

Culture Walk

D@C × Google UX Challenge

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01

User Research

Research Methods



In order to help us narrow down our problem space, we decided to start with **user research**...

Quantitative

Quantitative research was conducted via a **survey** through various channels: Columbia undergrad and grad schools* group chats, Instagram, and Reddit.

Qualitative

Four **ethnographic interviews** were conducted on the following groups:

- ① NYC local (in NYC 10+ years)
- ② Recent transplants (in NYC ~1-3 years)
- ③ Future intern in NYC (in NYC ~2 months)

*Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia Teacher's College, Barnard 2025 GroupMe, Columbia 2025 GroupMe, Women in CS GroupMe

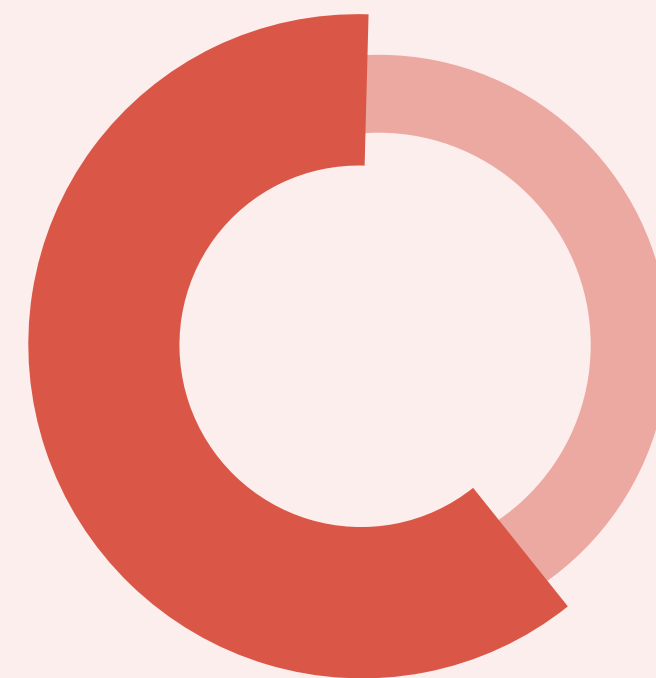
Survey Results



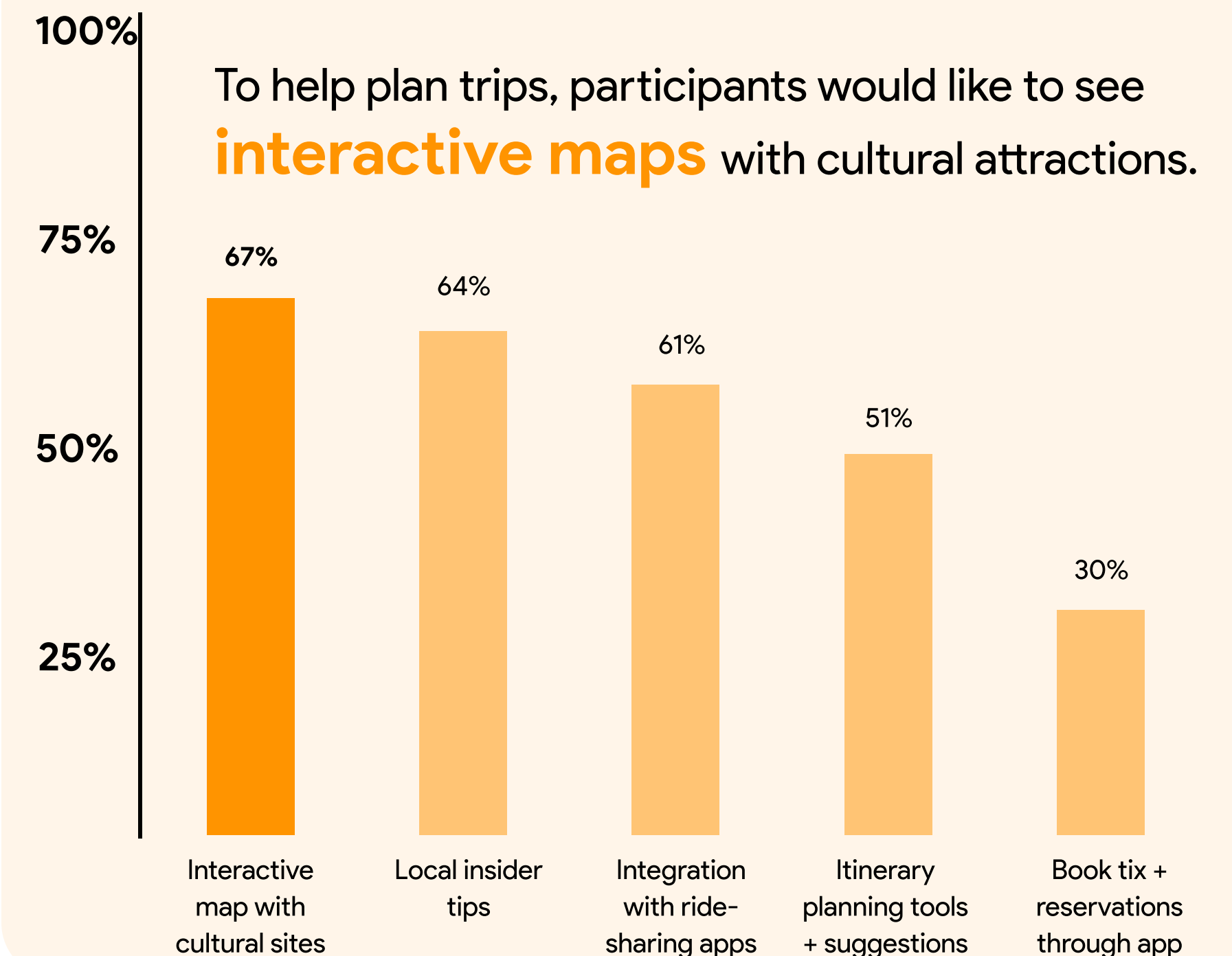
Based on our survey results from **49 participants**, we determined that:



65% of people highly value discovering **hidden gems** or **lesser-known** spots in the city.



61% of people feel **uncertainty** about the **authenticity or quality** of cultural experiences in NYC.



*Multi-select question so some users chose more than one option.

Interview Results



We conducted **4 ethnographic interviews** to gather more information.

We discovered that...

