

A go-to destination FLATIRON

BY JEFF SIMMONS

It's where the past meets the present—in the shadow of one of the most fabled buildings in New York City. Just 20 blocks south of the frenzy that characterizes Times Square is the distinctive Flatiron Building, an architectural beacon that draws countless visitors each day destined to photograph its architectural ingenuity.

While drawn to the neighborhood because of this 22-story icon, once one of the tallest buildings in New York City, visitors can easily be captivated by a dynamic landscape—the thriving Madison Square Park, cultural establishments including the National Museum of Mathematics, and culinary offerings that span the globe.

“While this neighborhood was once primarily defined by the Flatiron Building, it has evolved into a premier 21st century live-work-visit community,” says Jennifer Brown, who leads the Flatiron 23rd Street Partnership.

“The transformation continues to draw a diverse array of popular restaurants, a dynamic retail environment, and family-friendly activities—yet it's a place where you still feel connected. When you step into Flatiron, you feel like you've found a new home.”

The Flatiron Building, originally the Fuller Building, was considered to be a groundbreaking skyscraper. Upon completion in 1902, it was one of the tallest buildings in the city and one of only two skyscrapers north of 14th Street—the other being the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Tower, one block east. As with numerous other wedge-shaped buildings, the name “Flatiron” derives from its resemblance to a cast-iron clothes iron.



The American bistro Almond.



At the heart of the Flatiron District is the bow-tie—the intersection of Fifth Avenue, 23rd Street and Broadway.

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THE SCENE

Whether you're new to the neighborhood or a repeat “customer,” it's not difficult to discover that Flatiron is more than ever “a go-to destination.” At the heart of the neighborhood is the bow-tie—the intersection of Fifth Avenue, 23rd Street and Broadway. A healthy dose of visitors and workers mix with an ever-growing population of residents.

“Flatiron has everything—a central location; easy access to transportation; world-class homes, shopping, and dining; exciting nightlife and a jewel of a park, all surrounded by historical beauty,” says Nicholas Athanail, local resident and licensed associate real estate broker with The Corcoran Group. “I love the Flatiron District for its exiting diversity. It really has something for everyone. Being here, for me, always feels like I'm in the center of ‘where it's at.’”

Adds Christopher Heywood, Senior Vice President of Communications for NYC & Company, “Flatiron is one of the City's most stylish and well-located neighborhoods with excellent dining, shopping and cultural opportunities.”

FOODIES REJOICE

With more than 185 food establishments, a culinary cornucopia unfolds at every corner. With eateries ranging from casual to upscale, it's easy to take a trip around the world in less than one square mile.

Frequented by visitors from across the globe—and many from Italy itself—is the anchor culinary destination, **Eataly New York**, positioned at the bustling crossroads of Fifth Avenue and 23rd Street.

Packed with shoppers and diners at nearly all hours, Eataly offers a panoply of fresh ingredients, available to purchase or devour onsite at its seven sit-down restaurants. The marketplace allows one to indulge in fresh mozzarella; salumi and cheese; fish; pizza and pasta, and—year-round—enjoy splendid views from a rooftop restaurant.

In recent years, the district has welcomed an outcropping of new restaurants, though one of the most consistent draws continues to be the world-renowned restaurateur Danny Meyer's **Shake Shack**. The original burger-and-fries eatery is at the southeast corner of Madison Square Park. Don't be discouraged by the line—the queue moves swiftly, and in summer and fall you'll enjoy the peaceful park setting.

Meyer's reach has extended beyond the district's park boundaries and bur-nished the neighborhood reputation as a barbecue-lover's home, with mouthwater-ing real pit barbecue offerings at nearby **Blue Smoke**, paired with world-class live jazz at his **Jazz Standard**.

A brisk walk away, **Hill Country Barbecue Market**, **Maysville**, **Hill Country Chicken** and **Hog Pit NYC** provide other chances for lip-smacking barbecue and southern food indulgence with delicacies such as brisket, baby back ribs, crispy pork shank, spicy chocolate bacon brownies and red velvet cake. (And mark your

sister of the Bridgehampton outpost of the same name—which combines French cuisine in a casual atmosphere (and a roster of New York State craft beers).

