

New Public Bench is Unveiled in Chelsea

September 1, 2010

A prototype for a new public bench at 16th Street and 10th Avenue gives Chelsea residents a new place to sit.



The prototype bench, at its home across from Chelsea Market. (Courtesy of the Chelsea Improvement Company)

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CHELSEA — Pedestrians at the intersection of 10th Avenue and West 16th Street may have noticed a new place to rest their weary legs.

A prototype for a new public bench was recently installed at the corner by the Chelsea Improvement Company (CIC), a non-profit redevelopment corporation.

The bench is made of a stainless steel base and carbon-steel plate seats, and is specially designed with three wide seats to give New Yorkers a sense of personal space and accommodate a range of body types.

The bench's aesthetic is intended to reflect the Chelsea neighborhood "from the point of view of its contemporary design and the industrial nature of the buildings," said designer Ignacio Ciocchini.

CIC also wants the bench to blend in with neighborhood buildings, including the Chelsea Market, located directly across the street, and 85 10th Ave. (which hosts restaurant Del Posto), according to project manager Ben Donsky.

In addition to the bench, CIC has also installed tree pits, trash receptacles, pedestrian lamps, illuminated street signs and parking signs in the area this year. Funding for all these projects is donated by property owners in the neighborhood, Donsky said.

CIC is currently selecting feedback from bench-users in order to help them craft a final version, which will then be placed in 11 locations throughout Chelsea. So far, Ciocchini is considering adjustments including tilting back the angle of the seat.

Mary Vasquez, 42, a secretary who works on the same block, stepped out of her office Tuesday and gave the bench a try.

"It's straight, so it makes you sit up straight, but it's still comfortable," she said, praising the wide seats. "I like it."

The Department of Transportation and Public Design Commission are also evaluating the bench for possible integration into other city neighborhoods, according to CIC.

"The most important thing is that the bench functions well and people want to use it," Donsky said.