



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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J. LEE COMPTON
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

April 6, 2007

Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane
NY, NY 10038

Re: Street Name Change – “Jerry Orbach Way”

Manhattan Community Board #4 supports the proposal to add a street sign, “Jerry Orbach Way”, to the northwest corner of West 53rd Street and 8th Avenue. We make this recommendation because of Mr. Orbach’s long-standing status as a Broadway and off Broadway actor, his over 20-year residence in Manhattan Community Board #4, his activity in charitable and community activities and the substantial community support for this name addition.

This Community Board seldom recommends named street signs, however, we feel that in this instance, it will illustrate the prominent role our neighborhood plays for Broadway and Off-Broadway professionals in addition to celebrating Mr Orbach as a much loved neighbor.

- Jerry Orbach is a long-time, honored Broadway and Off-Broadway actor. For over two decades, Mr. Orbach was an important presence on the stage. He was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame and was the recipient of the Lucille Lortel Award for Sustained Excellence in the Broadway Theater. In addition to starring in the original production of *The Fantastics*, Mr. Orbach starred in *Carnival!*, *Guys and Dolls* (Tony Award nomination), the original production of *Chicago* (Tony Award nomination), *Promises, Promises* (Tony Award and Drama Desk Awards), *42nd Street*, *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Three Penny Opera* and several other shows. Mr. Orbach was also a noted film and television actor, including such New York-focused films as *Prince of the City*, *Prince of Central Park*, and *Crimes and Misdemeanors*.
- In spite of his international celebrity, Jerry Orbach remained attached to his neighborhood as a long-time resident of Manhattan Community Board #4: Mr. Orbach lived in a building near the northwest corner of West 53rd Street and 8th Avenue for over two decades. As was noted by the several community and Transportation Committee members at the public hearing on the street name addition, he was a constant presence in the community and at local businesses and frequent visitor to the midtown north police station. He was also a noted supporter and booster of the larger NYC community. When awarding Mr. Orbach the New York Mayor’s Crystal Apple Award, Mayor Giuliani described Mr. Orbach as “a friend to all New Yorkers and a

devoted ambassador to the city.” Mr. Orbach was also named a “Living Landmark” by the New York Landmarks Conservancy.

- Mr. Orbach used his visibility to further the cause of New Yorkers, in particular police officers. On behalf of the Police Department, Mr. Orbach worked on programs assisting widows and children of officers killed in the line of duty, acted as a spokesperson for the NYC Office of Emergency Services, and (somewhat more controversially) stood for several days on the picket lines with striking police officers in 2000. Mr. Orbach presented the national Policeman of the Year Award in Washington DC to New York police officers. Mr. Orbach was an active fundraiser and frequent spokesperson/ad campaigner for the ASPCA, the Doris Day Animal Foundation, Project Pet Safe, Bide-A-Wee, and the Animal Medical Center. Mr. Orbach was also the recipient of the March of Dimes Horizon Award. Noted at his death, his eyes were donated to the Eye-Bank and were used toward restoring eyesight for two people.
- There is substantial community support to add his name on the street. Several hundred names were submitted to the Transportation Committee of Community Board #4 in support of the name change. An online petition drew hundreds of signatures in a few weeks. Local businesses and residents spoke in favor of adding his name on the street. Local police officers, the Detectives Endowment Association and the Robert Fulton Houses Executive Committee also support the addition of the commemorative sign. People from the immediate surrounding area on West 53rd Street were particularly vocal in their support for the street sign addition.

Jerry Orbach represents the values at the heart of our community: working ethics, humility, respect for neighbors, appreciation for the arts, pugnacity when needed and quietly successful. He is a perfect example of the kind of people that live in Hells’ Kitchen and contribute so much to New York City. Community Board #4 supports adding “Jerry Orbach Way” on the Northwest Corner of West 53rd Street and 8th Avenue.

Sincerely,



J. Lee Compton
Chair
Manhattan Community
Board No. 4



Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning
Committee



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning
Committee