



## Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

530 West 166<sup>th</sup> St. 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10032

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Richard R. Lewis, Chairperson  
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

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January 28, 2019

Hon. Polly Trottenberg  
Commissioner  
NYC Department of Transportation  
55 Water Street  
New York, NY 10041

**Re:** Commendation for Ellen Fine, Business Owner of Historic Newsstand at 168th Street and Broadway, for 70 Years of Service to the Washington Heights Community.

Dear Commissioner Trottenberg:

At the General Meeting on Tuesday, January 22, 2019, with a vote of 38 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, 1 not voting, CB 12 Manhattan, providing a commendation in recognition and appreciation of the historic contributions of a historic newsstand to the Washington Heights community; and urging the New York City Department of Transportation to provide a permanent plaque, marker, or visible form of recognition of the historic newsstand at its former site at West 168th Street and Broadway; and urging the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and the New York City Council's Committee on Transportation to support this permanent recognition marker.

**Whereas**, a historic newsstand at West 168th Street and Broadway in Washington Heights was forced to permanently close after 70 years due to MTA construction of new elevators at the Number 1 train located directly beneath the newsstand location, with construction beginning on January 5, 2019 and scheduled to continue for approximately one year; and

**Whereas**, newsstands, licensed by the City, must move to accommodate city construction projects; and

**Whereas**, no other suitable locations for a replacement location for the newsstand could be obtained in Washington Heights; and

**Whereas**, the 70-year-old historic newsstand is owned by long-time District 12 community member Ellen Fine, and was opened by her father after his return from World War II; and

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**Whereas**, historic newsstands like this one have historically provided opportunities for immigrants and veterans struggling to find employment after World War II to start their own businesses and provided economic stability for themselves, their families, and their communities; and

**Whereas**, these historic newsstands provide distinctive character to New York City neighborhoods such as Washington Heights with their unique designs and embellishments that harken to the culture of the neighborhoods in which they are located; and

**Whereas**, the historic newsstand at 168th Street and Broadway also provided a long-time familiar and friendly face to welcome residents as they headed toward their work-day commute, and greeted them when they returned home to the community in the evening; and

**Whereas**, Abbas Agwan, was a neighborhood ambassador, working at the Washington Heights newsstand for the last 17 years, providing an important community service in hospitality to residents, visitors, and other community stakeholders; and

**Whereas**, the number of these historic newsstands that provide significant business opportunities to communities such as Washington Heights has dwindled from a high of 1,500 at their peak in the 1950s, to less than 300 today; and

**Whereas**, New York City, under the direction of former Mayor Michael Bloomberg, contracted with Cemusa, a Madrid-based design company, to ensure all new newsstands and any existing historic newsstands are built or rebuilt with a uniform design and structure across the City; and

**Whereas**, there is no guarantee that any new newsstand will be constructed on the site of the former historic Washington Heights newsstand at 168th Street and Broadway, and if one is constructed in the historic newsstand's location at 168th Street and Broadway, it will have this same homogeneous design as all others constructed under the Cemusa contract and is not guaranteed to be locally-owned. Now, therefore be it;

**Resolved**, that Community Board 12-Manhattan is providing this commendation in recognition and appreciation of the historic contributions of this historic newsstand to the Washington Heights community, and to its owner, Ellen Fine, for her commitment to keeping this historic symbol of economic opportunity and community goodwill in Washington Heights for 70 years.

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**Resolved**, that Community Board 12-Manhattan urges the New York City Department of Transportation to provide a permanent plaque, marker, or other visible form of recognition of the historic newsstand at its former site at West 168th Street and Broadway.

**Resolved**, that Community Board 12 - Manhattan urges the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and the New York City Council's Committee on Transportation to support this permanent recognition marker.

Sincerely,



Richard R. Lewis,  
Chairperson

cc:           Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor  
              Hon. Letitia James, Public Advocate  
              Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller  
              Hon. Gale Brewer, Borough President  
              Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman

                  Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator  
                  Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member  
                  Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member  
                  Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member  
                  Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member