

**COMMUNITY BOARD 12 – MANHATTAN  
LAND USE COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES**

Wednesday November 4, 2020

Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair  
James Berlin  
Juan Guzman  
Omar Tejada  
Rosy Perez

Committee Members Absent

Christopher Ventura, Assistant Chair  
Steve Simon

Board Members Present

Sally Fisher

Public Members Present

Staff: Paola Garcia

Public Members Absent

Vivian Ducat

Guests: Shawn Rickenbacker – CCNY J. Max Bond Center, Lesley Doyel – Upper Riverside Residents Alliance, Peter Green- Upper Riverside Residents Alliance, Ann Friedman – NY Landmarks Conservancy, Diego Robayo – Historic Districts Council, Lena Melendez, Pat Courtney, Ryan Cote – DCP, Lorial Crowder, Paul Dokuchitz, Jerry Culligann Tim Anderson – MBPO

- 1) The meeting of the Land Use Committee (“Land Use” or the “Committee”) of Community Board 12 Manhattan (“CB12M”, or the “Board”), held via Zoom, was called to order at approximately 7:05 PM. Chair Benjamin greeted guests and welcomed Committee members. Committee members introduced themselves.
- 2) **Conversation with NYC Landmarks Conservancy**  
Chair Benjamin introduced Ann Friedman, Director, Scared Sites, the New York Landmarks Conservancy (the “Conservancy”). Ann stated that the Conservancy is not the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”) but rather a non-profit that advocates for preservation. Unlike other preservation-focused nonprofits, the Conservancy is unique in that it also offers low interest loans, emergency loans, technical assistance, and a state-wide Sacred Sites program, which she directs. Ann also stated that she is familiar with many of the sacred sites in Community District 12 and attended the meeting in 2019 called by Congressman Espaillat regarding preservation in Washington Heights and Inwood. She emphasized the importance of local advocacy for advancing landmark designation, noting that LPC wants to see public support for proposed designations. Ann cited some of the National Register listed properties in Washington Heights and Inwood including the recently listed Holy Rood Church, Hudson View Gardens, North Presbyterian Church, and Hebrew Tabernacle. Committee was informed that historic designation makes properties eligible for preservation grants offered by the Conservancy (up to \$50,000) and the State of New York (up to \$500,000); the State grant requires matching funds. The Committee was also informed that consultant costs associated with obtaining National Register can easily be as much as \$5,000. Ann advised that each year Andrew Dolkart, the former Director of Columbia University’s Preservation Program, teaches a course for which students research properties eligible for designation and draft designation reports at no cost. The designation of Holy Rood Church benefited from the work performed by Professor Dolkart’s students. The Committee inquired about non-contiguous historic districts such as the Dominican Cultural District presented at the Committee’s October 2020 meeting. Ann stated that the Conservancy is not familiar with the requirements for designating these districts, recommended that we outreach to the someone at the State Historic Preservation Office (“SHPO”) and offered to provide the Committee with a contact at SHPO.
- 3) **Update on Proposed Demolition of 857 Riverside Drive and Associated Development Project**  
Peter Green and Lesley Doyel of the Upper Riverside Residents Association (“URRA”) updated the Committee on the status of the proposed demolition of 857 Riverside Drive and the construction of a 13-story residential condominium building containing 46 micro-units. They thanked the elected officials and CB12M for the letter sent to the Commissioner of the Department of Buildings (“DOB”) and Department of City Planning requesting that DOB refrain from issuing any building or demolition permits for the site at 857 Riverside Drive, New York, NY until major concerns about both the zoning calculations used for the proposed new building and the historical significance of the existing building are addressed. They also informed the Committee that DOB has rejected the initial construction permit filing submitted by the developer. The Committee was also informed that as a result of further research by URRA on 857 RSD, it was determined that the property was built by a hero of the Underground Railroad, was later owned by a colleague of the original owner who too was an active abolitionist, and that these owners were each civic-minded entrepreneurs who were pivotal figures in the growth of Washington Heights and active in the creation of a church congregation on 158th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, which later built a church at 155<sup>th</sup> Street and Amsterdam Avenue that was actively anti-slavery and which brought well-known African American abolitionists to speak to the congregation. The Committee was further informed that 857 RSD is the last extant building of what was an abolitionist colony un Upper Manhattan. In recognition of the owners of 857 to the anti-slavery movement, URRA submitted a request for evaluation (the

“RFE) to LPC on November 2<sup>nd</sup> asking it to designate 857 RSD as a New York City Landmark. After further discussion, a motion was made (Rosy) and seconded (Omar) supporting the request for evaluation submitted to the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”) asking it to designate 857 RSD as a New York City Landmark. The resolution passed on the following votes.

	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstaining</u>
Committee Members	5	0	0
Other Board Members	1	0	0
Members of the Public	5	0	0

4) **Review of September 4, 2020 Land Use Minutes**

Chair Benjamin stated that preparing the September LU minutes was delayed, they were not presented at the September General Meeting and that the draft presented at the October General Meeting received limited review by the Committee. Therefore, Land Use Members were requested to advise of any modification required to draft September 2020 minutes. No modifications were offered. The Committee unanimously agreed to accept and finalize the draft September 2020 LU minutes as-is.

5) **Discussion with CCNY J. Max Bond Center on Updating CB12M’s 2007 Neighborhood Planning and Land Use Study**

Shawn Rickenbacker, Director, CCNY’s J. Max Bond Center for Urban Futures provided the Committee with an overview of work performed by the Bond Center to create a custom digital planning platform for Manhattan Community Board 9 as an example of who CB12M might proceed to update its 2007 Neighborhood Planning and Land Use Study. The Bond Center created a special online interactive planning tool for CB9 based on key issues it identified as planning priorities, such as identifying neighborhood-wide challenges, community land/site assets, and trends in community growth and development. Unlike a static planning report or study, planning platform permits CB9 to examine and model proposed development projects, zoning changes and the like in real time. The Committee expressed interest in working with the Bond Center to tailor a similar planning platform for CB12-M. Chair Benjamin committed to inviting Shawn to attend a future Committee meeting to provide a more detailed presentation on the functionality of CB9’s planning platform and next steps required for the Bond Center to begin working with CB12.

6) **Old Business – None**

7) **New Business:** Concerning the discussion with Ann Freidman, community Resident Pat Courtney stated there are various sites in Inwood that are eligible for National Register listing and also noted that not much has been done to advance the proposed Inwood Apartment House District since the 2019 meeting called by Congressman Espaillat. Chair Benjamin stated that subsequent to the meeting held by the Congressman, the proposed Inwood Apartment House district was discussed at a Land Use meeting and encouraged Pat to organize other stakeholders and work with the Committee to advance designation of the district.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 PM.

Submitted by Wayne A. Benjamin