

REVISIONING EAST FOURTH

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Background: Understanding the Street

The Big Ideas: Overall Summary of Main Themes, Ideas, Trends

Once home to German, Italian, and Yiddish theaters, East 4th Street, between Second Avenue and The Bowery, is the heart of the Off-Off Broadway scene. In the Winter of 2005, eight city-owned buildings were sold to the cultural groups on the block for \$8 and designated a Cultural District by Mayor Bloomberg, ushering in a new chapter in the cultural history of the block. Starr Whitehouse has been retained by the Fourth Arts Block, an association of over fifteen cultural groups on the block, and the Cooper Square Committee, a tenants' rights and community development organization, to develop a streetscape design for East Fourth Street.

The challenge of the streetscape design is to make the street even more of itself. In the case of East 4th Street, this means creating a streetscape design that fits both the block as a home—where the tenements have housed garment workers and, later, successful activists in the tenant's right movement—and a cutting edge theater district. To that end, we crafted a pre-design process designed principally to understand what East 4th Street means to the people that use it. Over the course of our research endeavors and public outreach activities, we've developed a portrait of a many layered block, which will serve, in turn, to influence the design. Several key ideas emerged:

- **Enclave in New York:**

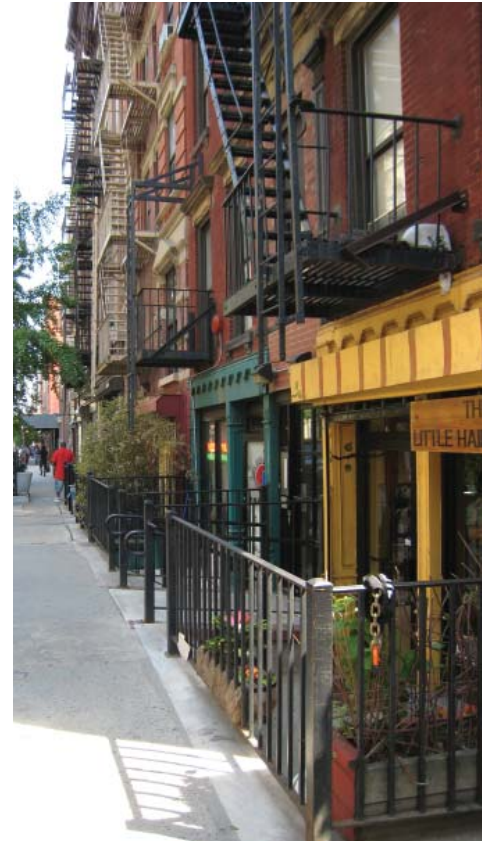
In large part because of the work of the Cooper Square Committee, the block has experienced relative stability. Shops have been able to stay throughout the years and families have lived on the block for multiple generations. On a first visit to East 4th Street, the longtime New Yorker is often delighted to find a piece of the old East Village preserved. This brings into question a difficult polemic between old and new. The streetscape project will need to strike the right balance, building off the block's much valued atmosphere.

- **Historic Arts District:**

East 4th Street's theater scene extends from the mid 19th century until the present day. Several of the buildings on the block were built, over a hundred years ago, as theaters and still hold theaters. Today, East 4th Street is a center of artistic innovation. The result of this is an aesthetic of collage, juxtaposing the individual styles of different theaters that, in many cases, have fostered an ad hoc style, drawing on unexpected and inexpensive materials, as expected of struggling arts groups.

- **A Mixed Use Neighborhood:**

East 4th Street has also always been a residential street. From Thursday night to Sunday afternoon, it transforms many times over, from box office, to a ballfield, to a picnic spot. East 4th Street must contain all these uses, respecting neighbors and theaters alike.



Who Lives Here and How It's Used:

Census Data and Community Profiles

East 4th Street is home to many people and activities. In order to understand all of the different ways that the street must perform, we sought to understand major user groups—artists, shop-owners, residents, and theater goers, in order to understand what they need.

Theater Community/Theater Goers

Theaters on the street range from the well established New York Theatre Workshop, to pioneers like La MaMa, to the emerging Spanish language theater Teatro Circulo. This diversity makes for a wide variety of audiences. They are New Yorkers who arrive from nearby neighborhoods on foot or by subway. There is some degree of synergy between the businesses on the street and the theater audiences. A trip to the theater sometimes includes a stop at an area restaurant but rarely occurs when the stores are still open. Youth arts programs bring participants and parents into local stores, including the Food Coop and Cuppa Cuppa. The theaters support a daytime population of performers and technicians creating a relatively steady influx of people on the block, in contrast to other strictly residential neighborhoods.



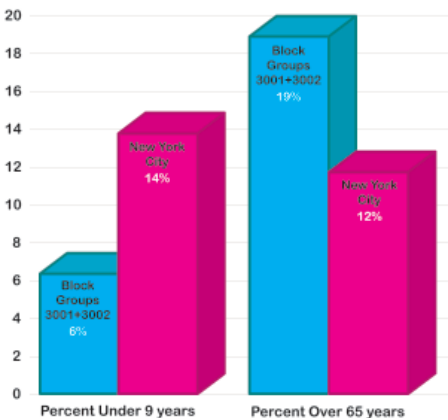
Residents

East 4th Street has benefited from relatively high stability. Although 94% of the housing units are rental, according to the 2000 Census Data, many of these remain rent stabilized as a result of work by the Cooper Square Committee. As a result, East 4th Street has been sheltered from the overwhelming trends of gentrification that have transformed large parts of Lower Manhattan. The census data reveals a story of a demographic enclave. East 4th Street is contained within two census block groups, 3001 and 3002, which extend from East 3rd Street to East 5th Street, from the Bowery to 2nd Avenue. The block group is the smallest geographic area in the 2000 Census and we used it as a proxy for East 4th Street. Looking at East 4th Street in comparison to Manhattan and the City as a whole, several interesting trends emerge. There is a smaller percentage of Caucasians, at 37% of the population, as compared to 54% in Manhattan and 45% in New York City. In terms of age, it is an older population. There is a smaller percentage of children under 9 years of age as compared to the city as a whole (6% versus 14%) and a larger population over 65 (19% versus 12% city wide).

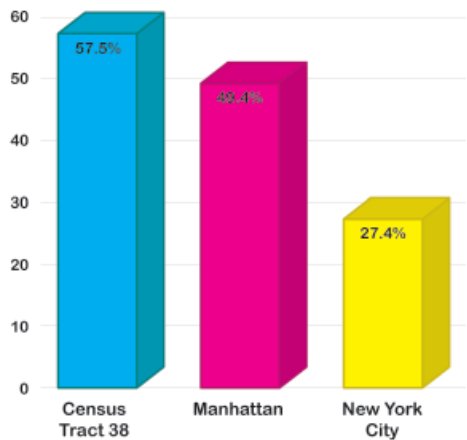
Looking at a larger geographic boundary of census tract 38—bordered by East 9th Street to the north, East 3rd Street to the south, 1st Avenue to the east and Bowery and 3rd Avenue to the west—several other trends emerge. The residents of East 4th Street and the neighbors in their census tract make less than their Manhattan neighbors, with a median and mean household income approaching the greater New York City numbers. The mean income for census tract 38 is roughly about \$350 above the New York City mean, but is almost \$30,000 less than Manhattan’s. Seemingly contrarily, they also have a higher level of education. 57.5% of the population over 25 in Census Tract 38 has a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 48.4% in Manhattan and 27% in the whole of New York City.

One neighborhood characteristic inexpressible in the census but key to understanding the block is the degree to which this community is actively involved in local issues. The tradition of advocacy remains strong.

