

COMMUNITY BOARD 12- MANHATTAN  
LAND USE COMMITTEE- MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair  
Tanya Bonner, Assistant Chair  
James Berlin  
Rosy Perez  
Steve Simon

Committee Members Absent

Omar Tejada (Excused)

Board Members Present

Sally Fisher  
Maria Luna

Public Members Present

Vivian Ducat

Public Members Absent

Staff: Paola Garcia, Community Associate

Guests: Gail Addiss; Miguelina Aristy (NYC Department of Small Business Services); Gabriela Biel; Nina Bernstein; Angela Blocker (NYC Department of Cultural Affairs); Kayla Brock (Douglas Elliman Real Estate); Kati Chen (NYC Economic Development Corporation); Cassandre Collazo (Girl Scouts); Martin Collins; Ryan Cote (NYC Department of City Planning); Mariela De La Cruz (Office of the NYC Comptroller); Jocelyn Dupre (NYC Economic Development Corporation); Cliff Elkind; Elizabeth Ernish (NYC Department of Parks and Recreation); Jennifer Hoppa (NYC Department of Parks and Recreation); Nick Hughes (Columbia University); Frederick Jewell; Waheera Mardah (NYC Economic Development Corporation); Jessie Mathisen (Harlem River Community Rowing); John Mattera (NYC Department of Transportation); Fredrick Matzner (Inwood Owners Coalition); Adam Meagher (NYC Economic Development Corporation); Katherine O'Sullivan (Save Inwood Library); Andrew Pontecorvo; Radaisy Ramirez; Desi K. Robinson; Tammy Rivera (NYC District Council); Michael Sandler (NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development); David Thom (Inwood Owners Coalition); Ahmed Tigani (NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development); Addison Vawters (NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development); Jose Trucios (NYC Department of City Planning); Kate Ward (NYC Economic Development Corporation); Annie White (NYC Department of City Planning)

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 7:08 p.m. Chair Wayne Benjamin introduced himself, and greeted Committee members, who introduced themselves, and guests.

2. Presentation by Sandra Harris on Baker's Field Tennis Bubble Replacement

This presentation will be rescheduled for May because the presenter was unable to attend.

3. Presentation by DCP on Upcoming Zoning Initiatives

Ryan Cote of the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) led this discussion, where he previewed the Zoning for Accessibility Text Proposal that will be submitted to the Board for review by the following week.

Cote displayed a PowerPoint presentation that provided an overview of the plan. The MTA and DCP are working on a collaborative plan to provide ADA accessibility more effectively and efficiently by working with private developers to achieve system-wide accessibility more quickly. The plan proposal includes a system-wide transit easement requirement and an expanded transit improvement bonus in high-density areas. Because most stations in the city were built before 1950, they do not have the proper ADA mechanisms in place. For example, Cote noted that only 28% of subway stations have elevator access, and only 61% of commuter rail systems within the city limits have the proper ADA mechanisms in place. The new transit bonus would provide a floor area increase of up to 20% for significant station improvements, expand coverage of existing subway bonus, and have a more simplified review and approval process. Additionally, developments and enlargements in all zoning lots of at least 5,000 square feet and within 50 feet of mass transit stations would be required to first consult with the MTA and DCP about the need for a transit easement.

The DCP will provide a full presentation on the Text Amendment to the LU Committee at its May meeting. Materials will be sent to the District Manager by April 15<sup>th</sup>.

Benjamin asked Committee members if they had any points that would like more clarification on when the DCP comes back in May. James Berlin asked if developers must make an entrance into their property, or are they funneling money to the city so that infrastructure improvements can be made in the stations. Cote believes that the developers would be providing the actual access on their property, but he will defer to the experts who will provide greater detail on the text amendment in May. Vivian Ducat noted that not all disabilities are visible, and wonders if there will also be consideration of adaptations for riders with intellectual disabilities. Cote will bring that concern back to the experts to address in May. Tanya Bonner commented that it will be important to ensure the MTA is prepared to maintain the accessibility it builds by noting that if it is not working, then it is not accessible. She gave an example of having elevators at subway stations that are not working. Cote said he will make sure the MTA can speak on that in May.

