



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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COREY JOHNSON
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

February 3, 2012

Honorable Christine Quinn
Speaker
New York City Council
City Hall, Room 5
New York, NY 10007

Re: Honorary Supplemental Street Naming for Brandon Romero on West 19th Street

Dear Speaker Quinn:

On January 18, 2012, the Transportation Planning Committee of Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) heard a request to honor the late Brandon Romero with an honorary supplemental street naming — Brandon Romero Plaza — on the northwest corner of West 19th Street at Ninth Avenue.

The Committee's unanimous recommendation to endorse the renaming was approved by CB4 on February 3, 2012, with X in favor, X opposed, X abstention, and X present but not eligible to vote.

Mr. Romero died on the morning of December 12th, 2011, attempting to save the life of his cousin, Jaime Cruz. His heroic and selfless action was the final one in a life of helping others and performing the many acts of kindness that knit a community together.

Mr. Romero, the middle child of five in a family that has lived in the neighborhood for generations with roots in both the Irish and Puerto Rican communities, spent all of his young life in the Chelsea and Clinton neighborhoods, first at Fulton Houses, then at Manhattan Plaza. He attended P.S. 11 on W. 21st Street and the Museum School on W. 17th Street. He worked at the Equinox Gym on W. 17th Street and Tenth Avenue and at the Penn Book group, in Penn Station, and attended church on a regular basis at the World Changes Church Group on W. 34th Street.

He was a beneficent force in his community, quick to give his lunch to hungry kids, or help neighbors with their groceries, acknowledged for his ability to help his friends stay off drugs and off the streets. His civic-mindedness even extended to looking out for strangers. Once, to prevent anyone from being injured, he stood by a dangerous pothole until the police arrived to secure the spot.

Characteristically, when his cousin needed help moving out from an abusive boyfriend's apartment, Mr. Romero volunteered. When the boyfriend showed up brandishing a gun, Mr. Romero's attempt to diffuse a dangerous encounter ended in tragedy when he put himself between his cousin and the gun. His cousin

was spared but Mr. Romero was shot three times and stabbed repeatedly. The boyfriend then turned the gun on himself and committed suicide. In spite of his wounds, Mr. Romero managed to walk down four flights of stairs to call 911. He died later at Beth Israel.

Hundreds of people attended his funeral. A petition in support of a street sign garnered an estimated 2,000 signatures in two days, some from people outside the community whose lives had been touched by Mr. Romero. Scores of his neighbors, friends, and relatives showed up to speak at CB4's Full Board Meeting on January 4th, 2011. Their testimony spoke less of the horrific events of that morning in December than of the hope and positive example that Mr. Romero's life engendered in individuals and in his community.

In a moving tribute, one young person said, " I find myself often struggling in my day-to-day life, and I am proud to say, that with Brandon's positive influence while he was alive, I constantly ask myself "What would Brandon do?" The answer, the speaker said, always led to a constructive decision. His hope was that other young people struggling with a difficult issue "could look up at this street sign, and ask, "What would Brandon do?"

The Board generally discourages honorary supplemental street signs. In this case, however, it feels strongly that not only does Mr. Romero meet the criteria in its guidelines for a street naming but also that a street sign will serve as an outward and visible honor for his extraordinary community spirit and uncommon inner courage and will serve to inspire the young people of our community, now and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson
Chair



Christine Berthet
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Jay Marcus
Co-Chair
Transportation Planning Committee

cc: Margaret Forgione, DOT