- Locals sometimes refrain from disclosing **hidden gems** to prevent overcrowding, adopting a **“gatekeeping”** mentality.
- When searching for places, NYC transplants often:
 - Feel overwhelmed by **too many choices**.
 - Focus on **location proximity** and **interest-based preferences**.
 - Consider **visually-appealing locations** for social media posts.

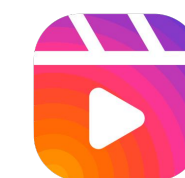
Frequently Used Discover Tools



Save locations on Google Maps and search for nearby places in specific locations



Use TikTok to discover new places, reveal the “vibe” of places



Watch Youtube videos and Shorts that oftentimes feature new places to visit

Problem Statement



Based on our research, we narrowed down the scope of the problem to...

New York City transplants and visitors often lack a deep understanding of the historical and cultural significance of the places they explore.

Based on the challenge prompt of creating a project that preserves and celebrates NYC's cultural heritage, we came up with the research question:

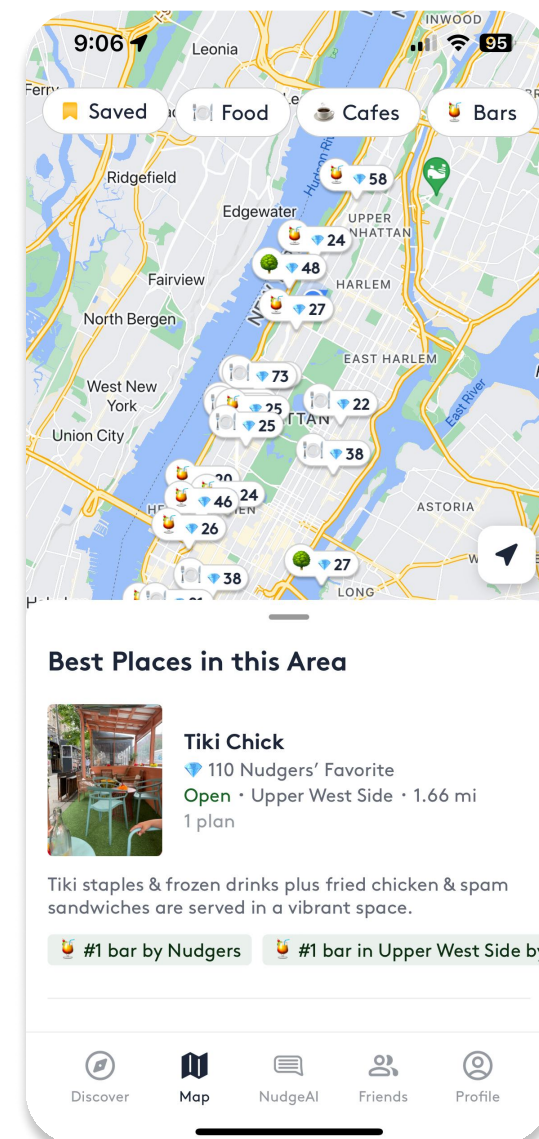
How can we develop a tool that enriches the experience of New Yorkers by offering historical and cultural insights throughout the city, fostering deeper appreciation and respect for NYC's heritage?

Competitor Analysis



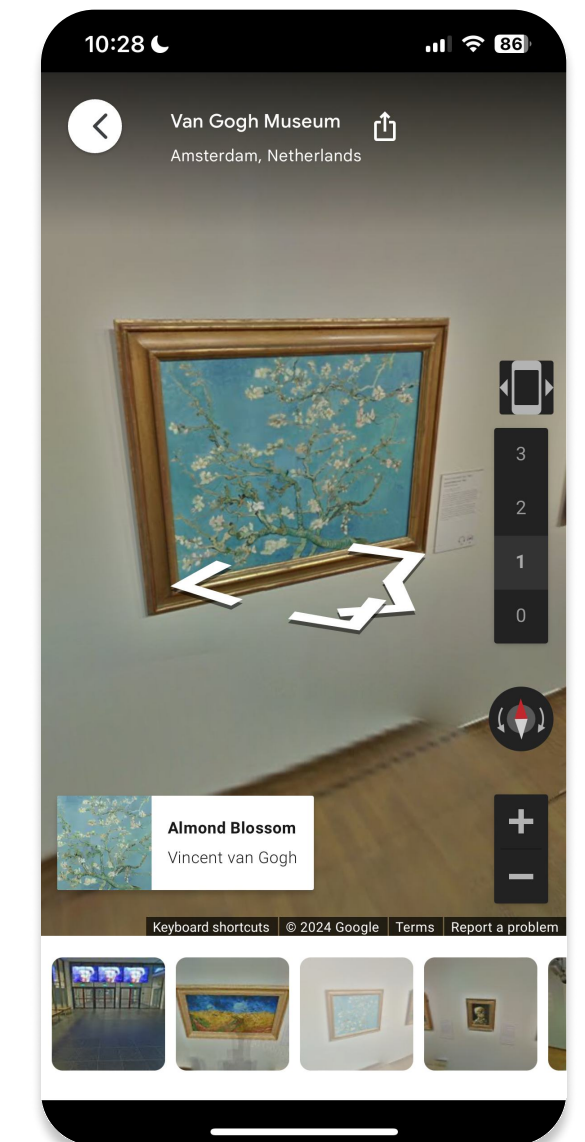
Nudge

- Provides information about **very unique, “underground” experiences**. Examples: immersive cooking / cultural experiences (learning family recipes from immigrant women right in their homes)
- **Short-form videos**: Similar to Tik Tok, each person who makes the video will **visually show** you what it’s like walking into the restaurant, sitting down, what to order



Google Arts & Culture

- **Augmented Reality**: GAC leverages AR to bring artworks and cultural experiences into the user's environment, providing an **immersive learning** and exploration experience.
- Engagement and Educational Value: GAC excels in **educational value**, offering **detailed descriptions, stories, historical context**, and **interactive games** (ArtRemix, Poem Postcard).