Age Group Comparisons: Blocks 3001+3002 vs New York City



Percent of Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher

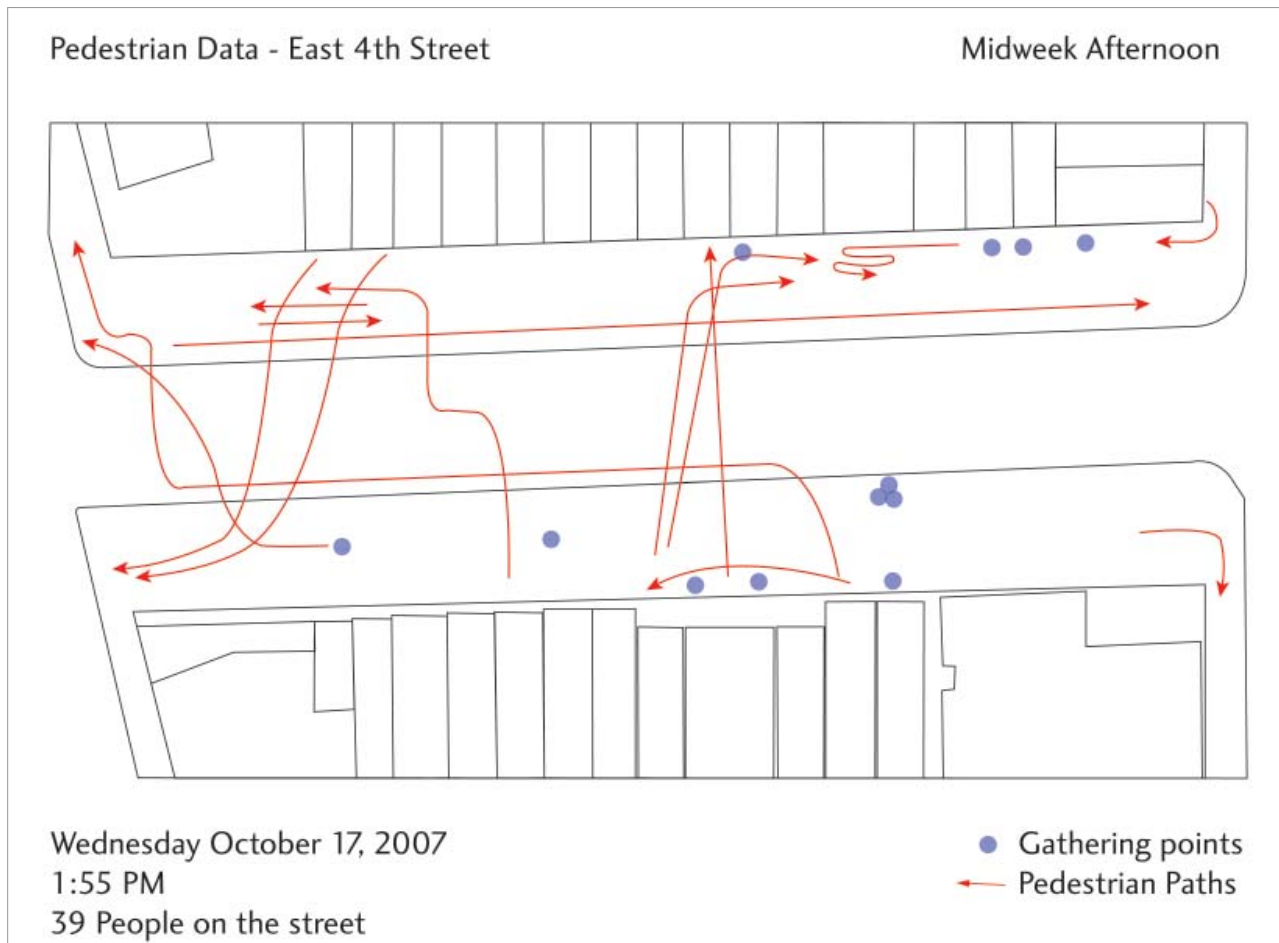


Shopowners

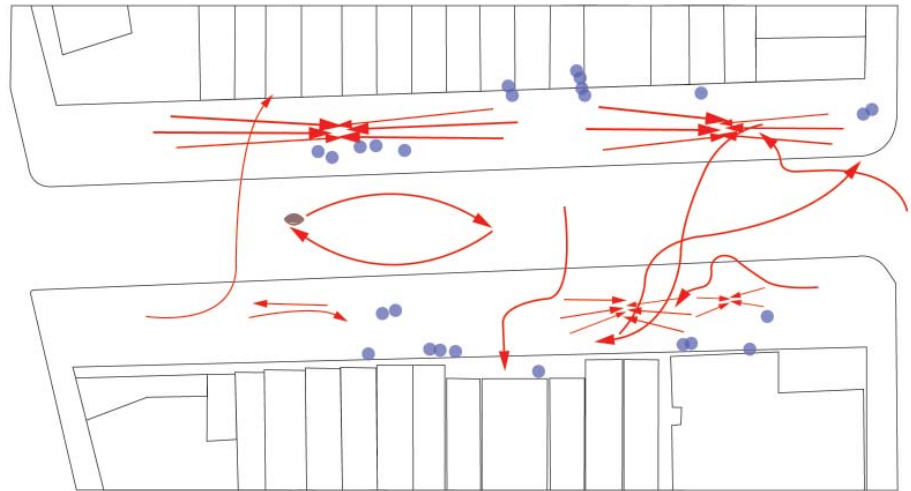
Under the management of the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association, a number of ground floor commercial units can be rented out at below market rate. As a result, East 4th Street has been able to better control its business mix in part safeguarding an atmosphere reminiscent of an older East Village. There are no franchises; store owners work in their shops; signs are hand made. In terms of the business mix, there are stores for recreational shopping (small boutiques, including a jewelry store, a custom lingerie store, and a novelty store); functional shopping (two bodegas, Food Co-op, Copy Shop); and several specialty stores, including a leather worker, exotic instrument store, moving supplies, old prints. There are a few restaurants and several bars (Phebe's and KGB), which are perceived to be frequented by New York University students, as well as a coffee shop, which is a popular meeting place for the theater community and area residents. In our meetings with shopowners, they tended to be actively involved owners.

Maps

Our team compiled a series of maps that document the rhythm of the day and the week. With the help of the Cooper Square Committee and FAB, we observed movement of the street at a number of key moments in the week—theater nights, Sunday afternoons, the morning—and developed a series of snapshots of the district at different times. The maps document different uses, different places that people stand, sit, and patterns of movement that will influence our design.

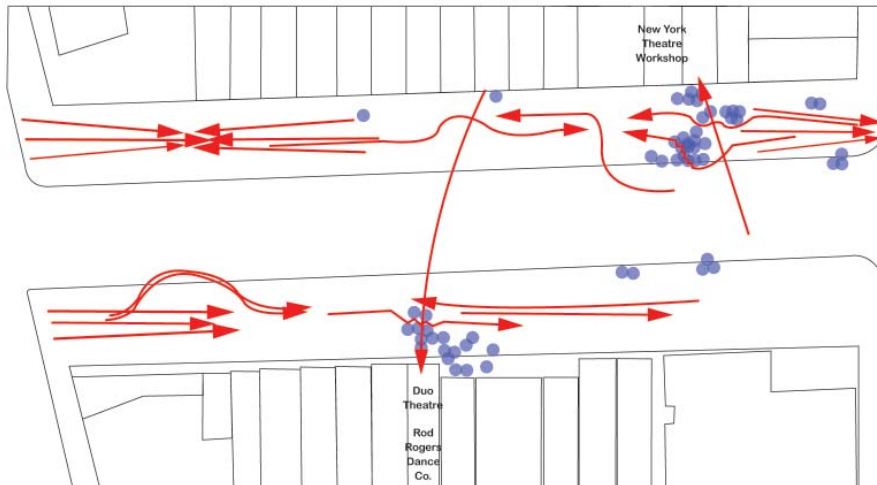


Pedestrian Data - East 4th Street



Sunday November 18, 2007
2:30 PM
40 People on the street

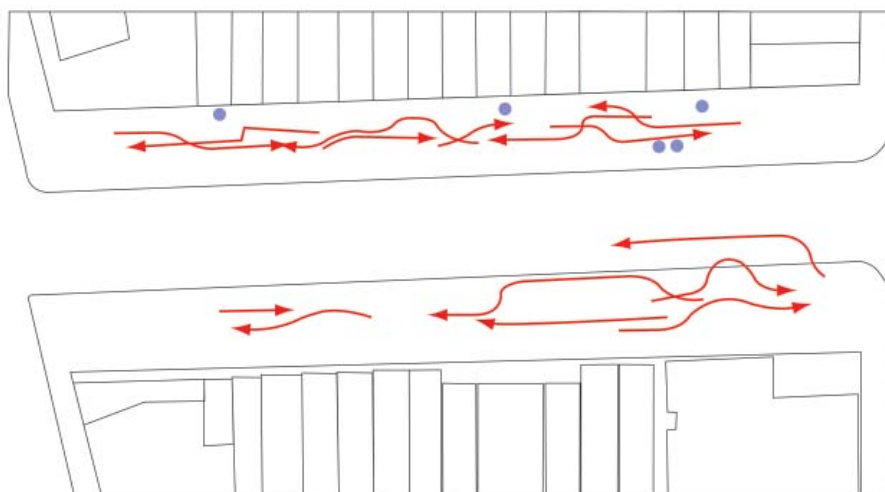
Pedestrian Data - East 4th Street



Saturday November 17, 2007
9:30 PM
63 People on the street

Pedestrian Data - East 4th Street

Midweek Evening



Tuesday November 17, 2007

6:30 PM

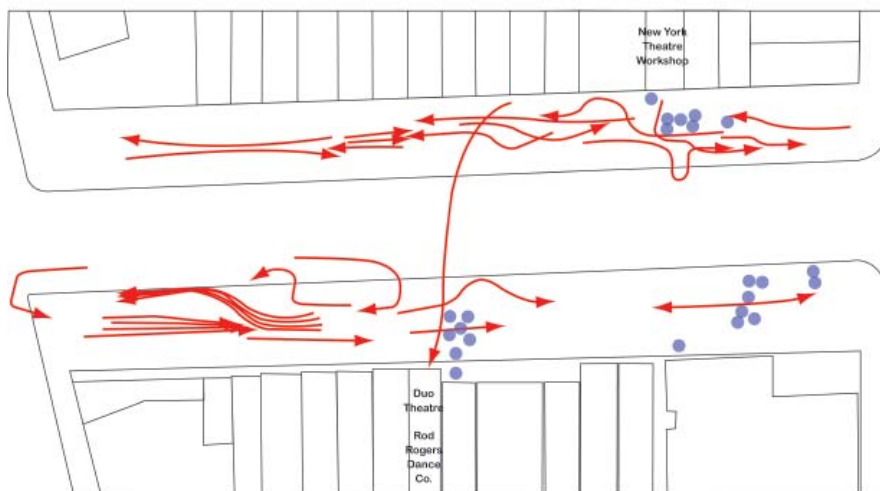
36 People on the street

● Gathering points

→ Pedestrian Paths

Pedestrian Data - East 4th Street

Midweek Theater Night



Thursday November 29, 2007

10:00 PM

68 People on the street

● Gathering points

→ Pedestrian Paths





History

The Bowery, East 4th Street's greater neighborhood, was one of the City's major arteries from the early 19th century on, running through residential neighborhoods to the seaport. The bank crisis of 1873 transformed the neighborhood into a place where the working class came to be entertained—at dime museums, freak shows—and to drink. At that time, the Bowery Neighborhood was the center of New York's vaudeville scene. It is believed that the theater that currently houses Duo Theatre on East 4th Street and the Bouwerie Lane Theater on the Bowery and East 3rd were constructed in this period. Many of the area's theaters reflected the neighborhood's changes, originally built for an upper class clientele and then later focusing on German, Yiddish, Italian, and Chinese audiences, following the waves of new immigrants to New York. On East 4th Street, Turin Hall, 66 East 4th Street, was a gathering place for the German immigrant community as well as New York's first Yiddish theater. Just next door, the Labor Lyceum was a meeting place for early union advocates and the birthplace of the international Ladies Garment Worker's Union.

