

Coalition for a Livable West Side

Vol. 21 , issue 2

Dec. 2007

www.livablenewyork.org

email:livablenewyork@erols.com

Warnings Unheeded - Closure of 72nd Street Exit Ramp Causes West Side Traffic Chaos

The following are excerpts from a letter (11/7/07) written to NYCDOT Commissioner Sadik-Khan, from all of our west side elected officials :

" The West Side Highway's 79th Street ramp, along with the streets and intersections into which it feeds, has long been one of our community's most congested, chaotic and treacherous thoroughfares. The closure of the Highway's 72nd Street off-ramp, which we (all of the west side's elected officials) strongly opposed, diverted substantial traffic to 79th Street, making a bad situation worse. Now more than ever, pedestrians are endangered, drivers are delayed, and quality of life in the area is compromised. We ask for your attention and assistance in ameliorating these conditions as soon as possible.

"The epicenter of the traffic chaos and congestion is the intersection of 79th Street and Riverside Drive... Where it meets Riverside Drive, the exit ramp that serves northbound vehicles empties out onto the southern side of 79th Street, creating conflicts between those vehicles and exiting southbound vehicles already on 79th Street.

"This situation is further exacerbated by conflicts between vehicles turning south from 79th Street onto Riverside Drive and vehicles continuing straight (east) on 79th Street,

as well by vehicles violating the prohibition of left hand turns north onto Riverside Drive.

"As a result, the intersection often locks, traffic backs up onto the highway, and 79th Street is paralyzed leading up to West End Avenue.

"We are grateful to the DOT's Acting Commissioner Keith Bray and Josh Orzeck, who participated in a walk through of the area with our staff and identified a number of potential mitigation measures that might improve conditions at 79th Street. Several of these measures can and should be implemented immediately.

"We would also be grateful if DOT would increase coordination with the local precinct to improve traffic conditions. **Traffic enforcement agents are desperately needed at 79th Street and Riverside Drive during rush hours, to deter illegal left turns as well as honking and block the box violations.**

"On behalf of our many constituents who have expressed great concern about the 79th Street thoroughfare, thank you for your prompt attention to this matter."

Sincerely,

Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Manhattan Boro President Scott Stringer, State Senator Tom Duane, Assembly member Linda Rosenthal and Councilmember Gale Brewer



Traffic going east on W. 79th St., 1017/07. Photo by Joseph Hoey, Doorman, 70 RSD

West End Avenue from W. 57th - W. 70th St., is a dangerous speedway created by the 72nd St. ramp closure. Crossing West End Avenue has become even more hazardous for pedestrians. **See page 3** for excellent solutions on how to make WEA safer for pedestrians.

Coalition For A Livable West Side
PO Box 230078
New York, New York 10023



Maximize your contribution
via our Challenge Grant

Join the Coalition for a Livable West Side. Membership form is on page 6.

**Attention Fordham and Columbia University
City Is Pushing Colleges To Expand Into Poorer Areas**

"The city is moving toward grouping portions of its biggest colleges and universities in far-flung underdeveloped neighborhoods such as Long Island City, Governors Island, the South Bronx, and downtown Brooklyn...Ideally, the schools would create intellectual communities in some of the city's struggling neighborhoods.

"The city's 113 colleges and universities together, are projecting a need for 20 million square feet of real estate over the next few years for new dormitories, laboratories, and classrooms... With the city's crowded real estate market, the city is pushing colleges and universities to think outside the box about their expansion plans, urging them to consider sharing facilities...The city is aiming to have its communal expansion plans nailed down by next fall." Fr. article by Annie Karnie, NY Sun.

**City Council Approves Downzoning of
Part of the Upper West Side**

On September 28, 2007, the City Council unanimously approved a rezoning of fifty-one blocks on the Upper West Side, which limits most building heights to 14 stories on Broadway; 10 to 11 stories along the other avenues and 6 to 7 stories on the side streets in the area bounded by W. 97th Street to W. 110th Street, Central Park West to Riverside Drive.

Councilmember Gale Brewer Asks For Limited Moratorium on Certain Hours of Construction Activity

Councilmember Brewer wrote to the Commissioners of the Department of Buildings and the Department of Environment, on behalf tens of thousands of residents in the Lincoln Towers, Lincoln Center and Lincoln Square area, who are experiencing unprecedented and truly unbelievable levels of noise from demolition and jack hammering.

