

A Message From the President

Choking on Traffic



East Side, West Side. It's all over town. Traffic. Congestion. Gridlock. Mayor Bloomberg's just released planning blueprint for 2030 confidently predicts that buses will be fighting with over 100,000 more cars to make headway through the streets.

The good news is that two public transit initiatives, long supported by CIVITAS, made important advances before 2006 came to a close. First, the Federal government signed off on funding to allow construction to begin early this year on the first phase of the Second Avenue Subway. And secondly, MTA and the City announced that they have selected the M15 bus route (up First Avenue, down Second Avenue) for Bus Rapid Transit service. The first phase of the new subway line is targeted to commence operations in 2012. BRT has the capability to be in service by early 2008.

The key to avoiding the catastrophe projected by the Mayor's planning report is to re-think long-term traffic priorities now, before it's too late. Hard choices must be made to end the favored treatment given to automobiles and to privilege pedestrians and bicyclists instead. This means cutting back on low cost and free curbside parking, establishing dedicated lanes for buses, putting in place flexible tolls on the East River bridges and widening sidewalks. Let's get started.



Cora Shelton revisits site of the study

The East 96th Street Study Twenty Three Years Later

When CIVITAS initiated a study of East 96th Street in 1984, working with the urban planning firm of Buckhurst Fish Hutton Katz, the goal of the study was to offer guidelines that could protect the neighborhood from insensitive development and preserve its character. The study included the two blocks to the north and to the south of East 96th Street -- 24 blocks in all. Within the 24 blocks there were many opportunities for development. Now, with the passage of 23 years, it is possible to look back on our efforts and see what has happened and what can still be done.

CIVITAS collaborated not only with planning professionals but with neighborhood groups as well. Local

Continued p. 4

In this Issue:

East 96 th Street Study—23 Years Later	p. 1, 4
CIVITAS <i>in Action</i>	p. 2
Affordable Housing—Challenges and Solutions An Interview with Mark Alexander	p. 3
Uptown New York—Massive Project Goes Back to the Drawing Board	p. 6
CIVITAS Benefit to honor Metropolis Magazine	p. 7
New Carolyn Greenberg Student Intern	p. 8



A solid wall of towers on East 96th Street



CIVITAS is a union of citizens concerned with the quality of life on the Upper East Side and East Harlem. Since 1981 CIVITAS has worked to improve the urban environment, advocating for better land use, zoning and urban planning, affordable housing, public transportation, clean air and water and public access to the waterfront.

Visit us at www.civitasnyc.org

Founder
August Heckscher
1914-1997

Chairman
Genie Rice

President
T. Gorman Reilly

Vice Presidents
Marcia Fowle Raymond Plumey James T. B. Tripp

Treasurer Frederic Withington
Secretary Jo Ahern Bressler

Executive Committee
William Q. Brothers Janis Eltz Jeanne G. McAnaney

Board of Directors

Mark S. Alexander
Tess Ankis
Lucienne S. Bloch
Adrienne Caplan
Elisabeth R. Clark
Ray Cornbill
Nathalie Cox
Judith Fresco
Elise Frick
Jamie Gibbs
Stuart Goldman
Sally Goodgold
Rita Hirsch
Roberta Hodgson
Willa Hutner
Clifton Maione

Daniel Pérez
Peter Pettibone
Diane Phillipotts
Debbie Quiñones
Agustin Rivera
R. Geoffrey Roesch
Roberta Schneiderman
Sally Schubert
Cora Shelton
Annette Siegel
M. Sava B. Thomas
Felipe Ventegeat
Joseph F. Walsh
Charles S. Warren
John S. Winkleman

Advisory Board

Christopher C. Angell
Elizabeth Ashby
Kent Barwick
David W. Beer
Jewelle Bickford
Hon. Schuyler G. Chapin
Mrs. John French III
John Jay Iselin
Mrs. Stephen Kellen
Stephen S. Lash
Paul Newman
Cynthia D. Sculco
Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff
Hon. Henry J. Stern
Margot Wellington
Anthony C. Wood
Joanne Woodward

Administrator/Office Manager
Trayco Belopopsky

Editors: Sally Schubert
Contributors: Lucienne S. Bloch, Raymond Plumey, Gorman Reilly, Sally Schubert
Photography: Lucienne S. Bloch, Gorman Reilly, Sally Schubert
Desktop Publishing: Trayco Belopopsky
Printing: Patane Press

