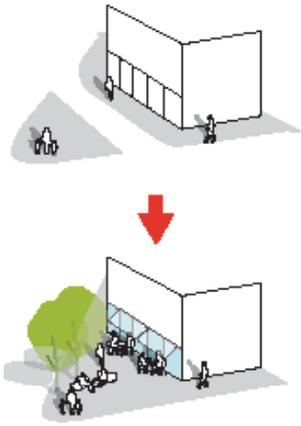


# NYC Plaza Program Guidelines



# Introduction



Transforming underutilized streets and refuge islands into pedestrian plazas.

Credit: Gehl Architects

The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) is proud to launch round two of the NYC Plaza Program (Plaza Program). The new initiative will create or enhance an existing neighborhood plaza in every community in the City by transforming underused streets into compelling, accessible public spaces and walkable destinations. A "plaza" is considered to be an area located fully within the public right of way, which may vary in size and shape, that is designed for pedestrian use, generally incorporating seating, decorative paving, trees, appropriate lighting, and public art. The Plaza Program is one part of the City's long-term plan: PlaNYC 2030 and aims to provide all New Yorkers with quality open space within a 10-minute walk.

Through this innovative, new program, eligible not-for-profit organizations will apply to DOT to propose a site location for the design and construction of a new pedestrian plaza. After reviewing and evaluating submitted applications, DOT will select appropriate sites and will design and construct new plazas each year.

DOT will work with the selected not-for-profit organizations to establish long-term, formal partnerships for each plaza. These Management Partners (Partners) will eventually take on daily operation, maintenance and management of the permanent public plazas, once they are built.

After sites have been selected, DOT and its Partner will hold a public visioning workshop to develop a conceptual design that is appropriate to the scale and character of the neighborhood. Public visioning provides the public an opportunity to make suggestions and provide design comments to ensure that many ideas have been considered. A professional team of landscape architects will then base their plans on the conceptual design. The Partners will be involved throughout the design process. Once plazas are built, Partners will be responsible for regular maintenance, management, and programming of the plazas so they remain not only clean, safe, and attractive but also successful, active and well-used public spaces.

By applying to the Plaza Program, the applicant is requesting:

- 1** to have City capital funds invested in their community in the form of a pedestrian plaza,
- 2** to be involved in the design process, and
- 3** to maintain, manage, program and operate the plaza once construction is complete and an agreement is signed.

# Requirements

## ORGANIZATIONAL CRITERIA

### **Applicants must be:**

- Not-for-profit organizations operating in any of the five boroughs of New York City;
- Incorporated in New York State and compliant with annual State and Federal filing requirements for not-for-profit organizations;
- Certified tax exempt under Internal Revenue Service Code Section 501(c); and
- Located near the geographical target area of the proposed plaza

*Should the applicant not have 501(c) status, the organization may partner with another sponsor that complies with the eligibility and legal requirements mentioned above.*

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

### **Based on its Fiscal Year 2008 budget, the organization must provide the following financial documentation:**

- Budgets under \$25,000: most current Financial Statement (signed by Treasurer)
- Budgets \$25,000 or over: most current IRS 990
- Budgets \$100,000 or over but less than \$250,000: most current IRS 990 and Independent Accountant's Review Report
- Budgets \$250,000 or over: most current IRS 990 and Audited Financial Statements.

*In some instances, DOT may request audited financial statements from organizations with lesser budgets. Any organization that can claim exemption from the required financial documentation must submit written proof of such with their application.*

## SUPPORT

The applicant must demonstrate local support for the proposed plaza. Applicants must provide letters of support from key community stakeholders, which may include nearby institutions (such as churches or schools), elected officials, property and business owners, other nonprofit groups, and neighborhood or block associations. Community Board involvement is strongly encouraged. DOT expects at least five (5) letters of support.

# Application Process

DOT will consider only one application per organization. Any organization interested in applying to the Plaza Program must submit an application to DOT. Applications can be downloaded at [www.nyc.gov/plazas](http://www.nyc.gov/plazas). **All applications must be postmarked by Tuesday, June 30, 2009.** Applications may be submitted by e-mail or post mail; e-mail submissions are preferred. Post submissions should be mailed to: **NYC Plaza Program, NYC DOT, 40 Worth Street, Rm. 1029, New York, NY 10013**. Email submissions should be addressed to: **plazas@dot.nyc.gov**. All applications will be subject to a completeness review and organizations will be sent confirmation of receipt of their applications as soon as it has been processed. Organizations may be required to provide additional information after the original application has been submitted. Applicants are encouraged to contact DOT with any questions well in advance of the deadline. For questions, please contact Vaidila Kungys by email at [plazas@dot.nyc.gov](mailto:plazas@dot.nyc.gov) or by phone: (212) 442-7154. After May 29, 2009: (212) 839-6693

## APPLICATION REVIEW & EVALUATION

Applications will be reviewed by a committee comprised of representatives from DOT. The panel will review and evaluate each application according to the following 100 point criteria: Open Space, Community Initiative, Site Context, Organizational & Maintenance Capacity, and Income Eligibility.

