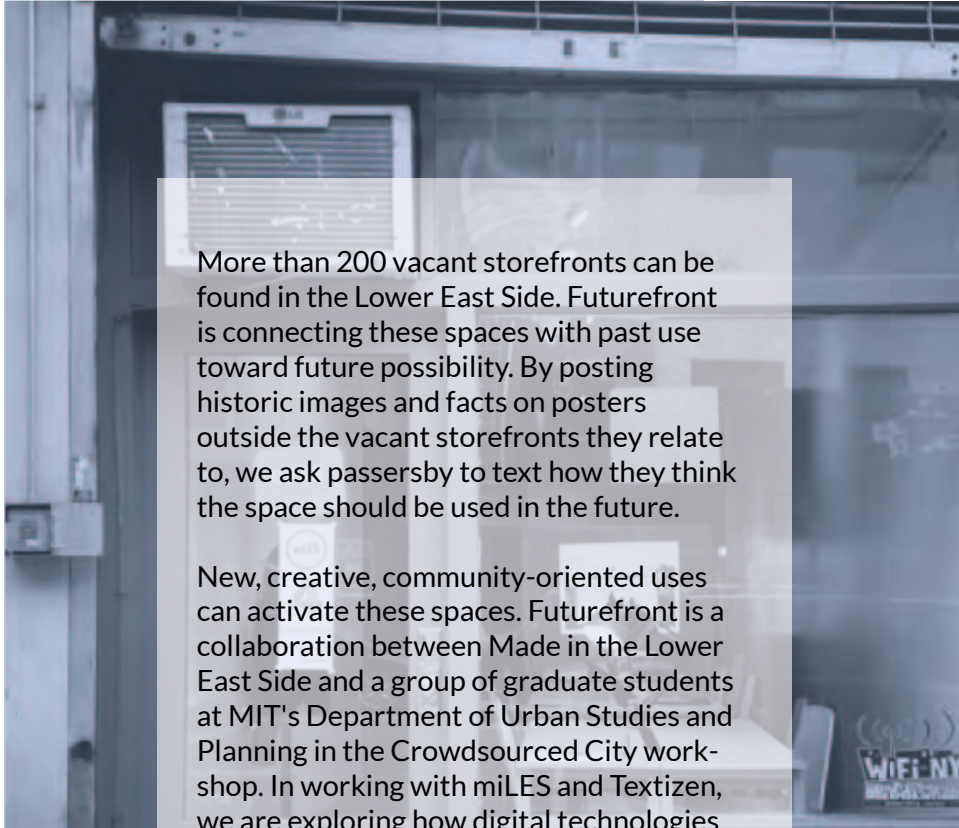
TREASURE MAP

FUTUREFRONT

CROWDSOURCING CITIZEN INPUT
FOR THE FUTURE OF THE LOWER
EAST SIDE'S VACANT STOREFRONTS

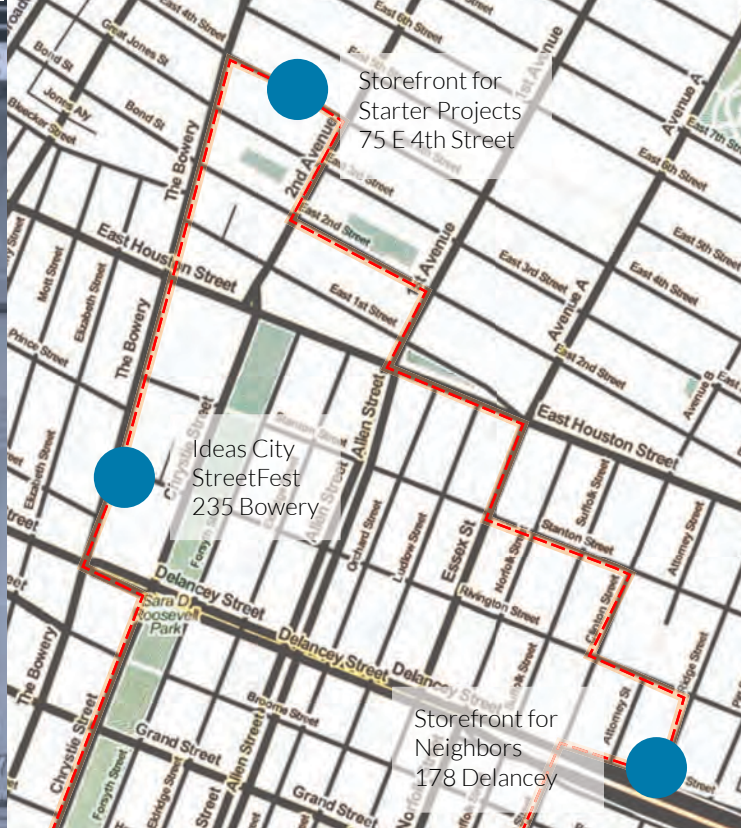


Discover the past. Define the future.
futurefront.org



More than 200 vacant storefronts can be found in the Lower East Side. Futurefront is connecting these spaces with past use toward future possibility. By posting historic images and facts on posters outside the vacant storefronts they relate to, we ask passersby to text how they think the space should be used in the future.

New, creative, community-oriented uses can activate these spaces. Futurefront is a collaboration between Made in the Lower East Side and a group of graduate students at MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning in the Crowdsourced City workshop. In working with miLES and Textizen, we are exploring how digital technologies



During the 2013 IDEAS CITY festival stop by these four locations to discover the past of the LES and define future programming in vacant storefronts.

Visit futurefront.org to find out what other people want there!

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TREASURE MAP

Discover the past. Define the future.
futurefront.org



75 EAST 4TH ST

The area surrounding East 4th street is currently thought of as a hub of arts, cultural events, and creativity in the City. Historically this was true as well. In the early 1900s, this area was place of production and entertainment. The block of 75 East 4th Street at



178 DELANCEY ST

Over the years, 178 Delancey has been home to many different businesses and people, changing to meet the changing needs of the community. It has been a synagogue, a police station for the 13th District, and a delicatessen. Most recently a local



221 E BROADWAY

Throughout New York City's history, the Lower East Side has frequently been home to different waves of immigrants and their descendants. For many years, the LES was home to a large Jewish community. Around 1900 many buildings near

