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**GROUP TAKES CITY TO COURT OVER WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK PLANS,
CALLING THEM "ARBITRARY, CAPRICIOUS, UNREASONABLE AND ILLEGAL".**

The Emergency Coalition Organization to Save Washington Square Park [ECO], a group of Greenwich Village residents and others opposing the Park Department's radical redesign plans, has filed an Article 78 proceeding in New York State Supreme Court, Docket Number 05/110200.

Among petitioners in the legal action is Robert B. Nichols. As lead architect on the previous Washington Square Park renovation 35 years ago, his team was largely responsible for the present free-spirited character of the park, which many feel will be lost in the Park Department's rigid redesign. Mr. Nichols is joined in the lawsuit by his daughter Eliza Nichols, an officer of Lower Manhattan Neighborhood Organization for Parks and Playgrounds [LMNOP]. LMNOP is also a petitioner in the lawsuit.

Other petitioners are Village Independent Democrats [VID]; Luther Harris, renowned historian and author of the book "Around Washington Square"; Keen Berger, Democratic District leader; The West Village Committee, the group led by Jane Jacobs who successfully fought Robert Moses in the late 1950's; Margie Reuben, founder of "Mobility Impaired Artists of Westbeth;" and Karen Kramer, director of the new film, "The Ballad of Greenwich Village".

The petitioners' major objections to the \$16 million dollar redesign of a land marked park include: relocation (23 feet to the East) of the fountain to align with the arch; leveling of the sunken fountain plaza area; removal of the three-tiered seating walls; destruction of at least 20 trees; and alterations of the park's unique landscaping.

The redesign calls for a reduction of the size of the plaza by nine feet which will interfere with the ability for different groups to perform in separate nodes simultaneously, affecting the dynamics of the plaza.

The demolition, which Parks says will take 2 to 4 years to complete, will impact the city's tourist industry, and create economic fallout for filmmakers and photographers deprived of the park as a filming location.

Lack of community involvement and transparency, i.e. the recent surprise announcement of the naming of the "Tisch Fountain," are further concerns.

The glaring inadequacy of financing for this \$16 million vanity project, for which only \$6.8 million has been raised (1 million from NYU and 2.5 million from the Tisch family), threatens the park's future status as a public park.

Required demolition of the fountain and excavation for a new one will also disturb the Potters Field which contains Yellow Fever victims not allowed in church cemeteries, including an African cemetery as well as a synagogue's.

Another point of contention is the redesign's 4-5 feet wrought iron vertical fence, to which gates would most likely be added later.

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