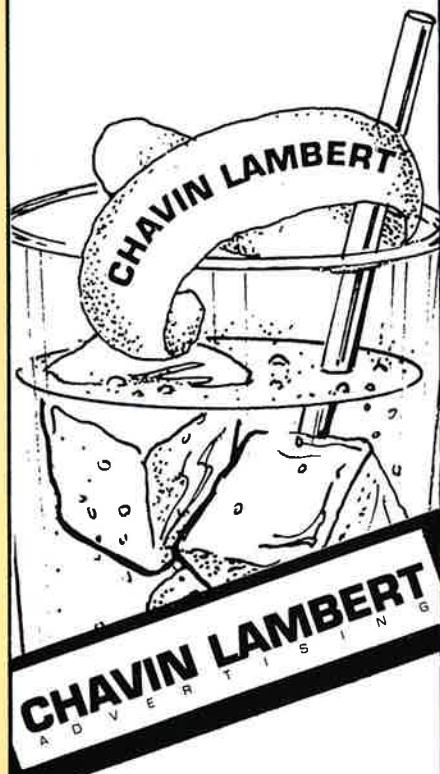


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**Why Mid-Manhattan
Never Did Get Its
Crosstown Expressway**

A little known footnote to New York City development occurred in 1956 with the proposed construction of an expressway that was designed to connect the West Side Highway and the East River Drive via a 30th Street overpass in Midtown Manhattan. Envisioned as a six-lane overhead artery, the project carried a price tag of \$131 million, a vast sum at the time. Parking for up to 1,300 cars was to be provided below the elevated highway.

The tenor of the times was pro-construction. Robert Moses held court as the "master builder" and successfully lobbied for such well-known projects as the Throggs Neck Bridge, the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and double-decking the George Washington Bridge. All three of these projects came to fruition at this time. Yet, despite the fact that Mr. Moses lobbied equally as hard for the Midtown Expressway, it failed. Why?

First and foremost was the well-organized opposition of labor unions, business leaders and real estate owners. In a rare display of unanimity, they banded together to voice strong concern about the impact an expressway would have on jobs and real estate values. Rights of way would be required necessitating condemnation proceedings, resulting in the loss of jobs and businesses.

Real Estate Opposition

Real estate opposition to the proposed expressway and demolition of many buildings was articulated by Sidney J. Bernstein, a major owner of commercial property in the area, when he appeared on a CBS-TV news program. Although Robert Moses could not be present for the live broadcast, he was represented by William Zeckendorf, Sr., a startling alliance of two well-known public figures who appeared to be an unbeatable combination.

However, elevated transportation was an anachronism even then. Remember the blight caused by elevated subway lines. To now build another "El" and recreate the

blight in a different section of town was cause to pause. Finally, an expressway would represent a Chinese Wall dividing the Midtown business district in half. Harry Helmsley was of the opinion that properties south of 30th Street would suffer a 30%-40% decline in value.

The irony of this story is not that the proposed expressway was killed by local opposition, but that 35 years later, the two major highways that were to be connected by the expressway have fallen on hard times. East River Drive, although still functioning, is over-used and under-maintained, while the West Side Highway has ceased to exist, requiring a desperately needed replacement road. Notwithstanding, opponents have blocked efforts to replace the highway, arguing that a new road would simply add to the congestion and fumes and serve as an impediment to people having access to the waterfront—a variation on the Chinese Wall theory used 35 years earlier to kill the Midtown expressway. ■



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**IREM Programs Help
Management Specialists
Meet New Demands**

(Note: This article is based in part on material originally published in a special 50th anniversary issue of IREM's Journal of Property Management (November/December 1983).

Even before World War II ended in 1945, members of the Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM) were planning for the challenges of post-war property management. In 1943, IREM's Experience Exchange Committee undertook a survey on "Postwar Planning in City Growth." Armed with these insights and others, IREM members participated in a resurgence of single-family home construction, public and institutional housing, cooperative apartment development and management, and downtown office building management.

Later on in the 1950s, as families moved out of the cities, Certified Property Man-

(Continued on page 132)