

[Westiders for Public Participation, Inc.](http://www.westsiders.com)

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Update Friday, December 19, 2008

- Please excuse duplication and cross-posting-
- Permission granted to duplicate the message below in its entirety-
- Please forward to other community stakeholders!-

Former DOT Deputy Director Calls “Columbus Village” Traffic Patterns “Inherently Unsafe”

BSA Hears Our Testimony and Our Elected Officials' Testimony

Nicholas Bellizzi, P.E., a qualified and experienced traffic engineer, states in an expert traffic and pedestrian safety evaluation commissioned by Westiders for Public Participation that the "Columbus Village" development as currently planned will have significant "adverse traffic and pedestrian safety impacts" along both 97th and 100th Streets, and will "interfere with the efficient functioning of school traffic and student pedestrians as well as police and fire department traffic and emergency services."

Mr. Bellizzi is a former Deputy Director at the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT), and was the project manager for the traffic, transportation, and pedestrian elements of numerous large-scale Manhattan environmental impact statements and large-scale site developments, including the Jacob Javits Convention Center, Lincoln West, and the Times Square Development Project.

The "Columbus Village" development lacks "even a basic, minimal traffic impact study," Mr. Bellizzi concludes. And worse "reasonable conditions necessary to protect public safety" and required by law "have not been met by this project at this time."

What does this mean for our community?

Ten new vehicle/pedestrian conflict points will be created by the developer's plans according to Mr. Bellizzi's expert evaluation:

- Five locations of off-street truck loading docks,
- One location of on-street truck loading,

- Three locations of underground parking, and
- BA private service road west of Columbus Avenue, connecting 97th Street and 100th Street, and creating a three-block stretch of unregulated traffic, as well as new unregulated intersections with both 97th Street and 100th Street.

On 97th Street, the development will add new "conflict points" to the existing toxic combination of a "large volume of traffic and double parked vehicles" including numerous P.S. 163 buses, and complicated by the added necessity of reverse tractor-trailer maneuvers on a street where students must walk to and from their school, and where all of us must live in safety and comfort at all hours through every day of the year.

On 100th Street, Mr. Bellizzi notes that new "conflict points" will add complications to an already congested street where both the fire department and the police department park employee vehicles "in a unique manner with two rows of parking along both curbs in a tandem parking fashion." The safety and comfort of everyone who uses 100th Street for any purpose will inevitably be affected.

In addition to five residential towers and 320,000 square feet of retail space on three levels, two new private schools intend to assume residence in "Columbus Village," adding an unspecified student population to our community and increasing our safety needs even further.

Mr. Bellizzi points out that the "traffic memo" provided by the developers to Community Board 7 provides "no analysis of any type whatsoever" and "would not meet the minimum requirements required by NYCDOT to perform a reasonable and adequate evaluation of the project's impacts."

Please read Mr. Bellizzi's full report to us [here](#). It's a long and occasionally technical document, but please take the time to read it carefully and thoughtfully. This expert evaluation is a blueprint for the future of our community. If you are unable to read the document online, please request a printed copy from a neighbor, or a stand-alone PDF file from us at westsiders@earthlink.net.

There are still many things that can be done to mitigate the adverse impacts Mr. Bellizzi has identified in his evaluation before they occur. As Mr. Bellizzi notes:

"There are many fully qualified traffic and transportation engineering firms located in New York City that are fully capable and qualified to perform the needed and required study and analysis, provided they are given an adequate, complete, and comprehensive scope of work and associated budget by the developer."

The adverse traffic and pedestrian safety impacts Mr. Bellizzi has identified will come to our community inevitably, unless we can persuade the developers to resolve them now to our satisfaction, or persuade the court to require the developers to resolve them now, and at their expense.

As a community, we must continue to rely upon Mr. Bellizzi's expertise as we press our legal case forward. WPP has budgeted \$10,000 for Mr. Bellizzi's professional services. The time has come for us either to resolve to seek a legal solution to the unacceptable traffic and pedestrian impacts of "Columbus Village" as a community now, or to decide to accept--and to pay for--whatever happens here later. If you have not yet made at least a \$25 contribution to WPP because you were waiting for such concrete and objective information as Mr. Bellizzi has provided in his [expert evaluation](#), please make that contribution now.

You may contribute to the success of WPP's legal efforts either by credit or debit card, using our PayPal link below, or by sending a check to the address below.

BSA Hears Our Testimony and Our Elected Officials' Testimony

We presented our case to the New York City Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA) in a hearing on Tuesday, December 16. The BSA also received an expert affidavit from our traffic engineer, Nicholas Bellizzi, and heard powerful testimony from Borough President Scott Stringer and State Assemblymember Daniel ObDonnell in our support. As a result of this first hearing, our attorney has been invited to submit additional testimony. We are encouraged by this development.

You may read the testimony from Borough President Stringer [here](#) and the testimony from Assemblymember ObDonnell [here](#). But you need only read a few sentences to begin to understand how the Department of Buildings has allowed the developers to skirt the law at the community's expense:

"Let me specifically address the 'reconsideration' of open space requirements issued by the Department of Buildings. DOB's interpretation has allowed the developers to include 'open space' located on the [private] roof of 808 Columbus Avenue to count towards requirements under New York City zoning law. This single re-interpretation has allowed the developer to increase the project's density and, as a result, reap a financial benefit in the millions of dollars." (ObDonnell testimony, paragraph 3).

Not only has this undeserved bonus allowed the density of development under construction to exceed the lawful limit, but it has also enabled the developers to plan yet another building on 97th Street (see their architect's schematic [here](#)), which will add even more density to our community and even more "conflict points" to our community's complex traffic and pedestrian safety circumstances.

This is WPP's last update of 2008. Happy holidays and best wishes for 2009 to every stakeholder of the Park West Village community. Please remember the community in your year-end giving plans by supporting WPP generously.

How to Support WPP

The time has come for us either to resolve to seek a legal solution to the unacceptable traffic and pedestrian impacts of "Columbus Village" as a community now, or to decide to accept-- and to pay for--whatever happens here later. If you have not yet made at least a \$25 contribution to WPP because you were waiting for such concrete and objective information as Mr. Bellizzi has provided in his [expert evaluation](#), please make that contribution now.

You can contribute by credit or debit card by clicking our secure link, hosted by PayPal: <http://snipurl.com/westsiders>

Or if you prefer, checks can be made payable to Westsiders for Public Participation and mailed to:

Westsiders for Public Participation, Inc.
P.O. Box 20093, Park West Station
New York, NY 10025

Please include your email address if you wish either to receive an acknowledgment of your contribution or to subscribe to our progress updates.

Names of contributors will be held in strict confidence. We pledge our accountability to the community. Complete financial statements are available upon request.

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If you are a community stakeholder, and you want to participate in the outcome of the proposed "Columbus Village" development, please contact us at westsiders@earthlink.net!

Have a neighbor without email? Please print this and distribute a copy! We know your neighbor will appreciate it.

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The Commitment of Westsiders for Public Participation, Inc.

FIRST: Assure every community stakeholder the legal right to public participation, in every decision that's made about the Park West Village community.

SECOND: Empower all community stakeholders by providing a focus for the contribution of services and funds in support of the Westsiders for Public Participation community legal action.

THIRD: Provide leadership and education to the communities of New York City who want to remain livable within the current climate of rapid urban growth, by working with community stakeholders to identify, claim and exercise their rights to public participation in community-based planning.

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