

COMMUNITY BOARD 12 – MANHATTAN  
LAND USE COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair  
Christopher Ventura, Assistant Chair  
James Berlin  
Steve Simon  
Omar Tejada

Committee Members Absent

Rosy Perez

Board Members Present

Public Members Present

Vivian Ducat

Public Members Absent

Staff: Paola Garcia, Community Associate

Guests: Annie White (DCP), Ryan Cote (DCP), Keith Taylor, Aurora LeGrande Skawinski, Martin Collins, Valeria Ramos, Allegra LeGrande, Maggie Clarke, Clare Doyle, Thomas Degner Andersen, Loretta Henke, Aidan Ortega Santiago, Kaya Malik, Reena Nazir

1) The meeting of the Land Use Committee (“Land Use” or the “Committee”) of Community Board 12 Manhattan (“CB12M”, or the “Board”) was called to order at 7:19 PM. Chair Wayne Benjamin greeted guests and welcomed Committee members who then introduced themselves.

2) Consideration of the Department of City Planning’s Zoning for Coastal Flood Resiliency Zoning Text Amendment

The Department of City Planning’s (DCP) proposed Zoning for Coastal Flood Resiliency Zoning Text Amendment was previously discussed at the December 2020 Land Use Meeting. Annie White (DCP) and Ryan Cote (DCP) presented on the Zoning Text Amendment. Comments on the Zoning Text Amendment were initially due on December 28, 2020. The Committee requested more time given the tight schedule to allow it to consider a resolution in January 2021 and present it to the Executive Committee for consideration on behalf of the Board. Chair Benjamin asked if DCP could wait until the end of January for comments from Community Board 12- Manhattan to allow the full Board to consider the Committee’s resolution. Ms. White stated that DCP would continue to consider comments received by the end of January and that late-February is the deadline for presenting the Zoning Text Amendment to the City Planning Commission. She also stated that Manhattan Borough President’s Office will likely review all comments from all Manhattan community boards before the DCP’s presentation, not the City Planning Commission.

The Committee discussed the one-page document on DCP’s website that outlines the Zoning Text Amendment’s four primary goals: allowing buildings to build precautionary standards by taking into account increasing flood risk, support resilient buildings that are accessible and fit for their surroundings, enable the existing building to become more resilient by partial retrofits and prepare today for recovery in the future. Annie stated that another goal of the Text Amendment is to close loopholes in current flood resiliency zoning.

Chair Benjamin discussed his initial comments on the Text Amendment including the importance of reconciling the zoning and flood maps and taking into account the topography, clarifying the minimum amount of renovation and alteration work that triggers the compliance for the new coastal recommendations, the capital expense involved and having City Hall and Department of Finance creates tax incentives to encourage property owners to undertake flood mitigation and retrofits, provide ongoing public education on flood resiliency, better coordinate the building code to zoning resolution requirements to ensure consistency, and study the differences between the 2050 & 2100 floodplain projections. Public Member Ducat stated that the City should incorporate resources such as models or individuals who have engaged in the retrofitting process for a better understanding of the scope of work.

Allegra LeGrande, Inwood resident and lead author on the National Climate Assessment, shared various comments on the Text Amendment. She discussed ‘Managed Retreat,’ which considers lower density areas, and the recommendations to decrease density in vulnerable floodplain areas. She further noted that FEMA flood maps only provide one-year forecasts for insurance purposes. To best assess future climate scenarios and climate models, the City’s Panel on Climate Change should be utilized as a point of reference. LeGrande stated that climate resiliency should not be limited to facets of climate change but also to surface air temperature, chemistry, and extreme precipitation changes. It is important to note that the 2050 to 2100 models should be used based on different scenarios such as density, new builds, and climate risks. LeGrande recommends that units related to the environmental impact statements should be converted to a dollar unit, per person, per land use. New York City Panel on Climate Change depicts an extreme scenario for sea-level rise in the year 2100 and should be considered explicitly. Another recommendation is that the information is evolving, and regulations should be updated according to expiration dates and by flood zones within the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s seven-year regulatory cycle. In addition to Managed Retreat, the Text Amendment should consider economic costs weighed against the percentage possibility of flooding. Annie White stated that DCP encourages and permits existing density measures in areas with proper building protections in place. LeGrande referenced the way Hurricane Sandy’s impact devastated areas in New York City, especially developments in vulnerable areas such as South Street Seaport, which did not have preventive measures in place such as Managed Retreat. Also, LeGrande mentioned advocating for the study of Managed Retreats economic costs per person per square meter .and comparisons between different submarkets applicable to undeveloped sites. Committee Member Simon commented on the design of ADA accessibility of MADDD Equities’ development site at West 207<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, where the entrance to the residential portion of the building is designed to face the Harlem River. White stated that new buildings are required to meet ADA code and flood resiliency regulations. Committee Member Tejada questioned the reasons behind allowing new construction in vulnerable areas.

Maggie Clark, chair of Inwood Legal Environmental Committee, also commented on the proposed legislation asking for Managed Retreat for Inwood and established floodplains. The second aspect of the proposal would offer buyouts for buildings located within the floodplain. Clark expressed concerns about the density of the proposed buildings along the Inwood waterfront.

After further discussion, a motion was made by Jim Berlin and seconded by Vivian Ducat to support the Zoning Text Amendment with the various comments discussed. The motion passed with the following votes:

	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstaining</u>
LU Committee Members	6	-	-
Board Members	-	-	-
Members of the Public	3	-	-

3) Discussion of Proposed Dorrance Brooks Square Historic District in Central Harlem

Keith Taylor, President of the Dorrance Brooks Property Owners and Residents Association and former member of Manhattan Community Board 10 (CB10M) presented the proposed historic district in Central Harlem to be named after Dorrance Brooks; if designated it would be the first NYC historic district named after a person of color. A public park in Central Harlem was dedicated in 1925 to honor African-American infantryman Dorrance Brooks for his bravery during WWI. The proposed historic district would include the park and the surrounding residential area which is associated with the Harlem Renaissance, home to jazz musician Lionel Hampton and sociologist and civil rights activist W.E.B. DuBois, among others. Local property owners and the Residents Association are advocating for an official landmark designation of the Dorrance Brooks Square Historic District, which would run up Edgecombe Avenue between West 136<sup>th</sup> and 140<sup>th</sup> Streets.

Designations throughout Northern Manhattan are scarce and therefore lack lasting preservation. Chair Benjamin stated that National Register listings do not protect against demolition and/or alteration. Keith stated New York City’s 1965 Landmarks Preservation Law offers the highest degree of protection to designated buildings. The Dorrance Brooks Historic District is already granted State and National Register listing; the effort to obtain NYC designation through LPC has been ongoing for two-years. CB10M received an Urban Fellow who, in addition to interns, helped to create the documentation for CB10M’s preservation plan, which includes the Dorrance Brooks district.

After further discussion, a motion was made by Jim and Seconded by Vivian supporting the designation of individual landmarks and historic districts in Manhattan that recognize preserves and cements the legacy of our communities and the designation of the proposed Dorrance Brooks Historic District. The motion passed with the following votes:

	<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstaining</u>
LU Committee Members	6	-	-
Board Members	0	-	-
Members of the Public	0	-	-

4) Old Business: None

5) New Business:

- The Committee discussed inviting BLDG Management, the developer of a commercial project at 4261 Broadway to attend a Committee meeting to make an informational presentation on its project.
- The Committee discussed inviting the Largavista Companies, the developer of a residential mixed-use project at 4566 Broadway to attend a Committee meeting to make an informative presentation on its project.

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 PM.

Submitted by Chris Ventura and Wayne Benjamin