



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Shahabuddeen A. Ally, Esq., Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

July 5, 2016

Hon. Polly Trottenberg
Commissioner
Department of Transportation
55 Water Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10041

Hon. Mitchell J. Silver
Commissioner
NYC Parks & Recreation
The Arsenal
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

Dear Commissioners Trottenberg and Silver:

At the General Meeting on Tuesday, June 28, 2016 Community Board 12 Manhattan, passed a resolution with a vote of (30) In Favor, (0) Opposed, (0) Abstention and (1) Not voting due to conflict calling on our elected officials immediately to fund the W. 181st Street Beautification Project; and requesting that DoT & DPR work together to coordinate funding and completion of such project(s) and requesting that DDC exercise the utmost care and stewardship over the extant plantings and restoration of same in the course of managing the renovation project.

Whereas: The W. 181st Street Beautification Project (W181BP) is a small 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to making the neighborhood a more attractive and caring place, providing neighborhood youth programming at several sites in Washington Heights and having created beautifully terraced gardens on either side of the Pinehurst Ave. / W. 181st St. step street in 1986 through Operation Green Thumb and has maintained them for the last 30 years; and

Whereas: The gardens consist of 22 terraces (11 on either side of the steps) and provide visual beauty as well as seating and respite for residents of Washington Heights, and are a cherished neighborhood amenity providing "old world" charm in the urban visual landscape; and

Whereas: The W181BP presented to the Traffic & Transportation Committee of Community Board 12, Manhattan (CB12M) on June 6, 2016 and to CB12M's Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee on June 14th with regard to the deteriorating conditions, citing two inter-related problems – rotting timbers and a rodent infestation replete with a vast network burrows that has eroded the terraces' underlying infrastructure – which have conspired to render the terraces unsafe for the public and for volunteer gardeners; and

Whereas: The step street is a mapped street under the auspices of the NYC Department of Transportation (DoT), and was renovated in 2001 by DoT and the NYC Department of Design & Construction (DDC), both of which agencies took great care to preserve what plantings they could and to restore the gardens following construction; and

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Whereas: DoT agrees that it has the responsibility to correct the current structural issues facing the step street, but lacks the landscaping and gardening expertise to evaluate the problem and identify the best corrections action(s) and would defer to NYC's Department of Parks & Recreation (DPR)'s expertise; and

Whereas: CB12M supports a joint effort by these two agencies to effect a short-term project to evaluate the situation and provide immediate stabilization, and a long-term project to provide a complete and enduring repair; now therefore be it

Resolved: That CB12M calls on our elected officials immediately to fund such projects; and be it further

Resolved: That CB12M requests that DoT & DPR work together to coordinate funding and completion of such project(s); and be it further

Resolved: That CB12M requests that DDC exercise the utmost care and stewardship over the extant plantings and restoration of same in the course of managing the renovation project(s) of the Pinehurst Ave. / W. 181st Street step street's terraced gardens; and be it further

Resolved: That CB12M requests that the NYC Department of Health immediately engage in an evaluation and extermination program to mitigate the severe rat infestation plaguing these terraced gardens.

Sincerely,


Shahabuddeen A. Ally, Esq.
Chairperson

cc: Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Letitia James, Public Advocate
Hon. Charles Rangel, Congressman
Hon. Bill Perkins, State Senator

Hon. Herman D. Farrell, Jr., Assembly Member
Hon. Guillermo Linares, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member, Chair of Council's Transportation Committee
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member, Chair of the Council Park's Committee
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, State Senator