

## **New Life for the Immortal Newsstand**

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There was a time when practically every corner in New York seemed to have its own ramshackle newsstand — a shelter sheathed in magazines and newspapers, a form of street art, a street event. The newsstand was also one of the great little conveniences of city life, offering fast reams of the world's experience to the passing crowd. But newsstands have gradually been closing down. In 1950, 1,325 were licensed. Now there are fewer than 400. For too many operators, the world's great issues in print have provided only small change in profit.

But now there is good news for the stands. A new city law will let dealers add to their income by selling other items besides papers and magazines. And the permissible size of the stands will be increased. These adjustments make good sense.

But the new law also decrees, in the name of beautification, that newsstands should follow certain design guidelines developed by the City Planning staff, subject to approval by the Art Commission. While the stands could use some tidying up, that sounds like a case of esthetic excess.

It would be more useful for the city to involve itself in the location of newsstands and in encouraging their operators to maintain them neatly. Newsstands tend to fasten themselves like barnacles to subway entrances and heavily trafficked corners. The result can be obstacle courses for pedestrians, a problem aggravated by the stands' inadequate size and the spillover of papers onto the sidewalk. Proper location, in short, is as important as proper dimension and reasonable policing. Both belong to the licensing process.

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