

1
2
3 *Manhattan Community Board 4 General Sidewalk Policy*
4 *May 2009*
5

6 Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) has developed – in consultation with its residents -
7 the following policy for how to allocate sidewalk space on the avenues and wide streets
8 in our district. This policy informs how various committees will weigh competing
9 sidewalk demands and guide Board advocacy on sidewalk usage.

10
11 Sidewalks are the pedestrian arteries of our cities and neighborhoods, carrying thousands
12 of people in a clean, efficient and healthy mode of transportation: walking. Our
13 schoolchildren, senior citizens, transit users, workers, tourists, and businesses depend on
14 them for survival. Unfortunately, our sidewalks occupy only approximately 25% of the
15 public space, even though 77.5% of Manhattan households did not own a car in 2000.
16 The narrowing of 9th Avenue’s sidewalks, 50 years ago, to make space for the Lincoln
17 Tunnel’s anticipated vehicular traffic, exacerbates a situation already difficult due to the
18 numerous trap doors, which are an historical fixture of our district’s sidewalks. On Eighth
19 Avenue, the subway grates make a portion of the narrow sidewalks unfit to walk on, and
20 an ever-expanding panoply of amenities and commercial endeavors further restrict
21 pedestrian movement.

22
23 At the same time, the 2005 Hudson Yards rezoning will bring thousands of new residents
24 to our sidewalks. The increased reliance on public transportation, combined with major
25 projects like the #7 subway line extension and the new rail tunnel from New Jersey, add
26 numerous commuters who use our Avenues to reach major transportation hubs located in
27 our district. In some areas, the problem has become so critical that pedestrians have no
28 other option than walking in the street, especially during peak hours.

- 29
30 • Sidewalk space will be allocated to prioritize a “Clear Pedestrian Path”, which is
31 an unobstructed “walking lane” designed to efficiently carry the maximum numbers of
32 pedestrians.

33
34 A minimum 8' clear pedestrian path should be maintained along the Avenues and large
35 Streets, unless the pedestrian level of service for that location is rated D or worse, in
36 which case a 9'6" clear pedestrian path should be maintained . There is precedent for
37 both measurements – an 8' pedestrian path for sidewalk cafes and a 9'6" path for
38 newsstands (Subchapter G of Chapter 2 of Title 6 of the Rules of New York City).

39
40 In addition, it is preferable for the clear pedestrian path to be in straight line from
41 intersection to intersection and to allow for efficient walking and improved sidewalk
42 safety for persons with disabilities. Obstructions for those with disabilities would include
43 grates, ventilations and cellar doors as well as tree pits, even when they are covered with
44 grates.

46 A 10' clearance should be maintained between the "Corner Quadrant" and any
47 obstructions (furniture, signs, light posts, etc). This will provide a reservoir space for
48 pedestrians waiting to cross the street, a clear access point for pedestrians crossing and it
49 will maintain a clear line of sight between turning vehicles and pedestrians thus allowing
50 for safe and efficient pedestrian crossings. The Corner Quadrant is the area delimited by
51 the curb and the lines projected from the corner building's facades.

52
53 • High Value Amenities that provide essential services and contribute to an
54 improved transportation experience will take precedence.

55
56 High Value Amenities include trees, wastebaskets, bus shelters and bus stops including
57 the space necessary for commuters to wait, step on and off the bus. When approving any
58 new amenity, CB4 will ensure it does not preempt the installation of a planned High
59 Value Amenity.

60
61 • The cumulative length of sidewalk occupied by all amenities (except trees) will be
62 limited to 50% of the total length of an avenue block from corner quadrant to corner
63 quadrant.

64
65 This should ensure proper access between the street and the sidewalk for deliveries,
66 emergency vehicles and Access a Ride. This will also reduce the clutter on specific
67 blocks.

68
69 • Frequency of other amenities should be limited and their placement carefully
70 assigned to ensure free access from the street to the sidewalk and to prevent clutter.

71
72 The frequency of other amenities (sidewalk cafes, canopies, bike racks, benches,
73 storefront extensions, storm vestibules, curb cuts, pay phones, newspaper boxes, bike
74 shelters, street vendors, newsstands, info kiosks and taxi stands) should be limited as they
75 do not provide essential services but in fact may encroach on a straight line, Clear
76 Pedestrian Path if placed improperly on the sidewalk.

77
78 The amenities should be located in the proper buffer zones to minimize their negative
79 impact on pedestrian movement. The following are the three buffer zones:

80
81 1. Building Line Buffer Zone; is the space between the building line and the Clear
82 Pedestrian Path where sidewalk cafés, trap doors, ventilations, storm entrances, store
83 extensions, ramps and small phone booths should be located.

84
85 2. Curb Line Buffer Zone; is the space between the Clear Pedestrian Path and the
86 curb where small street furniture, tree pits, bus shelters, planters, wastebaskets, safety and
87 regulation signs, lights, benches, and pedestrian lighting should be located.

88
89 3. Parking Line Buffer Zone; is the space between the curb and moving vehicles
90 where currently cars are parked. Anywhere parking is allowed 24 hours a day, bike
91 parking and certain amenities such as large garbage receptacles may be located in this

92 buffer zone .However, the preferred location would be on side streets near the
93 intersections with the Avenues, where curb extensions or reclaimed parking spaces could
94 hold various amenities (newsstands, bike parking, wastebaskets, etc.). The pedestrian
95 safety improvements associated with the resulting neck-downs would be an added
96 benefit.