East 4th Street retained its cultural, political, and ethnic diversity through the 20th century. By the time Robert Moses began to examine the neighborhood, in the late 1950s, the block was home to over 300 families of different backgrounds, including Latino and Jewish, of which close to half had lived on the block for over 15 years. According to accounts during the street fair and focus groups, it was an active theater district during this period. But Robert Moses had other plans for the area. The City's urban renewal plan proposed tearing down 12 blocks from Delancey Street to 9th Street, from 2nd Avenue to the Bowery, and building middle income high rises on the cleared sites.

The neighborhood organized into the Cooper Square Committee, which fought the plan, offering instead an Alternate Plan for the area, in an early example of advocacy planning. After over 10 years of hard work, in 1970, the Cooper Square Committee's Alternate Plan was approved by the NYC Board of Estimate. Cooper Square's Alternate Plan called for staged demolition and relocation of residents to newly constructed housing on adjacent sites. However, the City's fiscal crisis and declines in Federal funding for low income housing led the Cooper Square Committee to create a Revised Plan in 1986 which called for renovating the tenement housing on East 3rd and 4th Streets. These plans became a reality when the Dinkins Administration signed an agreement with the Cooper Square Committee in 1990, pledging millions for renovation of the substandard tenement housing. Today, a dozen tenement buildings on East 4th Street, containing about 200 affordable renovated units, are owned and managed by the Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association.

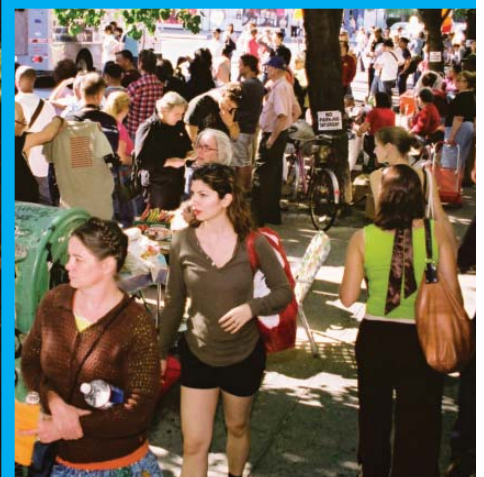
With regard to the commercial buildings on East 4th Street, the decline of manufacturing in the 1950s created opportunities for new uses for older buildings. La MaMa, a small experimental theater, led the way, securing a 30-day lease from the City for one of the empty buildings in 1961. Other neighborhoods arts groups followed suit. In several instances, the Cooper Square Committee helped broker leases for cultural groups with HPD. The 30 day leases were extended again and again, for stretches as long as 15-30 years and, during their tenure, arts groups took on the responsibility for the maintenance of the buildings, from the roofs to the boilers. Fourth Arts Block (FAB) was founded in 2001 by the cultural and community organizations on East 4th Street to preserve and advance the cultural district. The theaters acquired the rights to their buildings in October 2005 with tremendous support from local elected officials, ending a long period of legal uncertainty in their long term homes.

What People Think:

Street Fair

The FAB Festival presented our first opportunity to reach out to the broader community in order to better understand what people might want and not want in the streetscape project. We created three exercises, designed to foster open ended discussion and educate the public about the process to come. We provided materials so that participants could draw on a map of the block, showing areas of concern to them, things that they liked, and places with personal importance. We encouraged participants to take Polaroid photos of positive and negative things on the block, in order to better visualize their opinions and perceptions. Through these two exercises, we began to identify problem spots on the block, such as the crowding on the sidewalks in front of New York Theatre Workshop and the Kraine Theater before and after shows. More importantly, we began to understand how important the block is to the many people that use it. It is a street that people remember and love. We spoke to a woman whose first apartment, after her marriage, was on the block who told us about the richness of the theater community in the 1960s. We talked to a man who described hanging out in his friend's bookstore in the 1970s. We also distributed a survey and received responses from residents, visitors, and people who work on the street. There was an overwhelming consensus, in the surveys, that people like the street the way it is. While they did not want to see wholesale change, they did advocate for several specific changes including improvement to the façades and increased green on the street.







This used to be a cool 2nd hand bookstore: Chapter II.

It was owned by Gil Sherman.



I used to buy beer from here when I visited Gil.



Love the stairs



I Like the Building



IT'S TRASHED & BEAUTIFUL AT THE SAME TIME. I NOTICE IT EVERYTIME I WALK BY IT.

People took polaroids of things they liked on the street.

Fourth Arts Block (FAB)
and Cooper Square Committee,
 with consultants at STARR WHITEHOUSE
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS,
 are leading a Streetscape Design Program to improve
 the physical appearance of **East 4th Street**
 between the Bowery and 2nd Avenue. We want to
 make a streetscape that reflects the unique spirit of
East 4th Street. Over the next couple of
 months, we will be soliciting opinions and observa-
 tions which will help us make a design that really fits.
Look for more to come!

PLEASE CHECK OFF ALL THAT APPLY:

How often do you visit East Fourth Street?

- ☐ I live on the street ☐ Monthly
☐ Daily ☐ Yearly
☐ Weekly

On past visits, what was the main purpose of your visit?

- ☐ I live here ☐ I work here
☐ To attend cultural events ☐ Shopping
☐ Just passing through ☐ Restaurants
☐ Classes, rehearsals or training

What changes are the most important to you?
 (rank from 1-5 with 1 as the most important)

- More room for pedestrians on the sidewalk _____
 Improvements to Facades _____
 Less Loitering _____
 More Positive Activity on the Street _____
 Clearer Signage _____
 Decrease Car Traffic _____
 Improved Security _____
 Better Lighting _____
 More Plants and trees _____
 Less Plants and trees _____
 Cleaner _____
 Better Bike Parking _____
 I like it how it is! _____
 Other _____

PLEASE FINISH THIS SENTENCE:

When you say "East Fourth Street," I think...

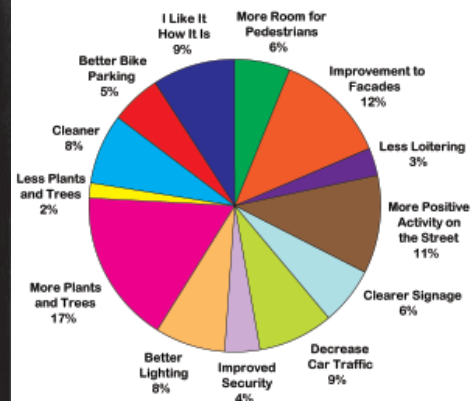
- ☐ Yes! I am interested in being involved in other public participation events for this project!

Contact Information (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Name: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

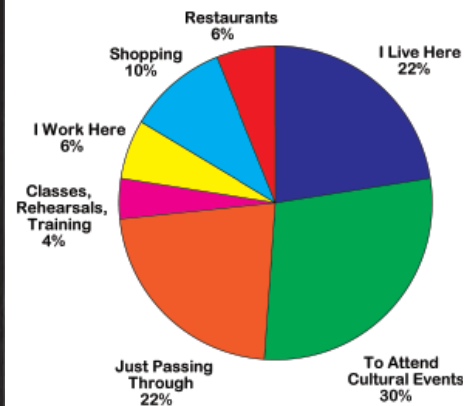
Thanks so much for participating in our Streetscape survey. Your input is very important to us. We hope you are happy with the results.

Importance of a Variety of Improvements



*Percent of people surveyed who desired this change

Activity on East 4th Street



*Based on surveys taken at the FAB Festival

We passed out surveys.

Focus Groups

The Starr Whitehouse team conducted interviews with key stakeholders to better understand their concerns and issues so as to inform the design process. We met separately with three key groups—shop owners, residents, and the theater community. We asked them all the same questions in an effort to elicit different perceptions and aspirations for the street.

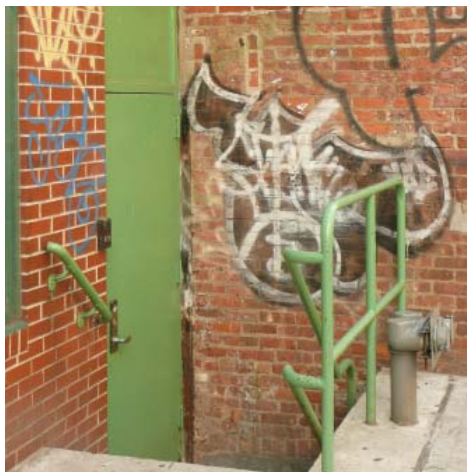
Description of the Street

We asked each group to describe the street, using all five senses. The theater group described an arbored street where people hang out during the day and audiences spill out of theaters. They described the smell of the blossoming trees in the spring and the sound of people talking. They particularly noted the originality of the facades. Negative descriptors included unpleasant sights, such as scaffolding and vandalism, and smells, including the garbage. Residents described a loud street, replete with the noises from fire trucks, ambulances, shouts from the bars at night, and morning construction. Sometimes, though, they said, you can hear the birds. They also described a street that can be overly crowded, difficult to maneuver as a pedestrian, and impossible to park on. Smells included garbage and urine but also blossoming trees. The shop owners described a street that changes throughout the day, with quiet in morning and drunk students at night.



