

During Construction, Business Is Not As Usual

Shops and residents cope with noise, dust and disrupted walkways along Second Avenue

By Susan M. Sippelle

Last April, construction began on the long-delayed Second Avenue subway, a transportation link originally proposed in the 1920s. During the ensuing decades, progress on the line lurched forward, then halted several times, derailed variously by lack of funds, rising costs and the onset of World War II.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) projects that the first leg of the long-awaited subway, which will run between East 96th and 63rd streets, will be complete in 2013 and cost \$3.8 billion. When the entire line is built, it will stretch 8.1 miles—from 125th Street down to the Financial District in lower Manhattan—and ease overcrowding on the nearby Lexington Avenue subway line.

In the meantime, neighborhood resi-

dents and businesses along Second Avenue between East 96th and 91st streets are struggling to cope with the first phase of the massive, multi-year construction project. Their blocks have become a maze of construction fencing pockmarked with temporary access points to their homes and shops.

"We did not think the construction would be as intrusive as it is," said Rita Popper, who lives at East 91st Street in Knickerbocker Plaza and serves as president of the building's tenant association. She expressed particular concern for the building's many elderly residents, who must maneuver wheelchairs and walkers along the circuitous paths around the construction zone. "We're all for the subway," Popper said. "It's greatly needed. But with progress, there's going to be some pain."



SUSAN M. SIPPELLE

Owners say this Ray's Pizza on Second Avenue has lost a third of its sales because of subway construction.

In this early stage of construction, utility lines are being moved from the center of Second Avenue to its west and east sides in preparation for boring the subway tunnel, which the MTA forecasts will

start in mid-2008. The relocation of utilities squeezes traffic along the busy avenue from four lanes down to two and creates dust, noise and safety issues in

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Subway

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the excavation area.

"It looks like a war zone," said David Liston, chair of Community Board 8. "And people are definitely suffering."

He said that the board is working collaboratively with the MTA, as well as other city agencies, to try to resolve problems, such as the displacement of local residents, disruptions for local businesses, tree removals and fire safe-

the local engine company during subway construction. The board is currently waiting for the fire department's response.

"There will always be some difficulties," MTA spokesperson Aaron Donovan said, "but we are doing everything we can to communicate with residents and impacted businesses."

He recommended that anyone with questions or concerns about the project call the MTA's Second Avenue subway hotline at 646-252-2670.

Assembly Member Jonathan Bing

"Our sign has been hidden by the construction since May," said Marisol Quinones, Synergy weekend manager.

"The noise and dust are bothersome. We can't leave the door open anymore."

ty concerns.

"Our sign has been hidden by the construction since May," said Marisol Quinones, weekend manager of Synergy, a fitness club at East 93rd Street and Second Avenue. "The noise and dust are bothersome. We can't leave the door open anymore."

David Rosenstein, a community activist who lives near East 91st Street and Second Avenue, said neighborhood residents grew concerned about fire hazards once they assessed the scale of the subway construction work. The work zone on the west side of Second Avenue extends 40 feet out from the sidewalk, making buildings difficult to reach with hoses and ladders. The community board met with the fire department in September and voted unanimously in October to request additional staffing at

said the subway construction project creates a particularly difficult situation for local businesses because the MTA is not accustomed to resolving issues of economic loss. The construction zone blocks access to storefronts, interrupts phone service and thwarts deliveries.

"In the long run, the Second Avenue subway will be a benefit, but not for the local businesses that don't survive," said Bing, who is looking for ways to help at the state level.

Nick Canovic, a partner in Ray's Pizza near the intersection of 95th Street and Second Avenue, said his business has lost a third of its sales as a result of the disruptions caused by the project. "We are trying to survive," he said, "that's all that matters. It's going to be a very long time." ■

Ferkauf

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also the public. Noted in the May 16, 2006, issue of New York Magazine as one of the "Most Influential" people in the health field, Gerstenhaber is a leading national expert in antidepressants, suicide and depression. She led research on the fatal side-effects of antidepressant use among teenagers, and her discoveries led the FDA to place a "black box" warning on antidepressant medication labels.

"Dr. Gerstenhaber's work and her driving vision is making major contributions that are critical to creating a healthy nation," Joel said. "I'm proud to call her the 'poster child' of Yeshiva University Graduate School of Psychology. She truly represents the best of Yeshiva University."

"I'm thrilled beyond description," Gerstenhaber said as she accepted her award. "Ferkauf provided the tools to make a difference."

Gerstenhaber is active in a number of other health and medical organizations, including the Foundation for Huntington's Disease, the National Center for Disease Control, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and the Jewish International Health Care Division of the United Jewish Appeal.

The evening's events concluded with a performance and speech by recording artist and mental health advocate Judy Collins. Beginning her presentation with her song, "Both Sides Now," Collins shared her experiences with alcoholism, attempted suicide, her son's suicide and her recently released memoir, "Sanity and Grace." ■