



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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COREY JOHNSON
Chair

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

January 3, 2013

Mr. Steve Napolitano
Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
625 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 10018

Re: Proposed Dyer Avenue Landscaped Public Park Area

Dear Mr. Napolitano:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) supports the efforts of the Dyer Park Committee (DPC) to close the eastern half of Dyer Avenue between West 34th and West 35th Streets in order to create a roughly 7,200 square foot open space for public use as shown in attached concept plan. CB4 requests that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANY&NJ), NYC Department of Transportation (DOT), and NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) move forward with DPC in implementing this site plan, which would remove the traffic island, relocate the traffic light, and provide suitable landscaping.

CB4 requests the DPC hold advertised public meetings and receive input from residents of the surrounding blocks. After those public meetings, CB4 requests the DPC returns to the Board with a budget and revised programming and landscaping plan for further CB4 review.

The DPC was formed by area residents and the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association in 2012¹. As part of the 34th Street Rapid Bus Transit planning, the PANY&NJ agreed to reduce the number of lanes on Dyer Avenue, between West 34th and 35th Streets, from the current four lanes (one lane Northbound and three lanes Southbound respectively) to three lanes (two lanes Southbound and one lane Northbound). The DPC, which includes leadership of Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association (HKNA), Clinton Hell's Kitchen Coalition for Pedestrian Safety (CHEKPEDS), the President and members of the 434 W. 34th Street Cooperative Board of Directors, representatives of St. Michaels Church and several residents of West 34th Street, have met over the last few months to discuss how best to design and program this approximately 6,000 square feet of additional public space (the length of the street is approximately 200 feet and each former car lane is approximately 10 feet).

¹ Christine Berthet is Co-Chair of Community Board 4's Transportation Planning Committee and is also the Founder of CHEKPEDS and a member of the Dyer Park Committee. She disclosed her conflict and voted "present-not-eligible".

The site plan proposed by DPC concentrates the 6,000 square feet of public space into one area on the east side of Dyer Avenue, basically extending the eastern sidewalk (one lane adjacent to the sidewalk is already closed) and creating a total over 7,200 square foot (including the current sidewalk) of park area. Other alternatives are either less viable or desirable. Placing the concentrated public space on the west side of Dyer Avenue would require a substantial redesign of traffic patterns north of West 35th Street and likely expensive rerouting of traffic coming out and into the tunnel space linking Dyer Avenue to the Lincoln Tunnel. Placing the park space in the middle of the street surrounds the park space with moving traffic and thus makes the space less likely to be used and more difficult to buffer from traffic affects. It would mean both the east and west side sidewalks would remain narrow. Extending both east and west side sidewalks has some advantages in that it would enable both sidewalks, currently each less than 6 feet wide, to be more pedestrian friendly and could include some attractive landscaping. However, it would not enable the creation of a more park like area for this severely under-parked neighborhood. This is particularly important since “pocket” style parks have a long history in New York City and create an environment that neighborhood residents often take active involvement in ownership and landscaping. CB4 agrees with the DPC’s conclusions, derived in a “charrette” overseen by an architect, on this basic site plan.

At CB4’s Transportation Planning Committee meeting on DPC’s proposal, support was voiced from area residents, as well as the Acting Father for St. Michael’s Church. However, three areas of concern were raised by attendees. First, while efforts for public involvement were made, the process did not include any larger publicized public forums (e.g., flyers, mailings and e-mail blasts in area buildings, etc.) for area residents. Second, several buildings in the area did not have representation on the DPC. Third, the proposed design would have the added cost, not required in alternative designs, of removing the cement median in the middle of Dyer Avenue and moving the traffic light at West 35th Street and Dyer Avenue. This cost is estimated at between \$15,000 and \$25,000.