Summary of Problems

Each group made a list of major problems on the block. To a large extent, the issues facing the different groups overlapped. All groups were concerned about speeding traffic and pedestrian congestion, the result of narrow sidewalks paired with oversized planters and bike parking up and down the street. All parties have a great concern with a sense of security at night. They feel threatened and bothered by some daytime and more late night activity on the street. They all said that this drinking and sometimes drug dealing takes place, in large part, beneath the scaffolding. Low levels of illumination aggravate the problem. Residents, in particular, spoke of the noise levels at night, which they sourced to bars. Parking and double parking concerned both the theater community and the residents. The issue of garbage bags on the street was of great concern to both the resident and shop owners group.



Summary of Existing and Future Uses

We asked the different groups to list the uses that the street should be designed to accommodate. Again, there was extensive overlap within the groups. All groups described an active street where walking, biking, window shopping, eating, and socializing with neighbors are possible. All groups wanted to see more street festivals and the residents wanted to see in particular neighborhood block parties. The theater group wanted to see more spill out from the storefronts and box office activity. Residents agreed that they enjoyed the energy from theater openings. The theater group wanted to see, above the current issues, more street theater and spontaneous happenings. Residents expressed a concern with the amount of disruption on the street, from festivals and planned events. There is also a need for loading and unloading. Very few theaters have loading access through the back and most need space to unload through the front door. Some stores require street side loading as well.

Summary of Aspirations

The participants were asked to imagine the street in 10 years, imagining both general changes, specific additions, and character. The groups had in common a number of general alterations. All groups are interested in seeing well planted, unobtrusive greenery; enhanced facades; good lighting at night; better pedestrian flow and more sidewalks space; public art opportunities; improved signage and orientation; and slowed down traffic. Every group mentioned that the historic landmarks should be celebrated and noted and there were numerous suggestions for various plaque systems. The residents and shop owners spoke of a wish to see improved garbage management. The theater community and shop owners wish to see more active retail. The residents and theater group wish to see improved parking management. The theater group specifically asked to see temporary installations with scaffolding, a bulletin board promoting theater events, and a moving sidewalk theater.

Analysis of Potential Conflicts between User Groups

In large part, the three user groups are in agreement about the kinds of changes and uses they want to see on East 4th Street. There are a couple of key areas of potential difference. The first is the issue of visual character or style. While residents spoke of historic look, with light fixtures, wrought iron, and restored iron cast doors, both the shop owner and theaters group described an eclectic character, where the design would provide an armature for great visual diversity. The theater group in particular spoke of the design aesthetic of the theaters on the street, where materials are reused in innovative ways and familiar textures are reinvented. There is also a possible differing interpretation of the extent and type of street activity. The theater groups imagined a block full of street theater, spontaneous and planned. The residents enjoy some activity on their street but they may tend towards a mix with less disruptions and more, small scale socializing between neighbors. This will have an impact on how additional sidewalk space is partitioned, if changes to sidewalk configuration are proposed. The extent to which residents, shop owners, and the theater community envision the same future for East 4th Street eases the task of designing the streetscape.

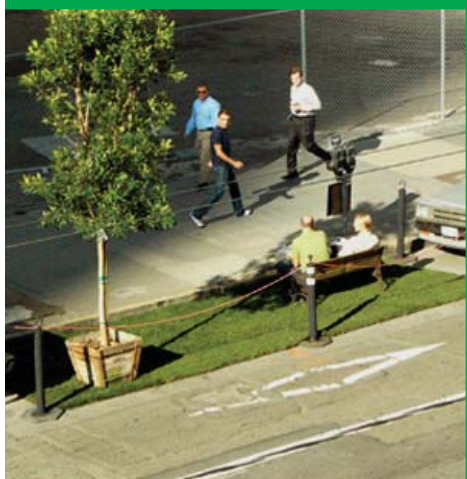
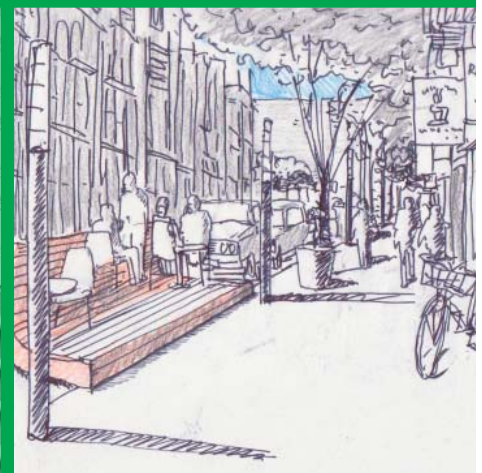
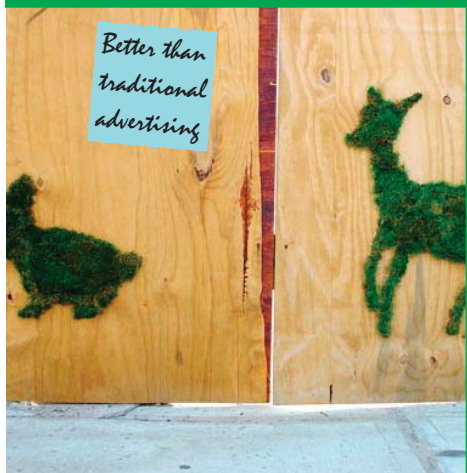
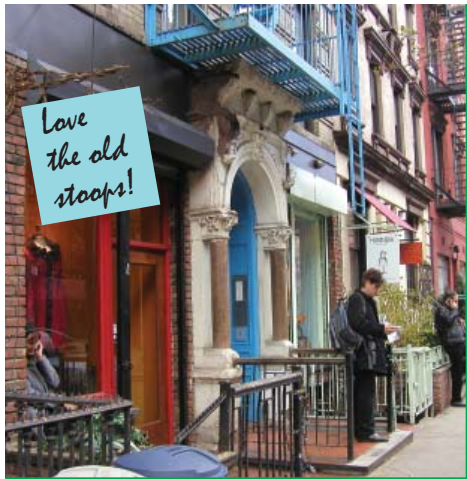
Initial Design Ideas

Through mapping exercises, focus groups, and surveys with residents, shop-owners, and the arts community, Starr Whitehouse documented the uses, current and desired, developing a portrait of a place that changes drastically over the course of the day and the week. We took these ideas and observations back to the community for a workshop, where we began to articulate ideas of block identity with design ideas. The workshop was opened to the public and was well attended, with over 20 participants. We began the workshop with a presentation, summarizing the different observations and ideas that had come out of previous work (Appendix A) and then we moved onto a series of exercises designed to move progressively deeper into the design process.

First Ideas: Mood Board

With our subconsultants, Sylvia Harris and Linnaea Tillett, we amassed over a hundred precedent images, depicting character, street theater events, and specific elements, including signage, façades, lighting, art installation, and planting. We also found images of East 4th Street historically and today. We posted these on the wall. Throughout the workshop, participants were encouraged to post comments on the images.





Rendering courtesy of Yoshihara McKee Architects

Precedent images and participants' comments



Thematic Concepts:

Working in teams with residents and theater affiliates together, we developed several design concepts based on themes that were revealed throughout the design process, including lighting, garbage management, scaffolding, traffic and sidewalk configuration, signage and information, and planting. Each theme was paired with a set of parameters, reflecting community restrictions on different interventions. These can be found in Appendix B. Every idea was expressed on an individual sheet of paper and later posted to a wall, grouped thematically.

Key elements include:

Planting

- The removal of current sidewalk planters
- The placement of additional street trees
- The development of vine planting along facades
- Using the opportunity to plant around tree bases
- Use of porous pavement under street trees.

Lighting

- The design of wall mounted sconces that could possibly integrate signage
- Lighting along building crowns
- Increased lighting at the street ends
- LED display in FAB storefront
- Projected lighting, both thematic and decorative, on the sidewalk

Signage and Wayfinding

- Gateway arches and banners at entrances to block
- Information Kiosk at the street end to mark a gateway
- Reuse of the JASA wall and other blank walls for art and information
- Agglomerated uniform banner with add-ons for different performances, organization, etc.
- A canopy armature that could hold seasonal displays, banners, and shade structures in the summer
- Interpreting the block's current culture & history through signage & art (plaques, banners, murals, video projections on sidewalk, etc.)

