



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

330 West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, 26<sup>th</sup> floor New York, NY 10036  
tel: 212-736-4536 fax: 212-947-9512  
[www.nyc.gov/mcb4](http://www.nyc.gov/mcb4)

**COREY JOHNSON**  
Chair

**ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.**  
District Manager

October 4, 2013

William T. Castro  
Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
NYC Parks Department  
Arsenal West  
24 W. 61<sup>st</sup> Street, 5th Floor  
New York, NY 10023

**Re: Tree pit widening program**

Dear Commissioner Castro:

Manhattan Community Board #4 requests that the Parks Department do additional community outreach and ensure on-going block resident communication and sufficient quality control whenever it does tree pit widening and ensure community participation in decision making when the widening leaves less than six foot pedestrian access and/or require extensive sidewalk replacement.

Earlier this year the Parks Department sent notices to residents of several blocks in Chelsea that they will be widening tree pits in the area to promote improved tree health and prevent tree roots breaking sidewalks. As long term advocates for street trees, Manhattan CB4 supports this effort. However, discussion with residents on West 19<sup>th</sup> Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues leaves us with several concerns.

Residents of this block on West 19<sup>th</sup> Street received notices of the work, but were not consulted. Fortunately, the Department of Transportation (DOT) stepped in and facilitated communications between the Parks Department and residents. We appreciate DOT Borough Commission Margaret Forgione for her assistance in that matter. The tree pit widening in front of homes with larger stoops left less than six foot passage, creating difficulties for the several wheelchair bound residents of the block. Some of the sidewalk replacement that they installed was severely sloped and/or uneven; also creating difficulty for wheelchair bound and disabled residents. Curb areas in parts were not replaced. Residents also indicate that they were not informed of the specific work or the timetable for completion and none of the workers on the site were responsible for resident communication or outreach. We appreciate that DOT Borough Commission Margaret Forgione has assisted to facilitate communications between the Parks Department and residents.

Manhattan CB4 thus requests that the Parks Department:

- assign a staff person to act as a communication liaison with residents of streets affected by work;
- hold a block meeting in advance of beginning work on a street where they provide residents and property owners with a description and drawings of the work to be completed, the timetable for completion and the name and phone number of the community liaison to answer questions and address complaints of poor workmanship;
- in cases where proposed tree pit widening will leave less than a six foot pedestrian clear pathway, not finalize design until there is discussion with residents.

We also request that you review the work completed on West 19<sup>th</sup> Street and ensure curbs are fully reinstalled and severe uneven sidewalk locations be redone.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,



Corey Johnson  
Chair



Christine Berthet, Co-Chair  
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus, Co-Chair  
Transportation Planning Committee