

Meeting of minds on 34th St.



Teams from the 34th Street Partnership and Bryant Park Management Corporation assemble weekly to discuss the 'state of the district'.

The 34th Street Partnership and Bryant Park Management Corporation have garnered many awards and much praise for their success in keeping their districts clean, safe, attractive to pedestrians and desirable for businesses.

Much of the credit goes to the cooperation among the talented, dedicated staffs that Dan Biederman, the president of both BIDs, has assembled.

Once a week, Biederman gathers the staffs for the "Streetscape" meeting, a "state of the districts" meeting at which key personnel from the various departments can together address emerging problems, update each other on various projects, and plan for the long-term.

Streetscape meetings cover all aspects of urban management. During the week previous to each meeting, Biederman and staff members independently propose items for that week's agenda. Those items may deal with departmental projects, individual observations about the districts, or aspects of urban management a staff member has observed at other venues.

These are added to a standing agenda that includes updates on event planning, horticultural projects, security, sanitation,

and capital projects including street furniture replacement, design and maintenance.

A key to the effectiveness of Streetscape meetings is the empirical, non-ideological approach to street and park management that has served the organizations well. Staff members are encouraged to think independently and to offer ideas and solutions to problems occurring within, and beyond, their areas of responsibility. Recently, the solution to a long-standing problem of how to bring people to an under-utilized section of the park was proposed by the Director of Sanitation.

Typically, Streetscape meetings include slides taken of urban settings in cities around the world. Recently, a staff member who had returned from Japan presented snapshots she took of Tokyo streets, buildings and street furniture. The staff watches these slideshows intently, always looking for ideas on how to make their districts better.

"The Streetscape meeting is a valuable tool," says Biederman. "Having everyone in the same room allows us to bounce ideas off each other, to come up with solutions to problems, and to coordinate plans that involve more than one

department. The meetings also reinforce our mission by giving each member of the staff a view of the big picture."

The effect of Streetscape is synergistic. By bringing together the team of professionals that make the 34th Street Partnership and Bryant Park Management Corporation so successful, the meetings allow for cross-pollination of ideas, encourage teamwork, and accelerate problem solving. ■