

Chelsea now

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The party is over at West Chelsea's Club Mumbai

BY ALBERT AMATEAU

The State Liquor Authority last week imposed a two-year liquor license revocation on the troublesome Club Mumbai – also known as City – and then ruled that the location at 250 W. 26th St. would also have a two-year license ban.

The club's license was lifted because of dozens of underage drinking, disorderly premises and building and noise violations over the past four years, according to William Crowley, spokesperson for the S.L.A.

The agency sent notices of every violation to HAG Realty L.L.C., landlord of the club, said Crowley. "That's why the board, at its last meeting on Jan. 10, voted to proscribe the location as well," he added.

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Politicians give postal trucks plan Bronx cheer

BY LAWRENCE LERNER

It is comforting to know that neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays United States Postal Service couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds. But if the Postal Service has its way, more of those rounds will begin at the Morgan Processing and Distribution Center, bringing additional traffic congestion to an area of West Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen already inundated with automobile traffic.

The Postal Service is studying whether

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Chelsea Now photo by Lawrence Lerner

Urban planner Jee Mee Kim, far left, leads a small-group discussion at Tuesday's meeting held by Greater Gansevoort Urban Improvement Project.

Gansevoort project group told to think 'big and crazy'

BY LAWRENCE LERNER

Chelsea and West Village residents got an unprecedented chance to reshape the Meatpacking District Tuesday night at a public brainstorming session held at Fulton Houses Community Center by the area's newest community group, the Greater Gansevoort Urban Improvement Project.

Coming on the heels of a study commissioned by the group in November, which looked at motor and pedestrian traffic in the area bounded by W. 16th and Gansevoort Sts. between Ninth Ave. and the Hudson River, the public meeting made good on a promise to include the community in future plans for the district.

The goal of Tuesday's gathering was to brainstorm ideas for a small but cen-

tral part of the area, the Ninth Ave. corridor between Gansevoort and 16th Sts. Jo Hamilton, a member of the project's steering committee, kicked things off by addressing the approximately 80 participants.

"I know many of you thought you'd be hearing the results of our study tonight, and learning about what our consultants have come up with, but that's not the case," she said. "The consultants have come up with nothing so far. They're relying on you and hoping for your input to make this a more meaningful process."

With the district's historic buildings, wide streets and open plazas offering vast potential for the creation of a welcoming public space, the improvement project has several objectives in mind, including promoting pedestrian safety, reducing the

negative impacts of vehicular traffic and creating a sense of place in the Gansevoort area.

The group's initiative has gained momentum as nightlife, high-end retailing, art galleries and remnants of the wholesale meat industry bring crowds of pedestrians, cabs and trucks to the Gansevoort Market District, and the proposed 2008 opening of the High Line's southern end promises to make the area even more of a destination.

Planning consultant Sam Schwartz, former commissioner of the city's Department of Transportation, took over Tuesday's meeting where Hamilton left off, emphasizing D.O.T.'s recent decision to make the traffic on Ninth Ave. between 14th and 16th Sts. one-way southbound, which in

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Chelsea Now photo by Lawrence Lerner

The Morgan Processing and Distribution Center stretches from 28th to 30th Sts. between Ninth and Tenth Aves.

Postal Service might increase West Side truck runs

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it should shift some of its mail-processing functions from the Bronx Processing and Distribution Center, at 149th St. and Grand Concourse, to Morgan, which stretches from 28th to 30th Sts. between Ninth and Tenth Aves. The consolidation is being sought because of a significant decrease in single-piece, first-class mail that has left the Postal Service with excess capacity at its facilities.

But the headaches consolidation is likely to cause near Morgan have raised concerns among local elected officials. In a recent letter to U.S.P.S. signed by Congressman Jerry Nadler, State Senator Tom Duane, Assemblymember Richard Gottfried and Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, the officials took a firm stance against what they see as a possible nightmare.

"We are very concerned about the impact such a consolidation would have on local traffic.... We urge U.S.P.S. to reject any plan that would increase truck traffic to and from Morgan, and would strongly prefer a plan that decreases truck traffic, particularly at a time when New York City's air quality is in serious jeopardy," reads the letter.

Adding insult to possible injury is the fact that the officials found out about the Postal Service's study from the local postal workers union rather than U.S.P.S. management. But Duane tried to minimize fallout from the faux pas.

"Sure, we first heard about it from the union, but to tell you the truth, we're just glad we found out, period," Duane said. "And since then, the Postal Service has been more responsive to our concerns because of Congressman Nadler's intervention. So, I think it's important to just let the past be the past and look ahead and work together to resolve our issues."

Currently, mail is collected in the Bronx and brought by large trucks to Morgan for preliminary sorting into Bronx and non-Bronx mail. Bronx mail is then trucked back to the Bronx center for secondary sorting before being loaded onto the more numerous small trucks that head out on local delivery routes.

The consolidation being studied would move this secondary sorting from the Bronx to Morgan. At issue is whether mail will be moved back to the Bronx — as is done now — for loading onto small trucks, or whether the small trucks will embark on Bronx delivery routes from Morgan, creating more traffic in West Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen.

In the letter to U.S.P.S., elected officials lined up behind the first option, reiterating their desire for less congestion.

"Clearly the former scenario is preferable, although not preferable to a plan that results in less truck traffic," reads the letter.

Because the Morgan facility sits just south of the entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel, it is already at the epicenter of congestion problems. According to the officials, future development slated for the area, including

the Javits Center expansion, No. 7 subway line extension and Moynihan Station, will only make matters worse.

"Even if no changes to Chelsea's traffic patterns were imminent, additional truck traffic to the Morgan Center would be detrimental, and the disruptions these new projects are expected to cause will only add to the traffic congestion in the area," reads the letter.

Duane has raised concerns about area traffic before, most notably in discussions about the Moynihan Station development and the downsizing of the Farley Post Office facility, which has already added to the mail-processing load at the Morgan Center. He says that, although no environmental impact study has been released on this initial consolidation's effect on traffic, he has seen more congestion around the facility.

"I believe from sight that there's more truck traffic on 29th St.," Duane said. "I've seen postal trucks backed up on Ninth Ave. turning onto 29th St. and then onto Tenth Ave. But what's more important is what's going to happen from here on out."

If the Postal Service decides, after studying the matter, that its proposed consolidation is feasible, it will begin a public review process that typically involves public forums for communities near the affected post office — in this case the Bronx. But politicians representing Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen are adamantly calling for hearings in neighborhoods on the receiving end of the proposed consolidation as well.

"We definitely want a hearing in the

Chelsea area so people will be able to reinforce our desire for no more trucks — or even less truck traffic," said Duane. "This is particularly important with the development happening in West Chelsea and Hudson Yards. The Postal Service hasn't decided not to do a Chelsea hearing, but by putting together our coalition of elected officials and reaching out, that will probably ensure there is one."

But according to Pat McGovern, the Postal Service's New York District spokesperson, it is too early to tell whether Duane and the others will get their wish. She said that while the request has been forwarded to Washington, D.C., she has not yet received a response.

"It's still premature, since the study has not yet been approved," she said.

McGovern also could not lay out a timetable for completion of the study and subsequent hearings, whether they take place solely in the Bronx or in Chelsea as well.

"But if the study goes through, Washington will notify the Postal Service's New York District, which includes Manhattan and the Bronx, and then we would set up a community meeting up in the Bronx, at the very least, and invite all the relevant officials, including those from Chelsea," she said.

Meanwhile, the other major stakeholder keeping tabs on the issue, Community Board 4, is aware of the developments, according to C.B. 4 District Manager Robert Benfatto, but has not taken a position or responded yet.