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TUNNEL VISION ON WEST ST.

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December 28, 2004 -- TEMPERATURES are rising Downtown over **Gov. Pataki's** proposal to build an \$840 million West Street tunnel that would sink the six-lane highway under a landscaped median.

Local residents who didn't want a tunnel to begin with are livid over a new scheme to make it longer by extending it north to Murray Street, two blocks beyond its original planned entrance/exit portal at Vesey Street.

And the extension proposal has also become a hot potato for commercial and residential developers nearby who strongly favor or oppose it, but can't comment publicly out of political sensitivity.

Pataki wants the tunnel to protect the "sanctity" of the memorial planned for the World Trade Center site's southwest quadrant adjacent to West Street.

But tunnel portals, wherever they fall, will generate pedestrian-impassable incisions across West Street similar to the ones on First Avenue near the United Nations — precisely the sort of rupture to the urban fabric that Downtown planners have pledged to avoid.

As originally conceived, the West Street tunnel would run the length of Ground Zero's western edge from Liberty Street to Vesey Street.

But as the Times first reported on Dec. 2, Goldman Sachs, which plans to build a new headquarters in Battery Park City between Vesey and Murray streets, put up a stink over having 260-foot wide tunnel ramps on its doorstep.

The firm's objection led to the idea to extend the tunnel two blocks north, the Times reported.

In fact, sources told The Post, a tunnel mouth at Vesey Street would "be a dealbreaker" for Goldman Sachs, which wants convenient 24/7 auto access — which it now lacks at its Broad Street offices hemmed in by security barriers.

The Wall Street firm's campaign to move the tunnel entrance is said to enjoy the support of Brookfield Properties, which owns the World Financial Center next to Goldman's site. Brookfield and some of its tenants, such as Merrill Lynch, "really want to see Goldman's tower go up" to affirm the area's commercial future.

"They're afraid they could end up surrounded by apartment buildings," a source said.

But keeping Goldman Sachs happy would not be without consequences. A tunnel portal at Murray Street would cleave West Street at two now-barren sites where the city is promoting big-league residential projects. West Street, because it is part of Route 9A, falls under state control.

Both sites abut schools. They're also across from ballfields in Battery Park City, and some fear the tunnel portal will make the West Street crossing even more hazardous for youngsters trying to get from one side to the other.

After three years of haggling, the city's Economic Development Corp. is close to a deal to sell developer **Edward Minskoff** a lot on the east side of West Street between Murray and Warren. The project would include hundreds of new apartments and a retail base of up to 100,000 square feet.

Through an aide, Minskoff declined to comment. But it is reasonable to assume that after years of tough talks with the city — during which he agreed to drop his original plan for an office building — he can't be thrilled by the sudden idea to extend the tunnel to his front yard.

The tunnel depressions might also impact the block just north of Minskoff's, where Jack Resnick & Sons just paid the city \$40.5 million for a lot bounded by West, Chambers and Warren streets.

Resnick's complex will include around 400 apartments — many of them in a 300-foot tall wing along West Street — as well as a kindergarten annex to P.S. 234 next door. Groundbreaking is scheduled in a few months.

Company president **Scott Resnick** could not be reached. A call to Brookfield CEO **Ric Clark** was not returned.

Goldman Sachs spokesperson **Andrea Raphael** declined comment.

State Transportation Dept. spokesman **Peter Graves** said, "We're continuing with the environmental review process that's looking at all the issues currently affecting the corridor. No decisions have been reached as yet."

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