



GRAMERCY PARK BLOCK ASSOCIATION, INC.

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To: Our Neighbors on Gramercy Park
From: Arlene Harrison, President, Gramercy Park Block Association
Date: May 24, 2005
Subject: Update on Neighborhood Concerns

I continue to have daily meetings with the Gramercy Park Hotel management, the Bovis Construction field supervisor and the Con Ed site supervisor to discuss quality-of-life concerns involving the construction work at the Hotel. I also continue to monitor other issues that affect our community.

Gramercy Park Hotel/Con Ed Steam Pipe Excavation Site

During the next few days, Con Ed plans to be paving the streets on Gramercy Park West. The meters that have been bagged on the east side of the street on Gramercy Park West will be opened and people should be able to park there beginning on Wednesday. The last two meters toward Gramercy Park South may continue to be bagged as additional construction work needs to be done in that area. Con Ed is in the process of putting the steam pipe in on Gramercy Park North. They are digging down 10 feet on the sidewalk in front of 60 Gramercy Park North, but they have been running into unexpected delays because there is rock and brick and other debris and they must dig by hand. They are unable to bring in a tall machine to help with the digging because there is no room with the overhanging bridge. It is their hope to be finished in approximately three to four weeks.

Many neighbors at 60 Gramercy Park North have contacted me about a large, 20 cubic yard dumpster that has been sitting in front of the entrance to their building. It will remain there until the crew finishes the sidewalk excavation. I asked them not to idle their engine and they have agreed.

Con Edison Steam System

In my last memo, I wrote about the possibility of some buildings on Gramercy Park West and 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 have been informed that if the owners or the boards of these buildings wish to consider this option, now is the ideal time for them to do so. While Con Ed is working on the service extension to the Gramercy Park Hotel and the adjacent resident annex, they can install the underground piping at a reduced cost to new customers. Also, they will be able to avoid further disturbance to residents and street traffic. Those who are interested in exploring this option should call Jon C. Hettinger at (212) 460-3972 or George Gerritson at (212) 460-2011. They will visit your building and give you a better understanding of your energy options and will provide you with an assessment comparing the use of an on-site boiler plant versus Con Edison steam.

Demolition

Different phases of the demolition at the construction site will continue into the summer. Bovis is currently finishing the demolition of the flues on the bridge between the Hotel and the annex. The top four floors of the bridge will be coming down shortly and they will then begin construction of a steel bridge addition between the two buildings.

Dust

Bovis is committed to making sure that the water hose in the demolition truck is operating at all times. In addition, they are now spraying the containers as the demolition material goes into them.

In recent days, Bovis has added heavy clear plastic on the sides of the sidewalk fences to further shield the pedestrians in the walkways from some dust that may still come from the demolition trucks.

Safety Issues

There are presently orange and white heavy plastic barriers, known as New Jersey barriers, surrounding the construction site. It appears that instead of using the walkways on Gramercy Park North and Lexington Avenue, pedestrians are walking inside these barriers right under the construction site. This is a real safety issue to Bovis. To protect pedestrians, they will now place a chain through the barriers. I explained to Bovis that many of our neighbors expressed concern about using the walkways. They are requesting that if for any reason we do not wish to use the walkways, we should, for our own safety, cross the street. They are strongly urging us not to walk through the construction site.

Graffiti

Graffiti on the walkways, both on Lexington Avenue and on Gramercy Park North, continues to be a problem. Bovis is doing the best they can to paint over the graffiti. We both are working with the 13th Precinct to try to solve the problem.

Sanitation

Some residents of 60 Gramercy Park North have continued to complain about refuse around the construction site. Bovis continues to clean and hose down the area throughout the day and they are making sure that it is clean before they leave for the day.

Calvary Church Renovation Update

I met with Reverend Tom Pike to learn the construction plan for the Parish House of Calvary Church. Within the next month, they will begin fixing the façade of the building by replacing some of the deteriorating brick and window sills. It is their hope to have the work completed by the end of the year. They are working with consultants to ensure that the work will be done safely and with respect to the building's history.

Defective Street Light on Gramercy Park North

On April 29th, I called 311 and reported that the street light on Gramercy Park North between Park Avenue South and Gramercy Park West had not been working for several months. I was given a service request number for future reference, and I checked last week and am pleased to report that the light has just been repaired and is now in good working order.

Traffic Concerns on Gramercy Park North

Many people at 60 Gramercy Park North still have concerns about the scaffolding on 21st Street making it difficult to see traffic when they get out of cabs, unload their cars or attempt to cross the street. The Con Ed supervisor has agreed to have a flag man in place to direct traffic at various times during the day.

Traffic Recommendations

In my last memo I reported that Community Board Six approved the traffic recommendations worked on by the Gramercy Park Block Association, the Trustees of Gramercy Park, and the officers of the 13th Precinct to address the emergency public safety traffic situation at the intersection of Lexington Avenue and Gramercy Park North. An additional "no through" traffic sign has now been hung from the Lexington Avenue and 22nd Street traffic device. I have been informed that before the Department of Transportation can make changes in traffic, its engineers are required to do a safety study. Only then can the light at Lexington Avenue and 22nd Street be desynchronized.

Information System for Residents on Gramercy Park

If you have any 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 will do my best to get answers for you promptly.