



West 45th St. Block Association

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REMARKS TO COMMUNITY BOARD #4 PUBLIC HEARING ON POLICE PRECINCT BOUNDARIES APRIL 5, 1995

Ten years ago, the West 45th Street Block Association (8-9 Aves.) raised the issue of the Midtown North/Midtown South dividing line with city officials and the NYPD.

At that time, responding to a letter from then City Councilperson Ruth Messinger, Zone Commander Robert Burke stated officers would cover both sides of West 45th Street and would make frequent patrols.

Since then, we've seen drug gangs invade the block, the Guardian Angels establish a presence on 46th Street, a MTN permanent post on Restaurant Row, the 42nd Street clean-up and a concentration of pornography on Eighth Avenue - all affecting this residential block.

During these years, residents of 45th Street continued to experience problems with police coverage on the block and have legitimately and appropriately voiced their concern.

The record Speaks for itself.

Responding to community complaints, Borough President Messinger in 1993 asked Commanders of both Midtown North and Midtown South for a greater effort to coordinate staff deployment between the two precincts.

In a Manhattan Spirit article from 1993, one block resident was quoted as stating, "We're at the dividing line between Midtown North and Midtown South, and neither wants to commit anything to this street. This should be the most protected block in New York and we have zero protection." The article expressed residents' opinions: the block was a dumping ground for undesirables pushed out by private security forces on Restaurant Row and the aggressive clean-up campaign in Times Square.

The precinct dividing line is not the cause of the various street problems. Many factors are at play -- Times Square and the Javits Center push the problems North, the various walls of private security from the Theatre District, the Times Sq. BID and Restaurant Row create a

containment area where the dirt is swept and re-swept onto 45th Street.

The existing problems are exacerbated by the dividing line and also by NYPD's reluctance to adequately patrol 45th Street.

In denying previous requests, the Police Department has relied on various rational: election district boundaries and coterminality, community policing/community concerns and resource allocation. When scrutinized, these reasons don't hold up.

Election Districts

Midtown North Commander Diane Pizzuti stated in a May 20, 1994 letter that precinct boundaries are based on election district (ED) boundaries, and the dividing line between the 61st and 96th ED is coterminus with the 45th Street precinct boundary. However, the same criteria can be met with the precinct boundary on 43rd Street which is the Southern boundary of the 61st ED. Even so, exceptions are made as both the 48th and 51st EDs straddle over more than one precinct.

Community Concerns

Commander Pizzuti's letter made a direct connection from ED boundaries to NYPD's responsiveness to the community. Indeed, "community needs" was cited for the 1993 change of several Murray Hill blocks from Midtown South to the 17th Precinct. Former Police Commissioner Kelly stated the change was to "facilitate police service..." and it "unites the 'Murray Hill' neighborhood and allows us to provide them with more efficient police service."

It's undisputed that West 45th Street and the corners at both 8th and 9th Avenues have serious problems. Aside from reduced patrolling on 45th Street and the concentration on 46th Street, residents have raised several problems directly related to the precinct dividing line:

- drug dealers cross the street and some police won't follow, or in some cases, drug dealers are repeatedly chased back and forth from one side to the other;
- some officers won't cross the street to deal with other problems such as quality of life issues and illegal parking;

- some officers think both sides of the street are in the other precinct;
- Residents calling one precinct are often told to call the other precinct.

Given the problems on the corners and on the block, many residents feel the police have not been responsive to the block's needs. The general lack of coverage is more apparent because in some cases, there are some officers who do cross the street and who do take an interest, but such interest is the exception.

Resource Allocation

We also question the NYPD's reliance on "resource allocation" to resist a boundary change, especially when such reasoning can easily be clouded in statistical analysis and interpreted in a variety of ways.

Residents actually see a definite concentration of personnel on 46th Street, and actually see a paucity of personnel on 45th Street. The various reasons for this, albeit speculative, cannot justify any reluctance to deal with 45th Street.

