

City program aims for 1,000 benches in 5 boroughs

As part of its newly launched CityBench program, the Department of Transportation wants to install 1,000 benches across the five boroughs over the next three years.

By Emily Laermer 10/20



The city settled on steel for the new benches, rather than wood, because it is easier to maintain. The parts are detachable, so it will be easier to repair specific elements.

Pedestrians across the city will now have new places to rest.

The Department of Transportation launched its CityBench program, through which it will install 1,000 benches across the five boroughs at places like bus stops, commercial districts and senior centers over the course of three years. The first benches, at Chelsea's Covello Senior Center, were unveiled Thursday afternoon.

"Older New Yorkers are extremely active, and investing in benches around the city gives them the opportunity to set out for their destination and have the pleasure of taking breaks when they need it," said Department for the Aging Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli, in a statement.

These benches were designed with comfort in mind, said Ignacio Ciocchini, the director of design for Chelsea Improvement Co., who designed the benches. Each seats three people, with room for their personal belongings, children or pets, he added. The benches are wider than average, to allow more space between individuals. Two of the benches were installed at the Covello Senior Center.

"Public seating typically isn't comfortable," said Mr. Ciocchini. "With these, you can cross your legs, relax or sit at an angle without disturbing the person next to you."

The city settled on steel, rather than wood, because it is easier to maintain. The benches have been engineered to prevent rust. Further, the parts are detachable, so it will be easier to repair specific elements.

Each bench—engineered to have a lifespan of about 10 years—will cost about \$1,800. A typical bench can cost anywhere from \$1,500 to \$3,500. The Federal Transit Administration will fund about 80% of the estimated \$3 million cost of the program, while the state's Department of Transportation will provide an addition 10% of the funding.

These benches will also fulfill some of the goals of the PlaNYC 2.0 program, released in 2007, which was designed to help prepare the city for an addition 1 million residents. The CityBench program will encourage active transportation by making the streets more walkable.

“[CityBenches] makes it easier and more enjoyable for New Yorkers of every age to walk and take transit,” said DOT Commissioner Janette Sadik Khan, in a statement.

Models are available with and without backs. The backless versions will be used near bus stops that don't have bus shelters, while the backed versions will be used in other locations. The benches will continue to be rolled out on an as-needed basis. Organizations that would like to participate in the program can fill out a request online.