



GRAMERCY PARK BLOCK ASSOCIATION, INC.

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To: Our Neighbors on Gramercy Park

From: Arlene Harrison, President, Gramercy Park Block Association

Date: June 22, 2005

Subject: Update on Gramercy Park Hotel Construction

Information System to the Residents on Gramercy Park

I continue to have informal daily meetings with the Hotel management, the Bovis construction field supervisor and with the Con Edison site supervisor and I take the e-mail messages you have sent me to these meetings. You may be sure that all your concerns will be addressed and I will get a back to you immediately.

Gramercy Park Hotel Construction Site

A derrick has been erected on the roof of the Hotel to erect steel for the new part of the infill building. The infill building is what we have previously referred to as the bridge between the Hotel and the annex. The top four floors of the infill building have now been demolished and nine new floors will constructed in the next few months.

Demolition

Major demolition will continue for the next several weeks and then will wind down over the summer months. We are all working hard to make sure that the demolition dust is being contained as much as possible.

Con Edison Construction Site

We finally have some good news for our neighbors! All Con Edison work will be completed by early next week. It is likely that all parking meters will have the bags removed on Monday or Tuesday. The streets on Gramercy Park West will then be paved. I am requesting that Con Edison replace the bluestone that has been damaged on Gramercy Park South.

Con Edison Steam System

In my last memo, I wrote about the possibility of all the buildings on Gramercy Park West and some on Gramercy Park South, as well as two buildings on Gramercy Park North (60 Gramercy Park North and Calvary Church) tapping into the Con Edison steam system. I contacted twenty-three of those buildings and helped facilitate onsite meetings between the owners or the boards of these buildings who wished to consider this option. I have been informed that several buildings are now considering this alternative.

Safety of Pedestrians

Earlier during the construction the Bovis crew was concerned about pedestrians crossing through the construction site instead of using the walkways. For pedestrian safety Bovis placed a chain through the plastic barriers that surround the construction site. Bovis is happy to report that pedestrians are now respecting the construction barriers.

Lighting in the Construction Site

Many of the residents of 60 Gramercy Park North (in the back of the building) have complained about flood lights on the interior of the Hotel flooding their apartments with light throughout the night. Exterior lights on the construction site are required by the Fire Department and Buildings Department. Bovis will investigate and try to find a solution to this problem. I have suggested putting shades on the windows and Bovis is considering it.

Hotel Facade

All windows will be replaced with windows the same size as the original windows. The brick façade will be thoroughly cleaned. The bottom two floors of the Hotel presently have a concrete façade. During the summer the concrete facade of these two floors will be replaced by limestone, which the management feels will be more elegant.

Graffiti

In response to community requests, Bovis Lend Lease have made it their business to quickly paint over graffiti that has appeared regularly on the walls of the walkways.

Traffic

Traffic continues to be a problem particularly at Park Avenue South and Gramercy Park North. Also there continues to be a problem with larger tractor trailers coming down Lexington Avenue and having difficulty making the turn on to Gramercy Park North. We remain in close contact with the 13th Precinct, the Department of Transportation and Community Board 6 to see what we can do to improve this situation.

Street Closings on Gramercy Park

Sometime during the late summer there will be street closings around Gramercy Park for one day, for the purpose of erecting a temporary crane to bring mechanical equipment to the roof of the Hotel. We will alert you as to which streets will be closed for the day.

If you have additional concerns that you would like me to address, please e-mail me at arlenesharrison@yahoo.com. If you are not able to do so, please call me at (212) 260-3875. I am here to help you.

P.S. In case you have not seen the article about the Hotel in the Real Estate section of the June 27th issue of New York Magazine, I am enclosing a copy of it.

A first look at Ian Schrager's Gramercy Park Hotel suggests that his worried neighbors have nothing to fear.



Courtesy of 50 Gramercy Park

When word spread last year that hotelier Ian Schrager would be gutting the well-loved, well-worn Gramercy Park Hotel to build luxury apartments, the exclusive neighborhood's residents got very nervous. Gramercy Park, after all, is famously insular and slow to change. Would the structure, like the other Schrager developments, be too mod for the neighborhood? And who'd get keys to the private park? "There was concern," concedes Arlene Harrison, a park trustee and block-association president. "What would he do?"

But six weeks after sales began, 50 Gramercy Park is getting a warm reception from its reserved neighbors. "It's going to be elegant," says Harrison, sounding more than a little relieved. Schrager admits he took great pains not to ruffle any feathers. "I'm not coming in here like a bull in a china shop," he says, conceding that he's an outsider in the tight-knit neighborhood. "I want to fit into the fabric of the area." And buyers have responded; already, 19 of 23 apartments have sold, perhaps because the redesign of the building, by minimalist architect John Pawson (see rendering), is distinctive at a time when much high-end construction is rather generic.

Not that there haven't been snafus. Construction-related traffic has made headlines, and Gramercy's famously cranky residents have griped about the construction noise and dust. (Schrager's team has received a thumbs-up from neighborhood groups for responding quickly to grievances; his \$100,000 donation to the park probably didn't hurt, either.) But a fancy new building next door has its benefits. Schrager's larger apartments are supposedly fetching \$3,000 per square foot (that's \$6 million for a 2,000-square-foot apartment), a rumor he neither confirms nor denies. Warburg Realty's Judith Thorn says the prices will no doubt "help the value of the buildings nearby." (Nothing else comes close; a recent sale at 1 Lexington, the handsome prewar across the street, reached \$2,158 per square foot.) "You're paying a certain amount for the branding," explains Prudential Douglas Elliman's Rob Gross, and, of course, for that magic key to the park (every buyer will, in fact, get access to one). Also for what Schrager dubs "effortless living," which means the staff will take care of everything—including walking your dog and shopping for your groceries. "If I want to order a club sandwich at 1 A.M., I can," says art dealer Alberto Mugrabi, who bought a three-bedroom after touring nearly 100 apartments. "Whatever I paid"—he won't say how much—"it's worth every penny."