

8. IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

8.1 Building Support

There is nothing magic about traffic calming. It is merely a phrase that captures an approach to managing streets by acknowledging the needs of all users of the great store of public space contained between property lines (broadly roadways and sidewalks). Just as this approach recognizes and accommodates the needs of those who live and work and shop and play on the City's streets, so it also recognizes the need for motorized traffic to be adequately accommodated. Drivers of cars and other motorized vehicles are legitimate users of streets, but they are not the only users. This idea, perhaps not articulated in exactly this way, underpins the community groundswell that created the Downtown Brooklyn Traffic Calming Study.

When thought of as a rational sharing of limited space among all users rather than as a battle between cars and pedestrians, it is hard to disagree with the idea of traffic calming. It is important to maintain this concept. Traffic calming does not represent a radical new approach to managing streets, but a more balanced one – an approach that reflects a clearer perception of broad community objectives.

Promoting the debate over traffic calming in these terms is an important element underpinning continued and expanded support for implementation of Downtown Brooklyn's Traffic Calming program and development of similar projects elsewhere in the City. This project has helped to break down some of the barriers of distrust that were erected many years ago and that have provided the framework for conflict ever since. It would be easy but counterproductive for stakeholders to raise these barriers again.

Of course, it would be inaccurate to imply that the Downtown Brooklyn Traffic Calming study has created a harmonious environment of uniform agreement. In spite of extensive community involvement with the project, some people feel disenfranchised; others feel the project has not met their aspirations. So there is plenty of work to do both in engaging those people who think in this way and in refining and developing the details of the strategy to more broadly meet the community's needs.

A key element of continuing progress, however, is that people continue to embrace the idea of change. Many people find change threatening and so might instinctively seek to oppose the new focus that traffic calming requires. As has been shown through the course of this study, change is not necessarily threatening and it is only through change that improvements to the urban environment can occur.

8.2 Expanding the Envelope

Some stakeholders have criticized the actions identified in this study for not going far enough, for not representing the radical change that they had hoped for.

Yet it must be recognized that change inevitably is slow and proceeds by increments. A review of the different ways in which streets are managed in other countries or in other parts of the United States` shows that these differences were not created instantaneously, but came about either because of a difference in the initial philosophy of street management or because of a program of change that has lasted a number of years. Nowhere has a city changed its street management approach radically and overnight and nowhere has such a change occurred in the absence of broad community support. Implementation of sophisticated traffic management schemes elsewhere has

in almost all cases followed a long period of development of support, understanding and sophistication in use of the road system.

Brooklyn is no different. New York City has gone some way in the process of improving its management of traffic to meet broader community needs and this process will continue. However, it is unrealistic to expect that the city's first areawide traffic calming plan can immediately change the street environment in a radical way. This report outlines a strategy that delivers important benefits in relation to the livability of the study area and that is achievable over a short time period. Some parts of it may be regarded initially as challenging; however, it should be possible over time to implement the strategy in its entirety with the support of all stakeholders.

To do so, it will be necessary to continue the education process begun as part of this strategy development process and to harness the support of all stakeholders in gradually developing the strategy until it is achieved.

8.3 Maintaining Enthusiasm

It is also important that active steps be taken to maintain the enthusiasm generated through the course of this project. Many traffic calming programs around the world have foundered as focus has been lost and enthusiasm waned. In general, programs that are directed and supported work better than those that are not.

The best means of maintaining drive in implementing this traffic calming program must be determined by the community and NYCDOT. A small joint committee with a representative from each of NYCDOT, the office of the Brooklyn Borough President, and Community Boards 2, 6, and 8 could adopt responsibility for ensuring that implementation proceeds. Such a committee could be charged with:

- setting and monitoring implementation targets;
- ensuring that implementation proceeds in accordance with the implementation program;
- monitoring the effects of the program;
- refining the program as knowledge accumulates;
- publicizing progress;
- making progress on the difficult issues identified in *Section 7.3*; and
- reinvigorating the process periodically.