

G R A M E R C Y P A R K

Dust Settles at a Noisy Crossroads

For the better part of four decades, Gramercy Park has been beset by gridlock and honking. But in a city fabled for disputatiousness, a large and varied group — a new nightclub, local residents, Community Board 6, the 13th Police Precinct and the Department of Transportation — have gotten together to solve its traffic problems once and for all. They hope.

“Every few years a van comes down Lexington and crashes through the gate into Gramercy Park,” said Arlene Harrison, president of the Gramercy Park Block Association.

Moreover, trucks coming down Lexington regularly try to make the tight right turn onto Gramercy Park North and fail.

When Steven Greenberg, who runs the Gramercy Park Hotel, announced he was opening a new nightclub there called the Cobalt Club, it seemed like the final blow.

Ms. Harrison said she got nearly 100 calls from concerned residents in the first

24 hours after the club’s awning went up. “The community said to me: ‘Let’s picket. Let’s shut them down,’” she recalled.

An all-too-familiar battle was taking shape, when a strange thing happened: Mr. Greenberg called Ms. Harrison to tell her he too was worried about the traffic. “Cars pile up,” he said. “You get honking. The biggest loser when that happens is the hotel, because we have guests.”

In early May, Ms. Harrison and Mr. Greenberg met with representatives of the 13th Precinct and representatives of seven residential buildings and one church on the park to discuss traffic. Along with the community board and the Transportation Department, they came up with a simple plan that they hope will work: replace seven missing signs and add three new ones.

Most of the signs should be in place by next month. The angry phone calls have stopped, and no one has picketed the club, which opened June 4. **ERIKA KINETZ**