



December 23, 2013

CB9M	16-18 Old Broadway
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Ms. Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
59 Maiden Lane, 35th Floor
New York, NY 10038

Resolution Re: Support for Montefiore Park Expansion Project

Dear Manhattan Borough Commissioner Forgione:

At its regularly scheduled General Board meeting held on Thursday, December 19, 2013 Community Board No. 9 Manhattan approved the following resolution **re: Support for the Montefiore Park Expansion Project** by a vote of 26 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention, and 1 present not entitled to vote.

In 2008, *NYC Department of Transportation (NYCDOT)* launched its **NYC Plaza Program** to create opportunities for community-based organizations to work with the City of New York and expand public open space in busy commercial and residential neighborhoods. *Heritage Health and Housing (Heritage)* partnered with *Harlem Community Development Corporation, Montefiore Park Neighborhood Association* and *City College Architectural Center* and submitted a proposal under this program that would close Hamilton Place from Broadway to West 138th Street, expand and redesign Montefiore Park; turning a moribund and fenced-in grassy passageway into a community “living room”; and

Whereas, The *Montefiore Park Neighborhood Association*, since 1994, has advocated for the revitalization of the park and surrounding neighborhood through its community meetings with City of New York officials, its park stewardship with the *NYC Department of Parks and Recreation* and *Partnership for Parks*, its art happenings with local and established artists, its educational ecological awareness efforts, and its continued collaborations with other community based organizations to beautify the park and enhance the quality of life for all Community District 9 residents; and

Whereas, With *Manhattan Community Board 9 (MCB9)* joining local elected officials (NYS Assembly Member Keith L. T. Wright; NYC Council Member Robert Jackson) and area businesses in support of the **NYC Plaza Program** proposal with a letter dated

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October 17, 2008, CB9 stated the need to enhance this important open space resource and protect pedestrians as they traverse the busy intersections surrounding it by closing Hamilton Place between Broadway and West 138th Street; *and*

Whereas, In 2009, *NYCDOT* selected the Montefiore Park Expansion proposal as one of only eight (8) projects citywide and began the process of securing a \$6.0 million budget and consolidating partnership agreements with other city agencies, including *NYC Department of Parks and Recreation* and *NYC Department of Design and Construction*; *and*

Whereas, In the ensuing years, Heritage and its partners maintained close working relationships with *NYCDOT* while holding several community workshops and outreach sessions to gather ideas for the park's eventual redesign and reprogramming; *and*

Whereas, In 2013, *the City of New York* completed its internal process and hired a design team – *URS* and *Thomas Balsley Architects* – that would work with the community and hold a park redesign visioning workshop. Over 50 participants from the immediate area gathered on May 4, 2013 at PS 161 (*event co-sponsored by Community Board 9*) to work for several hours with the design team and develop ideas for how the park could be transformed; *and*

Whereas, Those ideas have now taken shape in a proposed design that the City of New York seeks to present to the *NYC Public Design Commission* for approval. If approved, the project will move through design development and construction will begin in 2016 with completion in 2018; *and*

Whereas, As parking will be removed when Hamilton Place is converted into a park, *NYCDOT* has suggested alternative neighborhood locations where vehicles could be accommodated. The agency is continuing efforts with CB9 to address this issue.

Whereas, The project expands Montefiore Park, closing Hamilton Place between Broadway and West 138th Street to create approximately 52,000 SF of enhanced public space; *and*

Whereas, The design incorporates much needed public amenities in the park including backed benches, stone amphitheater seat walls, accessible grass lawn, new trees and perennial planting beds, decorative paving, pedestrian lighting, drinking fountain w/ dog bowl, way finding signage, maintenance storage kiosk w/ community bulletin board, and bike racks; *and*

Whereas, The design enhances pedestrian safety by closing Hamilton Place, therefore eliminating the long, un-signalized crossing along Broadway, by widening pathways through the park and lowering fencing to increase visibility, and upgrading pedestrian scale lighting to make the park more bright and comfortable at night; *and*

Whereas, The design accommodates emergency vehicle access to the adjacent businesses and will incorporate a commercial loading zone to accommodate deliveries; *and*

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Whereas, The design includes a flexible hard-scaped central plaza area to facilitate community events, farmers market, and public art exhibitions and will include power and water access for programming and maintenance; *and*

Whereas, The *Montefiore Park Neighborhood Association*, as an integral grassroots organizing partner in this proposal, supports the draft redesign of Montefiore Park, seeing it as a great opportunity for expanding its programming and maintenance of the park, and supports the continuing efforts of NYCDOT to refine and develop the eventual expansion; *and*

Whereas, This park expansion project supports the efforts of CB9 to enhance its district and compliments its visions for the future as laid out in both the Community Board 9 197-A Plan and West Harlem Rezoning initiatives; *and*

Whereas, There is a dire need of additional parking in the area, and the plans would entail the LOSS of at least 40 spaces; now

Therefore, be it resolved that, Manhattan Community Board No. 9 supports the efforts of the *community-based partners* – Heritage, Harlem Community Development Corporation, Montefiore Park Neighborhood Association – and their efforts to secure this \$6.0 million park development project for West Harlem/Hamilton Heights; *and*

Be it also resolved that, Manhattan Community Board No. 9 supports the draft designs submitted by the City of New York and its design team and looks forward to a favorable review and approval from the NYC Public Design Commission; and

Be it also resolved that, The Community Board recognizes the need to mitigate the loss of the scarce parking spaces and urges the DOT to work with the Transportation Committee to devise a plan to replace the lost parking spaces by adjusting parking regulations in nearby areas.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me or District Manager, Eutha Prince at (212) 864-6200

Sincerely,



Rev. Georgiette Morgan-Thomas, Chair

cc: Emily Weidenhof, NYC Department of Transportation
Hon. William Castro, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
Steve Simon, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
Maria Centeno, NYC Department of Design & Construction
Sofia Zuberbuhler-Yafar, NYC Department of Design & Construction
Thomas Lunke, Harlem Community Development Corporation
LaQuita Henry, Heritage Health & Housing, Inc.
Basia Nikonorow, Montefiore Park Neighborhood Association
Michael Palma, Montefiore Park Neighborhood Association