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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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December 23, 2014

Faith Rose  
Executive Director  
NYC Public Design Commission  
City Hall, 3rd. Floor  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Executive Director Rose,

At its Full Board meeting December 18, 2014, Community Board #2, adopted the following resolution:

***Re: Proposal by NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, Department of Transportation and NYU to modify part of the open space on Bleecker Street between Mercer Street and LaGuardia Place, and part of LaGuardia Park on LaGuardia Place between Bleecker and W. 3rd Streets.***

WHEREAS the two parcels of land in question are owned by the City of New York and changes to these parks are required by the Restrictive Declaration created as part of the NYU 2031 Plan approvals, and

WHEREAS there is a lack of clarity about whether this Restrictive Declaration will stand, as the NYU 2031 Plan is the subject of an appeal submitted to the New York State Court of Appeals, and

WHEREAS Community Board 2 Manhattan (CB2) opining on these open spaces does not imply that CB2 considers NYU to have any rights or authority over these or other City-owned lands, and

WHEREAS CB2 has long sought remapping of all the open spaces on the perimeter of the Superblocks to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), which has not yet occurred despite being promised as part of the City's approval of NYU 2031, and

WHEREAS the Maintenance & Operations (M&O) agreement between DPR and NYU has not yet been signed; given NYU's poor track record of stewardship of open spaces in this neighborhood the community needs enforceable assurance that these redesigned spaces will be kept well maintained and secure with appropriate trash receptacles, signage, safety patrols,

vermin abatement, noise control, lighting that does not disturb the local bird habitat, snow removal, and other quality-of-life issues in this dense residential area, and

WHEREAS the third element in this stage of the NYU 2031 Plan, also required before the demolition of Coles Sports Center, is the new site for the Mercer Houston Dog Run. However, no plans for the dog run have been provided for consideration by CB2, and

***Re: Bleeker Street South strip approximately between the Morton Williams Supermarket and the back of Coles Sports Center***

- 1) WHEREAS the community expressed much concern about the impact of new benches, especially the two facing south, as they are likely to greatly increase nighttime noise reaching the Silver Towers, 505 LaGuardia and Washington Square Village residential buildings due to people congregating there on their way to the subway from local drinking establishments, as well as create potential locations for drug dealers and other undesired elements, and
- 2) WHEREAS there are limited resources that can be dedicated to this area by the local police precinct and no assurance of additional security overnight, and
- 3) WHEREAS the idea of additional north/south pathways was generally acceptable, but concerns were raised about the safety of traversing the proposed bluestone pavers, especially by those with mobility challenges such as walkers and canes, and
- 4) WHEREAS CB2 questions whether the lowered fences are the optimal height to assure sightlines yet discourage entry over the fences into the planting areas and Silver Towers site, and the existing fence is poorly maintained causing concern that the new fences in the redesigned space might also fall into disrepair, and
- 5) WHEREAS the Silver Towers site is landmarked and original NYU Plan 2031 revisions were approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), but this plan requires revisions to those plans that have not been brought to CB2, and
- 6) WHEREAS a question was raised as to the ownership of or jurisdiction over the westernmost planting bed north of 505 LaGuardia, and
- 7) WHEREAS CB2 appreciates that the planned new plantings will be attractive if they are well implemented and maintained, and

***Re: LaGuardia Park***

- 1) WHEREAS CB2 is greatly concerned that a large part of LaGuardia Park will be removed from public use for almost a year, even though that same area may become a construction equipment staging area for a future NYU building possibly starting in 2022, so the park will lose a year of use just six years before it may be destroyed, and
- 2) WHEREAS a not-for-profit community organization, the Friends of LaGuardia Place, created and has overseen the park's operation for decades, but there is no defined role for

these volunteers going forward despite their having commissioned and paid for the statue of Fiorello LaGuardia and received approval in 2009 from the Public Design Commission (PDC) for an already partly-implemented redesign, and

3) WHEREAS the current pathways, especially those at the South and North ends of the park, are well utilized and were designed with experience in how people move through this area. Therefore, any changes should keep the concept of additional movement and enjoyment of the park but retain the existing utility, and

4) WHEREAS a north/south pathway, rather than the current east/west pathways, may present a greater security risk as it would not be as easily seen from the street or the inner sidewalk, and

5) WHEREAS concerns were expressed that any new pathways must be carefully designed to provide safe and secure footing, including for seniors and the mobility challenged, and

6) WHEREAS the north quadrant was not shown as modified on the plans, although NYU said during the Q&A that it will be similarly planted but did not specify if the other modifications would be continued into that area, and

7) WHEREAS CB2 appreciates that the design for the plaza in front of the Fiorello LaGuardia statue has been opened up in response to community concerns, and that the designers state the current amount of unencumbered space will match what it there now,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that CB2 votes to deny this application unless:

- transfer of the park strips on the Superblocks to the Department of Parks and Recreation occurs before any changes are made to these spaces, and
- on the Bleecker Street strip: the two south-facing benches are removed, and
- in LaGuardia Park: the north quadrant is fully included, the park or as much of it as possible is kept open so this resource is not removed from public use for an entire season, and Adrienne's Garden and its seating area is kept open throughout the renovation, and
- the Friends of LaGuardia Place is consulted and included in the design discussions for LaGuardia Park, and a role for that organization going forward be determined and agreed upon, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** security, safety, cleanliness and ongoing maintenance must be planned for and arrangements made to assure these are done regularly and on an ongoing basis, and both CB2 and the Open Space Oversight Organization should be given the opportunity to weigh in on the Maintenance and Operations agreement prior to its being signed, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:** all possible precautions must be taken to preserve the existing mature trees, and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:** the concerns expressed throughout this resolution should be carefully considered and enforceable solutions created and approved by CB2 prior to any changes being made to these public lands.

Vote: Unanimous, with 41 Board Members in favor.

Sincerely,



Tobi Bergman  
Chair  
Community Board 2 Manhattan



Terri Cude  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair  
Community Board 2 Manhattan

- c: Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, Congressman  
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NY State Senator  
Hon. Daniel Squadron, NY State Senator  
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, Assembly Member  
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Margaret Chin, Council Member  
Hon. Corey Johnson, Council Member  
William T. Castro, DPR Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
Margaret Forgione, DOT Manhattan Borough Commissioner  
Lynne Brown, NYU Senior Vice-President for University Relations & Public Affairs