

# Chelsea **now**



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VOLUME 1, NUMBER 20

THE WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF CHELSEA

FEBRUARY 9 - 15, 2007

## C.B. 4 rejects Seminary's tower proposal

BY CHRIS LOMBARDI

Community Board 4's full-board meeting on Wednesday night at the Fulton Senior Center was loud, passionate and, to some, very familiar.

A casual observer might have been forgiven for thinking time had gone backward — back to the numerous public hearings, most recently on January 22, on the General Theological Seminary's proposed 15-story brick-and-glass luxury residential tower on Ninth Ave.

Making another appearance were the infamous "Save the Seminary" stickers, worn by a quarter of the more than 200 people attending the meeting, along with the "75 feet is the Limit" tags passed out

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## Woman killed by truck at dangerous Chelsea intersection

BY LAWRENCE LERNER

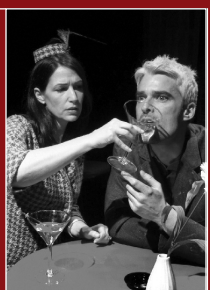
An elderly woman was crushed to death Monday morning after being hit by a large flat-bed truck at what has long been considered by community activists as one of Chelsea's most dangerous corners.

Amelia Chimienti, 82, of 335 West 14th St., was killed instantly just after 11 a.m., as she made her way south across 16th St. on the east side of Ninth Ave., police said. Chimienti was pronounced dead at the scene, which was just across the street from Chelsea Market.

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*Chelsea Now photo by Lawrence Lerner*

Knox Martin's renowned mural "Venus," painted on the southern wall of the Bayview Correctional Facility in 1970, remains in view for the time being as construction of a 20-story glass tower, designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, is poised to forever block it from view.

## When Chelseas collide, 'Venus' is shadowed

BY CHRIS LOMBARDI

Last fall, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn's office convened a small meeting that could be called Old Chelsea versus New Chelsea. Or Artsy Chelsea versus Condo Chelsea.

You might just call it Bambi versus Godzilla.

On one side, 83-year-old painter Knox Martin, his students at the Art Students League and representatives of concerned legislators Quinn, Upper West Side councilmember Lewis Fidler and State Senator Tom Duane. On the other: Cape Advisors, a development corporation in charge of the new 100 Eleventh Ave. condominium complex.

The topic: the prospect that the 20-story glass tower, designed by French architect Jean Nouvel, would forever block from view Knox's 1970 mural "Venus," painted on the eight-story Bayview Correctional Facility, across the street.

Quinn had directed her staff to call the meeting after her office had received telephone calls from constituents in her district. By then, letters had poured into city officials' mailboxes for months, ever since Martin's students first saw signs of construction in the prison parking lot.

Admirers of Knox, and of "Venus," asked how the city could allow the loss of a beloved work of art — one which had, as one writer put it, "become as iconic to

Chelsea as the clock tower is to Soho."

Around the table, Cape Advisors representative David Comfort told the others that Nouvel hadn't known about the mural when he designed the site. Martin and the others asked: How could you not have known? Didn't you take aerial photos of the site?

But Cape Advisors had long since cleared the hurdle of community boards and zoning committees, received the required approvals and issued its first offering. It was already too late, said Comfort. He wished he'd known, but it was too late to try to alter the design now.

Knox and other local artists have since

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# Woman killed by truck at dangerous Chelsea intersection

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The driver, who police refused to identify, has not been arrested or charged with a crime because the incident has been ruled an accident, according to officials. He was issued two summonses unrelated to the incident, one for non-working equipment on his truck and another for not having a tax stamp on the windshield.

According to the police and eye-witnesses, Chimienti was hit when the truck, driving north on Ninth Ave., turned right onto 16th St. and struck her. They said the vehicle, from Sunny Lumber & Hardware in Brooklyn, continued on for a short distance before parking halfway down the block.

