



NEWS SEARCH

Departments

Letters to the Editor

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B.P.C. scribes say no tunnel

We received a strong negative reaction to last week's Downtown Notebook by Cleveland Adams, who argued for submerging the Lower Manhattan section of Route 9A and constructing buildings and parks on top ("The answer is to submerge and build on Route 9A," Sept. 24 -30, 2002). Our letter writers were all from Battery Park City and they were unanimous in their opposition to the plan. Here is a sample:

To The Editor:

The idea of a buried West St. seems on paper to have so many wonderful things. However, if any of these people proposing/encouraging it actually lived in Battery Park City, they wouldn't be doing that. The idea of 10-20 year construction and spending billions of dollars when a Second Ave. subway is so desperately needed in this city is a crime.

Additionally, what happens to access for B.P.C. residents while this fiasco is being worked on? How do we get out of B.P.C., onto the F.D.R., or into the tunnel? How do the buses get into B.P.C.? Fire trucks? Ambulances?

And to create all this space to put buildings on it? That is much worse than just the highway.

I hate the idea and I resent your article for presenting it as such a "wonderful" idea for Downtown.

Denis Timm

To The Editor:

I was appalled to read the article by Cleveland Adams in the Sept. 24 issue of Downtown Express. He argues that tunneling West St. will save Downtown by providing more buildable land, but he ignores some important factors. He calls the 10-year construction to build the tunnel "a discomfort in the short run for us to live through." Who considers 10 years the short run? And let's not forget that he lives in Tribeca, well away from the "discomfort."

His premise assumes the re-establishment of the grid, which has been pretty thoroughly derailed by the "save the footprints" crowd, and talks about two new north/south streets. Well, I guess he hasn't read the proposals very closely, because they are talking about "local access roads," usually depicted as 2 lanes wide in each direction, not the broad avenues of the rest of Manhattan.

Also, I am mystified by the concept that "the property just north of Battery Park will command such spectacular views that the luxury housing built there would generate enough income to pay for pools, daycare centers, senior centers, and teen facilities." How? Is this to be not-for-profit ownership? Financed and owned by the city or the Battery Park City Authority? What is he talking about?

Let's think for a moment about who could profit from the construction of all these new buildings - could it be... architects?

Joanne Taylor

To The Editor:

Imagine an article where an opportunist like Mr. Adams does not prey on the raw emotions of victims and survivors of 9/11 to win support for burying Route 9A. To bury 9A and build above it will not benefit anyone other than the rich developers of the projects. Burying 9A is not the alternative solution to the "what to do with the W.T.C. site" question. The W.T.C. site should be rebuilt and that should be enough building for Lower Manhattan. We do not need a 10-20-year, billion-dollar project ruining a neighborhood that is trying to get back on its feet. Haven't the Downtown residents suffered enough?

Robert Thompson

To The Editor:

The article on the burial of West St. is preposterous. We in Battery Park City are opposed to it and decisions that affect our lives should not be made by people who do not live in our neighborhood.

Nritya Subramaniam

To The Editor:

As a nine-year resident of Battery Park City, I'm writing to express strong disagreement with the arguments of Cleveland Adams in his article entitled, "The Answer is to Submerge and Build on Route 9A" (Downtown Express, September 24-30).

To begin with, Mr. Adams states that the burial of West St. is necessary to gain land "to give Lower Manhattan the future of which we dream." In reality, the dream of which he speaks is that of huge profits to be realized from the development of this newly created acreage by real estate developers and the architects with whom they work.

The suggestion is further made by Mr. Adams that using a submerged West St. to rebuild lost office space is "the finest way to respect a hallowed site." Is it coincidental that moving the development away from the World Trade Center site would allow a new group of developers and architects to obtain a big piece of the development activity (since Larry Silverstein obviously has development rights on the World Trade Center site)?

Mr. Adams' reference to building luxury housing just north of Battery Park is a further clue as to what this is all about. Note how all the early talk about a "Grand Promenade" on West St. has melted away, and how the focus in recent weeks has shifted to putting up buildings. Behind all the soaring rhetoric and touching concern for a hallowed site is a simple driving force: money.

Mr. Adams also asserts that the debate should not be whether it will be a discomfort "in the short run" for "us" to live through the construction that will be involved. That's easy for him to say, since he is not a resident of Battery Park City and will be minimally affected. West St. is Battery Park City's main artery, our link by vehicle to the rest of Manhattan.

In addition, because there are no subway stops in Battery Park City, residents who primarily use the subway have to cross West St. on foot in order to get around. Those of us who live here will therefore face ten years or more of restricted vehicle and pedestrian access to our neighborhood as well as the noise, dust and dirt associated with road construction if West St. is submerged. In short, the quality of life in Battery Park City and the character of our wonderful neighborhood will be greatly harmed by the development schemes involving West St. that are advocated by Mr. Adams and others who stand to benefit financially.

Residents of Battery Park City will not sit idly by while this fate is imposed on us.

Bill Love

Koch and Express over the line

To The Editor:

In your September 24 - 30 issue, Edward Koch, in "Koch on Film," horribly overstepped the line of good judgment and of his responsibility as the film critic for your paper when he took advantage of his column to cast aspersions at the actress Susan Sarandon for her political beliefs. This fact reflects terribly on your editorial obligation.

I am an award-winning short filmmaker (recently graduated from Columbia University) and I can honestly say that I actually read critics' reviews in the city's papers. When I read Ms. Cooper's letter a few weeks ago regarding Mr. Koch, I thought she might have been overreacting (letters, Sept. 10 -16, 2002). It's true Mr. Koch is neither an "average Joe" nor a serious reviewer. Yet, his reviews, though poorly written and uninformed, do have a kind of senile avuncular charm that makes them a curiosity. However, by introducing politics into his review of "Igby Goes Down," Mr. Koch has lost all credibility. I now agree with Ms. Cooper that it is time for the Downtown Express to evolve and get a different reviewer. I don't recall ever seeing politics mentioned in a film review in this nasty way.

Mr. Koch and Downtown Express not only broke trust with the filmmakers, but, more importantly, with the readers. I don't care about Ms. Sarandon's politics and certainly not in a film review.

Is Mr. Koch advocating a return to the days of McCarthyism when actors and writers were punished because of their political beliefs? The most revolting part of was Mr. Koch introducing the word "Nazi," essentially connecting by analogy Ms. Sarandon's name to this universally odious group.

The problem is Mr. Koch is a politician, not a film reviewer. He does not have the interest of the viewing public or the filmmakers at heart. If he has concerns about someone's politics, he should write about them elsewhere not a film review. The editors know this. Worst of all, by disparaging the actress and insidiously asking about the benefits of a boycott, he also damages the other actors and filmmakers involved. Does this seem right or professional to you? Downtown Express should know better.

I believe Downtown Express and Mr. Koch owe an apology to the readers and Ms. Sarandon. I would also welcome a promise from the Editor to try to keep the word "Nazi" out of film reviews unless writing about World War II or Leni Riefenstahl films.

Lastly, I support Ms. Cooper's suggestion that the Editor find someone more qualified to review films, this great city is full of them. Otherwise, thanks for your hard work keeping Downtown informed about local issues.

Justin Dorazio

Sex acts matter for priests

To The Editor:

Re "How Father Mychal Judge came out posthumously" (Downtown notebook, Sept. 17-23, 2002)

That Father Mychal Judge had a tendency to homosexuality is not the same as practicing it. The question is, did he practice it? If so, he was not faithful to his vow of chastity, which he freely took. The facts are that the Catholic religion forbids sexuality of any kind outside the sacred bonds of matrimony between a man and a woman.

If Father Judge did not keep these vows, then there is the problem in this picture. That he had a tendency towards attraction to his own sex is not a sin. May God be merciful to him. No priest can be a practicing homosexual and be a good priest. This is a clear non sequitur.

Mary Faith West

Don't redevelop my home

To The Editor:

I am looking for help with a problem. An organization of which I am not a participant, the Downtown Alliance, has made a call to take action on our property based on their priorities and convenience ("Business, civic leaders outline ways to revive Downtown," news article, Sept. 24-30, 2002). As part of their principles for redevelopment, they have published the following:

"The nine buildings near the WTC site that have neither reopened nor been demolished should be immediately evaluated. They should be either condemned and demolished or programmed for redevelopment. The presence of these shrouded structures is among the most debilitating factors in the current physical appearance of Downtown."

It is disturbing that among these nine buildings are residential buildings with approximately 30 families. Among these are residents who have been active in many Downtown organizations. Press pieces in numerous newspapers, magazines, and TV shows have documented the difficulties in getting our homes back in order. The staff of a number of elected officials, including Sheldon Silver, Jerrold Nadler, and Michael Bloomberg, have supported us. And yet, with all of this visibility, a Downtown organization is calling for action on our homes without even taking the time to contact us.

In a way, I am complimented by the Downtown Alliance's interest in usurping our property rights. It puts us in good company. Larry Silverstein, for instance, has rights to redevelop the World Trade Center. People with no standing and limited stake in this property deem themselves justified to limit Larry's rights also.

This behavior is hardly neighborly from an institution that is so connected with Downtown. A call to action submitted to the L.M.D.C., with its stated right of eminent domain, is the moral equivalent of pointing a loaded gun at us.

A year later, I am happy that everyone a year or more away from site has returned to normal. I don't expect sympathy for our situation, which we will manage with time. But I do expect that an organization, whose members we support daily with our business, would at least respect our property rights.

The first step in respect is direct communication. I also have an issue with the lack of progress on the Deutsche Bank building, for instance. Can my family live in the shadow of that foreboding toxic ruin? I may prefer that the building be removed immediately, but that is not my decision. So the first step we have taken at B.P.C. United in addressing this community issue was a letter written to the owner. Only when our inquiry is ignored is more public action justified.

How would the Alliance feel if a group of community residents (called the Eyesore Residents of the WTC, perhaps) issued a press release calling for the dissolution of the Downtown Alliance in favor of a more effective organization?

If anyone from the Alliance would like to meet with his or her neighbors at 114 Liberty St., please stop by. In the meantime, we continue to work on repairing our building. Incidentally, the shrouds serve to protect people from falling debris during reconstruction. We regret that we are an eyesore on this beautiful Downtown that we have grown to love, even more since the attack on 9/11.

To those who have helped the community be aware of our plight, particularly the members of C.B. 1, Sheldon Silver, and Yvonne Morrow, thank you for your support.

Dave Stanke

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