



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 10
215 West 125th Street, 4th Floor—New York, NY 10027
T: 212-749-3105 F: 212-662-4215

BRIAN A. BENJAMIN
Chairperson

ANDREW LASSALLE
District Manager

March 3, 2017

Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP
Commissioner
New York City Department of Parks & Recreation
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10065

Re: Frederick Douglass Circle Modification Proposal to prevent skateboarding vandalism, neighborhood disturbance and to promote a healthy and safe environment

Dear Commissioner Silver:

Manhattan Community Board (CB) 10 is writing this letter in support of the Frederick Douglass Circle Modification Proposal to prevent skateboarding vandalism, neighborhood disturbance and to promote a healthy and safe environment. The pedestrian plaza is located on West 110th Street and Frederick Douglass Boulevard.

The New York City Department of Design and Construction, on behalf of the New York City Department of Transportation, New York City Department of Parks, New York City Department of Planning, and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, worked on the design and reconstruction of the circle.

The memorial, located at the northwest corner of Central Park honors the African-American abolitionist, orator, writer and statesman Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), and consists of an eight-foot bronze portrait sculpture by Gabriel Koren, and a large circle and fountain with ornamental and symbolic features designed by Algernon Miller. Frederick Douglass Circle is also a traffic circle which connects the New York City neighborhoods of Harlem with the Upper West Side.

In the mid to late 1990s, a series of community-based design workshops organized by the Central Park Conservancy and later the Cityscape Institute led to a design competition for the circle in 2003--won by a collaborative proposal submitted by Harlem-based artist Algernon Miller and Hungarian-born sculptor Gabriel Koren.

Miller's overall design of the Frederick Douglass Memorial includes granite seating and paving patterns based on traditional African-American quilt motifs, as well as a bronze perimeter fence with a wagon wheel motif. The memorial also features a bronze water wall depicting the Big Dipper constellation that guided those on the "underground railroad." Koren crafted a standing bronze portrait of a dignified Douglass, cast at Polich-Tallix bronze foundry, highlights the memorial and was inspired by nineteenth-century photographs. The circle and memorial opened to the public in June of 2010, and after further improvements were formally dedicated on September 20, 2011.

In consultation with The Friends of Frederick Douglass Circle, Al Miller (the designer of the site and fountain), plaza architect Mark Bunnell, NYC Parks division of Art & Antiquities, the Central Park Conservancy has developed a minimally-intrusive, ADA compliant plan to deter skateboarding in the Circle. The proposal was designed with guidance from Steve Rodriguez, a former professional skateboarder and owner of the NY-based skateboard company 5Boro.

The proposed modification to the plaza include:

- Installation of dome-textured pavers at the base of the stairs at the northwest edge of the Circle to discourage skateboarders from skating over the stairs and landing at the base.
- Creation of a rusticated edge on the low-lying seating elements to prevent skateboarders from smoothly grinding the metal trucks of their skateboards across the edges.

The estimated cost of the project is \$92,820.00 (\$106,743.00 with 15% contingency).

It is the recommendation of Manhattan CB10 that this vital project be accepted as it will not only preserve the integrity of this monument to the greatness of Frederick Douglass, a jewel of the African American legacy, but will fore mostly, improve quality of life in promoting a safer environment for Harlem residents, pedestrians and motor vehiclist to the area.

Sincerely,



Brian Benjamin
Board Chairperson
Manhattan Community Board 10

Karen Horry
Chairperson
Parks and Recreation Committee
Manhattan Community Board 10

cc: William T. Castro, Manhattan Borough Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
Bill Perkins, NYC Council Member
Inez Dickens, NY State Assembly Member
Adriano Espaillat, U.S. Congress Member
Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President