

RESOLUTION

Date: January 5, 2021

Committee of Origin: Transportation

Re: Ending Taxpayer Support for Marketing of Helicopter Tours Over Manhattan.

Full Board Vote: 45 In Favor 0 Against 0 Abstentions 0 Present

The following facts and concerns were taken into account in arriving at our conclusions:

- Tourist and photo-excursion helicopters originating in New Jersey and Westchester County regularly fly over Manhattan neighborhoods, including the Upper West Side, as part of their tours. Many of the photo-excursion flights take place in helicopters with side doors either open or removed. Central Park is one highly attractive sight both during the day and after sunset, both for views of the Park itself and to frame the skyscrapers beyond. These helicopters hover, sometimes two at a time, for extended periods over the Park, disrupting the experience of the Park and the surrounding neighborhoods for those on the ground. Helicopters also hover over Central Park and the Upper West Side to await clearance to enter airspace proximate to or regulated by LaGuardia Airport.
- Tourist helicopter flights have increased in recent years, with a particularly sharp spike in the past six months, according to a recent BetaNYC presentation to Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer’s Helicopter Task Force.
- These increased flights have been accompanied by a dramatic upsurge in helicopter noise complaints. According to an analysis by the news site The City, complaints about helicopter noise have gone up more than 130 percent since 2019, rising to 7,758 as of November 13, 2020, compared to 4,400 for all of 2019. The complaints are concentrated in Community Districts 5, 7 and 8, according to BetaNYC.
- On January 7, 2020, CB7’s full board voted unanimously to support “our elected officials’ efforts to reduce helicopter traffic in the city, including the enactment of the Improving Helicopter Safety Act of 2019.” This Act (HR 4880) would prohibit nonessential helicopter flights from flying within New York City airspace, ending tourism helicopter flights, among others. Introduced by Reps. Jerrold Nadler, Nydia Velazquez and Carolyn Maloney, the measure has the support of many of Manhattan’s City and State elected representatives.
- Despite the impact of non-essential helicopter flights on the quality of life of those living, working and visiting the space below them, tourist and non-essential helicopter flights are listed on the website of NYC & Company, the taxpayer-supported official destination marketing organization for the five boroughs of New York City. These flights are listed under “Tours” alongside sightseeing cruises and walking tours, and discounts are offered.
- The website of one helicopter tour company listed on NYC & Co. proclaims: “With trees starting to get their leaves and flowers blooming, taking a helicopter trip NYC visitors will never forget over Central Park is simply the most amazing experience.”
- Another company website boasts: “You’ll fly right by the Statue of Liberty and can even fly across Central Park on our City Lights Experience!”
- In a recent Gotham Gazette article, Julia Vitullo-Martin writes: “It’s hard to make the intellectual leap from out-of-town helicopter flights to benefits for New York’s tourism industry.”
- The use of a New York City taxpayer-supported marketing and media facility to promote businesses that are not reasonably expected to create tax revenues or other benefits to our City, and which disrupt our communities, is inappropriate, unfair and inefficient.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT Community Board 7/Manhattan calls on NYC & Co., the Mayor and City government to cease using taxpayer funds to promote helicopter tours that are the cause of escalating community noise complaints and other concerns, and we urge that NYC & Company cease listing and promoting such tours.