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POSTER DISPLAY



East 4th Street



178 Delancey Street



221 East Broadway

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1924, 178 DELANCEY WAS A DELICATESSEN.

URING THE IDEAS CITY FESTIVAL, THERE WILL BE NEIGHBORHOOD EVENTS HERE.

WHAT KIND OF EVENTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HERE IN THE FUTURE?

- A** Walking tours
- B** Potluck dinners
- C** Round table discussions
- D** Film screenings
- E** Neighborhood workspace
- F** Suggest your own idea

TEXT YOUR ANSWER TO:
917-397-3269

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LESSONS LEARNED

Textizen worked well for collecting information (technically)

as a platform, easy to set up. Cost is a potential barrier, but reasonably priced

People responded well to historical imagery as a hook. Received emails afterwards regarding historic information.

Most of people are excited and interested in MiLES's idea. Some people even waited to talk with Eric.



LESSONS LEARNED



Text in!

Poster/Texting

Posters should be straight forward about the “text in” component:

- Too much mixed information is not a good strategy.

Text-in questions should be concise:

- Shorter questions and less options.

It is a neccessity to provide incentives:

- Provide opportunities to win a prize, or utilize users’ curiosity.

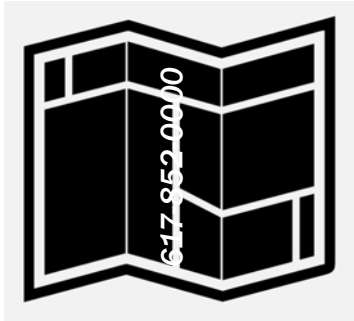
Posters should be put up weeks before the events:

- Posters can be placed at places other than storefronts. Textizen works well in busstops.



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LESSONS LEARNED



Treasure Map

Text numbers should have been on the treasure map that was distributed at the booth

More interesting information should be provided along the route, even including lovely restaurants.



Pop-up and Festivals Virtual-physical Relationship

During Pop-up and festivals, physical crowd-source methods might be better than virtual ones such as text-in or website polls.

