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COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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January 25, 2011

Ms. Jackie Snyder
Executive Director
NYC Public Design Commission
City Hall, 3rd Floor
New York, New York 10007

Dear Ms. Snyder:

At its Full Board meeting on January 20, 2011, CB#2, Manhattan (CB#2-Man.), adopted the following resolution:

Reconstruction of Astor Place and Cooper Square

Whereas, on January 6, 2010, the New York City Departments of Design & Construction, Transportation, and Parks & Recreation presented a plan for Reconstruction of Astor Place and Cooper Square to the CB2 & CB3 Joint Astor Place Task Force; and

Whereas, this plan is the most recent version of a proposal that has been developed in consultation in the two community boards over a period of years; and

Whereas, the plan is generally responsive to comments made in response to previous versions; and

Whereas, the project will provide important improvements to the area including pedestrian safety, attractive new open space, new trees and plantings, numerous bike racks, and better storm water management; and

Whereas, the area has numerous late night drinking establishments that often create disturbances to the quality of life for nearby residents; and

Whereas, heavy pedestrian traffic at night and on weekends is the subject of frequent complaints in the area; and

Whereas, the Astor Place subway triangle and the Alamo Island have historically attracted impromptu street performances and related street activity that on nights and weekends has substantially detracted from quality of residential life of the surrounding residential area; and

Whereas, the “Village Plaza” may attract similar problematic activity; and

Whereas, such activities are encouraged by the absence of physical design elements that thwart or discourage such behavior such as tree plantings, landscaping, sidewalk surfacing, and public seating arrangements or lack thereof, and

Whereas, neighbors have expressed reasonable concerns that the proposed plan provides expanded pedestrian areas that may encourage noisy activities and late night lingering; and

Whereas, well-placed amenities such as planters and bike racks can effectively discourage crowds from congregating, as demonstrated at the Alamo Island which has become less problematic since the installation of numerous well-used bike racks; and

Whereas, CB#3, Man. is particularly concerned about possible impacts on the nearby 150-unit JASA/Green Residence that provides housing for seniors and the mobility impaired; and

Whereas, Lafayette Street is the main northbound route used by the Great Jones Firehouse; and

Whereas, narrowed streets, pedestrian plazas, plantings, and street amenities are potential impediments to swift emergency response ; and

Whereas, neighbors have expressed concern about how reduced lanes may affect emergency and delivery access to buildings; and

Whereas, the park design as currently configured may include removal of one or more large trees; and

Whereas, the Joint Task Force voted unanimously to approve the plan subject only to removal of seating in the areas south of East 7th Street;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that CB#2, Man. approves this reconstruction plan as proposed if seating opportunities that cannot be locked or removed at night are eliminated from the areas below 7th Street, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CB#2, Man. requests that during the concluding phase of design and approval all city agencies and the design team to give due consideration to community concerns expressed herein, including the addition of more trees, plantings, and amenities to break up large open spaces, and additional review of proposed permanent seating to diminish the likelihood uses that would be a disturbance to neighbors who are already often disturbed by late night crowds; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CB#2, Man. asks that all the large trees at Cooper Square Park be protected and that the design of the park as much as possible be developed to avoid tree removals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CB#2, Man. recognizes that the decision by the City to proceed with this project entails a considered commitment to the required level of management for all the expanded pedestrian areas, plantings, trees, and amenities, and CB2 looks forward to joining with the Department of Transportation and the Department of Parks in developing the best mix of public and private participation in the management and programming of the area, which may include participation of local institutions and business and neighborhood organizations; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that CB#2, Man. requests careful consideration during the concluding phase for design of the needs for vehicular access to buildings to assure required access for fire trucks, deliveries, and drop-offs, including consultation with the fire department and affected businesses and building owners.

Vote: Unanimous, with 38 Board members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.



Jo Hamilton, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



David Reck, Chair
Zoning and Housing Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

JH/fa

cc: Hon. Jerrold Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Thomas Duane, NY State Senator
Hon. Deborah Glick, Assembly Member
Hon. Scott Stringer, Man. Borough President
Hon. Margaret Chin, Council Member
Hon. Rosie Mendez, Council Member
William Castro, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC Dept of Parks
David J. Burney, FAIA, Commissioner, NYC Dept. of Design & Construction
Margaret Forgione, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, Dept. of Transportation
Lolita Jackson, Manhattan Director, CAU