



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Adriano Espaillat

Upper Manhattan Residents Join Fight Against LG Tower

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT March 26, 2014



Upper Manhattan Joins Critics of Planned LG Electronics Headquarters in Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Michael J. Feeney, New York Daily News

The majestic views of the Palisades from upper Manhattan could soon be slightly less splendid. The vista could be interrupted by a state-of-the-art glass office building peeking above the tree line, and it has sparked an outcry on both sides of the Hudson.

LG Electronics, known for its TVs, appliances and home theater systems, plans to build its new North American headquarters in Englewood Cliffs, N.J. The 143-foot-tall building would sit directly across from Fort Tryon Park in Inwood, and some say it would ruin the previously unspoiled view of the Palisades.

John D. Rockefeller Jr., who donated the money for the Metropolitan Museum to build the museum of medieval Europe in Fort Tryon Park in the 1930s, gifted 700 acres of land across the Hudson River to the state of New Jersey, to ensure that the view would remain unspoiled. “To me, that’s sacred land,” said state Sen. Adriano Espaillat, whose district includes the Cloisters. “It shouldn’t be touched.” Harold Holzer, a spokesman for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, said museum officials have urged LG to “re-think the project.”

“It’s not only going to destroy the view from the Cloisters, but it’s going to do damage to a natural wonder that is unique in the United States.” The \$300 million project was approved by the Borough of Englewood Cliffs, and construction was slated to begin last year. But a lawsuit by environmental groups and a pair of local residents disputing the height of the building has held up the process. The sides will head to mediation next month to try to find a solution.

Espaillat recently sent letters to the Empire State Development Corp. and the city’s Economic Development Corp., expressing his displeasure and encouraging them to bar LG from future projects. Both agencies confirmed receipt of the letters, but declined to comment further. “It’s going to be mutilated,” Espaillat said of the view from the Cloisters.

Julia Attaway of the Hudson Heights Owners Coalition — an association of owner-occupied residential properties in Washington Heights — wants to see LG head back to the drawing board. “Re-think it,” she said when asked what she would say to LG. “People are not happy.” The plans have even attracted the attention of the Rockefeller family. Larry Rockefeller, the

grandson of John D. Rockefeller Jr., said that he had been in meetings with LG about the project and was “hopeful” of achieving a different outcome, although he would not discuss details. Holzer said the museum is also holding out hope for a change in the plans.

“It would be fantastic if the building got smaller and wider,” he said. “Anything that would compromise the height would be an improvement.” LG contends it scouted more than 200 locations before purchasing the 27-acre property near its current location in Englewood Cliffs, in 2010. “To stay in our hometown was fantastic,” said company spokesman John Taylor.

As far as redesigning the office building, Taylor said the added cost and timing would make that a challenge. “Hopefully, we’ll be able to reach a compromise,” he said. “It’s not a tower,” Taylor added, noting the building is eight stories. “LG worked hard to do everything right....We continue to hope there will be a satisfactory conclusion so we can commence construction later this year.” Holzer, when told of Taylor’s characterization, called it “disingenuous,” adding that “they are eight extremely high stories.”

He agreed that a redesign of the headquarters would add to its cost and further delay construction, but said “it’s probably the right thing to do.” Englewood Cliffs Mayor Joseph Parisi Jr. disagreed. “I think they’re making a lot about nothing,” he said of the project’s critics.

His message for New Yorkers: “Do they really have the right to tell us what to do?”