When residents have complained, the NYPD promises to be more attentive to 45th Street and to coordinate with their counterpart in the other precinct. But over the years this has been a failed promise. We've seen no change or meaningful attempt to deal with the concerns.

We do not want a short-term reaction of beefed-up patrols for a few weeks. We want consistent and adequate coverage for the block and the two corners which are so much of a problem. The only way this can be accomplished is to move the device which exacerbates many of these problems: the precinct dividing line.

A division between precincts must exist somewhere. Some suggest it be placed between streets. Some suggest it should be on a less residential block such as 40th Street. Some feel that 43rd Street is logical since it is less residential between 8th and 9th Avenue as well as contiguous with the boundary dividing Midtown North and the 10th Precinct between 9th Avenue and the river. We are not advocating where it should be; only that it should not be in the middle of 45th Street.

Put West 45th Street in ONE Police Precinct!

The dividing line between Midtown North and Midtown South Police Precincts runs right down the middle of 45th Street. Police officials claim the block gets "double protection" but many block residents know this just isn't true.

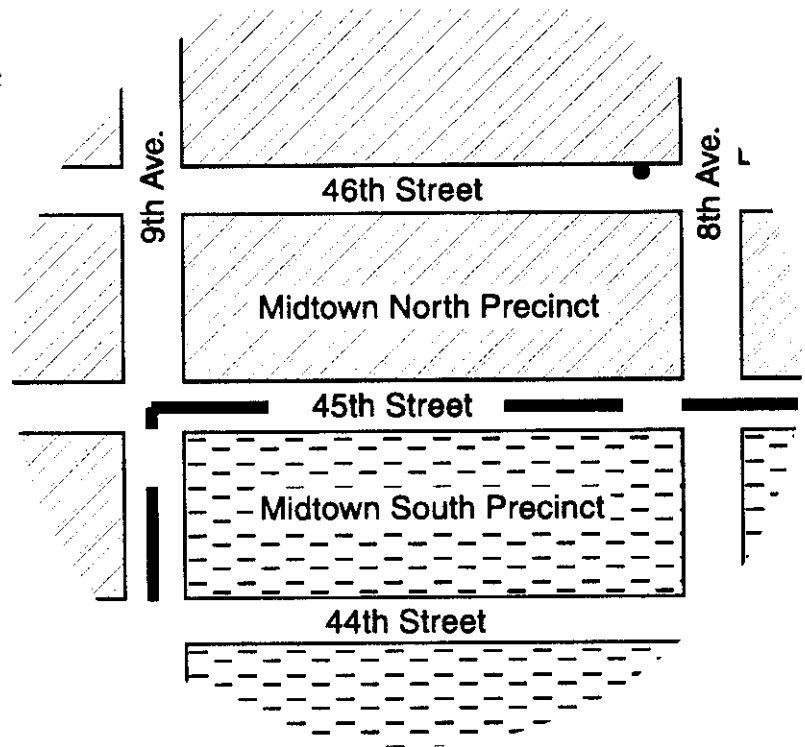
- Why do drug dealers and prostitutes consider 45th Street *safe* territory?
- Why do some police officers refuse to cross the street? Why do some officers think both sides of West 45th are in the *other* precinct?
- Why are police concentrated on 46th Street instead of giving 45th Street adequate coverage?
- Why does one precinct often tell residents to call the other precinct?
- Why are tourist busses and 'Private Eyes' limousines allowed to continue illegal parking?

"When you look out your window any hour of the day and see drug dealers, you become angry.

"When the owner of the ___ Cafe, on our corner, has to call 911 to move drug dealers so his customers can enter, you become angry.

"When you count 18 drug dealers from 45th to 46th Street on Easter Sunday afternoon while 3 beat cops and a patrol car are on stationary assignment guarding Restaurant Row on 46th Street, you become furious."

— Letter to Mayor Guiliani and Police Commissioner Bratton from a former resident



We support the police and we know their job is tough, but West 45th Street and its 1,000 residents deserve adequate protection.

