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## Fountain Turns Trash-Strewn Jamaica Alley Into Palm-Filled Oasis

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JAMAICA — The din of traffic and vendors along Jamaica Avenue (<http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/search?q=jamaica+avenue>) now has a subtle antidote — the sound of gurgling water.

A new fountain flanked by palm trees was recently installed in an alcove at 161st Street, between two landmarked buildings — Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning (<http://www.jcal.org/>) and the former Jamaica Savings Bank building, once described by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/html/home/home.shtml>) as "the finest Beaux-Arts building in Queens."

The new fountain is the only working one on the stretch — the one in front of the Jamaica Performing Arts Center has not been operational for at least a decade.

"We've noticed there was garbage collecting in the alley," said Andrew Manshel, executive vice president of the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation (<http://gfdc.org/>), a nonprofit local development organization. "We cleaned out the alley and we started thinking about what we could do with that space."

A water fountain seemed like a good fit, Manshel said. "People really respond positively to the sound of the splashing water."

The project, Manshel said, is part of an effort to change the perception of downtown Jamaica, once plagued with crime and neglect.

Over the years, however, the area has been transformed (<http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20130808/jamaica/tourists-hop-buses-from-around-nation-shop-jamaica>) once again into a major shopping district.

"To find a fountain at this location is a surprising thing — it's not what you would expect," said Manshel.

The wall behind the fountain will soon be decorated with a floral painting, designed by chashama (<http://www.chashama.org/>), a nonprofit arts organization.

Residents said it's a welcome addition to the busy street.

"I'm happy to see it," said Yahya Shakur, 44, who sells DVDs on Jamaica Avenue. Shakur said he grew up in the neighborhood and would like to see it brought back to its former prominence.

"Jamaica Avenue has many historic buildings and little improvements like that make it more beautiful," he added.

*Related Items* Andrew Manshel ([Http://Www.Dnainfo.Com/New-York/People/Andrew-Manshel](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/andrew-manshel)) Yahya Shakur ([Http://Www.Dnainfo.Com/New-York/People/Yahya-Shakur](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/yahya-shakur))

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