During the time other than events, text-in and posters might work better.

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LESSONS LEARNED



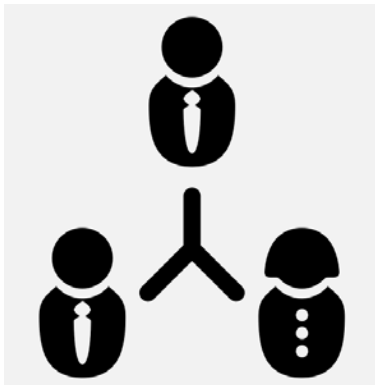
Website

The website should be a complementary component as well as an overarching component:

- Provide more information about futurefront, about historical information, etc.

There can be places to vote or leave comments:

- Should be only a small part within the whole website, and should be made clear as well.



Clients-relationship

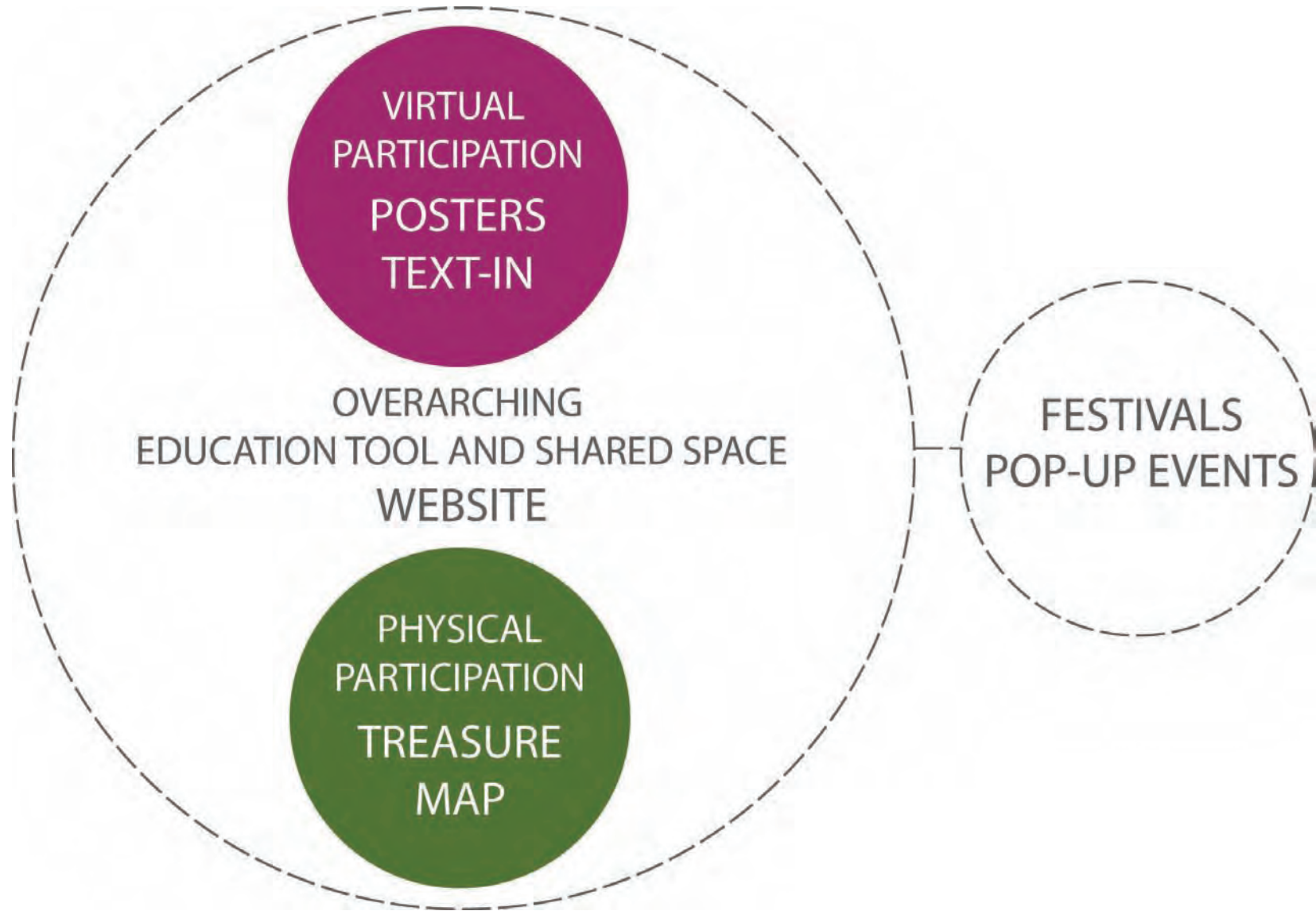
Put futurefront under client's brand so that people will not get confused with MiLES and futurefront.