### **Open Space | 30 points**

The Plaza Program will prioritize sites that are in neighborhoods that currently lack open space. An open space to population ratio of less than 1.5 acres/thousand persons is considered to lack sufficient open space. To determine whether or not the proposed plaza is in an area that lacks open space (see Appendix A: Priority Map).

### **Community Initiative | 20 points**

Organizations that have demonstrated community initiative will be considered to be stronger partners for the Plaza Program. To demonstrate previous initiative, the organization should show existing plans that have been developed, such as 197a Plan. If the applicant has worked with another organization that has developed a community plan itself, this information should also be submitted. If such plans have not been developed, the applicant should demonstrate results or outcomes from a community workshop that focused on public space, open space, or neighborhood planning. If no visioning workshops have been conducted, the applicant's rating for Community Initiative will be determined on the strength of the required letters of support, including Community Board support, and whether or not the organization has secured other funds for the project.

# Application Process continued

## APPLICATION REVIEW & EVALUATION continued

Organizations that have secured other funds should state the source and amount of funding that has been secured.

### Site Context | 20 points

Applications will also be evaluated with regard to the surrounding neighborhood context so that nearby uses and the environment are compatible with the proposed plaza. This criterion will rate the appropriateness of the adjacent land uses, population density, and proximity to transit, historic sites, significant view corridors, and other, nearby open space; these are considered to be positive elements that contribute to successful public spaces. Proposed sites located near such positive elements are more likely to be successful plazas. For example, a proposed site located near a dense retail center with transit hub and significant historic buildings will be rated higher than a proposed site in a low-density residential area with no nearby commercial activity. In addition, sites located in Community Districts that **do not** have a recently constructed plaza or a plaza that is currently in design will be ranked higher than applications in Community Districts that already have a "Pipeline Plaza." Community Districts with Pipeline Plazas include the following: Manhattan 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12; Bronx 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; Brooklyn 1, 2, 3, 4; and Queens 4, 14. To view a map of Community Districts that have Pipeline Plazas, see Attachment A: Priority Map.

DUMBO, Brooklyn



BEFORE



AFTER

Credit: DOT

### Organizational & Maintenance Capacity | 20 points

Applicants should demonstrate that they have an active Board of Directors and an established staff. Organizations that demonstrate that they have the capacity to maintain the plazas and to bring programming activities or events to the sites will be evaluated more favorably. Programming may include concessions, art/craft fairs, farmers markets, limited sponsorship events, holiday celebrations, temporary art installations, and music & dancing. Organizations that currently do not have this capacity but would like to develop it are also encouraged to apply.

# Application Process continued

## APPLICATION REVIEW & EVALUATION continued

### **Income Eligibility (CDBG Eligibility) | 10 points**

Applications for plazas in low- or moderate-income neighborhoods, designated by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, will receive 10 additional points. Proposed sites that are not located in such designated neighborhoods will receive zero points. Designation prescribes that at least 51% of the residents in the census tract must be low- and moderate-income persons living in households with incomes below 80 percent of the median household income (\$47,100 for a 4-person household in 2000). To determine your census tract, visit the New York City Census FactFinder: <http://gis.nyc.gov/dcp/pa/address.jsp> or contact the NYC Department of City Planning's Population Division, 9 am - 5 pm, Monday through Friday, Tel: 212-720-3443.

To learn more about CDBG eligibility and to view the NYC Census Tracts that are CDBG eligible, visit the Department of City Planning's (DCP) online Census Report: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/resource/censustractreport.shtml>.



Credit: DOT



Credit: DOT

# Responsibilities and Expectations

## PARTNER RESPONSIBILITIES

Partners will be responsible for the following elements:

### **1. Maintenance**

Before construction is complete, the Partner will enter into an agreement with DOT for the maintenance of the plaza so that the site is kept clean and in a state of good repair. The specific maintenance services to be provided will be outlined in the agreement but may include daily sweeping and bagging of rubbish, watering of plants, removal of stickers and graffiti from street furniture and property, and shoveling snow from pathways. To become the formal partner for the plazas, DOT and the Partners must apply to the Franchise and Concession Review Committee (FCRC) for authorization to enter into a "Master Concession Agreement" (Agreement). This Agreement would give the Partner the potential to generate revenue from concessions, limited sponsorship, and public special events. The revenue generated would then be used to manage, maintain and operate the plaza.