She requested: an immediate review of permits for two large sites: *150 Amsterdam Avenue, and 67-69 Streets and Amsterdam Ave.*; a limited moratorium on certain hours of activity at these and possibly other sites in the surrounding district; a start time later than 7 AM; no weekend permits for extremely noisy work; the observance of holidays when lighter work could be scheduled; and that construction sites be examined

on a consistent basis for full compliance with the new DEP noise regulations.

She wrote, "We all recognize the need for the city to grow and prosper, but not at the expense of destroying the right of citizens to live peaceably with their families in their own homes. These huge developments- and more on the way in the same area- should not take precedence over the health and welfare of those who rely on city to respect and protect their well-being.

"Amelioration is desperately needed, along with reasonable planning schedules that respect neighborhoods and their residents."

How Can Buildings in an Historic District Not Be Landmarked?

Answer: When NYC Department of Buildings (DOB) omits the landmark designation from its database.

"Once designated, the Department of Buildings (DOB) is supposed to mark them as landmarks in their records. That way, if an owner tries to get a permit from DOB to knock down a landmarked building or build something on top of it, DOB will know not to issue the permit, and will instead direct the owner to the Landmarks Preservation Commission to evaluate and hold hearings on any such major request. That's how it was supposed to work. But it didn't.

"The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation (GVSHP) surveyed the entire 37-year old Greenwich Village Historic District, the city's largest. They found that about 17% of the buildings in the Greenwich Village Historic District— some 337 buildings—had no record of being landmarked in the DOB systems. Therefore an owner could have obtained demolition permits without the landmark status of the building ever being considered.... After many rounds of corrections, all landmarked buildings in the Village appeared to finally be correctly marked as such.

"Many communities throughout the city are not aware of this potential danger to their landmarked buildings."

From: The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation. For more information, see www.gvshp.org/preserve/landmarkrecords.htm.

Coalition is seeking volunteers to check if buildings in CB7's Historic Districts are so noted in the NYCDOB database. All you need is time and a computer. Send us an email: livablenewyork@erols.com, if you are interested.

Design Streets For Pedestrians Not Vehicles

The Upper West Side Pedestrian Safety Plan, November 2007 - is part of **Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal's** goals to reduce older pedestrians' accidents in four study "sites". Site 1: West End Avenue from West 61st Street to West 75th Street; Site 2: West 66th Street from West End Avenue to Columbus Avenue; Site 3: West 72nd Street from West End Avenue to Broadway and Site 4: West 71st Street at Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue.

This pedestrian safety action plan, was prepared by Transportation Alternatives and developed by local senior citizens who recommended strategies for making their streets safer to cross and the neighborhood a more inviting place to walk. The bottom line - reduce vehicle speeds and pedestrian accidents by designing streets for pedestrians not vehicles!

Problems - Site 1: West End Avenue from West 61st Street to West 75th Street

Top pedestrian concerns are speeding vehicles, heavy vehicle traffic, turning vehicles, motorists failing to yield to pedestrians on West End Avenue and the cross streets, in particular at West 72nd St., West 66th St. and West 61st St., and not enough time to cross streets. Seniors found the lack of time to get across West End Avenue at 65th Street particularly dangerous. In fact, there were no intersections along West End Avenue where seniors felt they had enough time to cross the street.

Problems - Site 2: West 66th Street from West End Avenue to Columbus Avenue

Top pedestrian concerns in this area are speeding due to wide streets and wide avenues as well as cut through traffic to West End Avenue, turning vehicles failing to yield to pedestrians, not enough time to cross the streets, jaywalking because the blocks are very long and there are no safe mid-block crossings, fire trucks pulling in and out of the station without looking and Fire Department employees parking on the sidewalks.

Problems - Site 3: West 72nd Street from West End Avenue to Broadway

Top pedestrian concerns in this area are the mix of large pedestrian volumes and large vehicular volumes, many of which are trucks and buses and the fact that West 72nd Street ranks high on the list of pedestrian injuries and fatalities each year. The leading causes of these crashes are turning vehicles that don't yield to pedestrians or who overtake pedestrians with the rear wheels, and speeding vehicles. West 72nd Street at Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue is a busy area where pedestrians routinely battle the through and turning buses that travel on these wide streets. Pedestrians and motorists have a difficult time understanding how to move safely through this intersection together, making for a lot of near misses and the unfortunate crashes.