Scaffolding

- Lights underneath the scaffolding
- Use scaffolding as a canvas for community based art

Parking and Street Configuration

- Removal of parking meters at key areas
- Bump outs at the street end and in front of the New York Theatre Workshop and Kraine Theater
- Strategic curb bump outs to create a *woonerf*, or traffic calming, experience
- Parking management strategy, limiting loading to non-rush times
- Interesting patterns at crosswalks using street print
- Addition of bike racks

Garbage Management

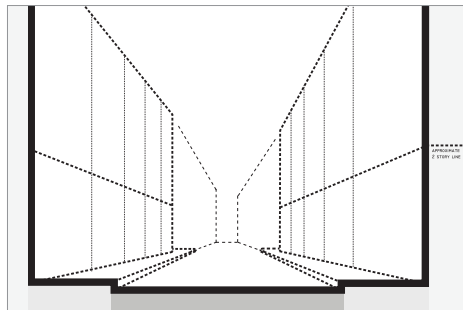
- Increased garbage pickups
- Improved basement space to alleviate street problem of garbage
- Get access to a compactor

Other

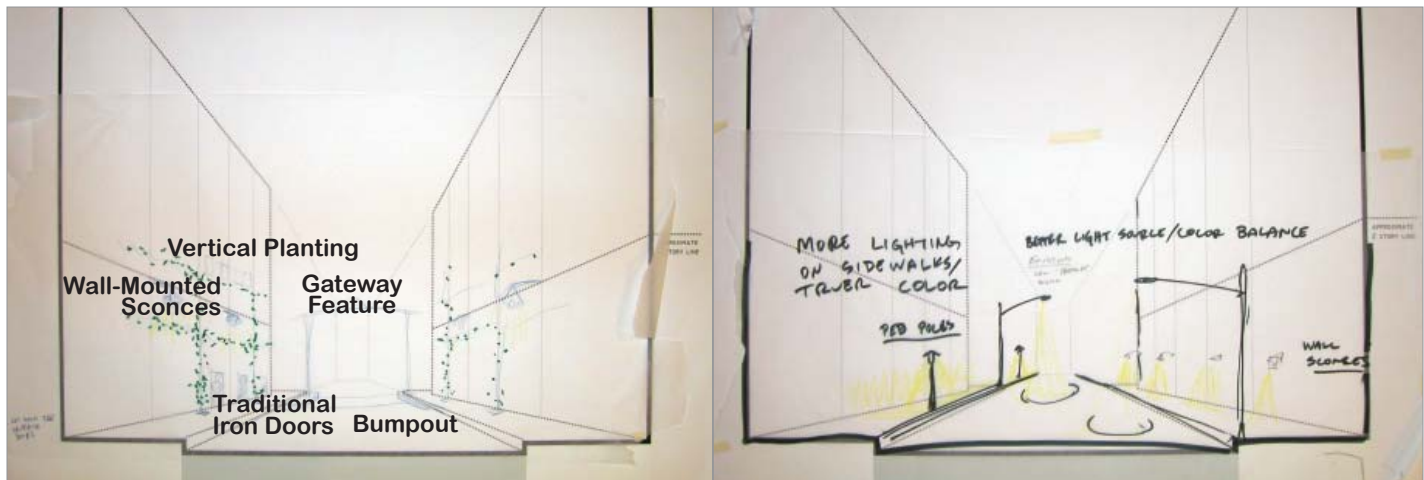
- Reintroduction of old iron doors

The Whole Picture: Design Concepts

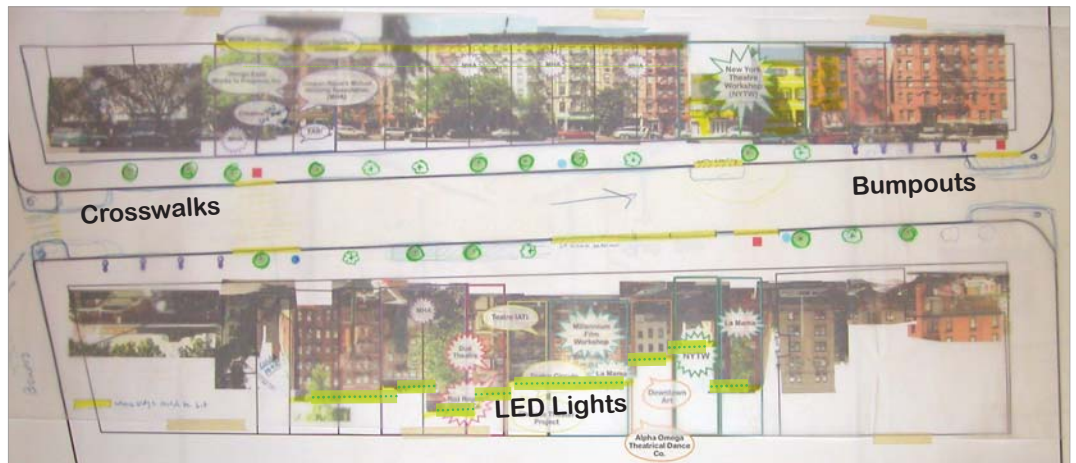
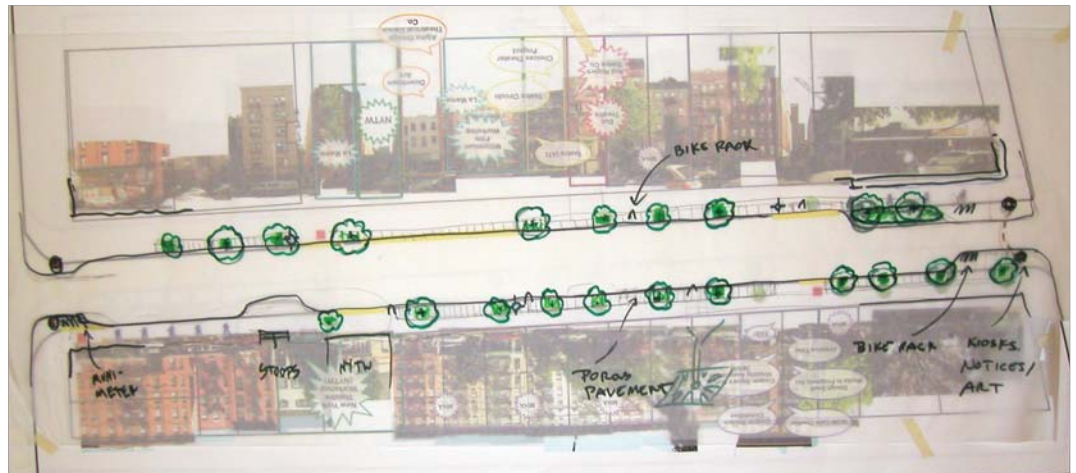
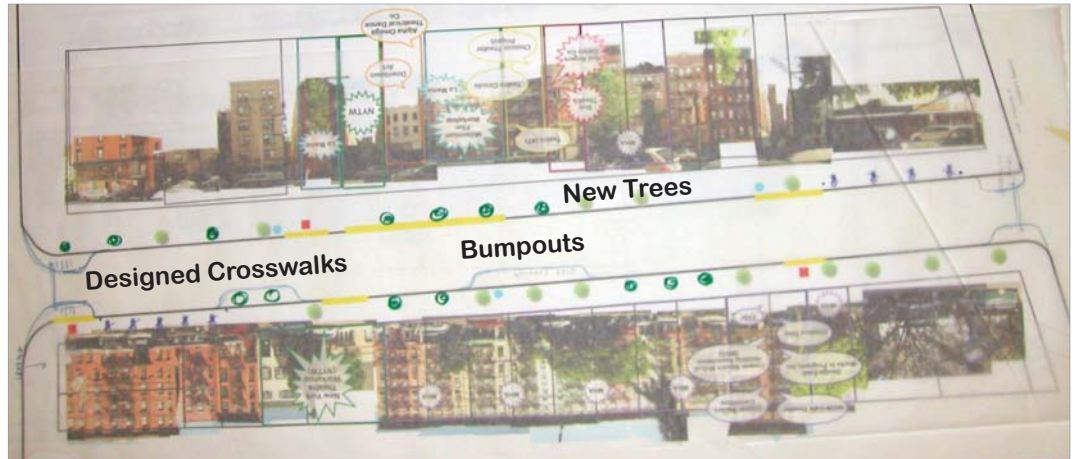
Next, the groups worked to bring together different elements into a whole plan. Each team developed a plan view of their main ideas. Key ideas included new street trees, location of bump outs and their program (bike racks, kiosks, but not benches), use of wall mounted lighting, original crosswalks out of street print.



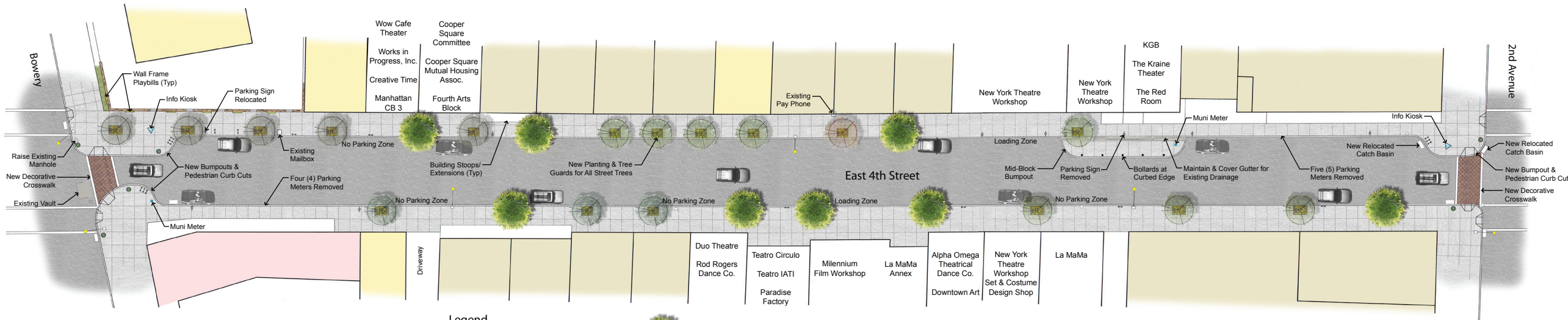
Base maps



Excerpts from Design Concepts



Streetscape Master Plan



STAR WHITEHOUSE
Landscape Architects
and Planners P.C.
80 Broad Street, Suite 1801
New York, New York 10004
212.487.5272, Fax 212.487.5273
www.starwhitehouse.com