CIVITAS *in Action*

Seventh Regiment Armory Conservancy. The Seventh Regiment Armory Conservancy was formed in 1996 as part of an ambitious effort to rescue the Armory building at Park Avenue and 67th Street from a long history of neglect. The most significant landmarked building on the Upper East Side, it is regrettably listed among the 100 most endangered monuments in the world. The Conservancy has entered into a 100-year lease for the Armory with the State of New York, and will undertake needed roof repairs, shoring up foundations and restoration of the elegant public rooms created in the late 19th century by Stanford White and the Herter Brothers. In addition, it proposes to expand on the popular art shows held at the site by adding an evening performing arts schedule of about 45 days a year, mostly during the summer. Concerns raised about the traffic impacts of this additional programming have been addressed in a 167-page Environmental Assessment statement. No building will be allowed on top of the Armory nor will rights be offered to others for new development. Based on visits to the Armory and a presentation to the Board made by Conservancy President, Rebecca Robertson, CIVITAS has endorsed the project as one of “exceptional merit” and has spoken out at Community Board 8 meetings in support of this project.

Bus Rapid Transit. In October the MTA and the Department of Transportation announced that they have selected five routes – one in each borough – for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. The good news for residents of the Upper East Side and East Harlem is that the route selected for Manhattan is the one that CIVITAS has been pressing for -- from South Ferry uptown to 125th Street on First Avenue and downtown along Second Avenue. The next phase of the study will focus on bus stop locations, parking and traffic displacement, pre-boarding fare payment and other aspects of BRT service. Two of

the five routes selected are to get priority treatment so that service might be implemented by late 2007. CIVITAS will urge that the Manhattan BRT route be among the first.

Pedestrian Bridge to Randall’s Island. There is a compelling need for a new pedestrian bridge from East Harlem to Randalls Island, the community supports it and it is feasible. These are the conclusions of the one year study conducted by urban planners, RBA Group, and bridge design consultants, Hardesty & Hanover. Their extensive investigation, community outreach and critical analysis resulted in a recommendation that one of two possible locations for a pedestrian bridge to the island be considered: the “urban” solution which involves constructing a new overpass of the FDR Drive at East 116th Street to the esplanade along the Harlem River and then building a span across the river at 117th Street where pilings from the former Washburn Wire loading pier can still be found; and the “neighborhood” option which would utilize the existing overpass of the FDR Drive at East 120th Street and continue with a span across the river from there. Either option would join the central part of East Harlem to the area of Randall’s Island where the stadium and most of the playing fields are found. CIVITAS has launched a public information plan whereby neighborhood groups, athletic clubs, schools, public health organizations and elected officials are being briefed on the results of our Bridge the Gap study and are being urged to lend their support.

980 Madison Avenue. After attending a public hearing held by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) on a proposed 330-foot tower atop the Park-Bernet Galleries, CIVITAS filed a statement in opposition to this assault on the Upper East Side Historic District. On January 16, 2007 the LPC rejected the developer’s proposal.

Affordable Housing — Challenges and Possible Solutions

An Interview with Mark Alexander, Former President of Hope Community

Mark Alexander spent 23 years with Hope Community on its many renovation and development projects and is now active as a developer of affordable housing.

Q. When did your interest in Real Estate development start?

A. The neighborhood I grew up in was consumed by anarchy and violence. After the middle class left in the 60s and 70s, the damage to social stability was complete. I spent 27 years at Hope Community trying to correct that by advocating for healthy neighborhoods and by building mostly low-income housing. We tried to stabilize a neighborhood, and once it was ready for moderate-income housing, we tried to build it. And when it was ready for middle-income housing, we celebrated it. The vast majority of properties that Hope acquired through city or state programs were developed for special needs, homeless, low or very low-income populations. Many populations were served, but 80% were low to very low income and only about 20% moderate to middle income. It was a terrible time of drugs and crime. The streets were a physical and economic wreck, but we built community gardens and sponsored public art works, like the East 104th Street mural “The Spirit of East Harlem” in 1979. Hope Community had its genesis when members of the community began meeting to talk about housing at the Church of the Living Hope in East Harlem. The ten people that met were a diverse group of neighbors and business people, Christians and Jews, black, white and Latino. That diversity is what informs me today. I learned that when people are faced with a challenge they could find commonality and do great things.

Q. What are the most important affordable housing needs in East Harlem?

A. There are a number of significant needs competing with each other:

1. The economic integration of existing housing

– middle, moderate and lower. Low-income housing developments especially need integration.