# Responsibilities and Expectations continued

## PARTNER RESPONSIBILITIES continued

### **2. Insurance**

In addition to maintaining the site clean, safe, and in good repair, the Partner will also be required to provide appropriate insurance on the plaza, as outlined in the Master Concession Agreement.

### **3. Outreach**

Outreach to the public to gather relevant data and to provide active participation in the public workshops, which may include promotion, surveying, and coordination of participants during visioning workshops.

### **4. Design**

A team of professional designers contracted by DOT will be responsible for the design process. Partners will be expected to participate in regular design meetings with DOT and the professional designers so that the design is appropriate to the neighborhood context, that it meets local needs, and that plazas are designed with acceptable materials and amenities.

### **5. Programming & Events**

To make the plazas vibrant centers of activity and neighborhood destinations, the Partner will be responsible for programming activities and events at the site, which may include holiday events, food or craft markets, temporary public art installations or exhibits, and music & dancing. It would be expected that programmed activities take place at least four times per year.

### **6. Funding Plan**

Partners will develop a funding plan that outlines how the organization will fund and manage the plaza for the long term. To demonstrate that steps are being taken toward the funding plan, the Partner will provide DOT progress reports.

# Responsibilities and Expectations continued

## DOT RESPONSIBILITIES

DOT and the City will provide the following:

### **1. Design & Construction**

DOT will fund the design and construction of the plaza. Design will strive to create environmentally friendly public plazas that are appropriate to neighborhood context. Possible amenities may include tables and seating, trees and plants, lighting, public art, and drinking fountains.

### **2. Site Inspection**

As needed, DOT will monitor and inspect the plazas to assess and confirm that the Partners are fulfilling their responsibilities as set forth in the Agreement.

# Funding

Contingent upon the availability of funds, DOT will provide any funds for design and construction for up to four (4) new plazas. Organizations that have secured other, private or public, sources of funding are strongly encouraged to apply.

Partners whose sites have been selected will not receive funds from DOT for the design and construction of the plazas. Instead, capital funds will remain within DOT and the City of New York.

# Timeline

Timeline	2009				2010				2011				2012	
	Jan	Apr	July	Oct	Jan	Apr	July	Oct	Jan	Apr	July	Oct	Jan	Apr
Application														
Application Review														
Applicants Selected														
Engineering & Approvals														
Design														
Construction														▶

\* This timeline is an estimate and is for informational purposes only. The actual length of time required for each phase may differ from this timeline.

# FAQs

**Q. What's the minimum size of a plaza?**

A. Sites less than 2,000 square feet are not encouraged.

**Q. What will the plazas look like?**

A. Each plaza will be designed to reflect the character and context of the neighborhood. Plazas may include seating (movable and fixed); trees and plants; lighting; paving; information and wayfinding signage; concessions; public art (temporary and permanent); bicycle parking; and drinking water fountains.

**Q. Will reclaiming streets cause traffic congestion?**

A. In some parts of the city, there is excess road space. In such places, a portion of the road can be reclaimed for pedestrian use without significantly affecting traffic. In other areas, reclaiming street space can have potential impacts on traffic, in which case a traffic analysis would be required. Nevertheless, as a general rule, the Plaza Program will not pursue applications that would produce significant adverse impacts on traffic.

**Q. Can public art be incorporated into the plaza?**

A. Yes, public art can be incorporated in plazas on either a permanent or temporary (under 11 months) basis. All permanent public art would be coordinated through the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art Program and would require submission and approval from the NYC Public Design Commission. Permanent art may be completely integrated and functional (e.g. benches, tables, etc.), or it may be stand-alone art (i.e. a sculpture). Temporary art can be installed as a one-time project or cycled through on a temporary basis at a designated space in the plaza, such as on a foundation block that would allow different temporary sculptures. Temporary art would be coordinated through NYC DOT's Urban Art Program. For guidelines and to apply to the Urban Art Program, visit [www.nyc.gov/urbanart](http://www.nyc.gov/urbanart).



Credit: DOT

**Q. Can events and fairs be held in the plaza?**

A. Yes. The Partner may hold events and fairs as outlined in the Master Concession Agreement. Nevertheless, a Street Activity Permit would still be required and would be applied for through the Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management (CECM).