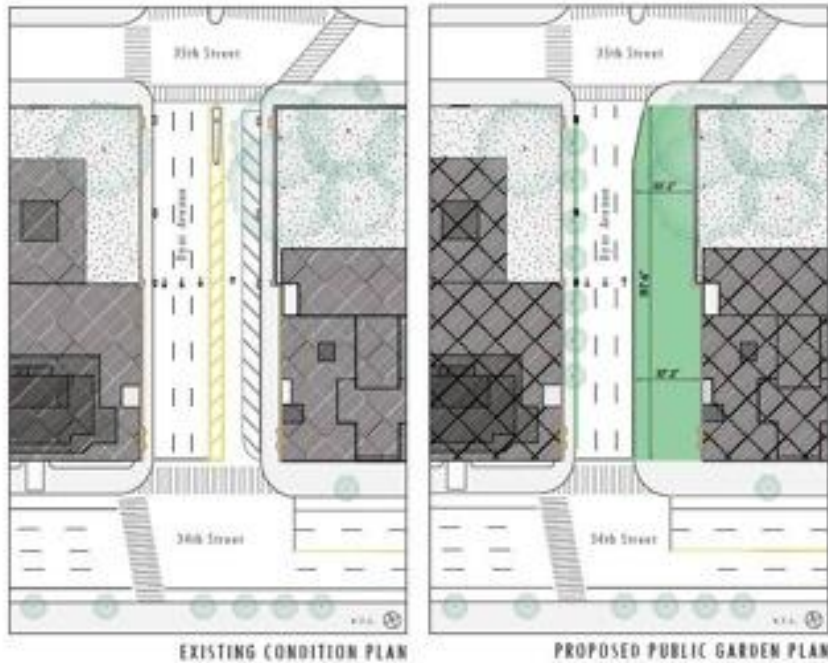
CB4 is sensitive to the concerns raised and thus, although we are impressed by the creative landscaping and programming proposals of the DPC for a “Hells’ Kitchen Memory Garden”, we do not endorse any specific landscape design or programming at this time. Instead, CB4 requests that the DPC return to the Community Board with more specific landscape and programming plans. We also request preparation of a budget for the creation and landscape design of the park and an understanding of who will be responsible and fund the park maintenance. .

CB4 makes the above recommendation with the following requirements, all of which have been agreed to by DPC:

- DPC should hold a minimum of two public meetings on its proposed design to gather input from neighborhood residents on the uses in the park area. Several of the buildings have substantial senior populations, therefore, there should be specific outreach to encourage their participation in the design and suggested features for the park area.
- These public meetings should include extensive outreach, including posters in building lobby areas, identifying email lists through tenant leaders and mailings.

- DPC continues their existing efforts to encourage tenant/resident leaders from all buildings between Ninth and Tenth Avenues between West 34th and 35th Streets to join in their planning and design efforts. CB4 notes that several of the buildings in the area are owned by Clinton Housing Development Company and hope that they, along with other building owners, will assist in the outreach to tenants.
- The final design and proposal should include articulated ideas for making the western sidewalk space a friendlier environment, including curb cuts with rubber grips on Dyer Avenue and West 34th and West 35th Streets and resurfaced sidewalks to smooth out buckling and landscaping.
- The DPC should return to CB4 only after a budget is created; a revised landscape design and programming plan is completed; funding for creation of the basic park infrastructure (removing the median and moving the traffic light) have been secured, and there is an understanding of who will fund and maintain the park area. .;
- While this project is focused on Dyer Avenue between West 34th and 35th Streets, the moving of the traffic light at Dyer Avenue and West 35th Street creates an opportunity to enlist DOT and the PANY&NJ in a discussion on how to improve the difficult and unsafe crossing between the east and west sides of Dyer Avenue on the north side of West 35th Street through signal timing and, potentially, a separate pedestrian crossing time of Leading Pedestrian Interval from turning traffic.
- Community Board #4 should seek to convene the Open Space Force Task Force established on 2009 Western Rail Yards Rezoning Points of Agreement (WRYPOA) to ensure implementation of the Community Board approved redesign and landscaping. The Open Space Task Force, which would include DOT and DPR, should also enlist the involvement and cooperation of the PANY&NJ, as stated in the WRYPOA.

CB4 is excited about moving forward with the creation of a new park space for our under-parked neighborhood and commends the residents who have taken leadership to move the more general commitment of the Port Authority to reduce Dyer Avenue traffic between West 34th and West 35th Streets to three lanes into a more substantial community benefit.



Sincerely

Corey Johnson
Chair

Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

cc: Patrick J. Foye, PANYNJ
Mark Schaff, PANYNJ
Commissioner William Castro, NYC DPR
Joshua Laird, NYC DPR
Commissioner Margaret Forgiione, NYC DOT
Speaker Christine Quinn, NYC Council
NYS Senator Brad Hoylman
NYS Assemblyman Richard Gottfried
Congressman Jerrold Nadler
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer

