

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
14TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

2331 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3214
(202) 225-7944

COMMITTEES:
FINANCIAL SERVICES

GOVERNMENT REFORM

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3214

DISTRICT OFFICES:
1651 THIRD AVENUE
SUITE 311
NEW YORK, NY 10128
(212) 860-0606

28-11 ASTORIA BOULEVARD
ASTORIA, NY 11102
(718) 932-1804

WEBSITE: www.house.gov/maloney

Statement of Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney
at the New York City Arts Commission Public Meeting on the proposed redesign and
construction of the playground, pavilion and northern plaza of Union Square Park
May 15, 2006

Thank you for offering me the opportunity to express my concerns about the proposed redesign of the north pavilion of Union Square Park.

Historically, Union Square has been and continues to be one of this City's most popular public spaces that draws countless local residents and businesses. It is imperative that this space be developed in a manner that does not eliminate open space for the public or playground space for children. Unfortunately, under the Parks Department's current plan, the restoration of the pavilion to include enlarged, privatized restaurant will result in a critical loss of public space. I understand that the pavilion's bathrooms will be reserved for restaurant patrons exclusively and that the Parks Department is planning to build additional bathrooms adjacent to the pavilion for the general public and playground users. These public bathrooms will be taking away space that could be used for flowers and greenery, open seating for the general public, or for the playground. There are few things of greater concern to young families in my district than the availability of decent playground space. Why are the facilities for a private restaurant taking away public playground space for our community's children?

Not only are these exterior bathrooms eliminating valuable park space for children and the general public, but the structure of the public bathrooms is cumbersome and takes away from the aesthetic value of the pavilion. The pavilion currently is a pleasing symmetrical building that serves as a visual focal point for the park. As the only building in the park, the eye is immediately drawn to its pyramidal shape. The bathrooms proposed by the Parks Department will be an unsightly hump on the side of the building. It will disrupt the balance and create a visual dissonance. On the other hand, there is no question that bathrooms are essential in a space that will be used by thousands of children and their parents. This unsightly dissonance is the result of the fact that the Parks Department is taking from the public perfectly good existing bathroom space in the pavilion and handing it over to private interests.

This pavilion is a time-honored communal gathering place that should be used in a way that best serves the Union Square area. The Parks Department should restore and renovate this historic space with additional seating, with consideration given to possibly using the pavilion as a public staging area or as a facility for community programs and activities. In an community

which is already lacking open space, every effort should be made to preserve and retain this structure as public park space.

In conclusion, I am strongly opposed to a plan that takes public space away from the public, thereby requiring the construction of a new building to replace what already exists. Instead of expanding the amount of public play space and greenery in the park, this plan expands the number of functional buildings required to serve park patrons. There is something wrong with a plan that takes a pleasingly symmetrical historical building and adds a disfiguring modern hump on one end.