



THE COUNCIL
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
CITY HALL
NEW YORK, NY 10007

September 16, 2008

Honorable Michael Bloomberg
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg,

As Brooklyn representatives, we ask you to explore a simple and inexpensive policy change that could greatly improve the lives of our constituents – to study the possibility of making Prospect Park car-free with a three-month car-free trial. We call upon your office, the New York City Department of Transportation and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation to implement a three-month pilot program to close the Prospect Park drives to vehicular traffic and to study the effect of this policy on park use and traffic on local streets.

Prospect Park is the lifeblood of the communities we represent. It is their place to exercise, to escape the heat of a hot apartment, to celebrate a birthday party, to barbeque, to listen to great music and to play with their kids. Just being in Prospect Park and enjoying all it has to offer makes life better.

Because Prospect Park is such a popular destination for our constituents, it is busy. From morning till night, the loop drive is packed with people walking, running, and riding bikes. When cars are permitted to drive through the park, these people are often put in danger. A recent speeding survey found that over 90% of cars travelling through the park were going beyond the posted speed limit—up to 50 mph. Runners and cyclists may find themselves just feet from this traffic and have no barrier to protect them from deadly collision.

The dangerous and unhealthy environment created by this traffic scares people away. A 2006 survey of 450 park users found that 4 out of 5 people would use the park more often if cars were banned. This survey also found a 40% drop in people entering the park when cars are permitted. As our city struggles to fight a rise in obesity, asthma and diabetes, we call on you to explore solutions to this troubling situation.

While the benefits of prohibiting cars from the park are many, we also recognize that closing Prospect Park to traffic may have an impact on the surrounding community. Conducting a three-month study and trial closure, to fully analyze the resulting effects on traffic and related quality of life issues would allow the City and the community to understand the full impact of a full closure. Furthermore, this study would

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allow the Department of Transportation the opportunity to analyze how the traffic patterns around the area are affected by the Prospect Park loop drive and to gauge what mitigation measures might be necessary to deter traffic buildups in the surrounding community, were the park to be car-free.

Parks are the very foundation of a healthy population. As public leaders, we need to do everything in our power to make our public parks and recreational areas as safe and inviting as possible, while also making sure to balance the diverse needs of the surrounding communities.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of David Yassky, Bill de Blasio, and Letitia James.

David Yassky

Member of the City Council

Bill de Blasio

Member of the City Council

Letitia James

Member of City Council

CC: Commissioner Adrian Benepe, Commissioner Janette Sadik-Kahn, Borough President Marty Markowitz, Council Member Mathieu Eugene, Tupper Thomas