#### 4. Presentation by EDC and Partner Agencies on Inwood Rezoning Points of Agreement

Benjamin noted that the EDC and other partner agencies provided this presentation at the recently held first meeting of the Inwood Rezoning Task Force convened by the Manhattan Borough President.

Multiple city agencies presented the aspects of the Inwood Rezoning Points of Agreement that are relevant to their agencies. Waheera Mardah of EDC opened the presentation with a PowerPoint presentation. Mardah explained that the Points of Agreement (POA) represents the commitments made by the City coming out of the Inwood NYC Planning Initiative that was adopted by the City Council in 2018, and the rezoning is just a piece of the larger neighborhood plan. The POA includes 87 commitments that are being executed by over 15 agencies and commits over \$200 million in new funding in various areas, including parks, education, and transportation. Mardah said the POA will continue to evolve as the needs of Inwood changes, especially post-COVID-19.

##### **NYC Department of Parks and Recreation**

The next to present about its POA was Jennifer Hoppa of the NYC Parks. Its projects include renovations and improvements at the Monsignor Kett Playground, the Highbridge Water Tower Stabilization, the Dyckman Rest, the Anne Loftus Playground, and the Inwood Hill Park Soccer Field #1. Board Member Sally Fisher said many things were included in terms of things done in the parks that were funded prior to the Inwood rezoning, and she asked if any of the Anchor Park funds part of the funds on the Water Tower project or were they brand new funds. Hoppa said the water tower funding is set apart from the anchor parks funding.

##### **NYC Economic Development Corporation**

The next to present about its relevant POA was Kate Ward of EDC. Two waterfront parks will be created to provide new recreation space for Inwood residents. These include Academy Street, where a two-acre park will be constructed, and North Cove, which will be restored from its current use as parking.

##### **School Construction Authority (SCA)**

Ward also presented on behalf of the School Construction Authority, who could not attend. Ward said the POA for the SCA is to improve schools and programming to prepare youth of Inwood for growing industries. These projects include a STEM Center for Gregorio Luperon High School for Science and Mathematics, a STEM education and after-school program at the George Washington Education Campus (GWEC), and other structural improvements. Benjamin asked if the GWEC building is landmarked, as that would need to be considered for any structural changes as part of the improvements. Ward will check on its status.

##### **Other EDC POA**

Ward also presented about various infrastructure improvements that will be made in Inwood, including bringing broadband improvements and water main and sanitary sewer replacement. Benjamin asked if the broadband improvements include Inwood and Washington Heights, or just Inwood. Ward will check on this, as she was not sure. Bonner asked about Verizon being blocked from installing Fios in certain buildings, while Spectrum is being

allowed in, and wondered what can be done as this has been limiting resident choices, including more affordable choices for broadband. Bonner said her building has been blocking Verizon, while allowing Spectrum access to solicit tenants. Ward will go back and have the Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer (MOCTO) and the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS) give more details about the RFPs to address this issue. Benjamin said the building must sign an agreement to allow Verizon in, and that Bonner's building probably did not sign the agreement. Berlin said in some cases spectrum has a contract with the landlord and if the landlord encourages people to use it, they get some part of the fee.

Bonner noted that a community resident stated in the Zoom Q & A that many of the POA projects are not in Inwood. Benjamin stated the POAs are not a new negotiation but rather were committed by the City several years ago; so now the Board is saying inquiring on the status of the commitments.

#### **New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA)**

Ward also presented about POA related to arts and culture on behalf of DCLA, who also could not attend. This includes the creation of an Immigrant Research and Performing Arts Center (IRPAC), which will provide dedicated performing arts and research space on the immigrant experience. Benjamin says a broader discussion clarifying the mission behind the center is needed, as well as about the center's size, nature, and broad accessibility to community-based organizations. Ward said the RFEI is structured to let different organizations respond to it and come up with their own vision for the space and the types of programming they would like to do there. Ward said this work would start with the selection of an operator who could facilitate such a discussion. Benjamin asked if the center is tied to the CUNY Center or the New York Public Library. Ward said there will be a collaboration with the New York Public Library. Bonner noted that there was a question in the Zoom Q & A from the public asking if the Center will be located in Inwood. Ward said at the moment there is not a site selected, and that there is a limited number of publicly owned sites in Inwood. She said it will be important to select an operator first before choosing a location that will work for them.