2. The tremendous under-utilization of public housing. In some cases there are seniors in 3 – 4 bedroom apartments who the Housing Department has been – very slowly – relocating. There are many ways to provide incentives so that tenants will vol-



Mark Alexander with designs for new housing

untarily relocate and open up large apartments for needy families. Of the 17,000 public housing units in East Harlem, as many as one-third are under-occupied.

3. The third compelling issue is that a few thousand apartments built under the Mitchell-Lama and other such programs are reaching the end of their regulatory compliance period. Some may have the right to opt-out of their regulatory restrictions by repaying their subsidized mortgage and other public benefits that they are currently receiving. If a project does so, the current residents may or may not have protections like Rent Stabilization, but in either case, the residents are unlikely to have the same level of benefits as in the past.

Q. What do you think of the Bloomberg-Dan Doctoroff program (called inclusionary zoning) that allows for rezoning areas as to height and

bulk, if private developers provide affordable housing?

A. As a neighborhood sponsor (and also now at a site in Brooklyn), I've participated in these programs. The program was generally viewed by the developers as time-consuming and expensive. Since the Chelsea-Hudson Yards and Greenpoint - Williamsburg rezonings, the city has made some changes but it remains to be seen if the programs can be executed in an effective manner. The challenge is to efficiently create housing that targets a particular economic population or strata and, at the same time, not dampen the private market by putting undue burdens on them. The large scale projects on the far West Side and Brooklyn waterfront have the economies of scale that should allow the inclusionary housing program to work to their benefit, but it is likely that the developers of smaller sites will choose to pass up the program because it is too cumbersome, and won't work economically without city subsidies. With a 20-30 unit building, the delays and other factors having to do with involvement in a government program will scare off smaller developers. These developers may not perceive enough benefit to risk a delay in developing the “as-of-right” market rate units.

Q. How optimistic are you?

A. Not very optimistic. Corraling poor people into one area and creating monolithically poor neighborhoods is not a very effective way to create healthy communities. There's enough low income housing in East Harlem. Better to give the progeny of low-income folks –the new middle class -- a choice. In the South Bronx and Brooklyn there are block after block of mixed income housing, built under the city's affordable housing programs and they have transformed communities precisely because they encouraged large numbers of the new middle class to stay, or to return, to the communities where

Continued on p. 7

Continued from p. 1

Community boards and civic groups were involved in the process of the planning study, along with area institutions -- schools, churches, the Islamic Cultural Center, Mount Sinai and Metropolitan Hospitals, a nursing home, cultural and athletic facilities, day care and senior centers. This community-inclusive approach to neighborhood development was novel then, and has become a standard feature of thoughtful city planning.

A striking feature of this neighborhood are the three different social/income groups living there. The study considered development beneficial to middle-to-lower income blacks and Hispanics in public housing; rental residents in older housing stock vulnerable to replacement by expensive apartment buildings; the largely white middle-to-upper income group living between Fifth and Park on 96th Street and on the side streets.



The 1905 public library is dwarfed by adjacent building

Traffic congestion was an important consideration as 96th Street is a major artery between the Upper West and East Sides, as well as a connector between the Henry Hudson Parkway and the FDR drive and the boroughs across the river. Other concerns ex-



EAST 96TH

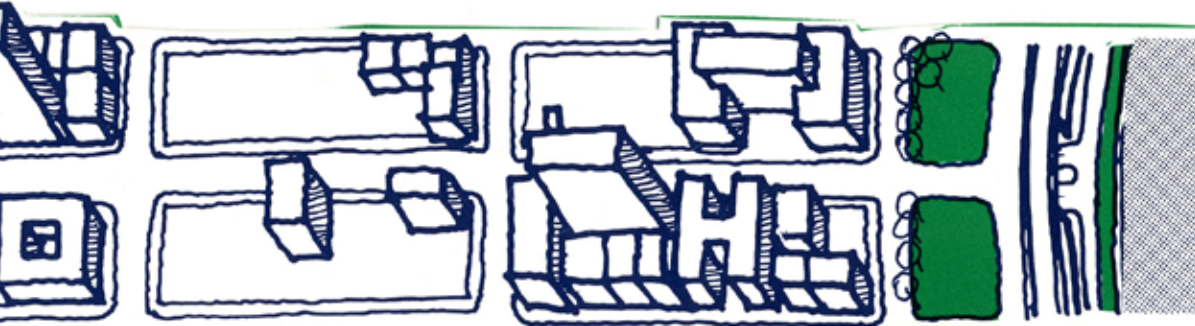
amined were: current land use, affordable housing, commercial opportunities, recreational facilities, tree planting, greater social and economic interaction between communities to the north and south of 96th Street, the preservation of unlandmarked buildings of architectural merit, the future of then-vacant properties and better pedestrian access to the East River Esplanade. The planning study detailed the following recommendations:

