

REAL ESTATE WEEKLY

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34th Street Partnership recognized for demystifying city parking

The 34th Street Partnership, a business improvement district (BID) responsible for maintaining the streetscape within a 51-block area in Midtown Manhattan, was recently honored with a Special Achievement Award from the International Downtown Association for its redesign of a Regulated Parking Sign System. In granting the award, IDA cited the innovative qualities of the sign system, as well as its ability to be replicated by other agencies.

The award was accepted by 34th Street Partnership President Dan Biederman, Director of Industrial Design Ignacio Ciocchini, and Michael Primeggia, deputy commissioner, Traffic Operations, NYC Department of Transportation at IDA's 2007 Downtown Achievement Awards Luncheon at the Marriott Marquis in Manhattan on Sept. 17.

The Partnership unveiled the sign system last spring. Biederman had long believed that drivers seeking parking spots in Midtown were confused and ultimately scared off by the city's existing parking signs. His industrial design team, led by Ciocchini, studied the signs

and interviewed drivers, DOT officials and persons on the street to find out just what it was that made the signs difficult to read and understand.

Ciocchini's team found that all-capital lettering, ambiguous abbreviations and military-style fonts made the existing signs intimidating and somewhat cryptic. To convey all the regulations at each location, an often unsightly vertical cluster of individual signs, each surrounded by a white border, was employed. The borders separated the messages from each other and made them relate to each other poorly. Drivers without the patience to sort out the regulations would become intimidated and then drive away from perfectly legal parking spots.

The Partnership team responded by creating a sign system that employs friendlier fonts and mixed-case lettering, while eliminating abbreviations and white borders.

The system is able to quickly create over 300 location-specific sign combinations. Instead of seeking guidance from the confusing cluster of individual signs

typically found at midtown parking locations, drivers in the 34th Street District are now presented with a streamlined combination of signs created specifically for each location. The Partnership enjoyed extensive cooperation from the Mayor's Office and the NYC Department of Transportation throughout the development and production stages.

Biederman and Ciocchini presented the plan to Deputy Mayor Patricia Harris, who liked it and instructed then-DOT Commissioner Iris Weinshall to work with the Partnership on the project. Weinshall appointed a team of DOT personnel that met with Partnership representatives throughout the process. This cooperation ensured that the system will be adaptable to the entire city should DOT decide to adopt it in the future.

"The new signs convey the same information as the previous ones, but are clearer and give drivers confidence that they are getting all the information they need," said Biederman. "They are also much more pleasant to look at. Our hats are off to the city for helping to implement the innovation."



The signs were unveiled last spring.