FUTUREFRONT

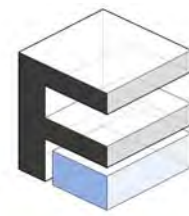


FUTURE STEPS

1. Set up posters at both storefronts and some bus stops, as a way of virtual participation. If it is too expensive to put up at bus stops then just keep one at storefront: make sure staffs at each storefront should be more engaging.
2. Provide treasure maps for exploring vacant storefront in Lower East Side, as a way of physical participation.
3. Make the website into a education tool and shared historic pictures for lower east side, as a complimentary for the above two components.
4. At events, use more physical components for participation: print out historic pictures, pin-maps, treasure and hunt, neighborhood games, etc.



FUTUREFRONT TURN-OVER STRATEGY



Website

Futurefront.org will continue to be a resource which can grow to include the 200+ vacant storefronts to describe historical significance and act as a forum for community input about place-based needs

Website was built in wordpress providing a free and simple administrative back end

Continue to use Textizen and poster design in a longer term capacity

miLES currently hosts events monthly. Texting in input could be a longer-term method for gathering specific input for future programming ideas

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Futurefront was an event based solution to crowd sourcing ideas for specific programming needs of miLES. The project has two replicable elements:

Technology: Use of Textizen to crowd source information with public posters

Concept: Tying past and future use around historical imagery and facts

Though research and content heavy, the system could be implemented for a number of alternate use cases




Already have an account? [SIGN IN](#)

Made in the Lower East Side › 178 Delancey Street

1. In 1924, 178 Delancey was a delicatessen. During the IDEAS CITY Festival, there will be neighborhood events here. What kind of events would you like to see here in the future? MULTI
- A: Walking tours
 - B: Potluck dinners
 - C: Round table discussions
 - D: Film screenings
 - E: Neighborhood workspace
 - F: Suggest your own idea

7

responses

latest about 7 days ago

Assigned phone
(917) 397-3269

Start date
-

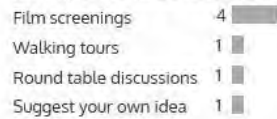
Status
Running

Great! What's your idea for using this space? (OPEN)

2. Thanks! How often are you in the Lower East Side? MULTI
- A: Daily
 - B: Weekly
 - C: Monthly
 - D: Not often

Response summaries

In 1924, 178 Delancey was a delicatessen. During the IDEAS CITY Festival, there will be neighborhood events here. What kind of events would you like to see here in the future?



Great! What's your idea for using this space?

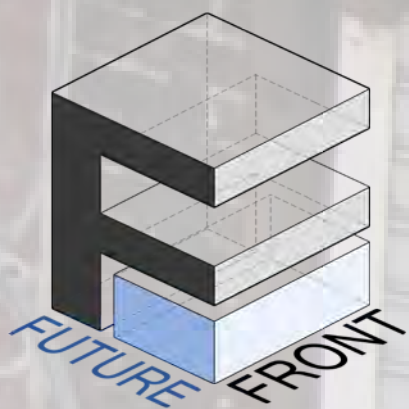


Thanks! How often are you in the Lower East Side?



