

**Report of the Special Committee on Reforming Alternate-Side Parking Rules**  
**Bronx Community Board No. 8**  
**March 2008**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>The Special Committee</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>History of Alternate-Side Parking Rules</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Formal Meetings and Deliberations of the Special Committee</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Suitability of Board No. 8 for Reduced Alternate-Side Parking</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Recommendations of the Special Committee</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Concluding Words</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Appendix A: Copies of Articles</b>	
<b>Appendix B: Public Comments from Hearings</b>	
<b>Appendix C: Maps of Proposed Change Areas</b>	

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## **The Special Committee**

The Special Committee on Reforming Alternate-Side Parking Rules (the “Special Committee”) was appointed at the December 11, 2007 regular meeting of Community Board No. 8 (the “Board” or “Board No. 8”). The Special Committee is charged with examining the current alternate-side parking regulations in Board No. 8, and proposing modifications that will make the rules less burdensome to motorists and more responsive to the street cleaning needs of our community.

Moving a car from side to side is a grim ritual for motorists in New York City. It is so ingrained in the psyche of New Yorkers that it has been used as a premise for countless TV shows and comedy routines. In recent years, communities have advocated for changes in the alternate-side parking rules in order to alleviate the burdens on motorists and encourage a more effective use of sanitation resources. For example, in 2000, the Sanitation Department reduced the number of days motorists had to move their cars from four times a week to two in the Park Slope section of Brooklyn, which is in Community Board No. 6. In 2007, this pilot program was extended to the rest of the streets within Community Board No. 6. Also, under an initiative that began in 1995, the time period for alternate-side parking was reduced from three hours to only 90 minutes in some of the City’s less densely populated neighborhoods. Since then, the 90-minute regulations have been instituted in most of the community districts throughout the City, including Board No. 8.

While there are no formal rules for requesting changes to alternate-side parking regulations, the Special Committee understands that one of the main criteria that the Sanitation Department considers for such requests is the cleanliness rating for an area’s sidewalks and curbs. The Sanitation Department required that Brooklyn Community Board No. 6 have cleanliness ratings of above 90 in each sector. It is significant to note that a review of the Sanitation Department’s cleanliness ratings for the 2000 pilot program areas in Brooklyn Community Board No. 6 reveals that the streets did not become dirtier. In fact, in some areas the cleanliness ratings actually improved.

## **History of Alternate-Side Parking Rules**

In New York City, alternate-side parking (or alternate-side-of-the-street parking) is a program that shifts curbside parking privileges from one side of the street to another for specified hours on alternate days of the week in order to accommodate mechanized street cleaning.

It was introduced on a test basis on August 1, 1950 in a 90-block area of Manhattan's Lower East Side. The experiment proved a success at removing debris that had regularly accumulated under cars parked bumper to bumper. The Traffic and Sanitation Departments soon extended the alternate-side parking regulations throughout Manhattan, and gradually introduced the program to residential areas in the other four boroughs.

In the Bronx, the program was introduced in the Fordham section in 1953. It was extended to the Kingsbridge Heights and Bedford Park sections in 1955, western part of Kingsbridge in 1957 and Riverdale in 1962.

Alternate-side parking is not used where parking meters have been installed or in commercial or other congested areas where more stringent regulations are in effect. Although alternate-side parking rules are in effect year-round, they are currently suspended for both street-cleaning purposes and traffic flow on 34 legal or religious holidays. This policy is implemented jointly by the Transportation, Sanitation and Police Departments. Alternate-side parking may also be suspended temporarily from time to time due to snow emergencies, inclement weather conditions or other emergencies.

Under the alternate-side parking rules, motorists must make sure they park on the correct side of the street or risk being ticketed. And since 1987, violators have also risked the annoyance and inconvenience of having a large, brightly colored sticker from the Sanitation Department glued to their vehicle's side window. The stickers say "THIS VEHICLE VIOLATES N.Y.C. PARKING REGULATIONS. As A Result, This Street Could Not Be Properly Cleaned."

### **Formal Meetings and Deliberations of the Special Committee**

The Special Committee held two public hearings to receive comments and recommendations. The first hearing was held at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 13, 2007 at Amalgamated Houses, Vladeck Hall, 74 Van Cortlandt Park South. The second hearing was held at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 31, 2008 at Riverdale Temple, 4545 Independence Avenue. An information package was distributed to attendees at both hearings, which consisted of an encyclopedia article on alternate-side parking in New York City and 20 selected newspaper articles on this subject for the period 1950 to 2007. A copy of the information package is attached as Appendix A to this report.

