

**Manhattan Community Board 10  
Landmarks Committee Meeting  
October 24<sup>th</sup> 2017**

**Board Members**

**Present**

Lisa Downing  
Seitu Jamal Hart  
Karen Horry  
Stanley Gleaton  
Maurice Sessoms  
Racquel Vasquez, Chair  
Crystal Shipp

**Absent/Excused**

Dan Clark  
Troy Gethers  
Aarian Punter  
Keith Taylor  
Danni Tyson

The meeting was called to order at 6:51pm

**110 West 123<sup>rd</sup>**

Daniel Kimya and his development team presented the new design for 110 West 123<sup>rd</sup> Street. This is ground up construction of a building that collapsed in 2012. The site of construction is adjacent to a community garden.

He reported that there was a consensus among residents at a recent block association meeting held in early October seeking a more modern look. For example, using a charcoal slate exterior (light color) and more glass to create more light from aesthetic standpoint.

The team also reported that they conducted a Shadow study. They looked at the building at different times of day that would have an impact on the garden from early morning to the afternoon. The shadows found to be identical as if the old building were erected. The changes the new building will have on the garden are minimal. The bulkhead will remain in the same position; it does not impact the garden.

A site safety plan will be prepared in conjunction with 108 West 123<sup>rd</sup> street. There will be a 6 ft chain link fence on each side of the building as well as a 4 ft cantilever extended on the West side of the building so that debris does not fall into the garden. The latter was the recommendation of the block association. An overhead shed will also be erected; an 8ft solid wood fence on the right side of the building and also in the front of the building to protect pedestrians. The Parks department will review the site safety plan to make certain that the property is safe. Upon Park's department review, the proposed plans could change.

The goal is to work in conjunction with 108 West 123<sup>rd</sup> Street is to start the construction together and minimize traffic to the block. Excavation is expected for this Winter. The estimated time frame for construction is 12 months for the exterior and 6-8 months for the interior build out.

The developer is seeking community support so that LPC is comfortable and the developer can obtain DOB approvals.

## **Other Facts/Comments**

- There will be a reflective roof which is energy efficient as per zoning.
- There will be water offered to the garden which will come from the building.
- The apartments will be market rate luxury apartments
- Residents are in touch with Green Thumb. They have not planted anything that cannot be removed on the east side of the garden adjacent to the building.
- The decision for both 108 and 110 West 123<sup>rd</sup> to do excavation and lay their foundations at the same time works in the best interest of the developers
- New brownstone-like condos on the block are not contextual; Why doesn't Infil housing have to conform to the same standards of appropriateness?

A representative from Save Harlem Now indicated that the designs for both 108 and 110 west 123<sup>rd</sup> were not within the historic context. The purpose of extending the Mount Morris Park district was to maintain the historic character of the neighborhood. Activists and preservations present at the meeting who have been fighting for preservation since the 1960s had strong reservations about the modern design presented. The architect for the developer responded that each building on the block represents a different time period and the design presented was in context.

The Block Association President and the Developer both attested to the many meetings held with residents on 123<sup>rd</sup> Street to incorporate their thoughts with the hopes that the project gets approved by Landmarks . It appears that among the group of residents gathered, the overall sentiment is that the modern design fits in the hodge podge of architectural styles that exist on this block which range from traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century to ultra modern. Community residents were not satisfied when the developer presented the design that reflected the traditional brownstone; they called it fake historical. According to the development team, it is difficult to replace the original façade; it has to be replicated. This new design falls inline the various styles on the block. It's a reflection of the new and the old. Community residents who attended the Landmarks meeting were not in favor of the modern design.

## **272 West 139th and 273 West 138<sup>th</sup> Street**

Attorney Eric Plotnick represented the owner HYK properties. The owner, was not present at the meeting.

Plotnick reviewed the renderings of the space under landmarks consideration and highlighted the issues that have led to this point.

- 1) Seeking permission from Landmarks to expose the original transom structures of the building that prior had been covered by signage for many years;
  - 2) Seeking permission for Landmarks to widen the existing staircase by 9 inches that leads to an existing basement. This widened space would accommodate tri-fold doors on the side of the building and insertion of a chair lift for handicapped access into the basement.
- The International Art Gallery tenants housed on the north side of the property requested that Tri fold doors be constructed on the 139<sup>th</sup> side of the property to transport large pieces of art. The lease was signed and everything was approved.
  - The post office tenant comes seeking space at the South corner at 138<sup>th</sup> street and FDB.
  - According to Plotnik, upon submission of the plans, the DOB examiner says that the staircase basement at the NE corner of 138<sup>th</sup> Street has to be updated because presently there is no handicapped accessibility to access the basement area. The building needs to be brought to code. If anyone wants to use the space , it now must be handicapped accessible.

