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COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

3 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE

NEW YORK, NY 10012-1899

www.cb2manhattan.org

P: 212-979-2272 F: 212-254-5102 E: info@cb2manhattan.org

Greenwich Village • Little Italy • SoHo • NoHo • Hudson Square • Chinatown • Gansevoort Market

May 25, 2011

Andrew Lynn, Director of Planning
The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
Tunnels, Bridges and Terminals
One Madison Avenue, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10010

Dear Mr. Lynn:

At its Full Board meeting on May 19, 2011, Community Board #2, Manhattan adopted the following resolution:

A resolution supporting public open space to replace a parking lot on land belonging to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

Whereas Hudson Square is the neighborhood bordered by Canal Street to the south, Houston Street to the north, Sixth Avenue to the east, and West Street to the west; and

Whereas Hudson Square Connection is a Business Improvement District including most of this neighborhood; and

Whereas the only publicly accessible open spaces in Hudson Square are “Soho Square”, Duarte Park, and the public plaza on the “Trump Soho” property; and

Whereas Hudson Square was once one of the most important printing districts in the world and the old manufacturing loft spaces are now occupied mostly by offices with many large and small tenants in creative and media businesses; and

Whereas the daytime population of Hudson Square including workers, students, and visitors is approximately 50,000; and

Whereas CB2 has expressed general support for a re-zoning initiative to update the antiquated manufacturing zoning that prevails in most of this area and it is anticipated that this re-zoning will encourage mixed use of the area, supporting current trends and adding some residential use; and

Whereas the Holland Tunnel, built to accommodate 15 million cars annually, accommodate 35 million today as well as much more truck and bus traffic; and

Whereas the lack of open space and the intense traffic associated with the Holland Tunnel present difficult challenges to improvement of Hudson Square to create an attractive and successful mixed use area; and

Whereas Spring Street is the only street within the Hudson Square neighborhood that extends fully from Sixth Avenue to West Street, and its improvement has been identified by the Hudson Square Connection as a major priority; and

Whereas the use of a property located at Spring and Hudson Streets belonging to the PANYNJ is restricted because the Holland Tunnel passes directly below; and

Whereas this lot has been used as a parking lot for approximately 40 cars, bringing some revenue to PANYNJ, but providing public value insufficient given the importance of the location to the success of major current and planned efforts to improve Hudson Square; and

Whereas there is no public open space in the center of the district and Hudson Square Connection has formally requested that PANYNJ make this site available for a permanent public open space; and

Whereas PANYNJ has not refused this request but has stated there are standpipes serving the Holland Tunnel on the site and the current use provides needed revenue; and

Whereas public open space can be built in a way that allows both routine and emergency access to standpipes; and

Whereas the revenue from forty parking spaces should not deter the PANYNJ from making an appropriate contribution to neighborhood revitalization in an area where they have a substantial impact;

Whereas the revenue from parking 40 cars is miniscule compared to the huge revenue generated by tunnel tolls, revenue that comes from a facility operated for the public benefit but to the detriment of the neighborhood character of Hudson Square;

Therefore it is resolved that CB2 enthusiastically supports the initiatives of Hudson Square Connection to create much-needed new public open space; and

It is further resolved that CB2 urges the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to make this space available to help mitigate the impact of Holland Tunnel traffic and transform Hudson Square in a manner that will benefit the entire west side of downtown Manhattan.

Vote: Unanimous, with 38 Board members in favor.

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

Sincerely,



Jo Hamilton, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Tobi Bergman, Chair
Parks, Recreation & Open Space Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

JH/gh

c: Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Thomas K. Duane, NY State Senator
Hon. Daniel L. Squadron, NY State Senator
Hon. Sheldon Silver, Assembly Speaker
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, Assembly Member
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Man. Borough President
Hon. Margaret Chin, Council Member
Hon. Rosie Mendez, Council Member
Sandy Myers, CB2 liaison, Man. Borough President's office
Lolita Jackson, Manhattan Director, CAU

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William T. Castro
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Parks
Arsenal West, 24 61st Street
New York, New York 10023

Bradley Romaker
Director of Capital Budget
NYC Department of Parks
Arsenal West, 24 61st Street
New York, New York 10023

Dear Manhattan Borough Commissioner Castro and Mr. Romaker:

At its Full Board meeting on May 19, 2011, CB#2-Man., adopted the following resolution:

A resolution requesting higher priority for replacement of trees in empty street tree pits.