In addition, a summary of the public comments received is attached as Appendix B to this report. The comments were almost unanimously supportive of the proposition of reducing the number of days of alternate-side parking from four to two. The major concerns voiced centered around maintaining street cleanliness and a concern over "churning" (the daily movement of cars that often leads to open parking spaces). However, most of those who attended the hearings felt that these potential issues were far outweighed by the benefits of not having to move their cars unnecessarily.

On January 17, 2008, the Special Committee conducted a field visit to locations throughout Board No. 8 to assess each areas cleanliness and suitability for modified parking rules. Particular attention was given to the presence of non-residential establishments such as businesses, schools, post offices, libraries, houses of worship, cultural institutions and police and fire houses. Members of the Special Committee who attended the field visit agreed that the Sanitation Department's scorecard ratings are, by and large, an accurate reflection of the relative cleanliness of our streets.

A conference call of the Special Committee was held on March 4, 2008. The Special Committee carefully considered all suggestions received from the public and members of Board No. 8. In reviewing the sanitation scorecard reports for Board No. 8, the Special Committee was careful not to place too much emphasis on just a single month's rating since conditions change from month to month due to a variety of factors. For example, street cleanliness is affected by the rate and amount of littering, the degree of compliance with alternate-side parking rules, as well as by weather and other seasonal factors. Therefore, when considering street cleanliness, the Special Committee was mindful of the importance of comparing figures for several consecutive months to those for the same months in the prior year.

The Special Committee also reviewed the Sanitation Department's 35-page "route narrative," which details the block-by-block schedule for every street-cleaning truck operating in Board No. 8. This was done in conjunction with an examination of a set of maps showing the blocks and lots in the locations under consideration.

### **Suitability of Bronx Community Board No. 8 for Reduced Alternate-Side Parking**

In 2007, the average score for all three sections of Community Board No. 8 was 97.3. Section 1, which includes Kingsbridge and Kingsbridge Heights, scored a 93.5. Section 2, which includes Van Cortlandt Village, scored a 98.7. Section 3, which includes all of Riverdale, scored a perfect 100.

During its field visit, the Special Committee observed that the curbs in some areas of the community do not get as dirty as others, and it concluded that there seems to be no reason why they all must be swept equally often. Specifically, the Special Committee decided that certain large enclaves of residential streets do not need mechanized sweeping as frequently as the areas around businesses, parks and some schools.

Noting that alternate-side parking was originally an experiment that was expanded carefully over time, the Special Committee expressed its support for an experiment to reduce the parking burden on motorists would now occur in areas that do not need cleaning as often.

Members of the Special Committee called such a reduction a quality-of-life improvement that would lessen the burden on motorists forced to move their cars and jockey for parking spaces. They also emphasized that it would help to reduce air pollution caused

by drivers who circle residential blocks in search of parking or who wait with their engines running until the no-parking time ends.

### **Recommendations of the Special Committee**

The Special Committee proposes that alternate-side parking be reduced on a pilot basis from four times a week (twice on each side) to two times a week in the following areas (see Appendix C for maps of each location below):

- 1) VAN CORTLANDT VILLAGE, in the vicinity of the Amalgamated Cooperative Houses, an 11-building co-op complex with nearly 1,500 residential apartments. The area, which is bounded by Van Cortlandt Park South, Van Cortlandt Avenue West, Sedgwick Avenue and Saxon Avenue, includes Hillman Avenue, Gouverneur Avenue, Gale Place and two blocks of Orloff Avenue.
- 2) KINGSBRIDGE, from West 231<sup>st</sup> Street to West 238<sup>th</sup> Street, including Irwin, Tibbett and Corlear Avenues.
- 3) SOUTH RIVERDALE, from West 227<sup>th</sup> Street to West 235<sup>th</sup> Street, including Fairfield, Arlington and Netherland Avenues.
- 4) CENTRAL RIVERDALE, from West 237<sup>th</sup> Street to West 246<sup>th</sup> Street, including Blackstone Avenue, Independence Avenue and the northern part of Hudson Manor Terrace (between West 237<sup>th</sup> Street and West 239<sup>th</sup> Street).

The Special Committee requests that resources now used to sweep four days a week in the suggested pilot areas be redistributed to needier areas of Board No. 8, specifically heavily trafficked commercial thoroughfares, such as Broadway between West 230<sup>th</sup> Street and West 238<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **Concluding Words**

Reducing the number of days motorists must move their cars presents a unique opportunity to improve the quality of life of local residents. It could reduce stress, save on fuel costs, and enhance the environment. Given that this is a pilot program, the potential downside is minimal. Therefore, the Special Committee urges the City and the Sanitation Department to act expeditiously on this request. Finally, the Special Committee extends its gratitude to those who attended the public hearings and to the members of the Board who offered their comments.

Respectfully submitted,

Special Committee on Reforming Alternate-Side Parking Rules

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**APPENDICES**

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