

## At last! Regulation of those unsightly newsracks

A new city law went into effect last spring that should bring some order to the sidewalk chaos caused by the haphazard proliferation of newsracks that have cluttered our streetscapes for far too long, especially at corners where pedestrian crosswalks are often blocked by boxes frequently chained to lampposts.

The legislation regulates the placement of newsracks for the first time, prohibiting their installment within five feet from the street-corner area and

mandating that they be kept neat and clean, graffiti-free on the outside and trash-free on the inside.

Failure to do so could result in civil fines and removal of the offending rack from the sidewalk. During an on-site field meeting in May with representatives of Community Board Six, the Department of Transportation, and the Thirteenth Precinct, it was noted that there were 130 locations of now illegal placement of newsracks in our area, including

the northeast and southwest corners of Gramercy Park North and Lexington Avenue.

Many people would be happy to see the complete elimination of sidewalk newsracks, but there are legal impediments involving First Amendment issues that must be addressed to accomplish such wholesale prohibition. In the meantime, the Department of Transportation will administer the new rules, a first step in bringing improvement to the appearance of our city sidewalks.

# Moskowitz boxing clever

## Move to clean up 'eyesore'

By Lyndee Yamshon  
Community and business groups this week hailed a new bill aimed at controlling the placement of newspaper and advertising boxes in the city.

"They're such an eyesore because they're not taken care of properly," said Sharon Ullman, of the 23rd Street Association.

"They're put anywhere and everywhere without restrictions. Any legislation that would restrict where they can be placed, that would limit the number and ensure they were taken care of would be supported by this association will support."

The bill is being sponsored by City Councilwoman Eva Moskowitz who told a meeting of Com-

munity Board Six last week, "This is a serious quality of life issue.

"These boxes often have broken doors that are left on sidewalks in dangerous places. Today, there are no laws or fines requiring the Department of Transportation to remove the boxes when they become a nuisance or safety issue."

Jack Taylor, community activist and public member of CB6 and CB5, said the city was in dire need of legislation to control the "phenomenon of boxes, which is getting increasingly out of control."

Taylor admitted total eradication of the boxes was unlikely to ever happen, as the issue had been already been debated and

the box owners citing their first amendment right for freedom of the press. He added that he believed the paid boxes, such those used by the New York Times, fell into a different category than the free, take-home boxes.

"The combination of too much street furniture, such as payphones and boxes, makes it nearly impossible to cross the city streets," said Taylor.

Taylor cited the Grand Central area as a model for the police of box use. There the old boxes have been recreated into one large, bulk box, subdivided into smaller encasements for individual papers, located in the middle of the block.

"It's only a partial solu-



UNSIGHTLY — the newspaper boxes that litter street corners.

tion, but it's more controlled around Herald Square up to Grand Central," said Taylor.

Some of the restrictions in the bill include a ban on the placement of a news rack or box within 15 feet of a fire hydrant, in any driveway or within five feet of a driveway.

The bill also states that boxes cannot be placed on any curb cut for the disabled or within two feet of any special curb; they cannot be located within 15 feet of the entrance or exit of any elevated railway, subway station or bus stop; repairs have to be made within 10 days or a report being made; if the box creates a danger to civilians it must be made safe within 24 hours.

The bill also proposes to fine any owner who fails to correct a problem and authorize the removal of the boxes. Fines would range from \$100 to \$300.