Legend

- Mixed Use - Ground Floor Commercial/Residential
- Residential
- Commercial



Proposed New Street Tree

Bike Rack

Trash Receptacle

Existing Light/Signal Pole

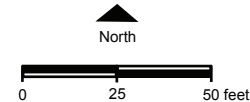


Existing Parking Sign

Existing Fire Hydrant

Existing Manhole

Catch Basin



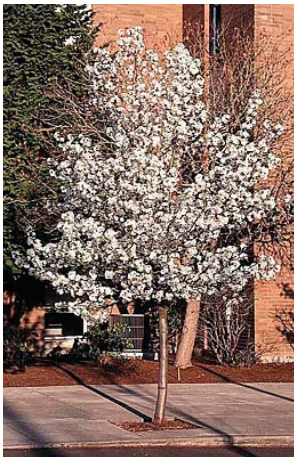
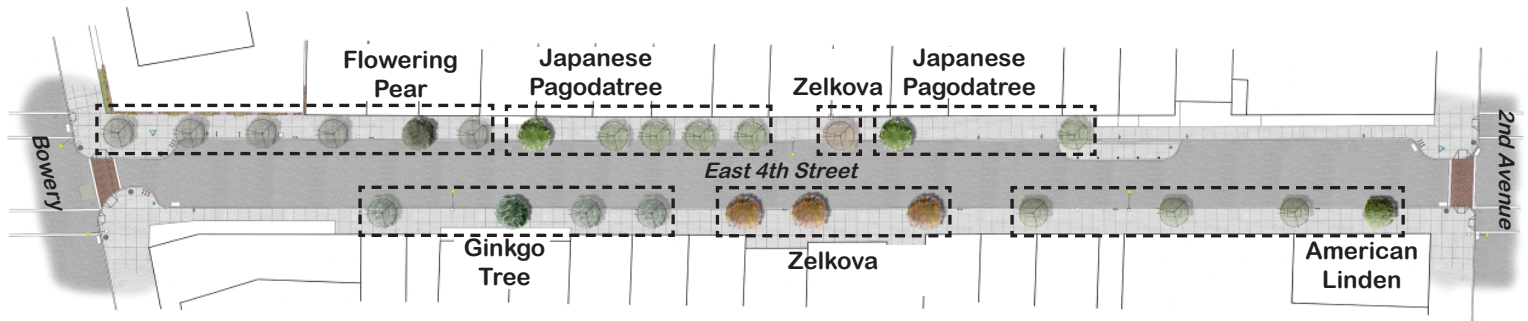
East 4th Street Streetscape Master Plan

Planting:

There are opportunities to further “green up” East 4th Street through new street tree plantings and possible vine plantings up and along facades of buildings.

Street Trees

There are currently five different species of trees on the block, pretty well grouped by species. Based on spacing needs and requirements, eight new street trees are possible. Supplementing the existing species groups will enhance the variety of street trees currently on the block.



Flowering Pear
Pyrus calleryana



Ginkgo Tree
Ginkgo biloba



Japanese Pagodatree
Sophora japonica



Zelkova
Zelkova serrata



American Linden
Tilia americana

Street Tree Pits

Each street tree, existing and new, needs some sort of tree pit treatment. With sidewalks on East 4th Street already in need of more space for comfortable pedestrian movement, standard NYC Parks & Recreation granite paver blocks (bottom left) will provide a flush and pervious treatment that will protect tree roots and foster growth, while minimizing additional sidewalk obstructions.

There are also opportunities to consolidate, lengthen and enlarge tree pits (bottom right) as new trees are planted or with existing trees already closely spaced together. This would increase tree pit size, soil volumes, and ultimately, the tree's chances for long term survival.

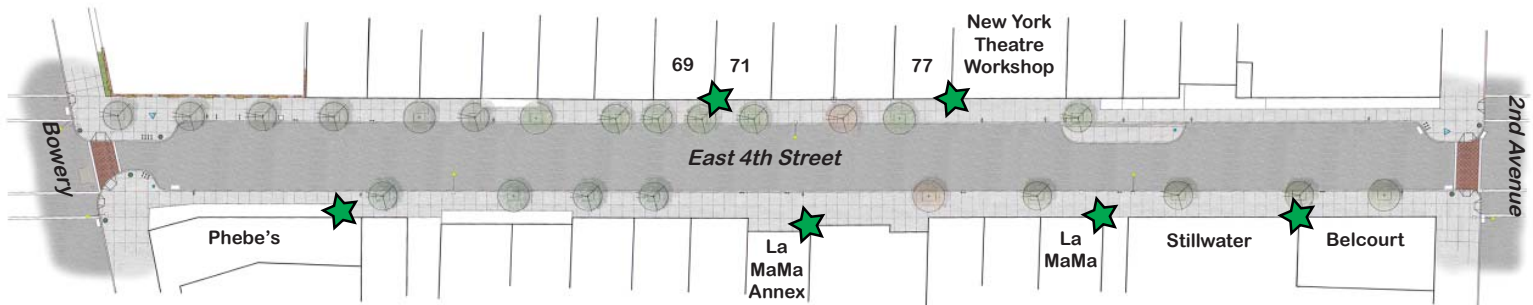
The tall, existing and unique tree guards on the block (right) can remain, with granite paver blocks retrofitted, until the trees outgrow them.



Vine Plantings

Several spots along East 4th Street present opportunities for vine plantings to climb up building facades and add visual interest to the block's architecture. This would require a sidewalk cutout up against the building and be planted & maintained by a private entity, i.e. residents, business/building owners, etc..

Possible climbing vines that could be used are English Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans*) and Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*).



Lighting:

Lighting on this portion of East 4th Street is generally sufficient in terms of light levels. The lighting, however, does not fully showcase the wonderful architecture, businesses, cultural groups and street itself as an arts block.

Residential

A sleeker wall mounted sconce to update existing sconces and flood lights at residential entries will continue to provide the feeling of safety at night for residents, while subtly unifying light quality and reducing the bulkiness/clutter on facades.



Existing wall mounted lighting on residential buildings.



Sample Sconce

Street Lighting

There are three existing street light poles on the block, which are all standard steel poles with “cobra head” luminaires.

An upgrade to a more decorative style pole can help to improve the image of the block, but will require more poles with closer spacing to maintain light levels equivalent to the existing cobra head fixtures. Adding new poles involve not only the cost of the fixtures, but also subsurface work for electrical distribution and foundations. For these reasons, new decorative poles are recommended as a longer term design intervention requiring additional analysis and funding partnerships with public agencies.

In the immediate term, retrofitting electrical plug-ins to the existing light poles will better support outdoor events and activities, while improving building mounted lighting will better highlight and focus attention to the pedestrian realm: the doorways, shops, and arts & cultural institutions.



NYCDOT “Bishop’s Crook” Lamppost*
Shown with decorative
teardrop luminaire



NYCDOT Type “F” Lamppost*
Shown with decorative teardrop
luminaire

* Decorative pole selections
shall be revisited with release of
new Fall 2008 NYCDOT Lighting
Catalogue

Signage & Wayfinding:

As the East 4th Street Cultural District, signage & wayfinding has a real power to further brand the district and highlight the unique businesses and dozen-plus diverse arts groups on the block between Bowery and 2nd Ave.

Banners

Banners are a very visual way to start defining and unifying a district. Whether on new decorative street light poles or the existing “cobra heads,” banners on the three street light poles within the block, and on the two poles at either ends of the block (the gateways), will provide the visual cues that this East 4th Street block is in fact a cultural and arts district. Rethinking the design of the district banners will further help define the brand of the district.



Existing District Banner



Information Kiosk

Information kiosks provide information in terms of direction and events, but can similarly be a marker that defines a gateway into a district or destination.

Kiosks at either end of East 4th Street (at Bowery and 2nd Ave.), would help define the block, and its gateways, as a destination with unique businesses, shops, bars & restaurants, theaters & arts groups. Something thin and sleek (to not obstruct pedestrian movement and sightlines) and illuminated (for nighttime use) are ideal.



Poster Light Boxes / Playbills

There are opportunities for the numerous performance venues on the block to promote their events and performances beyond their front doors.

One opportunity is the wall that defines the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA) housing complex at the northwest corner of East 4th Street and the Bowery. Outdoor light boxes can be put up on the wall to create some visual interest, define the west end gateway and promote happenings on the block with rotating playbills & event/performance announcements.



Existing JASA wall



Gateway Arches

An idea that came up in the community workshop was an arch structure that could span over East 4th Street to define its gateways at Bowery and 2nd Ave. Being a relatively narrow street with corners in need of more sidewalk space, physical access and sightlines should be taken into account in regards to the nature of the structure and how it meets the ground.



A sculptural and artistic archway can become an icon for the block and district as a whole.



A more simple and flexible structure can allow for rotating and seasonal signage, banners, event announcements, lighting & public art displays.



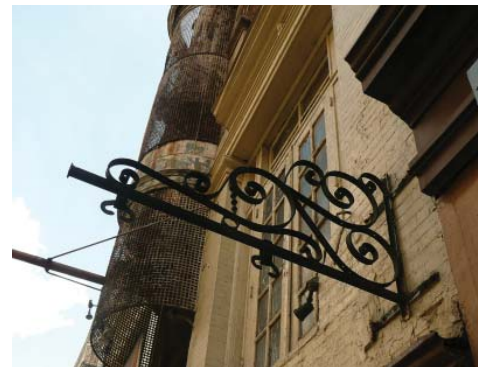
Spanning banners, flags and other fabrics in an artistic way across the street can be an effective alternative to a fixed structure that still defines a gateway.

Signage Components

The block is host to a unique variety of uses - businesses, shops, theaters, bars & restaurants - indicative of the East Village's sense of place. Signage for these uses share this uniqueness and variety.