Most Recent Responses

Timestamp	In 1924, 178 Delancey was a delicatessen. During the IDEAS CITY Festival, there will be neighborhood events here. What kind of events would you like to see here in the future?	Great! What's your idea for using this space?	Thanks! How often are you in the Lower East Side?
1 05/04/2013 at 04:44PM	D Film screenings		C Monthly
2 05/04/2013 at 04:27PM	d Film screenings		d Not often



Futurefront Transition Guide

Client: Eric Ho, Made in the Lower East Side (miLES)

MIT-DUSP TEAM 2013

Alexis Howland

Bernard Harkness

Alicia Rouault

Qianqian Zhang



This document presents a transitional guide for further implementation of a crowdsourcing strategy used at the 2013 Ideas City Festival 2013. The Futurefront was developed for Made in the Lower East Side by a group of graduate students in the MIT Crowd Sourced City class.

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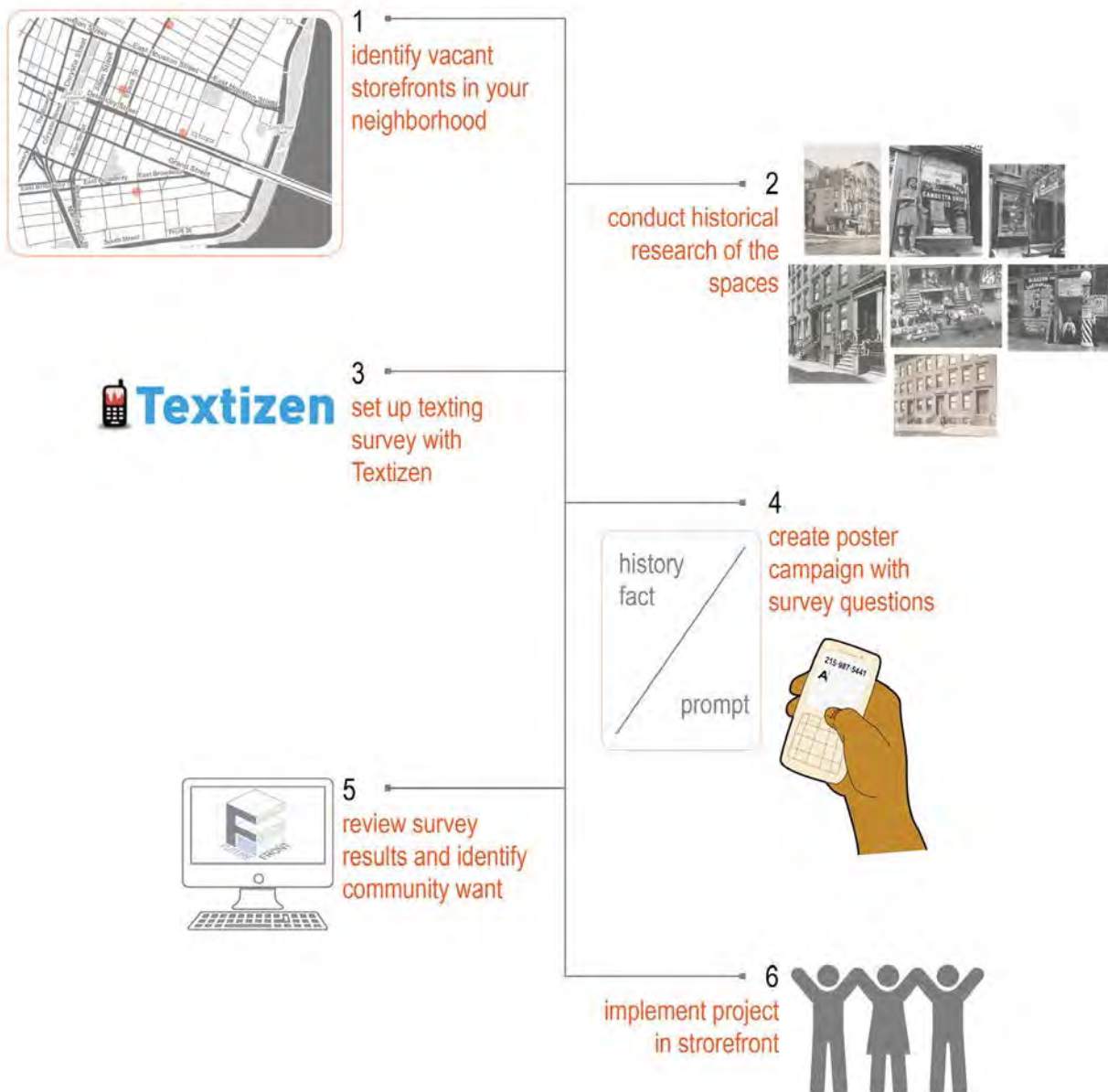
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What is Futurefront?