Ehsan Powanda, a native of Afghanistan who serves the nearby lunch crowd from his food cart on 16th St. near Eighth Ave., saw the accident while talking with a friend just inside the glass doorway of the Maritime Hotel, some 50 yards from the scene.

"I never saw this in my country. It was very bad," he said, adding that the northbound light on Ninth Ave. was yellow when the truck turned right and struck what he called an elderly woman. "I think he was trying to make the light. And he hit her. She was dead. And then his back tires ran over her. It was terrible."

Traffic coming east on 16th St. followed, Ehsan said, and a cab behind the truck also ran over the woman's remains before the next car stopped and halted traffic.

According to another eye-witness, a delivery driver who saw the accident in the sideview mirror of his truck, which was parked a third of the way down 16th St. facing east, the truck driver may not have known he hit the woman.

"As far as I know, he had no knowledge, because he just drove slowly down the block, got out and started doing his delivery," said the man, who went only by Jeff and was delivering goods to 111 Eighth Ave. for American Storage, of Melville, N.Y. "I then told the policeman that that's the truck that drove over the person, and



Chelsea Now photos by Lawrence Lerner

The grisly scene at the corner of Ninth Ave. and 16th St., where 82-year-old Amelia Chimienti was struck and killed by a large truck on Monday morning.

he went down and talked to him. I said, 'You'll see the spot mark on the tire, I guarantee it.'"

Meanwhile, Austin Thurber, a sales rep at Hilti, a construction tools company located on the southeast corner of Ninth Ave. and 16th St., did not witness the accident but heard passersby screaming immediately after the woman was hit.

"I went out before the police got there, but my weak stomach limited me. I had to come back in," he said.

Like many people living and working in the Meatpacking District, Thurber is wary of the intersection where the accident occurred. "You've got this one lone

northbound lane, between 14th to 16th Sts., coming head-on with four southbound lanes right where the woman got hit," he said. "She probably perceived that all the traffic was going south. It's easy to do. You barely notice cars coming north there, ready to turn right onto 16th St."

Community activists have long pegged the intersection as dangerous. Three weeks ago, the area's newest community group, the Greater Gansevoort Urban Improvement Project, held a public brainstorming session to help reshape the neighborhood.

Not surprisingly, Ninth Ave. and 16th St. ranked high on the list of problems to fix.

"There are many issues with that intersection, and our group and Community Board 4 are in the process of re-examining traffic patterns there, as is the Department of Transportation," said Joshua David, co-founder of Friends of the High Line and a member of G.G.U.I.P.'s steering committee.

"The northbound lane on Ninth Ave. seems to be left over from when the Port Authority building loading docks were still in use. The pavement markings for the southbound left-hand turn leads drivers to believe it's a highway turn, not a New York City intersection, and many of them take it going much too fast, making it very unsafe for pedestrians," David added. "And the hand-signal on 16th St. changes too quickly, instead of being pegged to Ninth Ave. traffic flow. I myself have had many near misses at that intersection and have heard of many accidents there."

At G.G.U.I.P.'s public meeting last month, planning consultant Sam Schwartz, former commissioner of the city's Department of Transportation, whose urban-planning firm is consulting with G.G.U.I.P. on retooling the Meatpacking District, said that Transportation is planning on making this stretch of Ninth Ave. southbound.

"This will create great opportunities for improvement in the immediate vicinity," he said, "including much-needed improvements to pedestrian safety, which has been a running theme all night."

Jo Hamilton, chair of G.G.U.I.P.'s steering committee, added her condolences to Chimienti, her family and friends yesterday.

"This killing was a real tragedy. My heart goes out to her," she said. "This accident, I'm afraid, only underscores what we're trying to do with our project, to prevent these kinds of things by looking at what to do differently with the streets in the Meatpacking District."



The truck driver who struck and killed Amelia Chimienti sat distraught on 16th St. after Monday's fatality. Police have not identified or arrested the man because the incident has been ruled an accident.