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Politicians blast West Side fireworks

Public Advocate and mayoral candidate Bill de Blasio and others say the Macy's Fourth of July display should return to the East Side where New Yorkers from Brooklyn and Queens can share in the view.

[Adrienne Pasquarelli](#)

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Macy's is planning a spectacular light show for its 37th annual Fourth of July fireworks display on Thursday, featuring more than 40,000 effects fired from four barges and choreographed to pop and country music. Yet most Brooklyn and Queens residents will barely see the dazzling display. For the fifth consecutive year, the event will be held on the Hudson River, where views are fine for Manhattan's West Side residents and New Jersey riverbank towns.

Some local politicians are fighting to bring the views back east.

On Wednesday morning, Public Advocate and mayoral candidate Bill de Blasio and state Sen. Daniel Squadron urged the city to hold the fireworks display on the East River in 2014. The event was held for 15 years on the East River, but in 2009, it moved to the Hudson River to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage.



Buck Ennis

Fourth of July fireworks have become a point of contention for some politicians.

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"The outerboroughs aren't an afterthought—they should be the main event," said Mr. de Blasio, suggesting an alternation between both rivers so the 4.8 million residents in Brooklyn and Queens, and those on Manhattan's East Side, can see the spectacle.

Mr. Squadron noted that by holding the event on the Hudson, the city is losing valuable tourism dollars to New Jersey. "Year after year, millions of New Yorkers in Brooklyn, Queens and Manhattan's East Side are left out while we send visitors and business to New Jersey," he said. Last year, the officials launched a petition to move the fireworks back to the East River and collected more than 2,500 signatures, but did little to sway the 2013 decision.

Local business owners, many of whom are responsible for the recent waterfront development along the East River, are also upset about the slight. Since Jon Marchisio opened his Williamsburg, Brooklyn-based beer hall Berry Park, which has a roof bar, in 2009, he has yet to reap the rewards from an East River fireworks display.

"They're neglecting Brooklyn and Queens," he said, noting that he would sign a petition. "Why don't they do two sets—they don't have to be massive." Mr. Marchisio noted that Berry Park often gets visitors eager to see the fireworks, and he tells them they are barely visible. To compensate, he screens the live show on a large TV downstairs.

According to a Macy's Inc. spokesman, the retailer expects 3 million spectators on the West Side, compared with 2 million

on the East Side for the public viewing locations.

"The final choice of location is dependent on many factors," said the spokesman, citing city resources, safety requirements and overall show design. "As always, Macy's is ready to partner with city agencies and government officials to bring this grand tradition to the city of New York and the nation."

He declined to disclose any costs associated with the event, but said that it is produced in conjunction with the city, which provides security and sanitation resources.

But one brand expert noted that the fireworks' placement should be the river with the most brand potential—perhaps more viewers in New Jersey translates to more dollars for Macy's.

"It's easy to get caught up in the politics and sentimental nature of the fireworks location, but Macy's should make the decision primarily with its brand strategy in mind—that is, it should determine which location best supports the company's desired brand position," said Denise Lee Yohn, a branding expert.

This year's televised event will be hosted by Nick Cannon and feature performances by Mariah Carey and Tim McGraw. It begins at 9:25 p.m. and is expected to last about 25 minutes.



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