- The space btw the wall of the building and the existing staircase must be widened 9 inches; these according to Plotnick are DOB's requirements. it would also accommodate for the tri-fold doors which need to now need to conform to the north side of the building.
- Plotnik apologized for the events that happened over the summer and understands that his team was in violation of protocol. He also confirmed that there was no bonus would be awarded to the property owner for use of the community facility space as the building was an existing structure and will remain underbuilt. He also clarified for the community members that landmarks does not have any jurisdiction of how the space is used.

### **Comments from Government Agencies**

Congressional District representative, Troy Outlaw, indicated that he will be attending a meeting of all congressional representatives this week. One of the topics being discussed is: *what is happening to the post offices in urban neighborhoods?* There appears to be a trend that the post offices are selling off their buildings leaving residents bereft of services. Congressman Espaillat wants to keep the post office where it is.

The public advocate representative, indicated that the Public Advocate's office is talking to LPC to find out exactly how a hearing could have happened without the consent of the community. Landmarks protocol for scheduling hearings was not followed nor was USPS' protocol observed; there was no transparency in the process. The community board protocol has also been violated. For example, USPS was given two parking spots by DOT for USPS trucks at the NE corner of 138<sup>th</sup> Street and FDB. However this issuance of these spaces did not go through the community board.

### **Comments from Striver's Row Residents**

One resident remarked that the landmark decision made to convene the hearing for the post office was made at the staff level. This is a matter that the Commissioner should have been apprised of in dealing with a federal organization such as USPS.

Residents complained about having the visual of the corner of the block at 138<sup>th</sup> street be destroyed by pending postal trucks. Handicap accessibility will be thwarted by the postal trucks; one resident indicated having a handicapped son.

The block association presented their petition.

- They do not want the tri –fold doors;
- They do not want the staircase changed; and,
- They want the post office to stay where it is.

Kings Court resident indicated that they opposed the chair lift and the tri fold doors because these alterations take away from the integrity of the building and the neighborhood.

They promised to hold LPC accountable regarding the tri-fold doors and are following the procedures to appeal accordingly.

Residents do not recall the art gallery requesting tri fold doors to transport large objects in and out the Art gallery. From the front of the art gallery there is ample space for painting to be transported through the front door.

One resident encouraged residents to apply for Landmarks Status of the original post office location. Is it possible to landmark the existing facility how can these buildings be protected..however this would not prevent a building from being sold.

## Community Questions/Concerns:

- Why is the staircase not being placed inside the building?
- What is the real use of the community facility space?
- What is the art gallery's intent?

### **The representatives response to the community was:**

**the owner considered several options it was easiest to do it on the side of the building.**

**LPC has forsaken us; the building is a walk –up.**

### **Proposed Community Facility Space**

Overall residents are concerned about noise, pollution, smoking and overall loitering outside the premises.

- What is anticipated traffic flow of the community facility space?
- Who does the owner intend to rent the space to?
- What will be the hours of use?

Another resident cited that access to the basement required 2<sup>nd</sup> means of egress. The basement does not have windows. There is a private gated alley on the other side of the building that cannot be used as an egress easement. Since there is no exit for the users of the space in case of an emergency; there is no purpose for the space. The guests will not be able to use the alleyway.

The current basement facility in its current formation does not have that. Community facility also requires more than 1 means of egress.

The residents concluded that since the basement space has no purpose, the staircase can be internal. Currently, renters from the building are putting garbage on the corner. If the staircase is changed, where is the garbage going to go? This building is creating a lot of problems for other residents on the block. The residents insist that the historic context of the block must be preserved.

**At present the owner's representative did not know the intended use for the community facility space but promised speak with the owner re: the possibility for an interior staircase.**  
**The zoning of the CF is a R6 with a commercial overlay.**

### **Comments from the Post Office Union**

Union representatives are suspicious about the entire process particularly because they have not been keep in the loop about any of what is going on or cc'd on any of the communications.

The focus of the union representatives is to ensure that the post office maximizes capacity and that USPS is transparent in their decision-making when dealing with the community.

According to the Union representative(s) what is happening in urban neighborhoods and USPS seeking to sell their real estate assets is a trend and the end, the community is losing. The union reported that they are using their resources to engage lawyers and elected officials. Elected officials have been called to investigate the matter because there is no transparency. USPS violated their own protocol. As a result, the AG may conduct an investigation.

There is speculation that USPS might be attempting to privatize their operations evidence is the reducing the post office hours by opening up offices later in the day at the same time the community id demanding more service. Presently USPS operations are mismanaged.

## **Next Steps**

CB 10 is drafting a resolution and will send to attendees via email.

We welcome comments/feedback.

The vote will take place on November 1<sup>st</sup> at the general board meeting.

The Board Chair also advised that there will be a separate resolution regarding the post office remaining at its current location

The Board Chair read aloud the email received from Greg Lackey from USPS indicating the despite all the problems that the proposed new location has caused, USPS is evaluation all their options. It is not clear who else was notified by the post office's new position.

Residents are demanding that public officials be held accountable; they are requesting a log of what has transpired to date concerning the matter. Residents want to continue to have input regarding the issue.

