

Community Problems with United States Postal Service Times Plaza Carrier Annex Whitepaper

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Background

In January 2017, the United States Postal Service (USPS) moved from Times Plaza (Atlantic Avenue between 3rd Avenue and Nevins Street) to two different locations: 539 Atlantic Avenue and 594 Dean Street. 539 Atlantic is a small, modern retail USPS facility for shipping packages and purchasing stamps. At 594 Dean Street, the USPS located the Times Plaza Carrier Annex (“Carrier Annex”) to sort mail for carriers servicing 11217 zip code (n.b., 594 Dean Street resides within the 11238 zip code. Neighbors on the Carrier Annex block receive service via the Adelphi Station post office in Fort Greene.) and offer package pick up and drop off (pre-stamped parcels only). **This whitepaper relates only to the Carrier Annex at 594 Dean Street.**

For 2+ years, this USPS location continually disrupts the quality of life and neighborhood safety. This whitepaper provides a succinct historical context, and detailed community problems with the Carrier Annex.

About the Neighborhood

The Carrier Annex is located in the northwest section of Prospect Heights: a neighborhood of nearly 20,000 residents. The northwest corner is also home one of New York City’s largest ongoing construction efforts: Pacific Park (formerly Atlantic Yards). In fact, the Carrier Annex resides opposite Pacific Park construction (buildings known as 535 Carlton and site B12). Due to the ongoing construction and frequent Barclays Center events, Prospect Height’s northwest section can be congested and crowded.

Whitepaper Goal

We hope to provide you with insights into our day-to-day experiences and to open a renewed, vigorous and transparent dialogue between the community, city, state and federal stakeholders.

Accompanying Materials

Along with this whitepaper, we are providing two corollary compendiums. The first documents our exhaustive outreach to the USPS, Community Board, and U.S. Congress. The second provides photo evidence associated to the proceeding community problems.

Historical Context

Since the Carrier Annex's inception, its location has negatively impacted the community. Nearby residents and our organization continually reached out to partner with the USPS to remediate these issues. These efforts have not met open partners and thus have not positively impacted the situation, to-date.

USPS Move

On January 11, 2017, the USPS issued a press release about the Carrier Annex at 594 Dean.¹ This move was covered by local news agencies throughout January and February of 2017.²

Community Problems

The Carrier Annex creates six types of problems.

1. MTA B65 bus stop blockage
2. Prevention of street sweeping
3. Placard / paraphernalia abuse
4. Sidewalk and parking consumption
5. Left turn lane blockage
6. Late night noise disruption

MTA B65 bus stop

Context: The B65 travels east along Dean Street from 3rd to Rochester Avenue; making 20 stops on Dean Street. The Dean Street / Carlton Avenue stop resides 25 feet west of the USPS Carrier Annex. Like so many buses, the elderly and school age children use this bus stop robustly.

Situation: Due to the USPS frequent parking within the bus stop, the B65 stops in the traffic lane.

Primary issue: Elderly riders and children must cautiously and quickly move around the USPS vehicle to on-board. This is a stressful and potentially dangerous situation.

Secondary issue: A B65 stopped in the traffic lane causes (a) automobile drivers to drive in the bike lane to navigate around the bus – endangering bicyclist, and (b) automobile congestion into the Carlton Avenue / Dean Street intersection (e.g., blocking the box).

¹ https://about.usps.com/news/state-releases/ny/2017/ny_2017_0111d.htm

² For example, <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20170106/boerum-hill/times-plaza-post-office-moving-atlantic-avenue-dean-street/>.



Prevention of street sweeping

Context: Dean Street – Carlton to Vanderbilt – has street sweeping 4 times per week. Street sweeping occurs on the north side every Monday and Thursday (11:30 to 1pm). Street sweeping occurs on the south side every on Tuesday and Friday (11:30 to 1pm). The USPS Carrier Annex resides on the **south side**.

Situation: USPS trucks and employee cars (see section titled “Placard / Paraphernalia abuse”) do not move during street sweeping hours.

Issue: Since the south side is so consistently cluttered with USPS vehicles, DSNY is unable to street sweep. Therefore, our streets are dirtier than ever; litter stuck in the gutter with no way to be swept away. It appears that DSNY has given up trying to street sweep our block and thus our streets will increasingly become fetid with detritus.

Placard / Paraphernalia abuse

Context: In 2017, placard abuse was hyperlocal news to our specific scenario.³ Placard abuse is now frontpage news.⁴ In February, the Mayor announced measures towards municipal employees. Unfortunately, the USPS is a federal agency.

Situation: USPS employees use placards and paraphernalia as a way to secure parking spaces away from residents and small business owners.

Issue: USPS employees set a two-tier class system: their parking needs usurping that of the common Prospect Heights resident. Residents endure government employees employing inequitable and dangerous practices to sequester parking normally available to all residents, businesses and visitors.

Sidewalk and Parking consumption

Context: In our neighborhood, residents, business owners, employees and visitors use the sidewalks, especially the south side sidewalk throughout the day and night. This neighborhood

³ See <https://www.brooklynpaper.com/stories/40/26/dtg-placard-abuse-on-dean-street-2017-06-30.html>

⁴ See <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/nyregion/parking-placards-city-workers.html>

is full of small children and myriad caretakers push strollers along this sidewalk from early in the morning well into the evening. Additionally, street parking can be hotly contested especially as neighborhood density increases from the addition of new high-rise, residential construction and 150+ events per annum at the nearby Barclays Center. The Times Plaza location provided some rear parking (entrance via Pacific Street) for employees. The Carrier Annex provides no off-street parking.

Situation: On any given day, USPS employees take 7+ parking spaces. In certain cases, the USPS employees park on the sidewalk creating a nuisance and potentially dangerous scenarios for our children who struggle to see beyond these parked cars.

Issue: Residents, small business owners, and visitors struggle to safely walk the streets and find adequate parking. Child caretakers must negotiate this potentially dangerous sidewalk with limited sightlines due to illegally parked USPS vehicles.

Left turn lane blockage

Context: At Vanderbilt Avenue, Dean Street has parking (on the southern side), a traffic lane (to proceed straight on Dean or right on Vanderbilt) and a left turn only lane. The left turn lane (heading towards Atlantic Avenue) provides much-needed traffic relief for this intersection. Traffic on Dean Street only has 20 seconds of “green light” at this intersection (relative to the 60 seconds Vanderbilt Avenue traffic receives). With 30%+⁵ vehicles turning left, the left turn lane reduces traffic backing up onto Dean Street.

Situation: The USPS has taken over the left turn lane by parking 1 to 4 vehicles in the left turn lane.

Issue: The USPS disregards NYC DOT traffic signage without repercussion. Without a left turn lane, traffic builds up on Dean leading to increased congestion, idling and driver aggravation. The aggravation can lead to unsafe driving conditions as anxious drivers dangerously accelerate through yellow and red lights.

⁵ The author counted vehicles on March 28th, 2019 (6:00 – 6:10pm). Approximately 30% made left turns, 30% proceeded straight, and 40% made right turns.



Late Night Noise

Many of the larger USPS (and subcontracted) vehicles arrive to the Carrier Annex during overnight hours.

Situation: Late night vehicle operators choose to idle their loud trucks rather than turn off. Occasionally, those vehicle operators choose to honk at the Carrier Annex to request the opening of the garage door.

Primary Issue: Residential neighbors – all pre-dating the Carrier Annex – are awakened at any point on any night by USPS trucks.