Our Idea



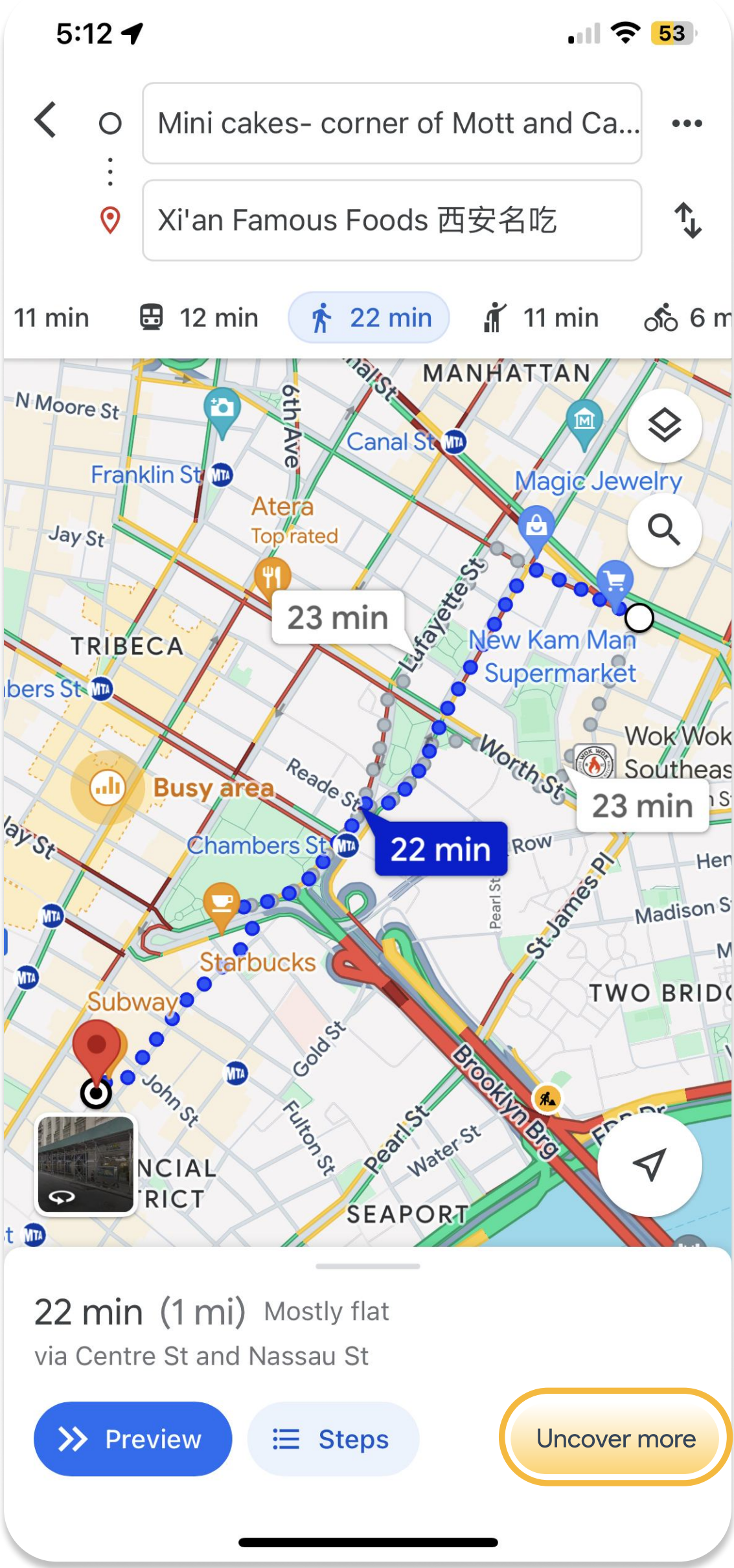
New York City is a living, ever-changing museum of history and culture.

Inspired by guided **museum and audio tours**, we aim to create a new feature for **Google Maps** that provides users **cultural and historical insights** about the areas they visit around New York City.

