

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

**May 3, 2023**

Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair  
Tanya Bonner, Asst. Chair  
Jim Berlin  
Daniel Bonilla  
Osi Kaminer  
Ayisha Oglivie  
Steve Simon  
Anthony Viola

Committee Members Absent

Board Members Present

Marielle Ali

Public Member Present

Vivian Ducat

Public Member Absent

Staff

Paola Garcia

Guests: Audrey Wachs—NYC Department of City Planning, Jose Trucios—NYC Department of City Planning, Matthew Spady, Yuien Chin, Ian Smith

1. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM. Land Use Committee (“Land Use” or the “Committee”) Chair Wayne Benjamin introduced Committee members and welcomed guests.
2. **Introduction of new Borough Planner.** Chair Benjamin introduced Audrey Wachs, the new borough planner appointed by the NYC Department of City Planning (“DCP”) for Manhattan Community Boards 9 and 12, who noted among other things that she has a background in journalism. Benjamin stated that he forwarded various Land Use resolutions to Audrey for her reference, including the planning study conducted by Community Board 12-Manhattan (“CB12M”) with the City College of New York (“CCNY”). Wachs stated she reviewed the resolutions and met with Jose Trucios to discuss the details of her role. Committee Member Daniel Bonilla asked Wachs about her writing, which Wachs said was architecture-related, mentioning a piece she had written about Hudson Yards. Committee Member Jim Berlin noted his long history as a neighborhood resident and spoke about recent buildings that have been erected, stating that they were too high for the area. Public Member Vivian Ducat also noted the number of large buildings recently constructed.
3. **Consideration of the proposal to designate 935 St. Nicholas Avenue as an individual landmark.** Benjamin stated that a Historic Districts Council (“HDC”) representative will attend the Committee’s June meeting to discuss strategies for advancing CB12M’s preservation concerns. He also stated that per a conversation with HDC, he understands that some requests for evaluation (“RFEs”) submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”) are not brought to the attention of the commissioners by staff; this may account for LPC’s failure to act on RFEs and resolutions submitted concerning properties in Washington Heights and Inwood.

Concerning the proposed designation of 935 St. Nicholas Avenue (the “Building”), LPC states that the Building was identified for designation as an individual landmark building through an ongoing citywide survey of buildings and sites significant to the African-American community and that the Building is significant for its architecture and its association with two notable African-American residents - Duke Ellington and Noble Sissle. Committee Member Anthony Viola commented that the building is already listed as a landmark on Apple Maps, to which Benjamin noted that this is because it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. Berlin commented on the beauty of the terracotta. Bonilla asked whether the windows are original. Committee Member Steve Simon asked whether a notice had been posted in the Building about this meeting, to which Benjamin replied that the proposed designation of the Building and two others associated with ties to jazz and legendary jazz musicians was carried in multiple publications. Ducat asked about replacing the terracotta, which she was told was part of a new rule from January 2020 that tightened the inspection practices dictated by Local Law 11. Bonilla stated that according to the submission, the building’s façade includes limestone, brick, and

terracotta. Yuien Chin, a resident of West Harlem, noted that in her work with Hamilton Heights -West Harlem Community Preservation Organization she has worked with LPC. Most recently, Chin said she was one of the leaders of the effort to create the Dorrance Brooks Historic District, the first New York City Historic District named for an African American, and previously was involved with the creation of the Hamilton Heights-Sugar Hill historic districts. She expressed her support for the designation and announced a conference on historic preservation to be held at CCNY on Saturday, June 10, 2023 (more details to follow).

A motion to support the designation of 935 St. Nicholas Avenue as an individual landmark was made by Simon and seconded by Committee Member Osi Kaminer. The resolution passed with the following votes.

Committee Members		Community Board Members		Public	
Favor:	9	Favor:	1	Favor:	1
Opposed:	0	Opposed:	0	Opposed:	0
Abstained:	0	Abstained:	0	Abstained:	0

4. **Continued Discussion of MBPO’s Housing Opportunities Plan.** Community Board Member Marielle Ali, who serves as Chair of the Housing and Human Services Committee (“HHS”) discussed collaborating with Land Use to review and comment on the MBPO’s Housing Opportunities Plan. Ali discussed organizing walking tours to view the sites included in the plan and to identify additional sites that potentially could support the construction of affordable housing to include in the plan. Ali also provided an overview of HHS’ discussions on the plan, including defining what “affordable” means for our community and recent interactions with Councilmember Shaun Abreu about the availability of right-to-counsel services for tenants. She suggested splitting the walk into two parts, covering Washington Heights and Inwood in another.

A discussion ensued about the coordination of these walks. Bonilla noted having a map for discussion and reference for the walk. Ali agreed and suggested looping in community partners for stops along the way for discussion and action points. She additionally suggested inviting elected officials, like the MBP and proposed that the walk should take place during the morning of a day in July before the weather is too hot. Benjamin said it does not need to be an official Land Use business and asked DCP if they can lend resources to help with the map. DCP representative Jose Trucios said he will investigate and report back. Committee Member Ayisha Oglivie noted that summer is a rest period for many people and would conflict with planned vacation activities. Simon noted his support for the maps and for having a workshop to discuss various sites. He asked DCP if they have provided feedback to MBPO about the sites listed in Housing Manhattanites and asked that this feedback be shared with Land Use as well. Bonilla suggested various free applications to use to track the path and mark sites (Footpath, Google Maps). Ali noted Oglivie’s point and asked if Land Use can commit to taking these walks over the next eight weeks. She will discuss this idea with HHS. Oglivie, who also sits on HHS, volunteered to promote the walks, and suggested that we ask restaurants along the way to provide samples. Benjamin suggested targeting three Saturdays starting in June. Bonilla volunteered to develop a plan for mapping the walks. Simon suggested including sites from our running list for inclusion on the walks. Benjamin agreed and said color-coding could be used to distinguish between Land Use sites and MBPO sites. DCP representative Trucios expressed interest in reviewing the sites proposed by Land Use.

5. **Old Business.** Simon asked about the Cumming Street project. Benjamin stated that the Board of Standards and Appeals held a hearing on April 25, closed the application review period, and intends to decide at the next meeting. Oglivie asked about Art Deco and where to find the history of buildings and architects. Ducat said Columbia University’s Avery Library (but it can be difficult to access), Municipal Archives (speak with Ken Cobb), and the New York Historical Society are good sources, as is the New York Public Library.
6. **New Business.** None
7. **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 8:32PM.

Respectfully submitted by Anthony Viola