



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND
Chair

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District Manager

March 13, 2009

Borough Commissioner Margaret Forgione
NYC Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 35th Floor
New York, NY 1003

Re: Comments on the redesign of Gansevoort Plaza

Dear Borough Commissioner Forgione:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the redesign of Gansevoort Plaza, in particular the area between 14th Street and 16th Street. It is our understanding that the current configuration is temporary and that CB4 will be consulted in advance of the redesign for the permanent installation.

We are pleased by the utilization of the Plaza since the reconfiguration. A substantial number of residents and tourists seem to be visiting and enjoying the area and the design is visually a benefit to the neighborhood.

However, we are concerned about bicycle and pedestrian safety at this popular destination. The bike lane is not protected on the east side of the Avenue between 14th Street and 16th Street and cars turning east conflict with pedestrians and bicyclists at those locations.

We are also concerned about the increased vehicular back ups in the area and the resulting honking and other congestion noise that affect the many residents to the north of 16th Street throughout the week. We have identified three problems that seem to contribute to the situation:

- The traffic light timing was recently changed at Ninth Avenue and 14th Street;
- The current design – which creates two traffic lanes to the west of the plaza and two traffic lanes and a bicycle lane to the east of the plaza - confuses the drivers who slow down or veer abruptly at the 16th Street bifurcation, even when there is no congestion;
- The two lanes to the west of the plaza are very congested: lumber delivery trucks at 15th Street and parked cars at 14th Street occupy one lane; lumber deliveries and taxis drop-offs often obstruct the remaining moving lane. When the cars finally reach the 14th Street intersection, they cannot turn west, as they yield to a heavy flow of pedestrians crossing 14th Street.

CB4 thus requests that DOT consider improving pedestrian and bicycle safety by moving the Plaza area west so that it is adjacent to the Ninth Avenue sidewalks from 14th to 16th Streets. We believe this will further enliven the Plaza area by making it even more accessible to pedestrians without any traffic conflict. It would also create a wide enough area on the east side of the

Avenue to extend south the protected bicycle lane to 14th Street and create turn bays. It will also improve traffic flow by eliminating the bifurcation and related slow down at 16th Street.

On a related issue, we propose that DOT consider restricting right turns from Ninth Avenue onto West 14th Street. We request volume counts to assist in informing this decision. We request that this be considered for several reasons:

- Our observations show that most cars going south on Ninth Avenue access the West Side highway by turning right at West 15th Street. Most of the traffic turning west at 14th Street, travels to Washington Street and could reach the same destinations by turning right further south on Hudson Street. Considering the current state of congestion on the dedicated turn lane west of the plaza, restricting the right turn should have a minimal impact, and,
- It is our understanding that the pedestrian conflict created by the vehicles turning right on West 14th Street was one of the reasons the DOT did not locate the Plaza next to the western sidewalk during this temporary phase. This change would eliminate that conflict.

Once again, we are excited about the sense of place and the enhanced neighborhood ambiance created by the Gansevoort Plaza area between West 14th and West 16th Streets along Ninth Avenue and appreciates the opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair
Manhattan
Community Board 4



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Co-Chair
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c.c.

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