02

Initial Designs

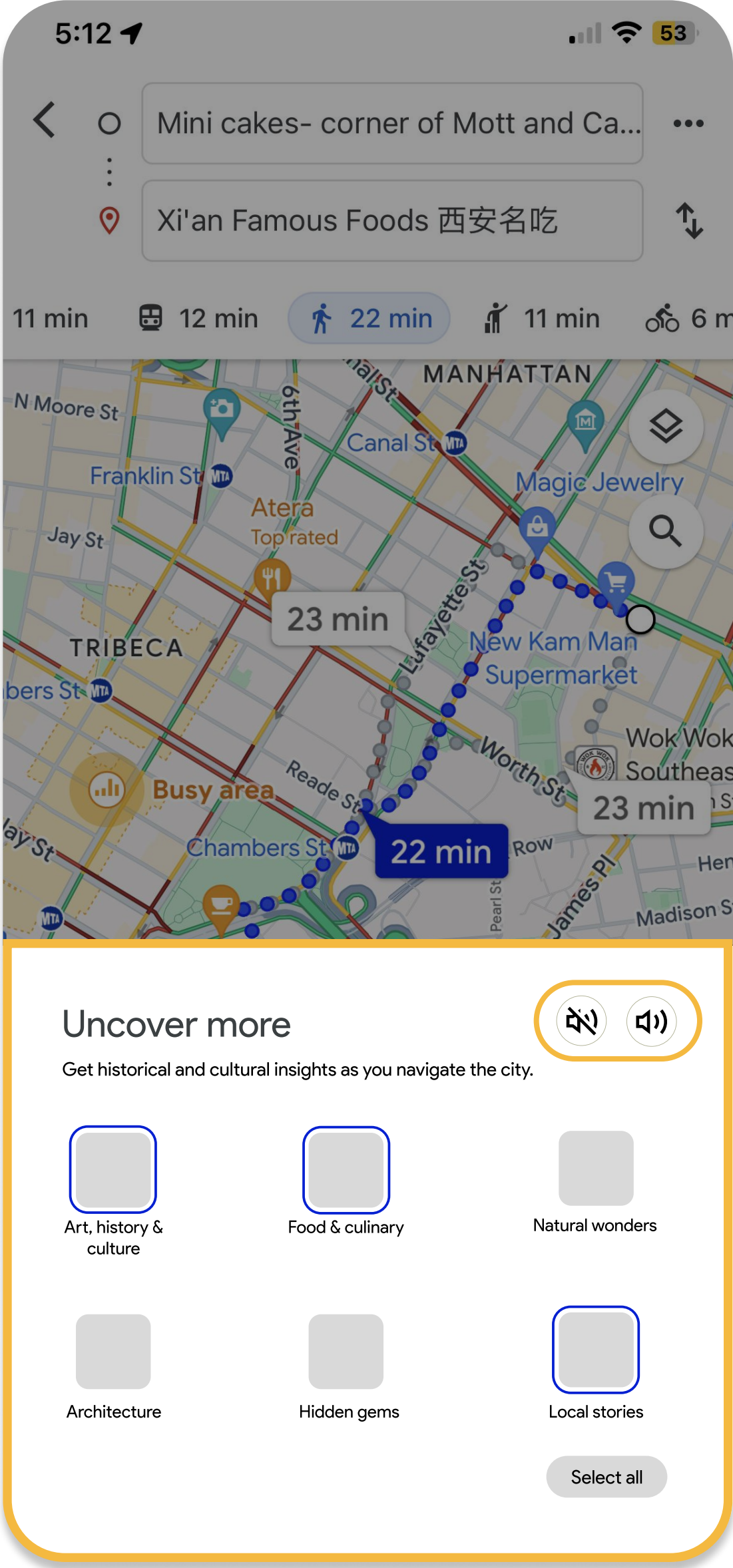
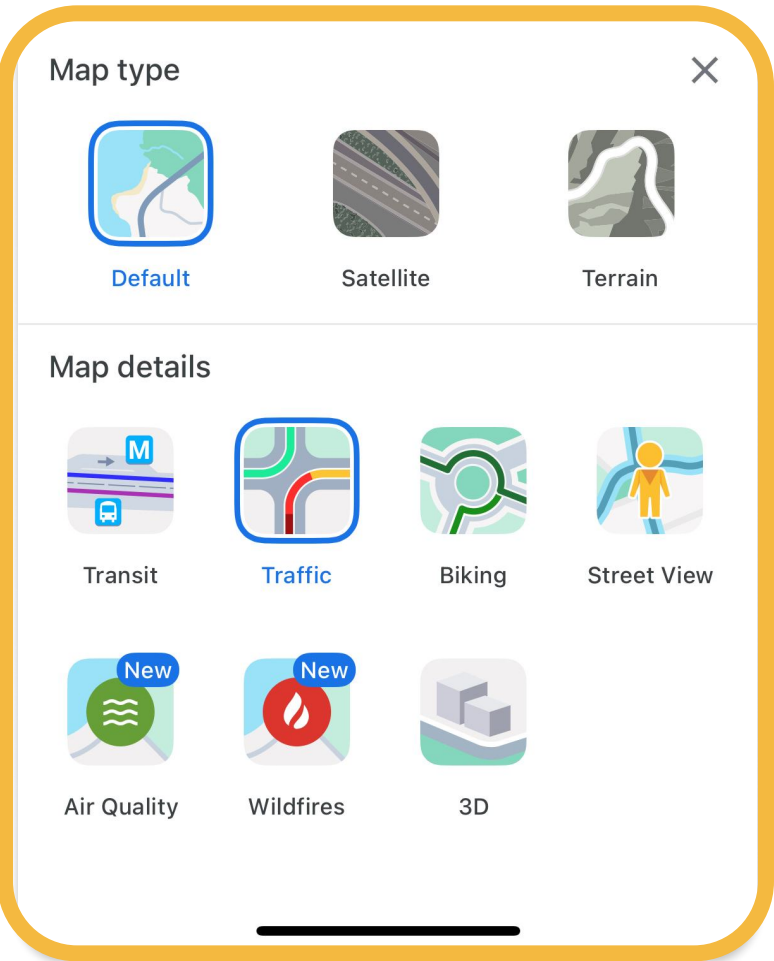
Enter
“Culture Walk”
Mode