Futurefront uses on-the-street poster campaigns to solicit feedback via text messaging from community members about potential uses for vacant storefronts.

A series of interventions were used to crowd source citizen feedback on what the future public programming should be in various storefronts being put to use by miLES in New York City's Lower East Side. By producing print posters which prompted passersby to text in their answer, Futurefront provided a digital-analog method of gathering input data in real time. Additionally, a website was created as an alternate channel for input collection. Futurefront had several components that were used in an event based strategy. In future implementations, components can be used in conjunction with another or as standalone methods for gathering community input.



Textizen Platform for Gathering Community Input

+ Text-in Survey



HEY COMMUTERS:
Would you use a rapid transit line along the Boulevard to get to Center City?

Text **Yes** or **No** to:
215-987-5444

215-987-5444
Your response here

How does this work?
Text your answer to have your response recorded. You'll get a series of 2 follow-up questions. Your **privacy is important** to us. We won't use your phone number again.

Why does this matter?
We are soliciting input for the **Philadelphia2035 Lower Northeast District Plan**, which will **guide Philadelphia's physical development** by making recommendations for zoning changes, city-owned land and facilities, and public investments.

For more info, go to <http://phila2035.org>

PHILADELPHIA 2035
CODE for AMERICA
City of Philadelphia

Philadelphia2035 is a project of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Textizen is a civic startup that provides a simple text-messaging platform for public input: Continued engagement with Textizen will involve creating an account with them. Please email michelle@textizen.com for further specific information. In the meantime, all data can be downloaded by logging in at textizen.com

Textizen.com

username: alicia@codeforamerica.org

password: dusp2013

Data can be exported as a .csv by clicking on the button titled "Download Data" on the primary dashboard.

Poster-based Texting Prompt

A poster was used as an analog prompt during the festival event to encourage passersby to answer a question and text in a response. There were several successful elements of our poster design and recommendations for improvement in future implementations:

+ *Poster Design: Hierarchy of Call to Action*

The Adobe InDesign poster file can be used as a template for future use (attached). Changing the prompt or question answers can be a useful way to crowd source input in the future at monthly events or permanently in vacant spaces specific to new questions miLES may have for public audiences.

It was noticeable that passersby were at times confused about what they were supposed to do when reading the poster. Raising the legibility of the phone number by increasing the size or prominence of the ask to text in will likely increase the utility of the tool.

+ *Poster Content: Clear and Straight forward*

One successful implementation of Futurefront encouraged users to learn about the history of the sites they visited while thinking about future possibility. However, historical information may confuse people: the poster should be kept clear and straight forward towards the questions. Therefore, the historic part should be highly concise in order not to confuse people. Besides, historical information can also serve as a hook and only be provided after the people response to the question via texting.

+ **Placement**

Placing posters in highly visible, semi-permanent locations presents a more effective strategy than a street festival environment. The best possible location for crowd sourcing prompts is in locations like bus stops or windows near benches where people are spending idle time. Alternatively, providing

poster prompts within a controlled environment (storefront event) might produce robust data by encouraging participants to answer a group question via text.

Additionally engaging with providers of input in an interactive way (ie, talking to them about the impact of this text message) serves as an incentive to provide input.

+ Timing

Posters should be set up weeks before the events to call for attentions and also serve as advertisement.

+ Incentives

People showed hesitance to texting in an answer and were perhaps concerned about their privacy. There should be an incentives for participation: either using historic information as a hook or possibly providing a prize based on lottery. Participants should also be reassured their contact information will remain private.

+ Longer Term Use

Another key takeaway from the use of the Futurefront platform is the possibility of this being a valuable tool for longer-term data collection. Posting a poster in a semi-permanent place provides a chance to see changing datapoints over time, as well as providing an opportunity for more datapoints to be collected.

