

Traffic changes approved for accident zone, Gramercy Park

By Maciej Wroblewski
Community Board 6 overwhelmingly approved pedestrian safety measures recommended by the Gramercy Park Block Association and the Trustees of Gramercy Park to resolve the emergency traffic situation at the intersection of Lexington Avenue and Gramercy Park North.

The April 13th approval by the full board came after several months of intense group efforts by neighborhood organizations, the 13th Precinct and the community board.

The Gramercy Park Block Association and the Trustees of Gramercy Park had worked closely with the 13th Precinct in developing the first four of the five recommendations, in response to the increase in the frequency and severity of accidents at that location, which were approved and submitted to the community board by Deputy Inspector Michael J. McEnroy,

Commanding Officer of the Precinct. Fred Arcaro, Chair of CB6's Public Safety, Environmental and Human Rights Committee suggested the fifth recommendation, and the Board promptly forwarded these to New York City Department of Transportation Borough Commissioner Margaret Forgione.

The recommendations call for taking the traffic light at Lexington Avenue and East 22nd Street out of synchronization, which would cause speeding southbound traffic to stop at East 22nd Street before continuing on to Gramercy Park North, and placing a large flashing arrow directing traffic to turn west on an existing traffic device at the intersection of Lexington Avenue and Gramercy Park North.

The board approved placing an additional "no through traffic" sign on the traffic light at the intersection of Lexington Avenue and East 22nd Street, making East 24th Street an alternate "truck

route" to reduce the congestion and the number of trucks that try to turn onto Gramercy Park North, and adding rubber "anti-fatigue" mats near the base of Lexington Avenue to slow down traffic. CB6 also urged the DOT to consider placing orange plastic "New Jersey" barriers on the street in front of the Gramercy Park North gate.

In the past several years there have been 55 accidents documented at the intersection of Lexington Avenue and Gramercy Park North. Of these, 33 have occurred since 2003, and in the first three months of 2005 there were eight accidents there, five of which occurred in the month of March.

Three of those five, in one of which an individual was run over, occurred in the week of March 12th.

"We want to express our gratitude to the 13th Precinct, especially Deputy Inspector McEnroy and Crime Prevention Officer Joe

Abbruzzese, for all their work, as well as to Commissioner Forgione for her recognition of the urgency of the situation," said Arlene Harrison, President of the Gramercy Park Block Association and a Trustee of Gramercy Park.

"We also greatly appreciate the leadership in support of our efforts shown by CB6 Chair Carol Schachter, and want to thank CB6 District Manager Toni Carlina, not only for all her assistance on our current traffic work, but

also for her long history of working with us in achieving successful solutions to many of our quality-of-life issues on Gramercy Park," she continued.

Harrison also thanked Fred Arcaro, calling the opportunity to work with him on the issue, "a great privilege."

"His expertise, his recognition that immediate action was required, and his dedication and hard work in seeking solutions to our problems, made an invaluable contribution to our traffic safety ef-

forts," she said.

"The trustees are taking additional steps to increase the safety of people in the park and pedestrians on the street, as well as the drivers who approach this dangerous intersection," James M. Clark, Jr., chair of the trustees of Gramercy Park, told T&V.

"We have already placed six very large orange and black arrows pointing west on the planters in front of the Park gate, and we are considering additional lighting for the Park."