Button to enter
“Culture Walk” mode
from Google Maps
walking route

Select categories of interest

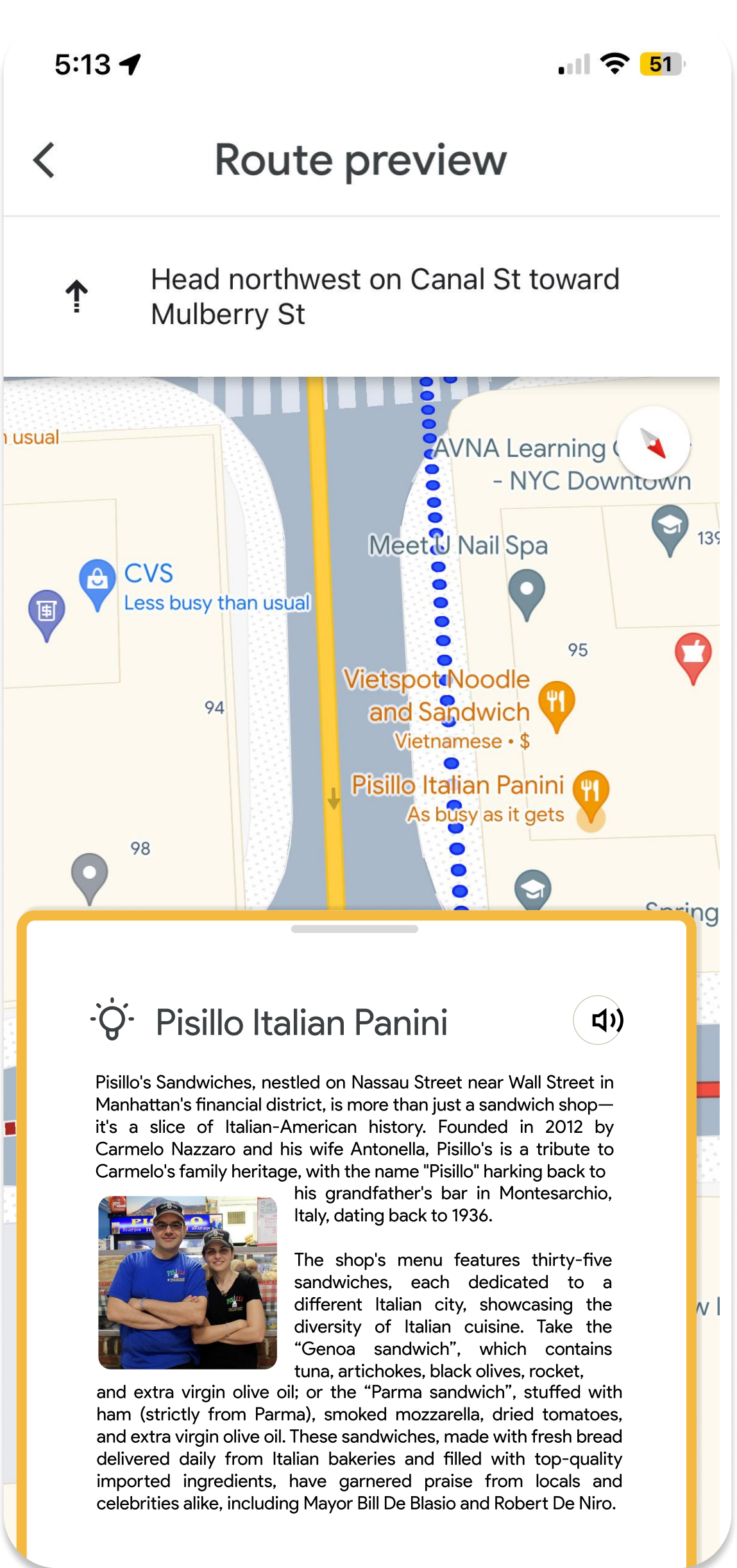
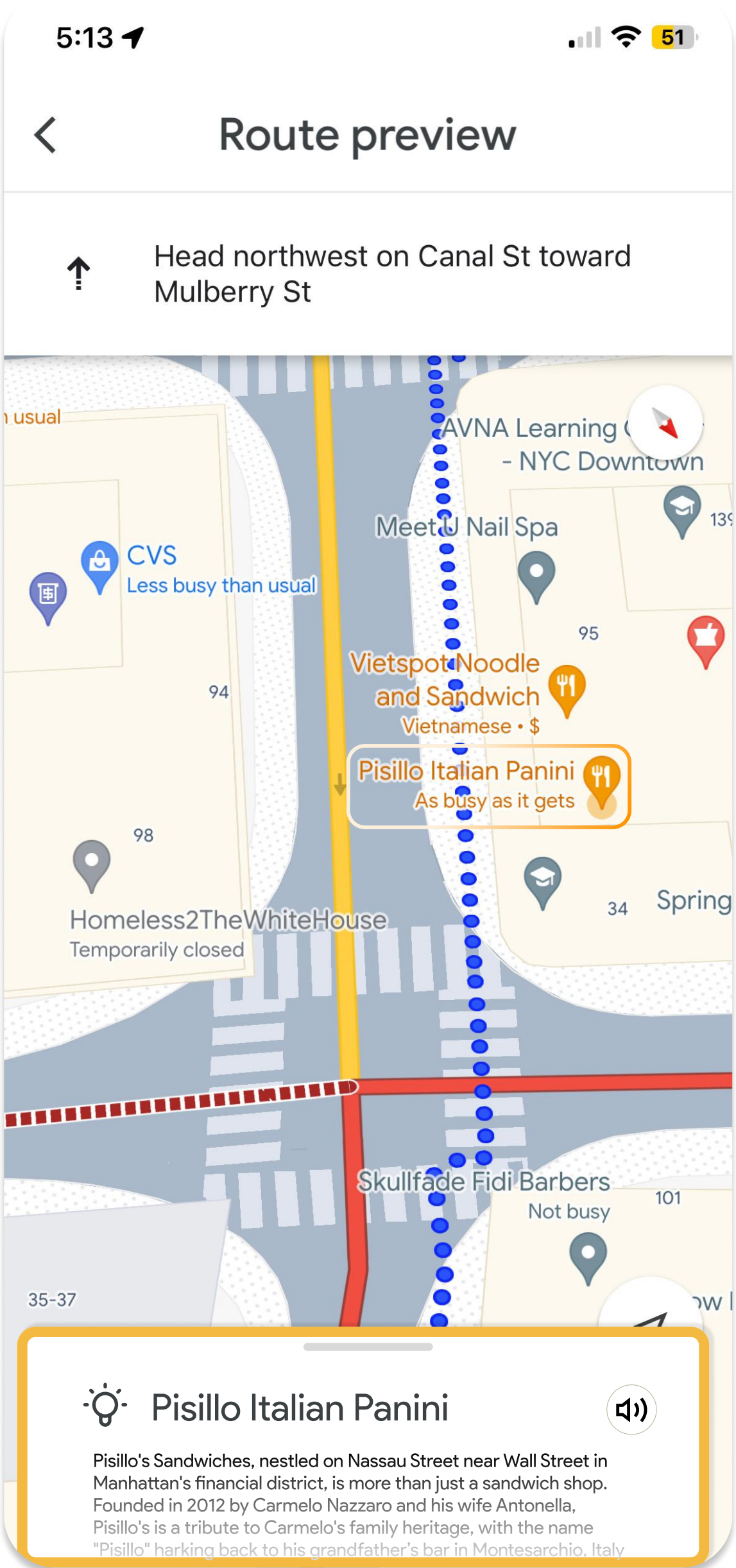
Inspiration



