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**City Planning Commission Votes to Relax Restrictions
on Outdoor Dining in Manhattan with
New Small Sidewalk Café Proposal Designed to Enliven Neighborhoods**

March 24, 2004 – The City Planning Commission (CPC) voted to approve a proposal to enliven Manhattan sidewalks with a new category of "small sidewalk cafés", CPC Chair Amanda M. Burden announced today. The proposal by the Department of City Planning to increase the number of places where patrons might enjoy outdoor dining in the small sidewalk cafes now goes to the City Council for final approval.

"City Planning's Small Sidewalk Café Proposal will enrich the vitality of the city's street life and we hope that it will be approved and adopted by the City Council in time for the warmer months," said Ms. Burden, who is also Director of the Department of City Planning (DCP). She noted that the smaller unenclosed cafes that hug the side of a building are "real urban amenities that, carefully sited, will add to the vitality of neighborhoods without interfering with pedestrian movement." And Ms. Burden credited local community boards with working with DCP to identify the most promising areas for the new small sidewalk cafes.

The proposal calls for permitting exclusively small sidewalk cafes on selected streets where sidewalk cafes are not allowed to operate today. The new small sidewalk cafes will permit a single row of tables and chairs within a maximum width of 4-1/2 feet, leaving a minimum sidewalk clearance of at least 8 feet. Sidewalk widths and pedestrian volumes were considered in selecting streets appropriate for small sidewalk cafes.

Compared to the other boroughs, there are a disproportionate number of streets and neighborhoods in Manhattan that are restricted from having unenclosed sidewalk cafes. Among these: Chinatown, SoHo, Union Square, Midtown, most major crosstown streets south of 96th Street as well as avenues including Third, Lexington and Madison Avenues.

Small sidewalk cafes would be permitted in many of these areas, with the exceptions of major transit hubs and areas with high volumes of pedestrian traffic or curbside deliveries.

Among the areas to benefit from the proposed zoning text change:

- Major crosstown streets and avenues south of 34th Street
- Selected side streets and avenues in Midtown
- Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side
- Resurgent retail areas in Upper Manhattan including Lexington, Park and Madison Avenues north of 96th Street as well as on West 116th Street
- Orchard and Delancey Streets and St. Marks Place on the Lower East Side
- Selected streets in SoHo

Like the larger cafes permitted elsewhere, the small sidewalk cafes would be subject to regulation and enforcement by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA), which must approve their licensing and permitting. To utilize the city sidewalks for sidewalk cafes, restaurateurs must apply to the DCA. Each sidewalk café application will be subject to discretionary review by the affected community board, DCA and City Council.

DCP's proposed revision in the zoning text to permit small sidewalk cafes is nearing the end of the formal public review process, having been approved by the CPC, the affected community boards, and the Manhattan Borough President. It now goes to the City Council for final approval.

For more information including maps of proposed areas where the small sidewalk cafes would be permitted, please visit the [Proposal section](#) of www.nyc.gov/planning.

About City Planning:

The Department of City Planning is responsible for the City's physical and socioeconomic planning, including land use and environmental review; preparation of plans and policies; and provision of technical assistance and planning information to government agencies, public officials, and community boards.