- Zoning changes to ensure a consistency of street-wall appearance with buildings west of Park on 96th Street and to limit density to maintain the look and scale, and structural design that maximizes precious urban amenities of light and air and lively safer streets.
- A detailed long-term plan for altering the west-bound entrance to the 96th Street transverse to relieve traffic blockages on Madison at 96th and 97th Streets.
- Rerouting the on/off accesses to the FDR Drive to ease congestion there.
- The elimination of the plaza bonus for new construction.
- The creation of a 96th Street Special District to promote its development as an attractive boulevard between Central Park and the East River.

- More affordable housing (the Stanley Isaacs, Carver and Lexington Houses predate the study).
- The improvement of the 96th Street subway station and its entrances.

The study took special note of the large apartment complex a developer was proposing to build on the entire block between 96th and 95th Streets and Third and Second Avenues and suggested design changes. The central recommendation was the siting of tower buildings on the corners of the property with lower-rise mid-block buildings fronting on 96th that would respect the existing street wall. The East 96th Street Study was published and presented to community groups, and circulated to New York City zoning officials and planners, neighborhood institutions, developers who owned buildable properties in the area, the interested public, and was well received.

The present-day picture is not a pretty one. East 96th Street doesn't begin to resemble the tree-lined boulevard envisioned by the planning study. As anticipated, traffic has worsened yearly, increasing its noxious impact on the environment. Minor traffic-light changes were made and crossing guards added at the blockage points, but the City has done



H STREET

nothing to ease congestion by rerouting traffic. The blocks between Fifth and Park have retained their allure, and that's because nothing was built there apart from a "sliver" building between Fifth and Madison and a new contextually-scaled luxury building on the northwest corner of Madison and 96th Street.

East of Park Avenue is where the urban planning disappointment begins. There you see towering luxury buildings next to unimproved or boarded-up tenements with seedy stores on the ground level. Between Park and Lexington, the elegant 1905 public library designed by Babb, Cook & Willard is dwarfed by the building adjacent to it. (The building would have been 12 floors higher if CIVITAS hadn't intervened in 1986 and spearheaded a protest and subsequent lawsuit against the developer who claimed to have made an "honest mistake" in reading the zoning map.) As a result of the CIVITAS study, the subway station was renovated years earlier than scheduled. Still, it is unchanged at street level where small retail plazas could have increased pedestrian and social traffic between East Harlem and the Upper East Side. The recently updated playground on the southeast corner of Lexington and 96th and five rehabilitated red-brick row houses on the southwest corner are the only pleasant features of an intersection that is a transportation hub for the

area. A tower on the northwest corner of 96th and Third was rounded at the corner in a failed attempt to minimize its huge appearance. An architecturally graceful mosque was constructed on the northeast corner of Third but is now overwhelmed by the luxury tower built on its formerly open site and air rights. And, adding insult to neighborhood injury, the massive undistinguished Normandie Court complex between 3rd and 2nd Avenues deliberately turns its back on 96th Street. There are four 34-story buildings, three of them connected, all entered on 95th Street. Of the 1,488 rental apartments in the complex, 297 are moderate-income units that will soon legally be converted to market-rate rentals. Further along 96th, there is a gas station on the southwest corner of First Avenue that in all likelihood will be sold to a developer, playing fields on both eastern corners of that intersection that are uninvitingly enclosed and isolated by chain-link fencing, and still no pedestrian access to the Esplanade except for a dangerous crossing under the FDR Drive.

On the whole, walking east of Park on 96th is a lesson in missed opportunities. It has not become what the study showed it could be. Like many neighborhoods in Manhattan, the 96th Street area is losing residents as their apartments are replaced with luxury housing built by private

profit-takers with little regard for the public good. Institutional expansion, particularly by the area's hospitals, is arguably necessary and proceeding rapidly. As for trees and healthier air and well-designed buildings and improved street life and other such vital concerns, they too have been conspicuously neglected by developers and our city planners.

