



THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

THOMAS DUANE
SENATOR, 27TH DISTRICT
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME, & CORRECTION
COMMITTEES:
ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE
CODES
ELECTIONS
ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS
JUDICIARY
TOURISM, RECREATION &
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT
WATER RESOURCES

275 7TH AVENUE, 12TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001
PHONE (212) 929-5501
FAX (212) 929-5562
ROOM 415
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE (518) 455-2451
FAX (518) 426-6846

April 1, 1999

Hon. Luis M. Tormenta
Commissioner, Department of Design and Construction
30-30 Thompson Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101

Dear Commissioner Tormenta: *Luis*

As you can see from the attached letter to City Planning Chair Joseph Rose, I am very interested in the planning for the redesign of Columbus Circle. I am most interested in ensuring that the final design reflects input from the community and fully addresses pedestrian concerns. I believe that it should also integrate planning for the sidewalks, the streets, and the central area of the Circle, as well as the developments planned around the Circle. Given the Department of Design and Construction's role in determining and implementing the final design of some aspects of the Circle, I also wanted to raise these issues with you before any final decisions are made.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (212) 298-5550. I look forward to hearing back from you regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. Duane
State Senator

cc: Joseph Rose
Richard Gottfried
Ronnie Eldridge
Community Board #4
Community Board #5
Community Board #7
Coalition for Environmentally Sound Development
Coalition for a Livable West Side
Landmark West





THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

THOMAS DUANE
SENATOR, 27TH DISTRICT
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME, & CORRECTION
COMMITTEES:
ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE
CODES
ELECTIONS
ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS
JUDICIARY
TOURISM, RECREATION &
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT
WATER RESOURCES

275 7TH AVENUE, 12TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001
PHONE (212) 929-5501
FAX (212) 929-5562
ROOM 415
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE (518) 455-2451
FAX (518) 426-6846

April 1, 1999

Hon. Charles Millard
President, New York City Economic Development Corporation
110 William Street
New York, NY 10038

Dear Mr. Millard: *Charles*

As you can see from the attached letter to City Planning Chair Joseph Rose, I am very interested in the planning for the redesign of Columbus Circle. I am most interested in ensuring that the final design reflects input from the community and fully addresses pedestrian concerns. I believe that it should also integrate planning for the sidewalks, the streets, and the central area of the Circle, as well as the developments planned around the Circle. Given the Economic Development Corporation's role in this planning, I also wanted to raise these issues with you before any final decisions are made.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (212) 298-5550. I look forward to hearing back from you regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. Duane
State Senator

cc: Joseph Rose
Richard Gottfried
Ronnie Eldridge
Community Board #4
Community Board #5
Community Board #7
Coalition for Environmentally Sound Development
Coalition for a Livable West Side
Landmark West





THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

THOMAS DUANE
SENATOR, 27TH DISTRICT
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME, & CORRECTION
COMMITTEES:
ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE
CODES
ELECTIONS
ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS
JUDICIARY
TOURISM, RECREATION &
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT
WATER RESOURCES

275 7TH AVENUE, 12TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001
PHONE (212) 929-5501
FAX (212) 929-5562
ROOM 415
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE (518) 455-2451
FAX (518) 426-6846

April 1, 1999

Hon. Wilbur Chapman
Commissioner, New York City Department of Transportation
40 Worth Street
New York, NY 10013

Dear Commissioner Chapman:


Wilbur

As you can see from the attached letter to City Planning Chair Joseph Rose, I am very interested in the planning for the redesign of Columbus Circle. I am most interested in ensuring that the final design reflects input from the community and fully addresses pedestrian concerns. I believe that it should also integrate planning for the sidewalks, the streets, and the central area of the Circle, as well as the developments planned around the Circle. Given the Department of Transportation's role in determining and implementing the final design of the Circle, I also wanted to raise these issues with you before any final decisions are made.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at (212) 298-5550. I look forward to hearing back from you regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Thomas K. Duane
State Senator

cc: Joseph Rose
Richard Gottfried
Ronnie Eldridge
Community Board #4
Community Board #5
Community Board #7
Coalition for Environmentally Sound Development
Coalition for a Livable West Side 
Landmark West



THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

THOMAS DUANE
SENATOR, 27TH DISTRICT

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
CRIME VICTIMS, CRIME, & CORRECTION

COMMITTEES:

ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE
CODES
ELECTIONS
ENERGY & TELECOMMUNICATIONS
JUDICIARY
TOURISM, RECREATION &
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT
WATER RESOURCES

275 7TH AVENUE, 12TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001
PHONE (212) 929-5501
FAX (212) 929-5562

ROOM 415
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
PHONE (518) 455-2451
FAX (518) 426-6846

April 1, 1999

Hon. Joseph Rose
Director, New York City Department of City Planning
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. Rose: 

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the planning for the re-configuration of Columbus Circle. It is my understanding that after a trial period lasting several months, the Department of Transportation will soon be releasing a report with recommendations for the final configuration of the area. There are, however, several important issues which I believe need to be addressed before any final recommendations take place.

As you clearly recognize, Columbus Circle is an enormously critical juncture, the design of which will have a tremendous impact on our city and our neighborhoods for generations to come. Columbus Circle must serve as a link between Midtown, Central Park, and the residential neighborhoods of the Upper West Side and Clinton/Hell's Kitchen. It also must accommodate vehicular, pedestrian, park, and civic uses. I think that we all agree that the Circle's configuration up to this point has been less than adequate to handle these important tasks.

Given the critical importance of this design, it is certainly my hope that no recommendations will be finalized until the Tri-Board Task Force and the community have been heard from. I believe that this is particularly critical to ensure that pedestrian as well as vehicular concerns are fully addressed in the final design. While my office has heard feedback indicating that the flow of vehicular traffic may be running more smoothly under the experimental configuration, there remain unresolved issues regarding pedestrian traffic. In the early stages of study for re-configuring the Circle, a third point of pedestrian access from the east side of the Circle had been included. However, the experimental configuration does not include this third point of access. This limits pedestrian mobility, and, strangely, separates the east side of the Circle, which includes Central Park and Central Park South, from the park space which includes the Columbus Monument and fountain in the center of Columbus Circle. The community was expecting such a pedestrian access way to be considered in this plan, and I am particularly concerned with ensuring that such a possibility is not eliminated from the discussion. Limiting pedestrian access in and around the Circle, as well as separating the park side of the Circle from the Circle's center, would be a significant drawback of any new configuration.



Additionally, it should be noted that crossing of the streets radiating from the Circle still often seems to be somewhat treacherous for pedestrians. Poor sight lines for pedestrians to see approaching vehicles, vehicles cutting across lanes of traffic to exit the Circle, and the inability of pedestrians to see the face of traffic signals directing oncoming traffic seem to add to this problem, and should be considered in the final plan for the Circle.

I would also like to note that any final determinations regarding the need to accommodate pedestrian access to or through the central part of Columbus Circle should not be based solely upon the use of this area during the experiment period. The presence of jersey barriers around most of the central area, combined with the use of only two not very easily identifiable crosswalks, undoubtedly has significantly reduced pedestrian traffic through the center of Columbus Circle. If the central part of Columbus Circle were made more welcoming to pedestrians and more easily accessible, I have no doubt that it would be well utilized and enjoyed by people using the area.

Planning for the final redesign of the Circle also begs at least two other important questions: What will the final design for the center of the Circle be, and what will be the eventual use/design for 2 Columbus Circle be? I believe that all of these issues should be considered together if we wish to bring about the best and most appropriate redesign of Columbus Circle. I believe that utilization of the central area of the Circle by pedestrians should be both facilitated and encouraged, and the final design for the Circle should reflect that. Along these lines, serious consideration needs to be given to the issue of the introduction of greenery into the central area of the Circle. The presence of the subway station beneath the Circle restricts the possibilities for plantings in the ground, and in all likelihood limits the options in this regard to planters. While adding greenery to the center of Columbus Circle is a desirable option to consider, large planters raise issues regarding whether sight lines would be limited and access to the Circle's center would be discouraged. Planning for the Circle would also be facilitated by knowing the details of the eventual development of 2 Columbus Circle. Clearly the building's configuration, type of use, and the amount and type of traffic it will generate impacts upon planning for Columbus Circle's design. I will here reiterate my strong support for development of this site which reuses the existing building and returns the building to its original use as a cultural institution. The physical shape of, volume of traffic generated by, and type of use involved in this sort of development would be vastly preferable to the construction of a new hotel on this site.