Buttons to toggle audio tour on/off

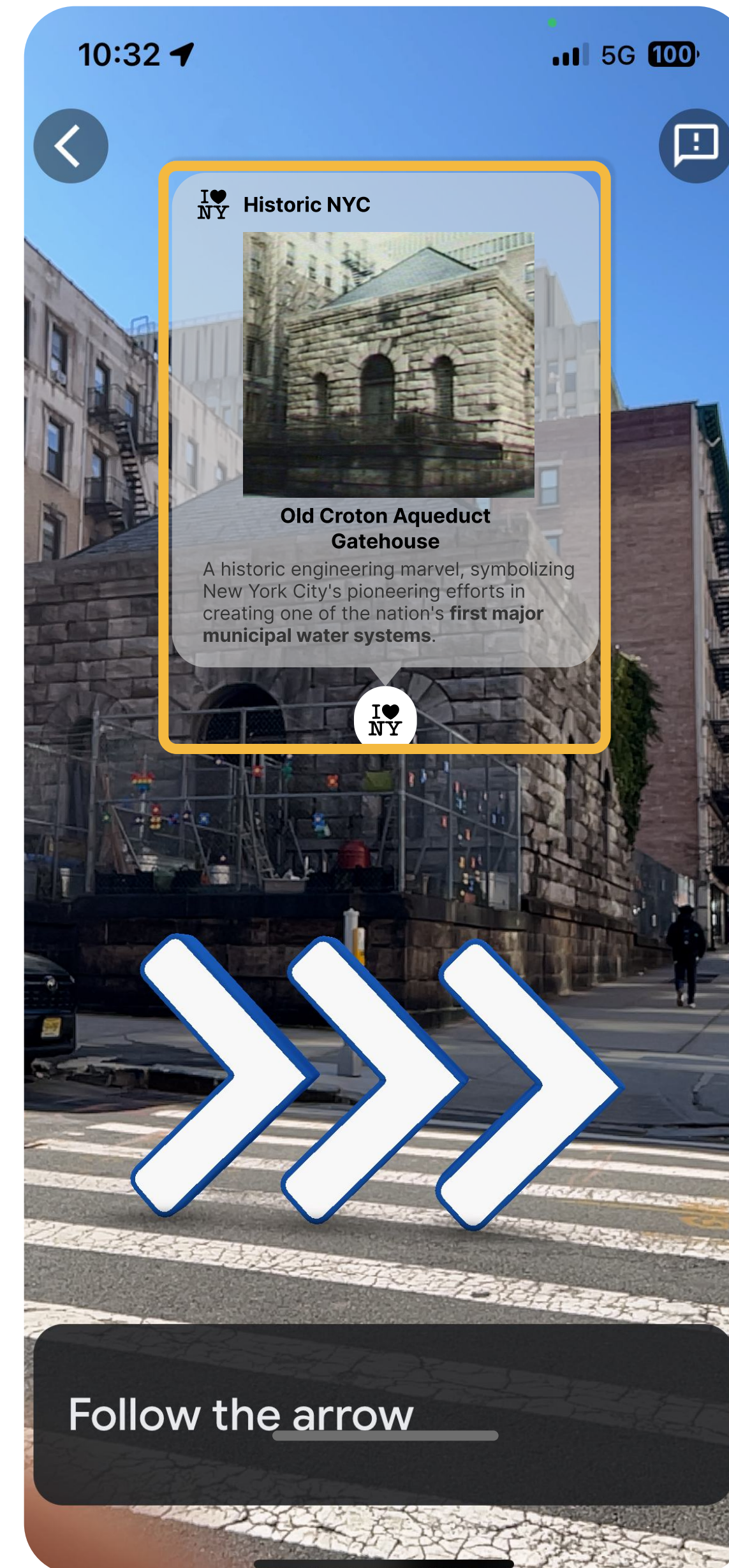
Window allowing users to choose from categories of interest.

View fact cards during route navigation



Fact card is
draggable up for
full information
viewing

AR with Live View



An AR fact card
pops up when users
enter Live View
Mode and walk by a
historic site.

03

User Testing

What We Tested



Given our initial design ideas, we were unsure on...

How do we progress into a final solution that would encompass the needs of our users while staying true to the design of Google Maps?

Let's ask some potential users about what they think!

We interviewed **3 potential users** what features they enjoyed from our initial design

User Feedback



Desire for to Remember Places Explored

It would be helpful to have a feature allowing users to revisit places they've already explored.

Clarity of "Uncover More" Feature

It's hard to understand the meaning of "Uncover More" – not very intuitive on what it does.

Readability of Historical Fact Cards

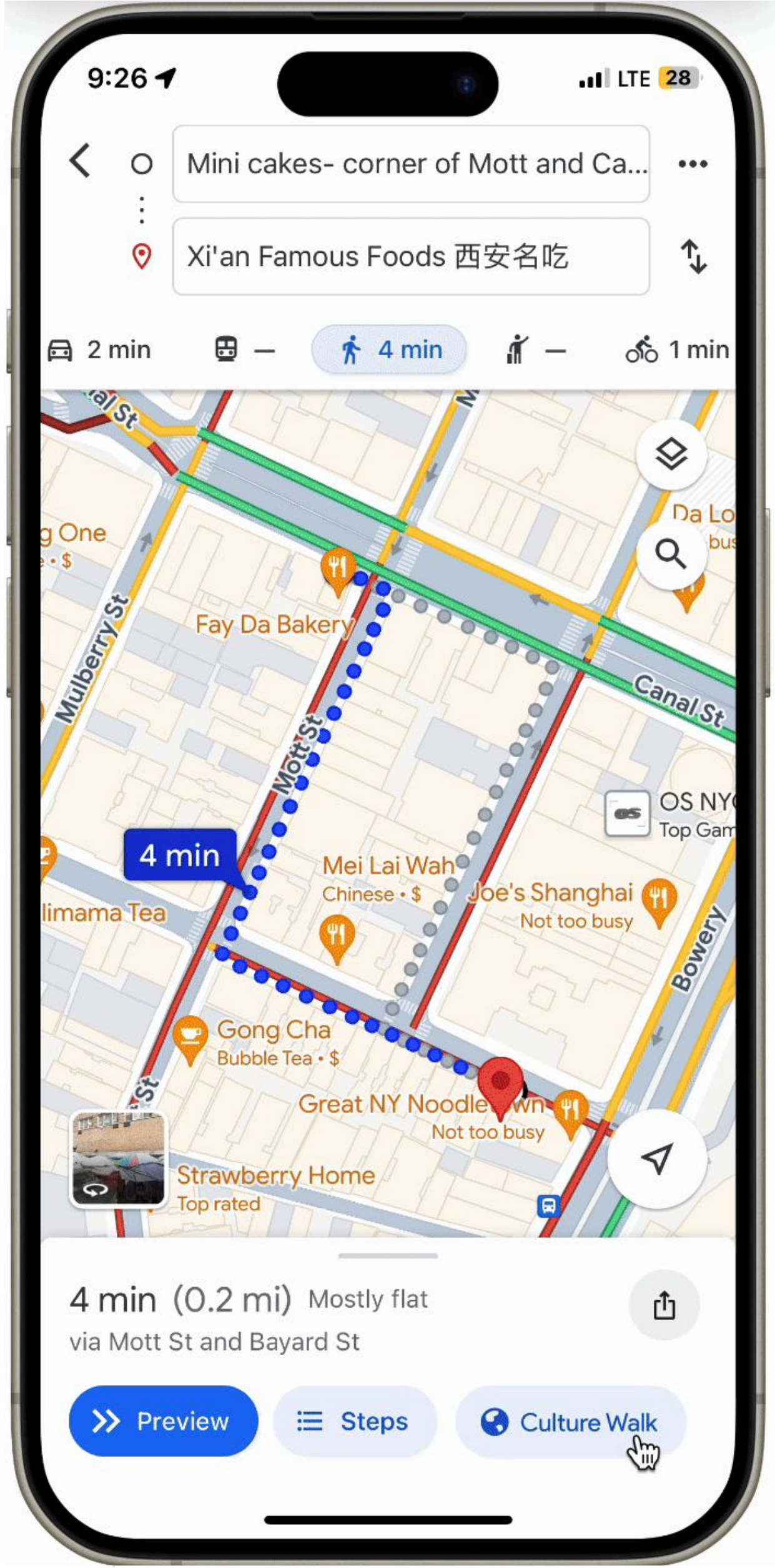
The historical fact cards seem difficult to read and overly condensed.