For at least ten years, residents of West 45th Street (between 8th and 9th Avenues) have complained that the dividing line between Midtown North and Midtown South Police Precincts has led to inadequate coverage by *either* precinct.

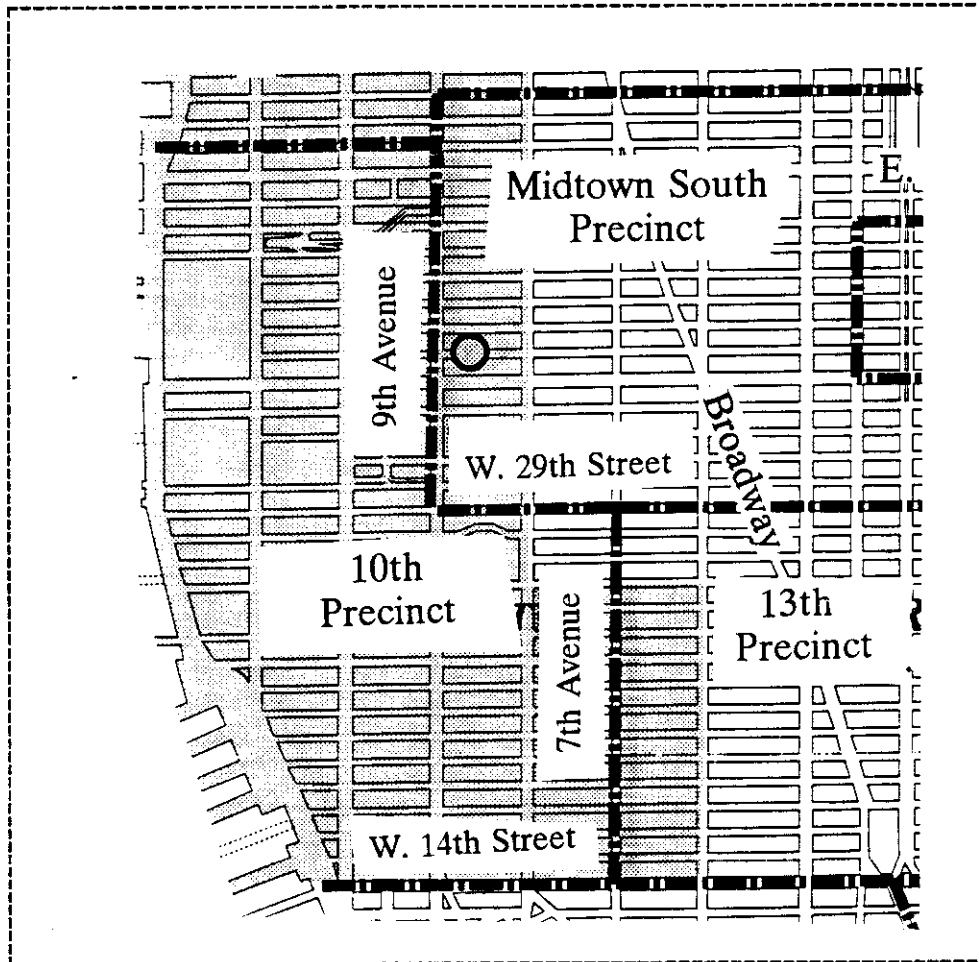
8-9 AVE
W. 45 ST.

**West 45th St.
Block Association**

Manhattan Community Board No. 4
invites you to a
PUBLIC HEARING
on
POLICE PRECINCT BOUNDARIES IN CHELSEA

Relevant precincts include Midtown South, the 10th, and the 13th.

Here are their current boundaries:



*How do these boundaries affect your block's security?
Would a change make your neighborhood safer?
What boundaries would make the most sense?*

Come and make sure that your opinion is heard!
... or listen and learn more about this issue.

The hearing will be held on **Wednesday, May 3rd, 1995 at 6:30 pm** at the **Fulton Senior Center, 119 Ninth Avenue** between 17th and 18th Streets.
Call the Board office at (212) 736-4536 for more information.