What has been built won't be torn down, but it is still possible to regulate new construction on 96th Street and the avenues crossing it, to plant trees and enhance the streetscape, to build affordable housing, to relieve traffic congestion with new routing, to create pocket parks and a safer walkway to the Esplanade. The Second Avenue subway, presently scheduled for construction, will provide an opportunity for good development around its 96th Street station. Now is the time to spur municipal and private efforts to make the neighborhood's potential a reality, before it's too late.

Lucienne S. Bloch



The Mosque is overwhelmed by luxury towers

Massive Uptown NY Project goes Back to the Drawing Board

A victory for East Harlem residents was declared in October of this year when the New York City Economic Development Corporation cancelled the Uptown NY project in its existing form and issued a new Request for Proposals for a large building site between East 125th and East 127th Streets and between Second and Third Avenues. The Uptown NY project had called for 1,500 residential units, towers approaching 50 stories, an underground MTA bus garage and heavily increased traffic. Development on a much reduced scale should be the likely result of the decision to start afresh. The turnaround on the Uptown NY project provides an instructive lesson on the value of meaningful community input.



Architect Raymond Plume at site of defeated project

The Uptown NY proposal was sprung on the East Harlem community in July 2005 at a well-attended public hearing at the Julia de Burgos Latino Cultural Center. The limited purpose of the hearing was to respond to a Draft Scope of Work for the project's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). This Draft Scope of Work was required under the City's Environmental Quality Review (CEQR), and was issued by the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) as the lead agency.

In December 2005, after the City de-designated the former developers it had chosen in 2000 to develop this site, Community Board No. 11 with EDC as lead agency set up a task force to develop a new request for proposals for the 125th Street Development Project. Task force members included representatives of the Deputy Mayor's Office, City Councilwoman

Melissa Mark-Viverito, Anthony Borelli of the Manhattan Borough President's Office, representatives of the EDC, the Department of City Planning, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, members of Community Board 11, the East Harlem Chamber of Commerce, the Community Association of the East Harlem Triangle, the East Harlem Homeowner's Association, the Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs, Hope Community, the Association for Hispanic Arts, the A. K. Houses Tenants Association, P.S. 30 Parents Association, Harlem Neighborhood Block Association and myself as a concerned resident, businessperson and member of the board of directors of CIVITAS and the Business & Residents Alliance (BARA) of East Harlem.

The Task Force held over 21 meetings on the following: (1) local development participation, (2) affordable housing, both rental and home ownership, (3) zoning that encouraged mixed-use (4) eminent domain of existing businesses, (5) economic development, to include small businesses, big-box stores and employment opportunities, (6) cultural institutions, to include theatres and gallery space, (7) health and the environment, including mitigation for the city's highest child asthma rate, (8) transportation, to include automobile, bus and truck traffic, and the MTA bus depot, and finally (10) the delivery of city services, i.e. education, sanitation, police, fire and health to complement the proposed development.

"The turnaround... provides an instructive lesson on the value of meaningful community input."

Finally in September 2006, two Town Hall meetings were held. The results were discussed further, and then the Task Force ceased to exist in its present form. A new Request for Proposals was issued by the City on October 18, with a submission date of January 12, 2007. An ad hoc committee of former members of the Task Force will continue to monitor the selection process by the City with the designation of a new developer expected by September 2007.

Raymond Plume

continued from p. 3
they grew up.

Q. Your company's current development project at E. 124th and 2nd Avenue didn't get city planning approval to go as high as planned. Were you disappointed with the outcome?

A. Contextual zoning has a legitimate place in urban land use planning. I believe that the prominence of this site – at the east end of the 125th Street corridor and across from the Triborough Bridge entrance – makes it an ideal location for a tower-on-base form. Although many individuals at the local and city government levels encouraged us to pursue such a building, we were ultimately convinced that a contextual building would be objectionable to far fewer people than a tower. The contextual building that we have designed for the site is very attractive and we are excited to be moving forward on this wonderful project.

Q. Was the Uptown--NY \$1 billion mixed-use complex defeat a bad thing?

A. No. The community had legitimate concerns about the scale of the project and about the design process. It is appropriate to re-bid the project, especially since the scope changed so dramatically from the original one. The political and local market dynamics have also changed since the original Request for Proposals was issued for the site.

Sally Schubert

MARCIA FOWLE HONORED



CIVITAS Vice President Marcia Fowle was honored at the 2006 annual Advocate Awards gala held at the Yale Club November 13th, for a "job well done" defending New York's environmental community. Environmental Advocates

of NY is a state watchdog organization that serves to protect our natural resources. CIVITAS extends a hearty congratulations and its own acknowledgment of Marcia Fowle's dedication to the Upper East Side and East Harlem community and for her long association with New York City Audubon.