Based off of this feedback, we decided to make some changes to our design...

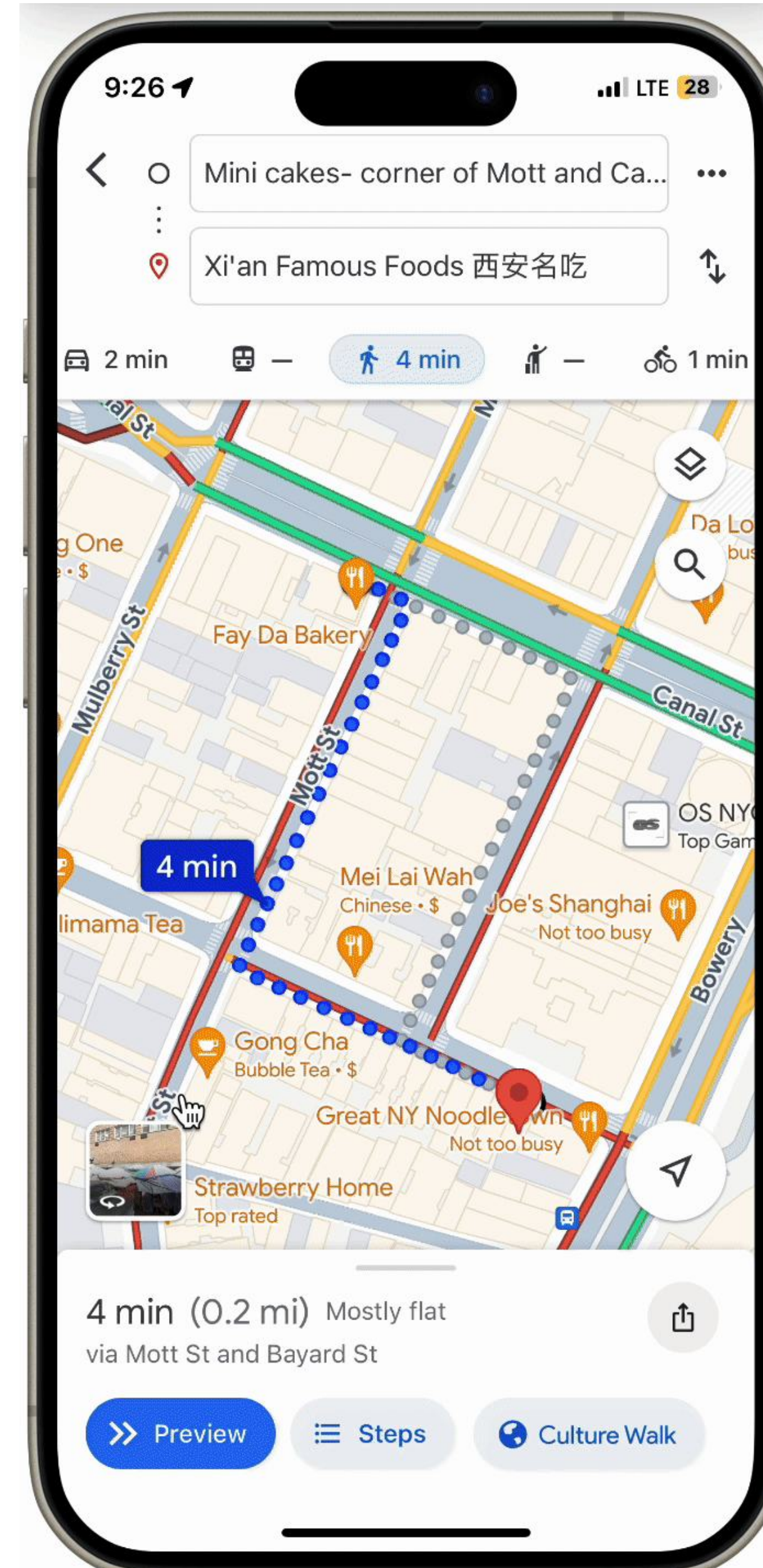
04

Hi-Fi Prototype

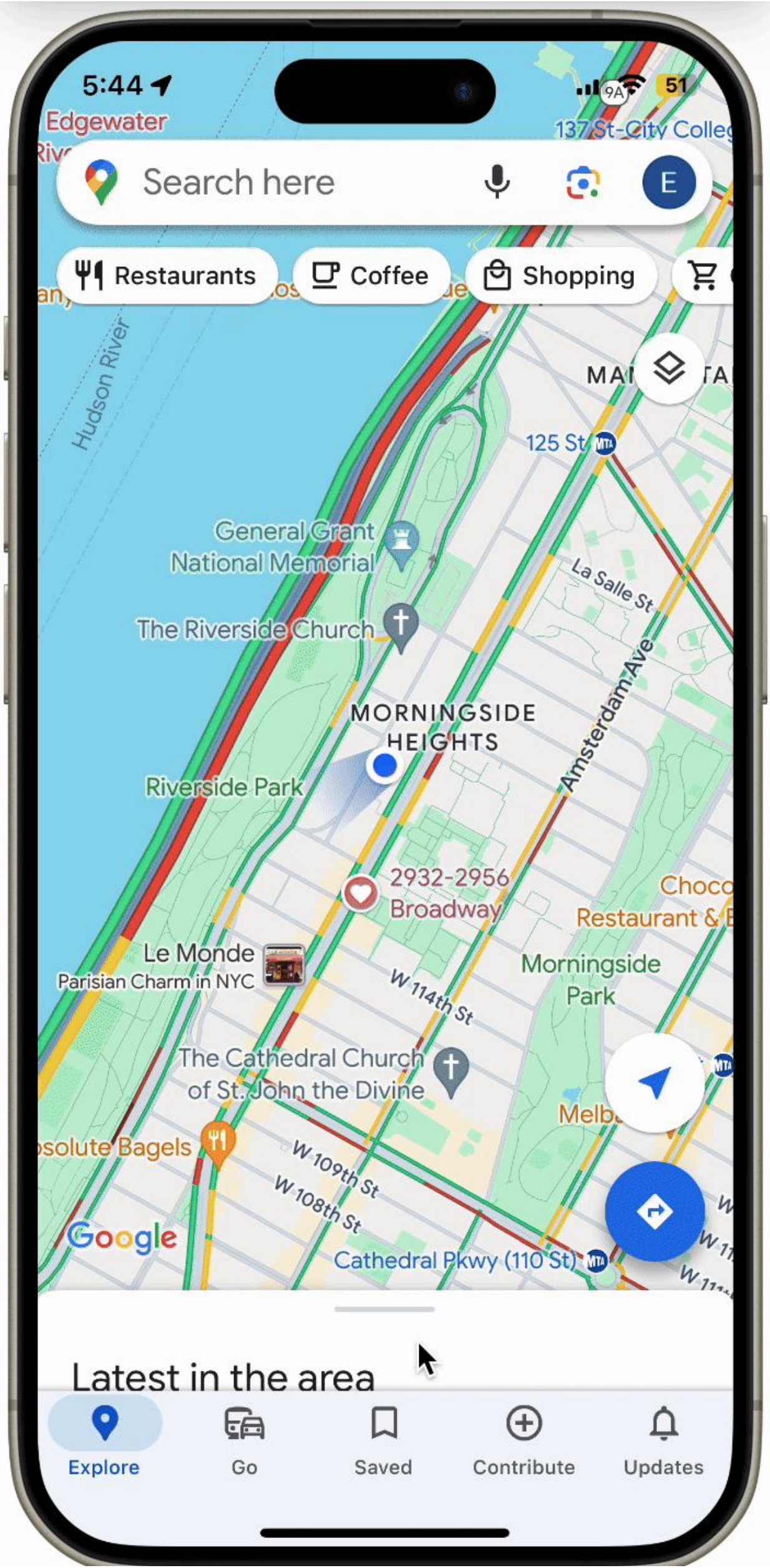
Flow 1: Culture
walk via
walking route



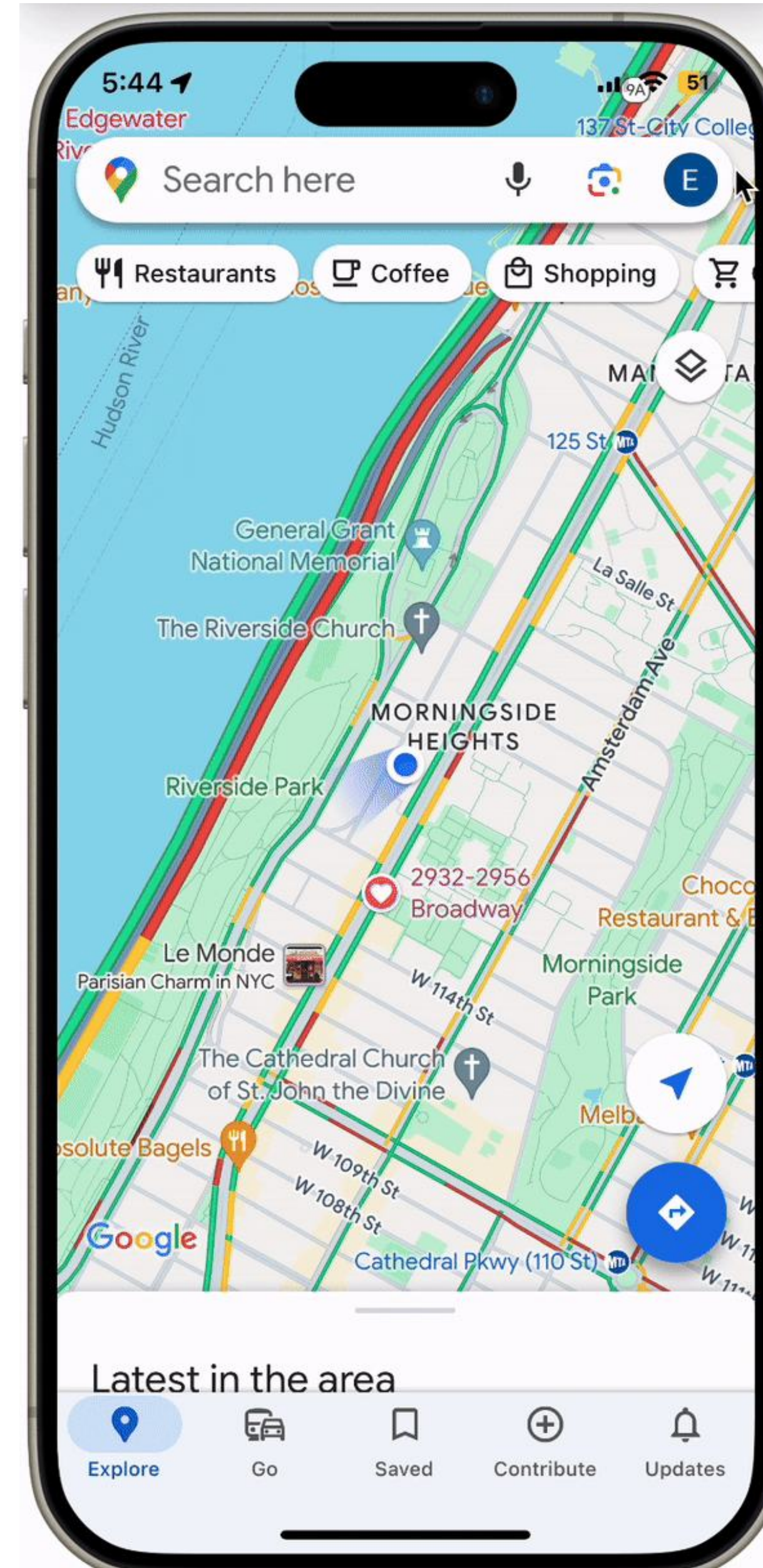
Flow 2: Live view & augmented reality



Flow 3:
Cultural
archive



Flow 4: Setting categories of interest



05

Takeaways

Our Takeaways



Prioritize Communication

Keep consistent communication among team members.

Embrace Iteration

Design is an iterative and collaborative process.

User-Centered Design

Design decisions should be made through continuous user testing, not assumption.

Embrace Limitations

Constraints can force creative problem-solving and lead to unexpected solutions.

Next Steps



1

Improve design and user flow on different ways to trigger fact cards.

2

Test with more users to get more practical preference categories.

3

Conduct more user research for building further communities around the cultural walk feature.