While the existing eclecticism is something to be celebrated and maintained, a series of understated supplementary signage components will offer a subtle unification among the variety of uses and their respective signage.

A combination of very simple and straightforward brackets with a more ornate one can start to be one of those subtle ties along the block.



There is precedent on the block of more ornate wrought iron work.



Triangle Ball Bracket



Universal Straight Arm Bracket



Triangle Scroll Bracket

Decorative Crosswalks

Better demarcating crosswalks with a decorative treatment creates the visual cue of a more pedestrian-friendly environment. It subsequently helps to improve overall pedestrian safety, calm vehicular traffic, and define gateways in and out of a block or district.



DuraTherm is an example of a durable decorative asphalt treatment that has been used to better demarcate pedestrian crosswalks.

Public Art on Buildings, Scaffolding:

With so much arts & culture on the block, public art seems like a natural fit. A few untapped resources for public art are the building surfaces themselves and scaffolding, which seems to be a constant reality on any block in NYC.

Murals on Buildings

There are areas on several of the buildings where murals could add a splash of color and visual interest to an otherwise blank and unused wall. Two of these conditions are on the sides of buildings that are exposed where the adjacent building has a deeper setback.



Mural Opportunities Along East 4th Street



Mural Example

Scaffolding

Scaffolding is ubiquitous in the city, and no less susceptible to East 4th Street. Scaffolding simply does not need to be an eye sore.

Working with building owners when scaffolding is planned, public art can be commissioned or used as a vehicle to market and promote the district.



Scrim can provide a reusable splash of color and visual interest that also brands the district.



A more individual artistic expression can become a great temporary public art piece.

Arts & Cultural Buildings:

The number and close proximity of arts & cultural buildings on the block are the anchor to the district.

While the arts & cultural groups are wide ranging and eclectic in programmatic and physical aesthetic, there are both bold and subtle ways to have them better related to one another. Again, balance is the key, as their respective individuality is something that should be maintained and celebrated.

Signage/Banners

Each building has a variety of signage and ways they promote their events: playbills in light boxes, banners, sandwich boards.

Further exploration how to enhance or better individual signage could be improved through a series of one-on-one design workshops with each arts & cultural group.

Design workshops could similarly develop custom and individualized banners that uniquely feature each cultural group as well as the greater cultural district they are a part of.



Millennium Film Workshop and Teatro IATI hang the existing district banner on their facades.



New York Theatre Workshop and La MaMa Theatre have individualized signage that adds to the overall character of the block.

Lighting

Lighting on the arts & cultural buildings generally lack the light levels and quality of light that would better showcase their venues - architecture, signage, advertising. Much like their signage, lighting is an opportunity to further express their individuality and eclecticism among each other.

A lighting solution for the arts & cultural buildings would similarly need to be done on an individual basis, potentially in a series of one-on-one workshops with each individual group.



Combining lighting with signage and banners can really get the most of each component and ultimately something greater than the sum of its parts.



New York Theatre Workshop has lighting that hardly highlights its signage and promotion sandwich board.



Rod Rogers & Duo Multicultural Arts Center has wonderfully unique architecture in their exterior staircase that should be showcased thru lighting.

Lighting Projections

Another creative way to tie the arts and cultural groups together, especially at night, is to have each group be able to do lighted projections from their buildings onto the sidewalk. This could be a rotating combination of images promoting their group, events and the district itself.

With all the groups participating, this could be a unique display and experience walking down the block.



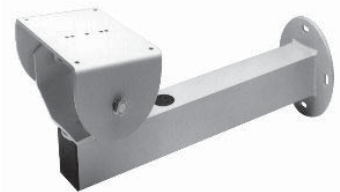
Sample Components



Outdoor Framing Projector



Wall Mount



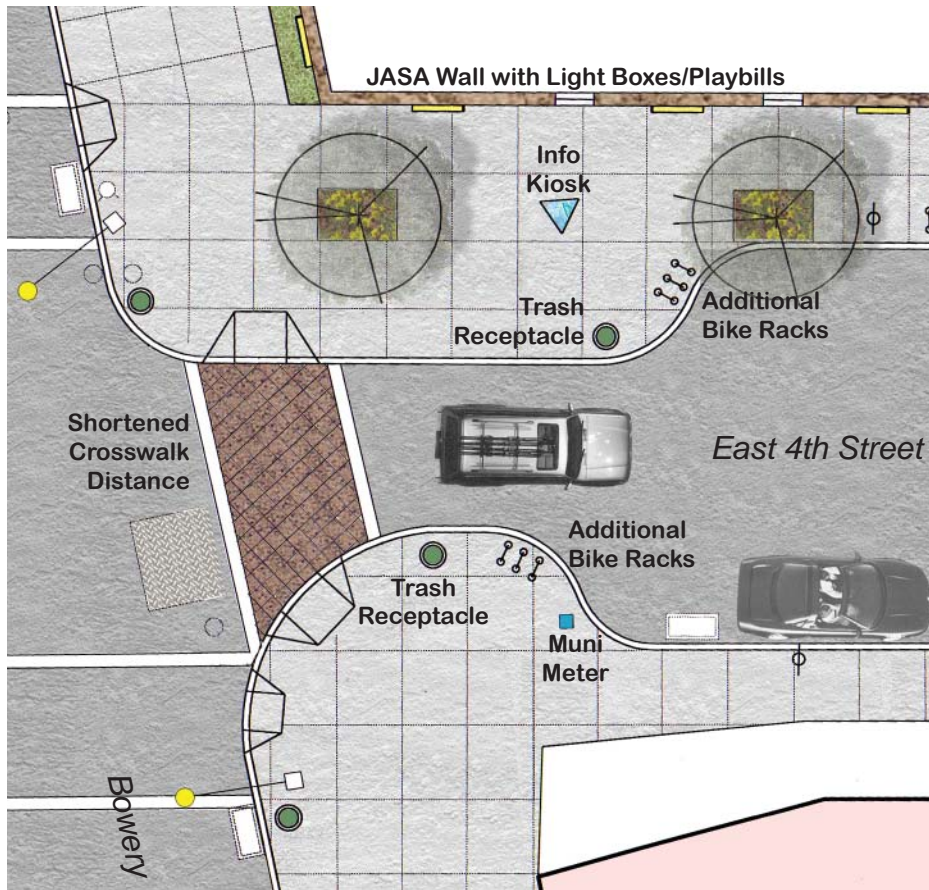
Pan/Tilt Head

Street Configuration:

The street itself on this block has potential to create a better pedestrian environment, offering more sidewalk space for amenities, vehicular traffic calming and more defined gateways that signal the entrance into a special district.

Corner Bumpouts

Bumpouts are sidewalk extensions that usually extend the width of an existing parking bay. Bumpouts occurring at corners serve several functions: add more sidewalk space for pedestrian sidewalk amenities, shorten crosswalk distances, and calm vehicular traffic by the visual cue of a narrowed street section.

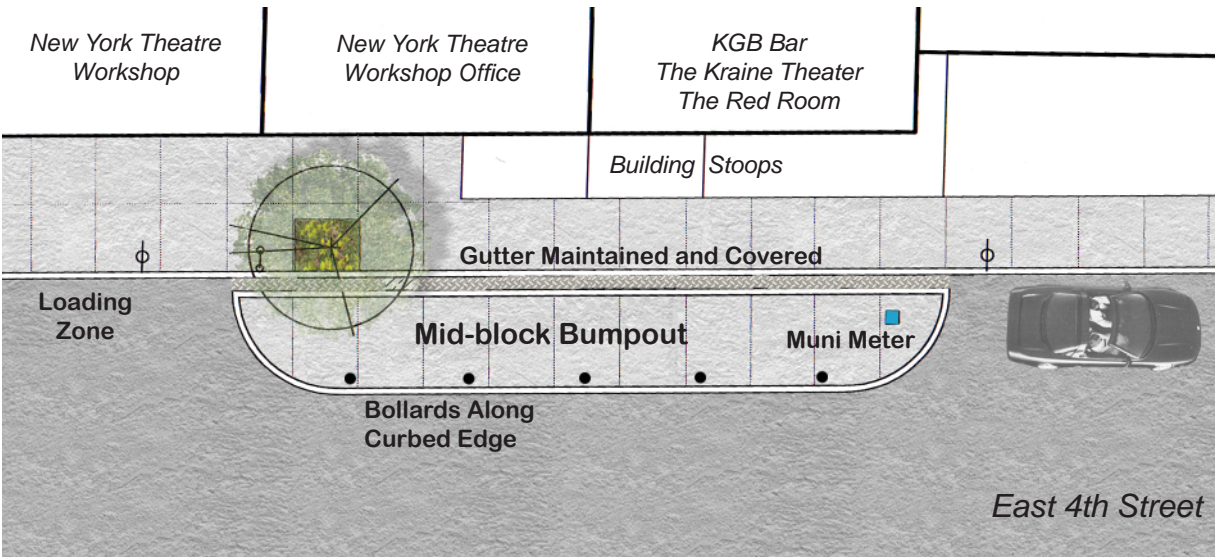


Mid-Block Bumpout

A mid-block bumpout gives the New York Theatre Workshop Office, KGB Bar, the Kraine Theater and the Red Room some additional sidewalk space, being they are the few performance-related buildings with the narrowest sidewalk condition on the block (because of protruding stoops).

Mid-block bumpouts function similar to a corner condition. In this situation, the bumpout provides additional space for pedestrian movement and gathering by performance-goers. While there is no pedestrian crossing to shorten, the bumpout will help in traffic calming as the pedestrian realm gets physically and visually closer to vehicular traffic.

