

Allen Street Mall Demapping Allen Street between Delancey Street and Rivington Street 5-14-2025

1. Introduction

The NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks) proposes a City Map change for the elimination, discontinuance and closing of a portion of Allen Street between Delancey and Rivington Streets consisting of an existing, landscaped mall with a shuttered restroom and the establishment of parkland on Allen Street for the area which is being eliminated, discontinued and closed in Community District 3, Borough of Manhattan (the Project Area), to facilitate Parks solely managing a future concession within the Project Area, which will include re-activating the shuttered restroom (Development Site) without any operational impediments that could transpire by licensing a future concession within a mapped, city-owned, street right-of-way.

Through a public solicitation, Parks will seek vendors to re-activate who may propose including some or all of the surrounding mall. Therefore, for the purposes of this application, the Development Site is coincident with the Project Area.

In addition, because of the proposed City Map change, the mid-portion of Allen Street between Delancey and Rivington Streets would become parkland causing the mapped right-of-way width of Allen Street to decrease from 138 feet to two streets that are less than 60 feet each. The resulting street limits would be consistent with a narrow street. Therefore, a zoning text amendment is proposed to preserve the current zoning regulations regarding lots fronting a wide street for those lots fronting Allen Street between Delancey and Rivington Streets.

2. Background

Allen Street is named after Captain William Henry Allen, a Captain in the United States Navy during the War of 1812.

On New Year's Day, 1813, then Lieutenant Allen and his crew, aboard the *Chesapeake*, brought the captured British ship *Macedonian* into New York Harbor and received a hero's welcome. The New York victory earned Allen the command of the *Argus* and at age 29, the distinction of the youngest Navy captain during the War of 1812.

Later that year, in August 1813, Allen perished in a battle with a British brig in the English Channel. In 1817, the City of New York named Allen Street in honor of him.

Allen Street between Delancey and Rivington Streets is a mapped, city-owned, street right-of-way with a width of 138 feet, under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT).

In total, the malls along Allen Street are divided into nine sections between East Houston and East Broadway and are approximately 1.6-aces total. They were constructed under the supervision of the Office of the Borough President in the mid-1920s. In the 1930s, the Borough President was also responsible for citing the 1,075 square foot restroom within the Project Area.



Allen Street looking south from Rivington Street to Delancey Street (1929)
Source: NYC Department of Records & Information Services

Despite being located within mapped, street right-of-way, since 1929, Parks has maintained the Allen Street malls per an agreement with the then Manhattan Borough President, Julius Miller.

In 1938, the Board of Estimate approved a resolution to transfer restroom facilities throughout Manhattan, including the one on Allen Street, from the Borough President to the Commissioner of Parks. The restroom was closed by the 1950s and the building has remained shuttered since.

Community Board 3 has called on Parks to reactivate the building as an asset that would benefit the neighborhood. However, after reviewing the City's records and consulting with DOT, the agencies determined that demapping the Project Area as right-of-way and mapping it as parkland would be necessary.

Acting at Park's request and based on the agency's management authority reaffirmed in 2015 by DOT, the Department of Finance issued Block 415, Lot 150 to the mall.

3. Description of the Surrounding Area

The malls on Allen Street extend between East Houston and East Broadway and pass through the Lower East Side, the Bowery, and Chinatown.

The area is delineated mainly into C6-2A and C4-4A zoning districts and is made up of mixed-use, medium to high-rise residential buildings with various commercial-uses on the ground floors. The main commercial uses in the neighborhood are eateries, small boutiques, and personal health/grooming establishments.

Historically, a diverse neighborhood, it is a characteristic still reflected in the neighborhood by the

half dozen religious institutions, from a variety of denominations, within a four block radius of the Project Area.

Notably, the Tenement Museum is located across Delancey Street from the Project Area at 103 Orchard Street. Together 97 Orchard Street, the museum's second location, visitors explore stories of tenement dwellers through guided tours of historic buildings and the surrounding neighborhood.

There are a few public educational institutions located in the surrounding area, including five charter schools operating from 350 Grand Avenue, south of the Project Area, and the Cascades High School and Forsyth Satellite Academy at 198 Forsyth Street, north of the Project Area.

This densely populated area is well served by public transit. There are 4 subway lines: the F, operating at the 2nd Avenue subway station and the F, M, J, and Z lines, operating at the Delancey St- Essex St. subway station. There are 3 bus lines: the M15 and B39 - with their own dedicated bus lane on Allen Street, and the B39, on Delancey Street.

