

August 30, 2007 • WEST SIDE SPIRIT •

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Remedial Work Resumes

Park W. Village project

By Jessica Troiano

Life is almost back to normal for residents of 784 Columbus Avenue in Park West Village.

Last month, their building was evacuated after a retaining wall collapsed in the adjoining

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construction site. The 16 families who were out of their apartments for a week have returned home, but construction noise has continued to test tenants' patience.

A stop-work order issued by the Department of Buildings has been partly lifted, allowing the contractor to perform remedial work to fix the collapsed wall and to conduct housekeeping. However, some residents are skeptical that all other work has ceased.

Robin Dolch, a spokesperson for Gotham Construction, said what the residents could have seen is Mayrich Construction, the excavation contractor, removing rocks from the work area and trucking them to another area on site.

Tenants also expressed concern about structural damage to their building, although Dolch said that surveyors and engineers found that the building did not move.

Gotham is currently repairing the wall under the supervision of a third party engineering firm, as required by Buildings Department regulations.

David Wellington, a resident of Park West Village for five years, said he's been opposed to the construction project from the beginning.

"Now that they're doing it, I'm kind of resigned to it," he said. "I hope they'll just get it over with." He's concerned that the stop-work order will only make the construction phase longer.

That's a worry shared by the developer, Stellar Management, according to spokesperson Kathleen Cudahy. She added that Stellar would like to resolve this issue as quickly as possible so the project can proceed.

Though city officials have not yet determined the cause of the July 25 collapse, they suspect blasting conducted earlier that day is the culprit.

In response to the collapse, the City Council recently proposed legislation limiting the use of explosives in building projects. The bill would shorten the duration of blasting permits from three years to three months and would require



Dorri Jacobs, a Park West Village resident, stands in front of the construction site, where some remedial work has resumed.

increased oversight from other city agencies, including the Fire Department.

"While we do not know for certain that blasting was the primary cause of the retaining wall collapse at 808 Columbus Avenue, there are obvious shortcomings in

the current regulations that must be addressed before someone is seriously hurt or worse," Council Speaker Christine Quinn said.

"I think it's wonderful," resident Lois Hoffmann said of the

proposed law. Hoffmann is president of the Park West Village Tenants' Association and has helped organize residents' complaints about the construction project. She believes that in this case, the builders shouldn't be using explosives at all. "In areas like this, with so many buildings close together," she said, "they shouldn't be blasting."

Dorri Jacobs, a writer who works from home, hopes the increased scrutiny will lead to a better quality of life for her and her neighbors. She was grateful when the construction ceased altogether for the week following the collapse.

"It was such a blessing," she said. "For the first time in a year, my apartment felt like home."

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