I recognize that, while the Department of City Planning is the lead agency on the Columbus Circle redesign project, planning for some of the aspects of the redevelopment of Columbus Circle may not be directly under the Department's jurisdiction. I am therefore forwarding a copy of this letter and reaching out to the Department of Design and Construction, the Economic Development Corporation, and the Department of Transportation about the above-mentioned issues as well (please see attached letters).

I appreciate your consideration of these concerns and look forward to hearing back from you regarding them. I am confident that working together and with the affected communities, a permanent redesign of Columbus Circle which addresses the long-standing needs of the area can be achieved.

Sincerely,



Thomas K. Duane
State Senator

cc: Wilbur Chapman, Commissioner, New York City Department of Transportation
Charles Millard, President, New York City Economic Development Corporation
Luis Tormenta, Commissioner, Department of Design and Construction
Assemblymember Richard Gottfried
City Councilmember Ronnie Eldridge
Community Board #4
Community Board #5
Community Board #7
Coalition for A Livable West Side
Coalition for Environmentally Sound Development
Landmark West

NEW YORK

STATE
SENATE

ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247



May 3, 1999

Hon. Joseph Rose
Director, Department of City Planning (DCP)
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. Rose:

We are writing as a follow-up to last week's public meeting regarding the design plans for the re-configuration of Columbus Circle. We would like to thank you for the meeting, which was informative and helpful for us as well as members of the public to understand the plans and the process for this project. There were, however, a few issues which were raised at that meeting which we would like to highlight for you and stress the need for follow-up.

It is apparent that plans for the final redesign of the Circle have not yet been formulated nor has the contractor been chosen. It seems from the meeting that we, as well as members of the public, wish to ensure that more options for crossing to the center of the Circle be created, including a crossing from the east side. DCP and the Department of Transportation gave verbal assurances at the meeting that such additional crossings would be included in the final plan. However, we realize that this remains a long process with many steps before the plan is actualized, and we believe that it would be helpful to see this in some way memorialized.

There are also other outstanding issues, some of which were raised at the meeting, to which we hope solutions can be formulated and placed in the final plans for the redesign of the Circle. Concerns about traffic problems on West 60th Street were raised at the meeting, but we also have great concerns about the difficult movement of traffic farther north of Columbus Circle, which we believe is also affected by the flow of traffic at Columbus Circle. Thus we believe that the traffic study should be expanded to consider and address traffic problems around Lincoln Center and as far north as 72nd Street. Members of the public also expressed concerns about the continuing difficulty in crossing the Circle, whether this involves going through the center of the Circle or around its perimeter. Also, the final design for the central portion of the Circle remains to be determined. At the meeting, the agencies indicated an interest in having planters and benches placed in the central area. Certainly these are desirable elements for inclusion. However, we believe that the public should be given an opportunity for comment before any plans are finalized, in order to ensure that the configuration of these elements

maximizes the public's ability to access and enjoy this area, and that sightlines are preserved.

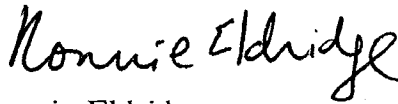
Lastly, we would like to reiterate our disappointment at the lack of inclusion of planning for the redevelopment of 2 Columbus Circle in this project. Clearly the future of this site will have a significant impact upon all of the issues we are discussing here, and it is a lost opportunity not to consider it as part of this overall planning. We will again here express our strong preference for a redevelopment of this site which would preserve the unique existing structure, and which would restore it to its former use as a cultural institution.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

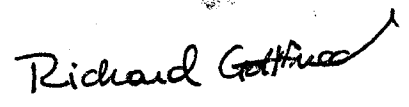
Sincerely,



Thomas K. Duane
State Senator



Ronnie Eldridge
City Councilmember



Richard N. Gottfried
Assembly Member

cc: Mayor Giuliani
Commissioner Wilbur Chapman, DOT
Commissioner Luis Tormenta, DDC
Commissioner Henry Stern, DPR
Charles Millard, President, EDC
Tri-Board Task Force
Coalition for a Livable West Side
Committee for Environmentally Sound Development
Landmark West