97
98 The specific spacing and placement restrictions for each amenity (bus stops, trees,
99 sidewalk cafes, canopies, bike racks, benches, storefront extensions, storm vestibules,
100 curb cuts, pay phones, newspaper boxes, bike shelters, street vendors, newsstands, info
101 kiosks and taxi stands) can be found in other CB4 policy documents and in the respective
102 city agency guidelines.

103
104 On avenues and wide streets, where walking space is very scarce, this policy will ensure
105 that pedestrians have the priority. On side streets, the specific sidewalk width and
106 existing obstructions will dictate how to apply these policies and amenity priorities.

107
108 We believe instituting these policies is an important first step in ensuring our sidewalks
109 remain vital and active and continue to encourage the active pedestrian use that has been
110 a core to the quality of life in New York City and within Manhattan Community Board 4.

111
112 Reference Information:
113 Pedestrian Level of Service (Highway Capacity Manual by the Transportation Research
114 Board):

115
116 LOS A: Pedestrian Space > 60 ft²/p, Flow Rate = 5 p/min/ft
117 At a walkway LOS A, pedestrians move in desired paths without altering their
118 movements in response to other pedestrians. Walking speeds are freely selected, and
119 conflicts between pedestrians are unlikely.

120
121 LOS B: Pedestrian Space > 40-60 ft²/p, Flow Rate > 5-7 p/min/ft
122 At LOS B, there is sufficient area for pedestrians to select walking speeds freely to
123 bypass other pedestrians, and to avoid crossing conflicts. At this level, pedestrians begin
124 to be aware of other pedestrians, and to response to their presence when electing a
125 walking path.

126
127 LOS C: Pedestrian Space > 24-40 ft²/p, Flow Rate > 7-10 p/min/ft
128 At LOS C, space is sufficient for normal walking speeds, and for bypassing other
129 pedestrians in primarily unidirectional streams. Reverse-direction or crossing movements
130 can cause minor conflicts, and speeds and flow rate are somewhat lower.

131
132 LOS D: Pedestrian Space > 15-24 ft²/p, Flow Rate > 10-15 p/min/ft
133 At LOS D, freedom to select individual walking speed and to bypass other pedestrians is
134 restricted. Crossing or reverse-flow movements face a high probability of conflict,
135 requiring frequent changes in speed and position. The LOS provides reasonably fluid
136 flow, but friction and interaction between pedestrians is likely.

137

138 LOS E: Pedestrian Space > 8-15 ft²/p, Flow Rate > 15-23 p/min/ft
139 At LOS E, virtually all pedestrians restrict their normal walking speed, frequently
140 adjusting their gait. At the lower range, forward movement is possible only by shuffling.
141 Space is not sufficient for passing slower pedestrians. Cross- or reverse-flow movements
142 are possible only with extreme difficulties. Design volumes approach the limit of
143 walkway capacity, with stoppages and interruptions to flow.
144
145 LOS F: Pedestrian Space = 8 ft²/p, Flow Rate varies p/min/ft
146 At LOS F, all walking speeds are severely restricted, and forward progress is made only
147 by shuffling. There is frequent unavoidable contact with other pedestrians. Cross-and
148 reverse-flow movements are virtually impossible. Flow is sporadic and unstable. Space is
149 more characteristic of queued pedestrians than of moving pedestrian streams.
150
151
152
153
154
155
156
157
158
159
160
161
162
163
164
165
166
167
168
169
170
171
172
173
174
175
176
177
178
179
180
181
182
183

184

185 **Community Board 4 - Sidewalk Amenities survey – November/December 2008**

186

187 Manhattan Community Board 4 performed two surveys, one of CB4 board members and
188 one of community members at large in CD4.

189

190 To the first question “Please rate these amenities in order of importance for the quality of
191 life in our community”, both the CD4 community and CB4 board members agreed on the
192 following rating:

193

194 Trees, Waste Baskets, and Bus Shelters were rated as the top three sidewalk amenities.

195 Planters, Benches and Bike Racks were ranked the next top amenities,

196 Sidewalk Cafes, Newsstands, and Bike Shelters were ranked below that.

197 The nine lowest ranked amenities were Storm Vestibules, Curb Cuts, Storefront

198 Extensions, Canopies, Pay Phones, Taxi Stands, Street Vendors, Info Kiosks, and

199 Newspaper Boxes.

200

201 To the second question “Please indicate the proper spacing for each amenity”
202 overwhelmingly, both the CD4 community and CB4 board members wanted to have :

203

204 1. Two or more Trees and at least two Planters and Waste Baskets per one side of an
205 avenue block (block)

206 2. Only one of each of the following per block: Canopies, Sidewalk Cafes, Bike Racks,
207 Benches, Storefront Extensions, and Storm Vestibules

208 3- Curb Cuts and Bus Shelters should be at every other block.

209 4- Pay Phones, Newspaper Boxes, Bike Shelters, Street Vendors, and Newsstands should
210 be at a spacing of no more than one every three blocks.

211 5- Fewer than one Info Kiosk or Taxi Stand should be placed at every three blocks.