Problems - Site 4: West 71st Street at Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue

Top pedestrian concerns in the area are the long east-west crossings, high pedestrian volumes at subway and local schools, especially at the McDonalds store on the south west corner of the intersection, diagonal crosswalk at Amsterdam is too long and vehicles tend to stop in the crosswalk, confusing "bow tie" geometry is difficult for all users, vehicles tending to speed through the intersection, vehicles turning from Broadway to west-bound 71st Street do not yield to pedestrians and newspaper boxes and vendors blocking the pedestrian ramp on the SW corner of the intersection.

Luckily almost every pedestrian injury and fatality is preventable using inexpensive engineering techniques to improve senior pedestrian safety and mobility. The recommendations in the document create a universally easier and more enjoyable space for people to walk, specific recommendations, such as extending crossing time, adding leading pedestrian intervals, and creating bollard protected medians and curb extensions are specifically used to protect senior citizens, and assure that when implemented, would reduce the impact of the motor vehicles on the lives and health of all West Siders.

Transportation Alternatives will work with the New York City Department of Transportation to make as many of these recommendations happen as quickly as possible. At the same time, elected officials will be contacted to provide funding for the larger traffic calming build-outs recommended in this report.

Building on this effort, **Transportation Alternatives** and **Assembly member Rosenthal** will begin **a second larger study that will address pedestrian safety concerns north of West 75th Street and will create a senior citizen driven task force** around these issues to sustain this effort after the reporting is complete. West 72nd Street, West 86th Street and West 96th Street account for a majority of the pedestrian crashes on the Upper West Side. These streets will be a part of the next study, as well as other locations deemed difficult to cross by local senior citizens.



Bollard Protected Median

More on Page 4

Report on Streets For Pedestrians Not Vehicles



Call Amy Pfeiffer, Transportation Alternatives at 1-646-873-6023 for a free copy of the full report that includes the recommendations and graphics. The report will also be on-line and ready to download shortly at www.transalt.org

If you want more than one copy, there is a \$10 fee per additional copy.

Please email Amy at amy@transalt.org if you have further questions, comments, concerns or recommendations on how to make your streets safer.

Why Did NYSDOT Increase Danger to Pedestrians on WEA, When It Increased Safety for Pedestrians in the Bronx?

NYCDOT made WEA (W. 57th-W. 70th Streets more dangerous for pedestrians when it removed the medians from W. 57th - W. 61st Streets and made WEA from W. 57th to W. 70th Street into a 7-lane roadway because DOT needed to speed up the increased traffic caused by its closure of the 72nd St. northbound exit ramp!

But, the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) knew better! In 1999, it implemented its "Pedestrian Safety Demonstration Project" in the Bronx which increased pedestrian safety by reducing traffic speeds and pedestrian crossing distances, while increasing pedestrian refuge space (safety island in the middle of the street, ie. medians) , from 10 to 18 feet.

The result, by 2005, pedestrian accidents *decreased by 69%*

Keep An Eye on These Sites

Developers are eager to acquire institutional sites.

Churches and synagogues-sold more property than any other nonprofit group in 2005.

210 W. 91st Street (Young Israel of West Side)

Between Broadway -Amsterdam Ave.

- Landmarked.
- Air-Rights of 110,682 gross sq. ft., offered for sale by Young Israel.
- 23-story condo tower above synagogue.
- 45 condo units
- Building would rise over the Young Israel of the West Side Synagogue.



Congregation Shearith Israel 6-10 W. 70th St. (Central Park West)

- Landmarked.
- Requested 8 variances (zoning exceptions)
- Wants to build luxury condominiums on top of new community house, mid-block on W. 70th St.
- Involves transfer of air-rights.
- Building would be more than twice as tall as the brownstones .
- Called "Spot zoning" .
- Would be adjacent to Landmarked Synagogue (corner of Central Park West and W. 70th St.
- At a November 19, 2007 meeting, Community Board 7's Land Use Committee basically did not support the variance application of Congregation Shearith Israel, under review by the Bureau of Standards and Appeals (BSA).

Development Site 272 - 276 W. 86th St.