Futurefront Website (wordpress platform)

The Futurefront.org website provides an overarching channel for user input including an interactive form associated with specific questions relating to vacant storefront addresses, as well as pertinent historical imagery and facts relating to the specific sites. Content produced for the website can stem from the same research methodology as listed above for poster design.

Home page: discover, ask, listen and implement

Each of them linked to a place with further information about this step.

Define your Futurefront
Transforming vacant storefronts through researching the past.

Discover the Past. Imagine the Future.

Discover
Identify vacant storefronts and conduct historical research.

Ask
Create posters with texting survey

Listen
Get community feedback

Implement
miLES brings new uses to vacant storefronts.

Featured store-fronts with pop-up historical image: more can be added on in the future.

Featured Storefronts > How to Gallery >

221 East Broadway

Tell us what you think this should be!

Participation: collecting on-line feedback. Can change the Questions and open more polls.

Data from online form can be accessed via google fusion table connected to the google forms plugin via wordpress.

Featured Storefronts > How to > Gallery >

221 E Broadway
75 East 4th Street
178 Delancey Street

What's your idea about the future use of this storefront? Tell us!

221 E Broadway

The area surrounding East 4th street is currently thought of as a hub of arts, cultural events, and creativity in the City. Historically this was true as well. In the early 1900s, this area was place of production and entertainment. The block of 75 ast 4th Street at the turn of the century contained a bakery, a brewery (Weiss Beer, to be exact), a bowling alley, a provisions store, a paper bag firm, and a stable.

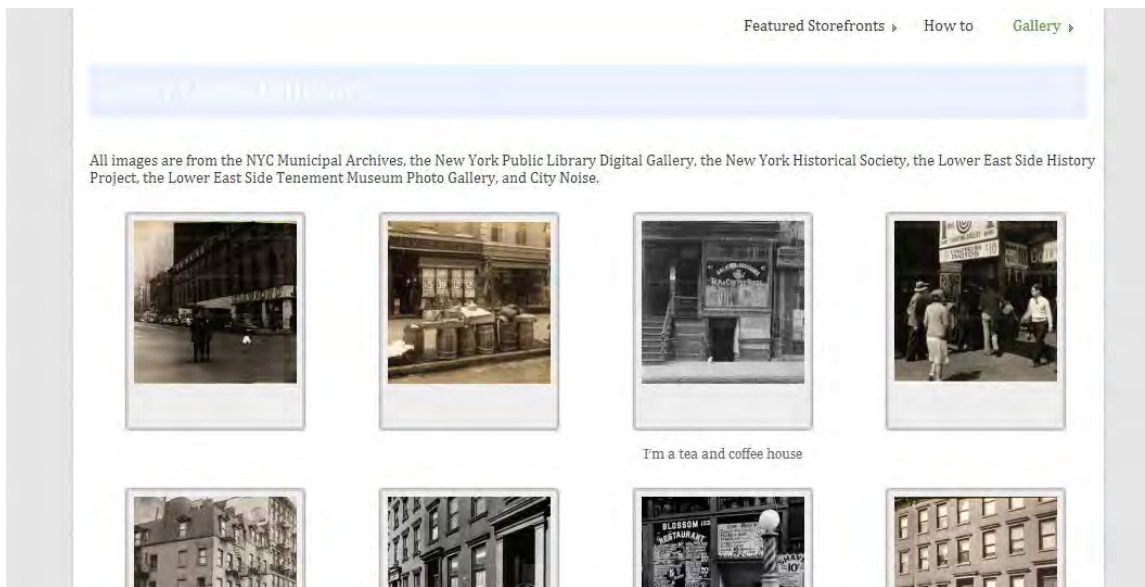
What would you like to see here in the future?