Two gems not to miss while visiting the neighborhood are **Eisenberg's Sandwich Shop** and **Birch Coffee**. The charming Eisenberg's—which touts that it has raised New York's cholesterol since 1929—is a classic Jewish deli, known for its hot pastrami, tuna melts and classic egg creams.

Birch Coffee just moved its store a few doors down near Madison Avenue on East 27th Street, but hasn't lost that down-

Taylor, Cole Haan, Club Monaco, and **Eileen Fisher**, to name a few.

The district has evolved into a tech and creative hub, with an ever-expanding number of companies like **Mashable**, **Tumblr** and **eBay**. At street level, **Best Buy** offers a sizeable display of computer, camera and phone options, while **Tekserve** are the go-to Apple experts (the place to visit when you need a quick repair).

And if you need to give your smart-phone a boost, a new gem along 23rd Street is **Time Warner Cable's** flagship store, which has recharging stations. The corridor soon will have free WiFi,

Square Park offers cultural programs year-round. Named for James Madison, the fourth president of the United States, the space formally opened as a public park in 1847.

The park underwent a substantial overhaul in the late 1990s, restoring elements of its original 19th century design and making the park the center of neighborhood life. Now, the restored park features lush green lawns, World's Fair-style benches and a beautiful fountain.

Overlooking the park at its northern point is the only math museum in the coun-try, the **National Museum of Mathematics**, which opened its doors on East 26th



calendars, because every spring, Madison Square Park and the surrounding blocks are home to the renowned Big Apple Barbecue Block Party.)

Over the past few years, tremendous growth in restaurant openings was seen in the district's northern NoMad section, including the **NoMad Restaurant**, **Flatiron Hall**, **The Flatiron Room**, **Vin Sur Vingt**, Cambodian sandwich shop **Num Pang** and organic outpost **Sweetgreen**.

Looking for breathtaking views while sipping martinis? Visit 230 Fifth's rooftop bar and restaurant (it's heated in colder weather!) and penthouse lounge, which rests in the shadow of the Empire State Building. Giant umbrellas provide cover from rain or sun, on those hot days.

For a cozier atmosphere, there's the nearby American bistro **Almond**—the

home appeal. The menus shift slightly with the seasons, and locally sourced brews continue to be the big draw. It's the perfect pit stop to relax or refuel while you traverse the neighborhood.

SHOPPING HAVEN

That range—from the upscale to the casual—is similarly evident while shopping in the neighborhood. The district attracts a healthy dose of shoppers driven by both name-brand, big-box outlets and small-business support. Abutting the vibrant pedestrian plazas is Finland's gift to textile and apparel design, **Marimekko**.

A saunter south of the Flatiron Build-ing along Fifth Avenue is a fashionista's dream, as dynamic window displays beckon customers into **BCBG**, **Ann**

an expansion of the free wireless service provided in the pedestrian plazas.

The retail landscape is extremely family-friendly. Children abound at **Space Kiddets**, which offers a broad selection of trendy designs and up-and-coming designers, vintage rock t-shirts for new-borns, funky apparel, and accessories. And, **Abracadabra NYC** is a wonderland to behold, a New York City institution housing costumes, masks, wigs of every sort. It's not just for Halloween anymore!

CULTURAL MECCA

Culturally, the Flatiron district con-tinues to flourish with a wide variety of attractions ranging from the academic to entertainment.

A seven-acre urban oasis, **Madison**

Street in 2012. **MoMath** consists of a suite of newly created exhibits, providing novel ways to experience the reality of math.

More than a dozen other cultural attrac-tions entice visitors both young and old, with the **Baruch Performing Arts Center** providing theater, concerts and lectures year-round and housing the **National Yiddish Theatre - Folksbiene** and the **Alexander String Quartet**. Each year, the **Sidney Mishkin Gallery** offers smaller shows.

Among other must-see stops are **Swann Auction Galleries**, a third-gener-ation family business and now the largest specialist auctioneer of works on paper in the world; **The Peoples Improv Theater**, which presents original comedic shows seven nights a week; and, the **Museum of Sex**, which presents the history and evolution of human sexuality. ■

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