To maintain drainage flow, the bumpout should be built to away from the existing curb with some sort of plate to cover the existing gutter.



Parking:

On-street parking is an important component to any street, but only one component of many. Striking a balance between parking needs and those of pedestrians is key. There are methods to make on-street parking more efficient, allowing for the pedestrian realm to be expanded.

Bike parking is equally important. Providing more infrastructure for bikes and bicyclists will encourage more bike riding and a more attractive alternative to driving.

Muni Meters

There are a total of nine metered parking spots, split into two zones on either side of the block.

Muni meters will reduce the clutter of individual parking meters on the sidewalk as these two zones are where the sidewalk pinches down to its narrowest.

Muni meters for each of these two zones will also ideally offset the official number of parking spots lost for corner and midblock bumpouts, as dedicated spaces are replaced by however many vehicles can fit in a zone.



Existing parking meters are at the narrowest sidewalk sections of the block.



Muni Meter

Bike Racks

There are many parked bikes on East 4th Street, although many are locked to street signage, light poles, trees or tree guards. Providing additional bike racks on the block can start to provide some order to bike parking while discouraging illegal bike parking.

Providing bike parking on new proposed bumpouts and existing areas with ample sidewalk space will also help to reduce some of the clutter within the block, areas where sidewalk space is already pinched.

The single hoop rack and ribbon rack (for wider sidewalk conditions at proposed bumpouts) are standard NYC DOT bike racks that are both functional and understated options for the block. The new NYC DOT bike rack design to be selected in the Fall of 2008 should be evaluated as an option for the block as well.



Additional bike racks will help to discourage illegal bike parking.



Single hoop racks (left) are more appropriate mid-block where sidewalk space is pinched, while ribbon racks (right) can be placed where there is more sidewalk space.

Before & After:



Northwest Corner Bumpout



Before & After:



Northwest Corner Bumpout - Nighttime



Before & After:



Arts & Cultural District



Implementation Strategy

A phased approach to implementing the Streetscape Master Plan works with funding sources and approval processes, and allows the master plan to grow naturally, informed by incremental steps. A phased implementation also identifies opportunities for immediate results. The removal of the concrete planters during this planning process has reduced the amount of sidewalk clutter and improved pedestrian walkability on the block.

Medium to longer term items outlined do not preclude the possibility of quicker development and realization. This strategy represents steps based on cost effectiveness and feasibility derived from the nature of existing conditions, complexity of realization, stakeholder input, and assumptions on funding.

As elements of the plan move forward, the continued participation of property owners, business owners, residents & other stakeholders is strongly recommended to build and maintain a consensus on the public environment of East Fourth Street.

Short Term Strategy:

Branding & District Definition

- Work with a graphic designer to develop an overall brand for the district. Elements can include, but not limited to: district logo, district color & font palette, banner design, information kiosk design, scrim design for scaffolding enhancement.
- Apply for banner permit through NYC DOT Banner Program for newly designed district banners on three existing cobra head light poles within block, and one on each cobra head pole at either end of East 4th Street (on Bowery and 2nd Ave).
<http://nyc.gov/html/dot/html/permits/banners.shtml>
- Work with the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA)

for use of their wall for outdoor light boxes to advertise happenings on the block. Investigate electricity source from neighboring MHA building.

- Working with business & property owners, develop information kiosk design to allow for immediate, temporary installation (at northwest corner & southeast corner). Relocate and provide necessary infrastructure (wiring for lighting) when proposed bumpouts are built per Streetscape Master Plan.
- Work and coordinate with building owners to explore decorative, public art treatments on scaffolding on existing and upcoming construction projects.
- Work with owners and residents of “mural opportunity” buildings regarding interest and maintenance of public art/mural on buildings.

Arts & Cultural Buildings

- Conduct a follow up workshop with the arts & cultural groups on the block regarding a building mounted banner/signage/lighting program that will provide better wayfinding and more cohesive demarcation for these entities, promoting both their institutions and the district.

Sidewalk Improvements

- Apply for recommended street trees through PlaNYC’s Million-TreesNYC initiative.
<http://www.milliontreesnyc.org>
- Utilize NYC Parks & Recreation standard granite block treatment for existing & future tree pits. Explore opportunities to consolidate,

lengthen and enlarge tree pits and granite block treatment as tree plantings are planned, approved and installed.

Bicycle Parking

- Install additional bike racks along block: single hoop and ribbon rack (space permitting, in respect to sidewalk vaults, protruding building elements, street trees, etc.). Evaluate new NYC DOT bike rack design to be selected in the Fall of 2008 for possible use on the block.

Follow-up Outreach

- Conduct follow up workshops with property owners, business owners and residents on the block regarding understory tree pit planting, vine planting and maintenance agreement, wall mounted sconce & signage component recommendations as a resource for future replacement and upgrade to buildings & businesses, and district-wide scaffolding decoration treatment.
- Follow up with NYC DOT regarding comprehensive design review meeting to expedite the review process and get project elements on their radar.

Medium-Long Term Strategy:

Street & Sidewalk Reconfiguration/Improvements

- Get survey of existing utilities and grading of street & sidewalk.
- Install bumpouts per Streetscape Master Plan, in following order of priority if need be (based on complexity of utility work & relocation

and NYC DOT input):

Northwest Corner (west side gateway)

Mid-Block (additional circulation & queuing for performance venues at sidewalk pinch)

Northeast & Southwest (requires relocation of catch basins)

- Install decorative crosswalks (DuraTherm) in conjunction with bumpout construction.

Branding & District Definition

- Apply for a revocable consent from NYC DOT to install two kiosks at northwest & southeast corners.
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/permits/revconif.shtml>
- Relocate information kiosks and provide necessary infrastructure (wiring for lighting), in conjunction with bumpouts construction, per Streetscape Master Plan.

Bicycle Parking

- Install additional bike racks on new bumpouts, per Streetscape Master Plan.

Street Lighting

- Replace existing cobra head light poles on block with new decorative street light poles.

* Muni Meters will be replacing individually metered stalls city-wide.

Appendix A

Parameters:

Lighting Parameters:

1. Street lights must be dot standard.
2. Lighting attached to buildings requires only permission of the owner.
3. Limit light that reaches upper residential areas.

Planting Parameters:

1. Planters have to be within 18" of storefront.
2. Street trees may be added.
3. Maintain ample pedestrian space.

Scaffolding Parameters:

1. It needs to be structurally functional.
2. It's best if it works within a standard kit of parts.

Signage Parameters:

1. Each business gets one sign.
2. Double-faced sign cannot project over sidewalk more than 18".
3. Single-faced sign cannot project over sidewalk more than 12".
4. A sign can be 5 times the linear length of a street front in square footage, but may not exceed 500 sq ft.
5. The top of a sign cannot be more than 40' above street grade.
6. If over a door, an awning can project 5'.
7. If over a store front, an awning may project 8'.
8. Temporary signs are a whole different ballgame.

Temporary Events Structures Parameters:

1. It needs to be easy to put away.

Traffic Parameters:

1. It is possible to widen the sidewalk
2. It is not possible to entirely close the street.
3. Special paving can be used on sidewalks, but all building owners must be on board
4. It is hard to use special paving on the road bed
5. People like their parking

Appendix B

Resources:

Street Trees

<http://www.milliontreesnyc.org>

Tree Guards

http://www.treesny.com/trees_pitguards.htm

Lighting Sconces

<http://www.sitelighting.com/Products.cfm?Brand=gar&ProLine=Scon&Style=111>

NYC DOT Street Lighting Catalogue

<http://nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/streelightingcat.pdf>

Outdoor Light Boxes

<http://www.displays2go.com/product.t5.asp?ID=7236>

<http://www.conventiondisplays.com/lightboxpictures/view.nhtml?profile=lightboxpictures&UID=29>

<http://www.blueriverdigital.com/lightboxes/weatherlyte-econo/>

<http://www.blueriverdigital.com/lightboxes/weatherlyte-premium/>

Signage Components

<http://www.hooksandlattice.com/all-sign-brackets.html>

http://site.hooksandlattice.com/Bracket_Cat_2007.pdf

Decorative Crosswalks

<http://www.integratedpaving.com/products/duratherm/>

Banner Hardware

<http://www.hooksandlattice.com/wall-mounted-banners.html>

Light Projector & Hardware

<http://mail.altmanltg.com/publicsynergy/docs/BLItemDossier.asp?Item=ODEC%2D1535%2DBK&PLID=&Country=US>

<http://mail.altmanltg.com/publicsynergy/docs/BLItemDossier.asp?Item=ODEC%2DHDWM&PLID=&Country=US>

<http://mail.altmanltg.com/publicsynergy/docs/BLItemDossier.asp?Item=ODEC%2DPTH%2DBK&PLID=&Country=US>

Muni Meters

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/motorist/meterpark.shtml>

Bike Racks

<http://home2.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/bicyclists/bikerack.shtml>

Credits and Thanks

Streetscape design led by
Cooper Square Committee and Fourth Arts Block
Design by Starr Whitehouse

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Alpha Omega Theatrical Dance	Duo Theatre	New York Theatre
Community Board #3	Epy	Workshop
Community Word Project	Fourth Street Co-Op	Pageant Print Shop
Cooper Square Committee	Hannah Clark	Random Accessories
Cooper Square Mutual Housing Association	HorseTrade Theater Group	Rod Rodgers Dance Company
Creative Time	La MaMa ETC	Teatro Circulo
Cuppa Cuppa	Manhattan Borough President's Office	Teatro IATI
Downtown Art	Millennium Film Workshop	WOW Café Theatre

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