

LAND USE COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES

January 7, 2016

Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair  
Anita Barberis  
James Berlin  
Isaiah Bing  
Osi Kaminer  
Andrea Kornbluth, Asst. Chair  
Jonathan Reyes  
Steve Simon

Committee Members Absent

Public Member  
Vivian Ducat

Board Members Present

Staff: Deborah Blow

Guests: Rita Gorman, Raulito Martinez.

1. The meeting of the Land Use Committee (“Land Use” or the “Committee”) was called to order with quorum present at 7:03 PM. Land Use Chair Wayne Benjamin welcomed guests, and Committee members introduced themselves.
2. The Committee discussed its goals for 2016, and crafted the following list of high-level issues:
  - a. 4452 Broadway (Quadriad’s former proposed site, now owned by HAP Investments LLC): The Committee will continue to monitor the situation regarding the Board of Standards and Appeals (“BSA”) review of HAP’s application. District Manager Ebenezer Smith has confirmed that BSA has requested that HAP reduce the size of the proposed building and submit a revised application, but no further details are available. There is now excavation equipment on the site, but as no permits have been issued, it is most likely that exploration of soil conditions is underway.
  - b. Zoning for Quality and Affordability (“ZQA”) and Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (“MIH”): CB12, like many others throughout the city, appreciated the intent and principles of these proposed zoning text amendments, but felt that the details needed to be revised and more specifically focused in order to ensure a positive outcome for our community. CB12’s resolution, specifically the suggestion that affordability be calculated on the basis of local income levels, was cited in a Met Council on Housing newspaper article. With the proposals moving through the approvals process (the City Council vote is expected in February), and the Manhattan Borough President indicating conditional support for MIH, this will be a priority issue for the Committee.
  - c. Inwood Rezoning: Community workshops sponsored by the New York City Economic Development Corporation (“NYCEDC”) continue, with a Community Services workshop scheduled for January 14 at P.S. 314 Muscota New School, and another Housing workshop scheduled for January 23 at a location to be determined.
  - d. Contextual Zoning: The Committee and the Board have been working toward the adoption of Contextual Zoning for several years. This issue will be especially important in the context of the Inwood Rezoning effort, and the Committee will engage with NYCEDC, City Planning, and other relevant agencies to see how they may be considering Contextual Zoning against the backdrop of the rezoning project. Chair Benjamin noted that the proposed building at 4452 Broadway highlights the need for Contextual Zoning, being disproportionately large, and out of context with the surrounding neighborhood.
  - e. Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”): The Committee will engage with LPC on several outstanding issues, including but not limited to the status of LPC’s decision on the calendaring of the Loew’s 175<sup>th</sup> Street Theater (United Palace), and the extension of the Audubon Park Historic District to include the brownstones on West 158<sup>th</sup> Street.

3. The Committee discussed other potential topics to address this year, including:
  - a. The use of Baker Field for sporting events not affiliated with Columbia University, in particular sporting events sponsored by for-profit entities.
  - b. Whether the Seaman-Drake Arch at West 216<sup>th</sup> Street might qualify for landmark designation: there are some factors that might reduce the possibility of designation (i.e., the architect is unknown, and the arch now sits amid various buildings and businesses and is no longer the entrance to an estate), but the first step in the process would be to put together a presentation similar to the one made in support of the 158<sup>th</sup> Street row houses at the December Committee meeting. A 1988 New York Times article by Christopher Gray recounts the history of the arch as the gateway to a hilltop estate built by the Seaman family in 1855. It would also be useful to ask former City Councilman Robert Jackson about his efforts to have the arch landmarked in 2003.
  - c. Vacant lots: Committee member Osi Kaminer noted that last year she and the former Housing and Human Services Committee Chair Richard Lewis surveyed the district and documented several small lots being used for parking, auto mechanics, etc. that could be redeveloped as affordable housing. Chair Benjamin noted that City affordable housing finance programs generally favor larger development projects (for example, projects financed by HDC bond programs tend to be over 100 units), but the underutilized lots in our district would be more likely to produce smaller, in-fill development projects, e.g.: 4-10 units, 20 – 30 units, etc., that nonetheless in aggregate would help to increase the number of new affordable housing in the community. A resolution regarding this type of infill development was passed in early 2014, and the Committee will review that resolution and follow up with HPD and other appropriate city agencies. Examples of development projects in other parts of the city that made good use of the available development tools to the benefit of their communities were discussed.

4. After further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:52 PM.

Submitted by Andrea Kornbluth.