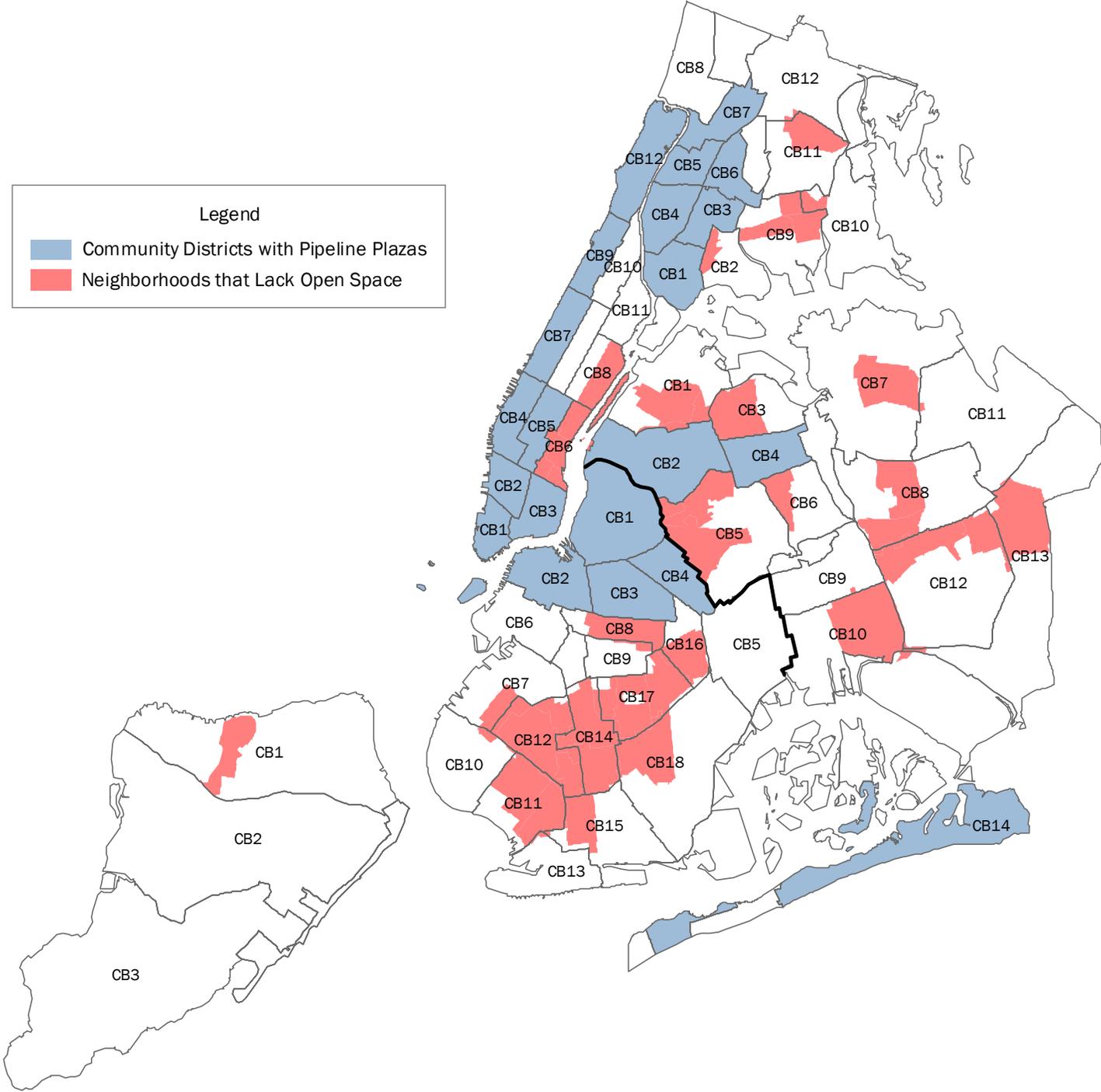
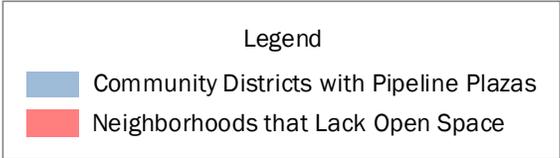
**Q. Will advertising be permitted?**

A. No. Advertising will not be permitted in the plazas. Banners on light poles, however, may be installed in accordance with the NYC DOT Banner Permit Program. In general, the banners must promote cultural exhibits and events or public or historical events which foster tourism and/or enhance the image of the City. (See 34 RCNY 2-14). Please contact NYC DOT Banner Unit for more information:  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/permits/banners.shtml>.

**Q. Must the organization be registered with the Vendor Information Exchange System (VENDEX) with New York City prior to applying to the Plaza Program?**

A. No. Nevertheless, VENDEX submittal is required prior to executing the Master Concession Agreement. To learn more about VENDEX, visit [www.nyc.gov/vendex](http://www.nyc.gov/vendex).

# Appendix A: Priority Map



Sources:  
Neighborhoods that Lack Open Space: NYC Department of City Planning, August 2005.  
Other Data: NYC DOT, March 2009.