- Three brownstones sold to Street Smart LLC.
- May be trying to buy air rights from Euclid Hall.
- Euclid Hall owned by a non-profit group - West Side Federation of Senior and Supportive Housing.
- Trying to buy air rights from 278 W. 86 St. - a coop.
- New building eligible for inclusionary bonus. (Adds 20% to size/bulk of buildings) .
- Height limit of 210 feet..

Planned Between W. 60th-W. 61st St.

Between WEA and Amsterdam Ave.

West End (LHL) plans two rental apartment buildings with a total of about 300 units at the site, one 27 stories and one 17-stories.

Potential Development Site Filene's Site - 2220 Broadway

W. 79th and Broadway, NE Corner

- Sold on 11/17/2006 to Friedland Properties.
- Can buy " air rights" from church across the street (First Baptist).
- Filene's has a long lease, but is in financial trouble.

The West Side As a Permanent Construction Zone

New Development - Under Construction or Planned

Planned

201 West 92nd Street

West 92nd St. and Amsterdam Ave.

- Owner plans to use 125,000 sq ft. of unused development rights.
- Add 7 stories to existing building.
- 56 condominiums.
- Building permit filed.
- Not yet approved (11/17/07)
- Seeking buyer.



Air Rights - Legal But Absurd

"Air rights" refer to "unused development rights." A property owner can sell his/her unused development rights ("air rights") to an adjacent property owner, allowing the buyer to build a taller building next door.

That's how the out-of-scale Extell buildings got built on Broadway (99th-100th St.)

Under Construction

230 West 78 Street - The Linden

Between Broadway and Amsterdam Ave.

- Bought air rights from 236 W. 78th St.
- 21-floors, 240 feet in height, equivalent to 24 stories;
- 35 condos;
- Cantilevered over 236 W. 78th St. at the 4th and 6th floor
- Backs up onto landmarked West Side Historic District
- Through a zoning quirk, not governed by Landmarks .
- High-rise mid-block!!

243-245 W. 60 St.

Under Construction

Between WEA and Amsterdam Ave.

- Called the Adagio
- 9-story condominium with 41 units
- Height is 144 feet
- Forty foot in-door pool
- Part of West End (LHL) bigger development

Under Construction

535 West End Avenue/W. 86th St and WEA

- 21-story building (210 feet).
- 20 floors (152,000 sq. ft.), 27 condos (from 3,700- 8,400 sq. ft)
- Construction time - 24 months.
- BOVIS/construction's Hot line 1-212-448-3997.
- Extell (developer) asking for 20 parking spaces /curb cut.
- Curb cut for the garage and additional parking spaces must go through 7-month Public Review, called ULURP.
- During ULURP, Public has opportunity to voice opinions, etc
- Entrance to the garage is on West 86th Street.

Between W. 68th - W. 69th St., Amsterdam Ave.



New Lincoln Square Synagogue

Five stories. Actual height not known. 53,000 sq. ft. Involved land swap of old synagogue site to American Continental Properties and new site to the synagogue.

Under Construction

Red Cross Building-150 Amsterdam Avenue , W. side of Amsterdam Ave. , W. 66th Street

The construction noise emanating from this site have been unbearable for residents who live near the site. Calls to 311 brought no results. So our elected officials organized a meeting (Nov. 19, 2007) where the community - over 400 people - met the developers, architect and the construction manager for Bovis.

The building is huge - 30 feet of retail space, 420 feet of rental apartment space (310 apts.), and on top, 33 feet for the water tower and mechanicals. That equals 483 feet or a **48-story tower**. The building is "as-of-right". No special permits needed but they are requesting special permission to add 25,000 sq. ft. of retail space. The public will have an opportunity to voice its opinions . Approval is not a "given".

Residents expressed their outrage and frustration at the lack of response from Bovis' Hot Line. The developer was asked to start construction at 8 AM instead of 7 AM. The answer was NO! Many residents asked the developer to consider using the 25,000 sq. ft. at the base of the building for a pre-school and kindergarten. The local school, P.S. 199 is swamped with new students and has no space. The developer did agree to meet with parents from P.S. 199. All our elected officials - Congressman Jerrold Nadler, Boro President Scott Stringer, State Senator Tom Duane, Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal and Council member Gale Brewer - support using a part of the new building for school use.

Is Sackman Properties 'Sacking' the West Side?

Sackman's Properties Planned

508 WEA/510 WEA

Between W. 84th- W. 85th St.

- Two tenants left.
- WEPS* fighting for tenants

Planned

732 WEA and 734 WEA

Between W. 95th - W. 96th St.