Whereas a recent survey of approximately 20 percent of the CB2 district found 78 empty tree pits; and
Whereas this indicates there may be 300 or more empty tree pits in the entire district; and

Whereas if a tree pit is empty for an extended period a property owner is likely to repave the pit and an unknown number of tree locations may have been permanently lost as a result; and

Whereas trees help create an attractive urban environment and remove pollutants from the air and trees are particularly important in downtown areas with trucks and buses, large buildings, and traffic congestion; and

Whereas the NYC Parks Department has invested in a major initiative to increase the number of trees in the city, including the number of street trees; and

Whereas empty tree pits are ugly and present a hazard to pedestrians; and

Whereas with so many trees missing, residents may be less likely to report missing trees because it seems useless; and

Whereas empty tree pits give a sense of poor management, potentially contributing to a cycle of declining civic pride and disregard for property in the same manner as graffiti and trash-filled vacant lots; and

Whereas there have been recent incidents of illegal tree removals which seem more likely if there is an impression that the city is not caring for its trees; and

Whereas a Parks Department representative told CB2 that all tree replacement orders are initiated through the 311 system; and

Whereas most people would assume that when they report a dead tree and it is removed by the Parks Department the agency would open an order to plant a new tree in its place unless the location is considered inappropriate and CB2 was surprised to hear that this is not done; and

Whereas the a Parks Department representative told CB2 that the Parks Department has no achievement standards regarding the time to replace trees even after a request has been received; and

Whereas, admittedly, it's a hard life being a tree on a city street and the task of maintaining hundreds of thousands of street trees is a big one;

Therefore it is resolved that CB2 requests that the Parks Department increase the priority given to replacing trees in empty pits, even if it means reducing the number of new trees planted; and

It is further resolved that the Parks Department work with CB2 to develop a plan for replacement of missing trees in CB2 and involve CB2 in the selection of locations for new trees; and

It is further resolves that when the Parks Department removes a dead or damaged tree an order for a new tree should be opened and that the Parks Department should set achievement standards for tree replacement including the maximum time a tree pit stays empty; and

It is further resolved that if a 311 report is an essential part of request tracking, Parks can initiate a replacement tree 311 request when they remove a tree; and

It is further resolved that Parks should evaluate the possibility of contracts whereby a single contractor can respond to a dead tree request with a single crew to remove the old tree and plant the new one.

Vote: Unanimous, with 38 Board members in favor.

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

Sincerely,



Jo Hamilton, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Tobi Bergman, Chair
Parks, Recreation & Open Space Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

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Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Man. Borough President
Hon. Margaret Chin, Council Member
Hon. Rosie Mendez, Council Member
Sandy Myers, CB2 liaison, Man. Borough President's office
Lolita Jackson, Manhattan Director, CAU
Ralph Musolino, Parks Manager, NYC Parks

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The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
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One Madison Avenue, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10010

Dear Mr. Lynn:

At its Full Board meeting on May 19, 2011, Community Board #2, Manhattan adopted the following resolution:

A resolution supporting use of part or parts of Freeman Plaza for public open space.

Whereas CB2 is on record in support of creation of much needed new open space in Hudson Square; and

Whereas CB2 is on record in support of efforts by PANYNJ to mitigate impacts on the Hudson Square neighborhood of traffic entering the Holland Tunnel; and

Whereas the Holland Tunnel entrance plaza is known as Freeman Plaza; and

Whereas the Hudson Square Connection and the Regional Plan Association have begun conceptualization of a plan to create an important public place at Freeman Plaza but this initiative is years from realization; and

Whereas PANYNJ has expressed interest in making parts of Freeman Plaza available for public open space; and

Whereas the areas include large and attractive trees and a combination of sunny and shady areas; and

Whereas the intense traffic through the plaza will present design challenges for an effort to create useable, safe, and attractive public space in this location; and

Whereas among the uses that may work well in this location are a dog run and an area with movable chairs and tables; and

Whereas dog owners have on many occasions expressed the need for more dog runs; and

Whereas dog runs are an excellent park use, providing opportunities for important human interaction as well as safe places to exercise and socialize pets; and

Whereas dog owners can be dedicated park users and stewards, visiting and caring for parks at all hours and in all weather; and

Whereas a dog run on Hudson Street between Canal Street and Broome Street would bring needed pedestrian traffic to the area and create links between Hudson Square and Tribeca communities; and

Whereas there are many employees in neighboring office buildings who would be likely to use it during the day in nice weather; and

Whereas safe access to this location from the south is impeded by poorly designed crosswalks at the tunnel entrance on Canal Street;

Therefore it is resolved CB2 applauds the initiative of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to provide new open space on its property at Freeman Plaza; and

It is further resolved that CB2 supports use of the portion of Freeman Plaza closest to Hudson Street for a combination of a dog run and a small seating area; and

It is further resolved that CB2 urges PANYNJ to expedite a project to improve the crosswalks at Canal and Hudson Street that in their current condition cause inconvenience and hazard and a chasm harming neighborhoods to the north and south and are detrimental to safety and access along Canal Street to Hudson River Park.

Vote: Unanimous, with 38 Board members in favor.

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

Sincerely,



Jo Hamilton, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Tobi Bergman, Chair
Parks, Recreation & Open Space Committee
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