## **Business Session**

### **Harlem Bike lanes**

The president of the 119<sup>th</sup> street Block Association complained that the bike lanes are too wide and that the emergency vehicles cannot get through the block when cars are double parked when alternate sides parking are suspended.

### **DOT to follow up with the resident directly.**

One resident was concerned that DOT's surveys never are conducted from a perspective of safety; they are always presented from the perspective of the best interest of the bikers. Biker must be learn safety as well. One woman shared that she has an autistic son. He cannot hear when the bikers are coming towards him and as a result, has been run down by a biker. Generally speaking, bikers need to be more accountable and responsible and flow with the traffic; bikers have no insurance for them to be liable for pedestrians.

One Board member asked about the level of community engagement involved in deciding on these bike lane locations presented; she argued that DOT's process needed to be more extensive. She added that conducting Charettes would be a good way to solicit community input. She questioned had any workshops been held in CB 10?

What is the position of CB 11?

There was a motion to table the vote for this business item on the grounds that DOT has not conducted sufficient research and or presented sufficient information concerning their rational to extend the bike lanes or transparency.

**The vote was 6 in favor 0 opposed 0 abstentions.**

Community residents were disturbed by the outcome of the vote. One resident indicated that the longer we postponed the vote we were putting the community at risk of accidents. It is against the law for cyclists to ride on the sidewalk.

- **238 West 139<sup>th</sup> Street**

The applicant did not show up for the meeting nor did their representatives. A motion was made to outline the concerns of the application from the committee in a formal letter to LPC so that it is on record and that no LPC hearing on the application occurs as a result. **The committee voted 6 – 0 -0**

There was concern from a Board Member the CB 10 Board Chair’s signature should also be on the letter to LPC so that the Chair is aware of all matters related to LPC. It was recommended that a change in policy include the Chair of the Board be included or all correspondence to LPC and this policy change should be updated in CB 10 policy and procedures manual.

- **272-273 Frederick Douglass Boulevard**

A motion was made to vote of the following items:

- Install Chair Lift
- Expand the width of the stair from the wall to accommodate the life
- Insert the tri –fold doors on the South side of the building

**The committee voted 0 in favor -6 opposed the committee is not in favor of this application**

The committee will draft a resolution to further solidify the position of the community board concerning this matter.

- **110 West 123rd Street**

A motion was proposed that the committee table this vote to the next meeting.

The developer is being asked to furnish letters from the block association as well as MMPCIA concerning the proposed design and signatures from residents on the block supporting the new design.

**The committee voted 6 in favor - 0 Opposed.**

### **New Business**

- **Faith Based Conference**

6 speakers are confirmed for the Faith based conference to be held on November 15<sup>th</sup> at the Harlem State Office Building.

- **New Landmark Designation**

The residents of the 130<sup>th</sup> and 131<sup>st</sup> Street Block Association received a letter from LPC. LPC is considering appropriating these 2 blocks a landmark designation. LPC invited residents to have a discussion with them on the matter. CB 10 Landmarks committee was not invited to the meeting. Presently, there is no collaboration.

The residents would like to spend more time with the CB 10 Landmarks committee to discuss the pros and cons of landmarking and wanted the committee to weigh in on the decision.

A decision was made to table the discussion to the next meeting or another scheduled time.

It is to be noted that the recommendation for LPC to landmark these two blocks came from the CB 10 Comprehensive Preservation Guide issued in 2012. The original proposed area was 130<sup>th</sup> to 133<sup>rd</sup> Street btw Lenox and 7<sup>th</sup> avenues. The Committee is curious about why only 2 blocks were selected out of the 4 blocks proposed.

Meetings are pending with LPC regarding their process to appropriate landmark areas and also process and criteria for approving building changes in landmarked areas.

- **Street Co Naming**

Julius Tajiddin a community activist presented his proposal for future street co-naming.

There shall be a restriction on co-naming a Street, Avenue, Boulevard or any road or other location where there is some form of vehicular traffic and under the authority of the New York City Department of Transportation, that has already been co-named, and a restriction on co-naming on top of a Street, Avenue, Boulevard or any road or other location where there is some form of vehicular traffic and under the authority of the New York City Department of Transportation that is named after someone of global recognition, American recognition or other important status.

Any such applications for street co-naming will not be entertained.

#### Purpose

We often honor heroes and sheroes by renaming or co-naming a street in such person's name. We also tend to take great pride in an already established area or village bearing a name that became notable by the history of a particular group of people. Examples: Little Italy, Chinatown and Harlem.

Changing names of sections or villages of Manhattan against the will of the people who are responsible for such area's notoriety diminishes such group's legacy or contribution to society on any level. Similarly co-naming a street that already bears the name of an important global figure diminishes such person's legacy which defeats the whole purpose of why such street was renamed or co-named after such person in the first place.

It is logically assumed that no reasonable minded board member would knowingly advance such agenda. But board members change and it is possible that new members would unwittingly advance such agenda unless a policy restricting such applications is put in place. At the least a prudent question will always be present in deciding a co-naming application.

This item will be reviewed at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:58 pm.