- Both browntones vacant.
- New Building can be 210 feet.

Sackman's Pressure on 487 West End Avenue

Between W. 83rd-W. 84th St.

- Two tenants remain.
- Owns 307 W. 83rd St. which backs onto 487 WEA.

Sackman or Affiliates Own 243 W. 76th St.; 245 W. 76th St. 251 W. 76th St.

Between Broadway and WEA

- Three contiguous brownstones.

For more info about the West End Avenue Preservation Society, email: epetersen.weps@gmail.com

Congressman Jerrold Nadler Urges West Siders to Get Involved

Congressman Jerrold Nadler urges West Siders to get involved in the fight for a livable West Side amidst a current spate of development throughout the neighborhood. The following are just three of the areas that he is currently focused on.

Fordham University Expansion Plan: Along with State Senator Tom Duane and Assembly members Richard Gottfried and Linda Rosenthal, Congressman Nadler called for changes to Fordham University's current proposal for expansion. He believes the plan, as it stands now, would create a too-tall, fortress-like perimeter around the Lincoln Center campus, burden the local infrastructure and create hundreds of unaffordable condos that will erode the economic diversity of the neighborhood. Taking a lead from Community Board 7 and Fordham Neighbors United, he has asked Fordham for a reduction in scale and bulk on the perimeter, plans for infrastructure improvement and the inclusion of affordable housing.

West End Preservation Society: He is also working with the newly formed West End Preservation Society to find a way to stop the speculative purchase and large-scale redevelopment of brownstones along and near West End Avenue. Currently, there are vulnerable sites on West End between 95th and 96th Streets, 84th/85th, and 83rd/84th, as well as on 86th Street between West End and Broadway. *Councilmember Gale Brewer* has been working with the Department of Buildings to make sure permits are not issued prematurely, while *Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal* has taken the lead on exploring historic preservation as a means to stopping this assault.

Southern End of Riverside South (W. 61st-W.59th St): The Extell Development Company has released preliminary plans for the final buildings of Riverside South, to be built on parcels L (original zoning - 280 apts.) , M (original zoning - 295 apartments) and N (W. 59th - W. 61st St. - unzoned). Extell's plans will include between 2,100 and 2,500 units. There isn't enough information to make a full assessment, but concerns about scale and community facilities loom large. The developer will be seeking approval for a necessary rezoning—keep your eyes out for notice of CB7 meetings on the developer's application. [The Coalition for a Livable West Side will keep you informed. It helps if you are on our email list - livablenewyork@erols.com.]

Tired of Wading Across Crosswalks After It Rains?

There is severe flooding at crosswalks on the West Side after it has rained. After complaints to 311, the Dept. of Environmental Protection inspected a reported area on a *sunny day and said they could see no problem!*

Volunteers are needed to take photos, preferably digital, of the flooded crosswalks. *Senator Tom Duane's* office (David Chang) will follow through with the proper City agencies. Please call Batya at 212-580-9319, if you are interested. Or email livablenewyork@erols.com

Send us an e-mail - livablenewyork@erols.com. We NEVER give anyone or organization your email address. E-mails are sent as blind copy. We send out frequent updates via e-mail.



The Coalition for a Livable West Side's prime goal is protecting our community and environment!

Name _____ Address _____ Apt. _____ City/State _____ Zip _____

My contribution is: **Annual Dues: \$25** New Member Renew - Year 2007 Dues Pre-Pay Year 2008 Dues
 \$500 \$75 I wish to support the Coalition's lawsuit to overturn DOT's approvals of ramp closing and WIP.
 \$250 \$50 I wish to support the Coalition for a Livable West Side's efforts on behalf of the community.
 \$200 \$25 I can help with publicity. can attend important meetings, hearings, etc.
 \$100 other _____ I can distribute the Coalition newsletters, important flyers, etc. in my building. I need _____ copies.
 I can help with _____

Please make checks payable to: CALW, Inc. - Write Challenge Grant in lower left-hand corner of check.

Mail to: CALW, Inc., P.O. Box 230078, New York, N.Y. 10023. Contributions are tax deductible [section 501c3]

If your company has a Matching Gift program, please apply on behalf of the Coalition. We now can accept gifts of stock. We have no paid staff. If your membership has expired (see label), please renew. If you are not a member, please join.