CIVITAS Benefit to Honor Metropolis Magazine

Please join CIVITAS in celebrating another year of accomplishment at the Ukrainian Institute of America for the annual CIVITAS Benefit on March 1st. When arriving at the majestic building, hear the soothing sounds of the Alex Donner Jazz duo, enter the grand salon and get ready for a very special evening featuring a delicious buffet and drinks. The festivities include an award ceremony where, this year, CIVITAS is pleased to honor the architecture magazine, **Metropolis**, and its publisher, Horace Havemeyer III and Editor in Chief, Susan Szenasy with the August Heckscher Award for Community Service and Excellence. **Metropolis** magazine has since its inception in 1980 covered good design, quality and environmental sensitivity, while avoiding the tired old, jargon typical of other architectural periodicals. Guests at the event will receive copies of **Metropolis** as well as the CIVITAS commemorative journal. We look forward to seeing you there.



Horace Havemeyer III
and Susan Szenasy

Take action against newsracks blocking pedestrian movement on the sidewalk, bus stops or next to fire hydrants. Call 311, reference the operator to the "news-paper box complaint" form and provide details as to location.

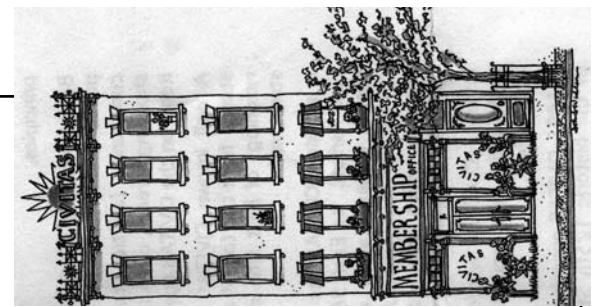


Please fill in your name and address ONLY if different from address label.
Join CIVITAS' continuing effort to make an impact on the quality of life in East Harlem and the Upper East Side by introducing a new member and by contributing.

Name _____ Apt. _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Evening phone _____ Day phone _____ Fax _____
Membership dues: \$50 Contribution: \$ _____

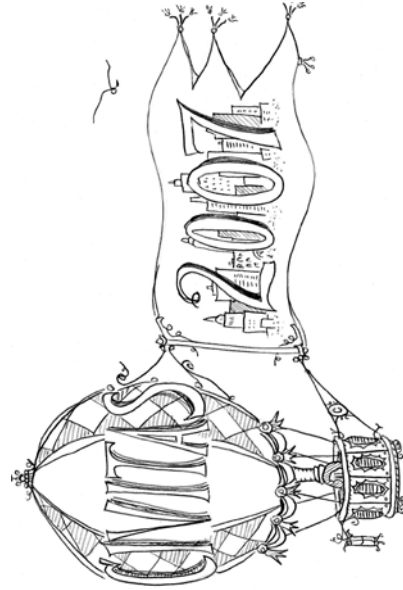
All contributions are tax deductible.

Please return to CIVITAS, 1457 Lexington Avenue, NYC 10128
Tel. 212-996-0745 www.civitasnyc.org Fax: 212-289-4291



CIVITAS
1457 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10128-2506

2007



CIVITAS Benefit

Thursday, March 1st

Aneeba Rehman

Hunter College student chosen for
Carolyn Greenberg Intern Program

Learning how CIVITAS interacts with the community, specifically to Upper East Side and East Harlem community issues, “was like seeing things from the other side,” says Hunter student Aneeba Rehman.

Aneeba, CIVITAS’ Carolyn Greenberg Student Intern, held a previous internship with City Council member Gale Brewer that involved legislation and public policy. Working at CIVITAS, where such public interest issues as land-use and zoning concerns are the focus, “has been a very different slant from my experience at 250 Broadway,” she explains. Both opportunities have come about from her participation in the Hunter College Public Service Scholar program.

Last September, Aneeba began gathering information on community groups and studying ways to rally public support for our Bridge the Gap project, the proposed pedestrian bridge from East Harlem to Randall’s Island. By identifying and calling tenant associations, sports and health groups with the eventual aim of putting together a presentation and meeting in order to pitch the project, she has been very helpful in moving this project along.



Studying full time, commuting, volunteering and applying to law schools Aneeba is busy. Her two majors are political science and sociology, and she plans to concentrate on civil rights and constitutional law in law school, especially as it pertains to the Muslim community.