



TESTIMONIALS



Greater Gansevoort Urban Improvement Project New York City, New York

What are you doing to create great streets and neighborhoods in your community?



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Transition, rebirth, and reuse in former industrial districts are ubiquitous themes for urban planners in New York City. As market forces change neighborhoods from manufacturing zones to lively 24/7 mixed-use destinations, the only available public space—the street and sidewalk—also requires transformation to meet the needs of its new users. As a senior urban planner and project manager with Sam Schwartz PLLC, I frequently have the opportunity to be a part of the public planning process that is necessary to create new streetscapes and public realms.

Sam Schwartz PLLC was retained by the Greater Gansevoort Urban Improvement Project in 2006 to study pedestrian needs and traffic patterns in Manhattan's landmarked Gansevoort Market neighborhood and to recommend improvements to create safe, welcoming public spaces; I served as project manager. The project is a community-based planning initiative begun in 2006 with funding secured from a variety of



sources including the New York City Council, a foundation grant, and private contributions. The project is now in the early stages of the implementation process.

This area is undergoing a rapid transformation from a wholesale meat market into a popular destination neighborhood. Traditional meatpackers have been joined by new boutiques, restaurants, nightclubs, hotels, and design businesses. The High Line and the proposed downtown Whitney Museum promise to attract thousands of new visitors, day and night. This growth will increase both pedestrian and vehicle volumes, which in turn will increase the need for safe, welcoming pedestrian facilities.

The project relied on data from traffic counts, engineering analyses, and input from community stakeholders. Feedback from residents, business leaders, property owners and local appointed officials, through surveys and a design workshop, indicated that the greatest challenges and the greatest opportunities are presented in the heart of the district, along Ninth Avenue.

With community guidance and engagement from New York City Department of Transportation, Department of City Planning, and Landmarks Preservation Commission, we developed a series of design and traffic engineering recommendations for the Ninth Avenue corridor, from 16th Street to Gansevoort Plaza.



Applying urban design concepts from great plazas and shared streets around the world, the fundamental approach of the proposed solutions is to prioritize the pedestrian experience. On the southern end of the corridor, cobblestone streetbeds would be raised to sidewalk level, inviting pedestrians to take advantage of excess street capacity. Most of Gansevoort Plaza is reclaimed for pedestrian use, with approximately one-quarter acre of public space carved out of the roadway. Additional public space is created at the

northern end of the corridor, again by eliminating unneeded roadway and replacing it with safe, welcoming pedestrian space. Finally, sidewalk widening and bump-outs replace unneeded vehicle lanes on 9th Avenue, reducing the dangerously long crossing distances and expanding the public realm.

I became a planner to influence growth and change in our cities in a more positive, sustainable manner. The Greater Gansevoort Urban Improvement Project has been an exceptional professional experience and is a unique example of how an active collaboration between a community and city agencies can result in innovative measures to create pedestrian improvements, reduce traffic congestion, and create appealing spaces that serve the public at large.