Aside from the remaining malls across Allen Street, the neighborhood's largest publicly open-space resource is the 7.8-acre Sara D. Roosevelt Park featuring playgrounds, basketball courts, a roller rink and turf soccer field. The park is currently slated for over \$24M in capital improvements including reconstruction of the existing fields, the Hua Mei Bird Garden, and the Rivington Street playground.

There are several other open-space amenities in the surrounding area, including the Nathan Straus Playground, First Park, ABC Playground, and Children's Magical Community Garden.

4. Description of Proposed Project Area/Development Site

The Project Area consists of an existing mall approximately 9,300 sq. ft., in the right-of-way of Allen Street between Delancey and Rivington Streets in Community Board 3 in the Lower East Side neighborhood of Manhattan. To help facilitate NYC Park's management, the Department of Finance has assigned Block 415 Lot 150 to the mall.

Despite the mall's tax lot, this section of Allen Street is mapped at 138 feet, which by zoning definition makes it a "wide street". The mall bifurcates the north and southbound lanes of Allen Street limiting the total width of the travel lanes on either side of the mall to 44 ft. The east and west sides of Allen Street each have an additional 13' of mapped right-of-way used as sidewalks.

The mall is landscaped with trees, an iron picket fence, benches, and a shuttered restroom facility on the south side of the Project Area at Allen and Delancey Streets with a street address of: 76 Delancey Street.

To control pedestrian circulation, access to the mall is limited by the iron picket fences that run parallel to the vehicular travel lanes. The only existing access point within the mall is at the northern intersections of Allen and Rivington Streets. The shuttered restroom on the southern end prohibits access to the mall from the intersection of Delancey and Allen Streets.

The mall and restroom were built between the 1920s and 1930s under the supervision of the Manhattan Borough President. By their authority, management of the mall and restroom were assigned to Parks since about the same period.

5. Description of the Proposed Development

Parks is seeking a City Map change for the elimination, discontinuance and closing of an existing 9,300 square foot mall on Allen Street between Delancey Street and Rivington Street as right-of-way and to map it as public park. There is no proposed change to the physical boundaries of the mall or the existing physical street layout.

Allowing the Project Area to be mapped as public park will give Parks exclusive control of the site, which is currently under the jurisdiction of DOT, including managing how to repurpose the shuttered restroom to meet the best interests of the community.

In addition, because the Project Area is established within the mid-portion of Allen Street, mapping it as parkland will create two narrow streets. It will be necessary to propose a zoning text amendment to preserve the zoning status of lots fronting on Allen Street which will be affected by the alteration of the street's width from 138 feet to less than 60 feet.

6. Actions Necessary to Facilitate the Project

a. Changes to the City Map

Parks proposes a City Map change for the elimination, discontinuance and closing of a portion of Allen Street between Delancey and Rivington Streets consisting of an existing, 9,300 square foot, landscaped mall and the establishment of parkland on Allen Street for the area which is being eliminated, discontinued and closed in Community District 3, Borough of Manhattan.

b. Zoning Text Amendments

A zoning text amendment is proposed to maintain the current zoning regulations for the lots fronting Allen Street which will otherwise change by mapping the mall on Allen Street a public park and thereby decreasing the right-of-way width from 138 feet, a wide street, to 56-57 feet, a narrow street. The street width definitions in the *New York City Zoning Resolution* are as follows:

Street, narrow

A "narrow street" is any #street# less than 75 feet wide.

Street, wide

A "wide street" is any #street# 75 feet or more in width.

The proposed text amendment would change the definition for wide street in Section 12-10 of the *New York City Zoning Resolution* to provide that in Community District 5 in the Borough of Manhattan, the roadways of Allen Street between Delancey and Rivington Streets which would be separated by mapped public park as a result of this application's successful approval as explained above, shall each be considered a wide street.

7. Conclusion

Parks maintains landscaped properties within the street right-of-way throughout the City. Often by informal agreements like the Allen Street Malls, or more formal, written agreements with DOT like the Greenstreets Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and various street-end MOUs. However, none of these sites have buildings Parks is responsible for maintaining and none are concessioned.

The Project Area's unique set of characteristics necessitates Parks map this site as a public park for DOT to release jurisdiction of the mall to Parks to reactive and repurpose the shuttered restroom as the community has called for.

