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COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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October 26, 2021

Dean Shapiro
Senior Vice President
Oxford Properties Group
450 Park Avenue, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10022

Dear Mr. Shapiro:

At its Full Board meeting October 21, 2021, Community Board #2, adopted the following resolution:

A Resolution Regarding the Proposal by the Developers of 550 Washington St. for the Creation of a New West Street Crosswalk to the Hudson River Park

Whereas:

1. There is a current lack of pedestrian crossings between West Street and Hudson River Park (HRP) on the stretch between Canal Street and West Houston Street, a distance of approximately one quarter mile; and
2. The new office building at 550 Washington St. that replaces the portion of the St. Johns building south of Houston St. - built by Oxford Properties Group and recently acquired by Google - was designed to include a new 50-ft-wide passageway between the southern side of 550 Washington and the northern side of the Department of Sanitation of New York (DSNY) building, in-line with where Charlton St. would run if it did not terminate at the UPS building on Greenwich St.; and
3. The new passageway will be called Charlton Garden Alley (CGA); and
4. The developers of 550 Washington Street have designed a new crossing of West St into HRP to commence from the sidewalk on the western side of 550 Washington St.; and
5. The new crossing will be positioned 60 ft north of CGA and 25 ft south of the left turn lane on the northbound side of the highway (closer to what would be King St. if that road continued west through the UPS building and the new office building). Specifically, the crossing will be sited 617 ft north of Spring St. and 372 ft. south of W. Houston St., terminating in HRP just south of pier 40; and
6. A crossing at this location permits a wide "refuge" area at the highway median; and
7. The option of a crossing that commenced at CGA and terminated in the space north of the tennis courts in HRP was considered but was deemed a danger to pedestrians because of the eastern terminus's proximity to the entrance used by DSNY trucks; and
8. The crossing will be 20 ft wide, which is thought appropriate to support cyclists and pedestrians concurrently; and

9. The sidewalk on West St. adjacent to the 550 Washington Building will not be widened, but there will be a bump-out from the sidewalk into the eastern side of West St. at the crosswalk in the parking lane; and
10. The new crossing will include the installation of a stop light that requires cars to stop in both directions on West St., as well as signals to direct pedestrians on when it is safe to cross. This new stop light will be synced / coordinated with other lights north and south on West St. and will follow the federal minimum times for pedestrian crossing which in this case is expected to be 37 seconds which is thought to be sufficient for pedestrians to cross the estimated 98 ft of the highway. Timing will be set up to minimize the chance for southbound traffic to queue back and block the West Houston crossing; and
11. The crossing will enter HRP at a newly constructed opening in the lawns that will include a pedestrian plaza with a 22-bike Citibike dock; and
12. This Citibike dock will replace a 22-bike dock currently located a short distance to the south, adjacent to the northern end of the tennis courts, and will be located just south of the southern end of pier 40; and
13. The new Citibike location within the new pedestrian plaza is deemed safer for pedestrians than the existing site because it will be more visible and will include the installation of a flashing amber light in the HRP bikeway to encourage bikers to slow down around the crossing; and
14. Significant landscaping design has been done both for the new plaza and the greening over of the existing bike rack space adjacent to the tennis courts including 3 new oak trees that will be planted to replace the 3 trees that will have to be removed, 101 new shrubs; and a total of 650 plants with better improved irrigation and new boulders; and
15. The Hudson River Park Trust is supportive of this plan and was the driver of the decision to move the existing bike rack and combine it with a pedestrian plaza in order to maximize green space and lawn; and
16. At the current time there is no support by New York City Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) for an additional crossing at Spring St. because of its proximity to Canal St. at West St. and the safety and traffic hazards that could result; and
17. There is no funding opportunity or consensus at this time for the building of overpass crossings at this site or at a Spring St location; and
18. NYC DOT has not yet proposed any signage to draw people to use CGA and this new West St. crossing, but the new Streetscape Plan by the Hudson Square BID recommends wayfinding to direct people to the CGA; and
19. Precise estimates of pedestrian crossing volumes are unattainable at this time because of the lingering effects of the Covid pandemic and the difficulty to predict employees' return to Google at 550 Washington St., but current predictions are for pedestrian crossings of 250 people per hour in both directions; and
20. Although designs and usage of the CGA have not been finalized, the developers have stated that it is expected to be primarily for pedestrian and bicycle access, though occupants of this building could use it for occasional drop-offs, but not for deliveries; and
21. Oxford Properties Group, the developers of 550 Washington, are funding all phases of this project, including design, getting approval for the plans, and implementation; and

Therefore, be it Resolved that CB 2, Manhattan:

1. Appreciates the proposal by Oxford Properties Group, the developers of 550 Washington St., for its efforts in the design and funding of this project; and
2. Supports greater accessibility to Hudson River Park and supports this plan for doing so, though this crossing does not do so for residents of Soho; and
3. Remains interested in investigating the possibility of an overpass at or near Spring St.; and
4. Insists that the new Charlton Garden Alley and the new crosswalk remain for public use and not become private assets for the exclusive use of the owners and occupants of 550 Washington St., i.e., Google employees; and
5. Requests that the crosswalk installed be as wide as possible i.e., at least 20 ft wide, to permit safe crossing of cyclists and pedestrians at the same time; and
6. Requests that Oxford Properties Group and/or Google investigate the possibility of providing crossing guards if the intersection is found to be dangerous at certain times of the day; and
7. Looks forward to a more definitive explanation of how the Charlton Garden Alley passage will be used if it is meant to be multi-modal: the frequency and quality of automobile use; traffic regulations; and the management of interactions between automobiles, pedestrians and cyclists. These plans have not been finalized and could have significant implications for safety and comfort.

Vote: Unanimous, with 42 Board Members in favor.

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

Sincerely,



Jeannine Kiely, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Richard Caccappolo, Chair
Parks/Waterfront Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

JK/EM

c: Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NY Senator
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NY Assembly Member
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Corey Johnson, Council Speaker
Rick Cook, Cook Fox (Architects)
Philip Habib, Philip Habib Traffic Engineering
Angela Pinsky, Google
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Amy Arato, Mathews Nielsen Landscape Architecture
Ellen Baer, Hudson Square BID
Noreen Doyle, Hudson River Park Trust