

Fossil Fools

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BY DR. CARY GOODMAN | President Ellen Futter, architect Jeanne Gang, and the Board of Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History are a group of Fossil Fools who care little about the climate crisis we all face. They want to expand the museum by polluting our air and ignoring the global consensus on climate change. They are committed to erecting a gigantic building in Teddy Roosevelt Park, which would burn about 50 trillion BTUs of fossil fuel every year. This private polluter in a public park would emit more than two million metric tons of toxic air annually. And, in order to construct this enormous wing, they are using more than \$100 million of our taxes, trying to fool us into thinking it's a good idea.

Futter, Gang, and the other Fossil Fools are ignoring the latest scientific reports which show that nine out of every 10 people are breathing bad air. And, they are oblivious to the failing grade for ozone that the American Lung Association has given the neighborhood surrounding the museum. They are planning at least 1,000 days on the Upper West Side filled with scores of diesel-burning trucks, cement-mixers, and other heavy, air-fouling equipment.

These Fossil Fools also hope to cut down a cluster of mature trees and dozens of other trees and plants in this great New York City park in order to erect their building. So, in addition to all the pollution created by the construction and their reliance on fossil fuel to operate the building, these air-cleaning elms and oaks would be clear cut. Their replacement trees would take 30 to 40 years to grow to the size of the historic trees the museum would like to wood-chip.

Ironically, the Fossil Fools try to shroud their proposal in the myth that this building will advance science. They claim that an additional building would provide more opportunities for more people to learn more about science. But what would be learned? That it is good to destroy ecosystems? That more pollution is okay if you expand your gift shop? That the air, light, wildlife, and flowers of a public park are less important than creating another event space for wealthy donors?

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The Fossil Fools unveiled their building's design, which uses no sustainable energy source, last December, just as the entire world was signing the Paris Accords. This global agreement is our planet's first unanimous call for the reduction of greenhouse gases. It affirms the desire of 193 nations to work with each other, business, and civil society to curb the rise in Mother Earth's temperature. Apparently, Futter, Gang, and company are unmoved by the urgency of curbing the use of fossil fuels. Instead of a rooftop of solar panels, they propose a

skylight so their event space can be filled with moonlight. Instead of a 21st century heating and cooling system, the museum wants to cut down the magnificent canopy that shades and shelters park users and museum-goers alike. And, instead of serving as a model for modern environmental design, the Fossil Fools are focused on expanding their footprint by ripping up lawns, paving greenspace, compromising a city landmark and the neighborhood's designation as a federal historic district.

I suspect that the reason the museum has developed a plan that contradicts the Paris agreement is because its president, Ms. Futter, is also a director of Con Edison, from which the building would draw its fossil fuel energy. And, from which she is handsomely compensated.

Recently, David Koch, King of the Fossil Fools, was driven from the museum's board by a petition signed by thousands of environmentalists, criticizing his connections to the fossil fuel industry.

More than 4,000 neighbors of the museum have already signed a petition against this toxic plan. Hopefully, Ellen Futter will be the next museum Fossil Fool to go.

Dr. Cary Goodman is the coordinator of a Community Summit scheduled for November 15 from 7 to 9 p.m., at the SAJ Synagogue, 15 West 86th Street, to discuss the loss of green space and ways to protect public health and improve public policy in an era of global warming. He has been a neighbor of the museum for more than 30 years.