#### **New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)**

The next to present were Addison Vawters and Michael Sandler from HPD, who presented about The Eliza project at the site of the former Inwood Library. Vawters said the project will create 174 deeply affordable homes, a new library, Universal Pre-K, community facility space, an Activities, Culture, and Training (ACTS) Center, and a STEM program. Benjamin asked about a request made in 2019 about the dedication plaque for the current library and the 1950s-era ornamental gates, with the request to have the gates carefully removed and reincorporated in the new building. Benjamin asks if that will happen. Vawters said he will inquire.

Other HPD projects include the North Cove project that will be developed by Madd Equities and will create over 600 new affordable homes and a new waterfront esplanade, as well as 570 new affordable homes, a waterfront open space, and innovation lab at 4095 Ninth Avenue. Additionally, HPD currently provides services to Inwood and Washington Heights tenants to prevent tenant harassment and evictions by launching a Preservation Action Center that serves as a hub for neighborhood anti-displacement initiatives, and by providing free legal services to help prevent evictions.

#### **New York City Department of Transportation (DOT)**

The next person to present on its POA was John Mattera of DOT. Mattera said DOT will make a series of investments in streets, and will upgrade below-grade infrastructure, including improving priority intersections along 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and under the El Improvements, and reconstructing the intersection of Dyckman Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and Harlem River Drive. Benjamin asked how DOT was soliciting community input on the more permanent work, and how do they ensure any deviation from the plan goes back to the community before it is advanced. Mattera said he is not familiar with any specific deviations Benjamin referred to during the meeting, and that DOT ultimately has responsibility to do what is right in the end as far as safety or engineering. Mattera said he will inquire about it. Benjamin said if there is need for a change in plans, the Board needs to know so that alternatives can be discussed that will work with DOT. Other DOT projects under the POA include the rehabilitation of Broadway Bridge that will include adding a solid-surface bike lane and examining potential enhancements to bus service along the 207<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor.

### **New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS)**

The next person to present was Miguelina Aristy from SBS. Its projects under the POA include increasing access to employment opportunities to local residents by prioritizing access for Inwood residents to Workforce1 training and recruitment services and connecting Inwood residents to training programs in the healthcare industry. Benjamin asked what is meant by the “job connections” SBS said it has made, meaning does it mean someone gets a job, or just an interview. Benjamin said he asks this because of past problems a few years ago by a city-sponsored center charged with getting people jobs that was criticized in the media for not really getting people who need a job connected to businesses who need to hire. So he wants a better definition of “job connection.” Aristy said she will get that answer. Bonner asked about the digital divide and small businesses who do not have the technology and asked how SBS plans to reach those businesses that are not connected. Bonner also asked if SBS plans to expand services into Inwood, since the current Workforce1 Center in the community is in Washington Heights. Aristy said they work with many community partners who work on the ground to connect with small businesses. Aristy said SBS is also offering trainings for businesses on being online. She also said that though the current center is in Washington Heights, they do cover Inwood, and hopes to resume the mobile van service that was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic soon. Fisher wants to know who is being serviced by zip code and how much pandemic relief-related money was secured for businesses. Aristy said that there were 33 ERG grants provided (totaling \$169,964), and small businesses that received the continuity loan, totaling over \$152,000. Aristy said she will inquire about other assistance businesses received. Benjamin suggested that these issues be addressed with the Board’s Business Development Committee. Gabriela Biel wants to know what Workforce1 will do to improve outreach to Inwood, because she feels the community is not being served properly.

About the overall Inwood Initiative, David Thom expressed concern about the number of projects that are in Washington Heights as part of the Inwood Initiative, and he wants more focus on Inwood.

#### 5. Old Business:

Steve Simon asked if any progress had been made on getting more information on the two developments (the Colosseum site and the radio tower project) that he asked about at the March LU meeting. Benjamin said there are no current updates, but he is working on it.

#### 6. New Business: None

Berlin made a motion to adjourn, and that was seconded by Ducat. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Tanya Bonner