- Art or music classes
- Web or programming classes
- Writer's workshop

How to: how Futurefront works



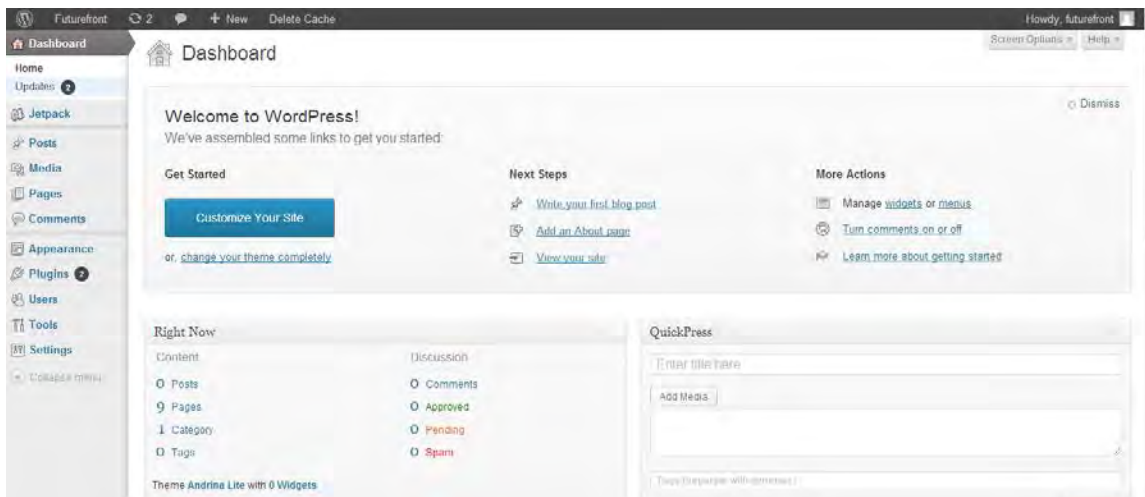
Gallery of both Idea City Festival and Historic Images: can add on new categories



+ Access

Maintaining the futurefront website with new content and using the form to collect user input can generate interest from potential clients.

1. Go to futurefront.org/wp-admin
2. login with username: futurefront password: MITDUSP2013



Since MiLES website is based on wordpress, this can be better integrated with MiLES's website.

Treasure Map

The Futurefront treasure map provided a print incentive for booth visitors to venture to the actual sites of storefronts for future programming.

In future iterations, the “treasure map” or printed map could better encourage crowdsourcing of information via text by explicitly listing a number to text in input. Also, more interesting places should be marked on the treasure map to make it more attractive to people.

The use of printed media in conjunction with a physical experience provides a way for visitors to retain information. It is unlikely that the design of this specific treasure map can be used in future iterations due to the Event-specific nature of flyers, however conceptually this could remain a useful strategy with altered content.

Historic Research

Over the course of this project we conducted historic research investigating past use of individual building addresses in the Lower East Side. Opportunities exist to continue this work by building on the existing image databases available through the New York Public Library System and the vast resources available through independent historical societies in NYC.

NYPL Image Database: <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/index.cfm>

Lower East Side Tenement Museum: <http://www.tenement.org/research.html>

Lower East Side History Project: <http://leshp.org/component/joomgallery/>

Some challenges to this process include limited historical information and imagery for address-specific sites. To remedy this, it was often helpful to gather images and historical facts about the surrounding area or street as opposed to finding imagery directly related to individual storefronts.

Visualization of Collected Feedback Data

+ Event-based

Within the miLES booth itself, an iPad was set up to display real-time data coming in. Given the quantity of results at the street festival, this intervention was less successful at Ideas City.

However, visualizing this information on the Textizen dashboard, or exporting the raw data and visualizing on a map (Google fusion tables, GIS) could be a successful way to explain to external and internal audiences the value of community input and where priorities fall within an external audience.

+ Future Visualization of Data

Data is a useful and powerful tool to convey meaning through quantitative and community input and where priorities fall within an external audience. With evidence based research and imagery, funders, future clients and other audiences can gather useful messages from data visualization. Here are some useful tools for future visualization should you gather more data via website or Textizen:

Little to no programming:

Google Fusion Tables (allows for geolocated point data)

<https://support.google.com/fusiontables/answer/2571232?hl=en>

Google Maps (Simplified version of geolocated points with text and photo information)

<https://maps.google.com/>

Timeline JS (uses google tables to create an interactive timeline)

<http://timeline.verite.co/>

Some programming required:

Data Driven Documents (d3) <http://d3js.org/>

d3.js a javascript library that allows to create robust interactive data visualization