



## Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

530 West 166<sup>th</sup> St. 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10032

Phone: (212) 568-8500, Fax: (212) 740-8197

Katherine Diaz, Chairperson  
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

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October 3, 2023

Hon. Mayor Eric Adams  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Re: Resolution Recommending Planning Principles as a Framework for the Development of New Residential Buildings in Washington Heights and Inwood.

Dear Mayor Adams:

At the General Meeting on Tuesday, September 2023, Community Board 12, Manhattan, passed the following resolution with a vote of 38 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, and 0 not voting, urging the Mayor, the Manhattan Borough President, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and other city offices and agencies involved in planning, promoting, reviewing, and approving the design, financing, and construction of new housing in Washington Heights and Inwood to adopt and advocate for the CB12M Planning Principles in the course of meetings and negotiations with any developers concerning the construction of new residential buildings or the renovation of existing buildings for residential use in the district.

Whereas: In January 2023 Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine released Housing Manhattanites, a report that lays out a vision of how and where to build the housing needed to address the demand for housing in Manhattan (the "MBPO Housing Report"). The MBPO Housing Report identifies 171 publicly and privately-owned locations in Manhattan, including vacant lots, parking lots, vacant buildings, single-story retail buildings, and outdated facilities that he said have the potential to support the creation of over 73,000 units of housing, with an estimated 40% of the units being affordable. Sixteen of the potential sites are in Washington Heights and Inwood; the majority are privately owned. In his January 2023 State of the Borough Address, Borough President Levine encouraged community boards to be proactive regarding development activities in their neighborhoods and to work with his office to move aggressively to address the housing affordability crisis in Manhattan: and

Whereas: Community Board 12-Manhattan (CB12M) consistently ranks affordable housing as a top priority in its annual ranking of capital and expense budget priorities. However, most new residential development projects in Washington Heights and Inwood do not adequately address local housing needs. The minimum income required to be able to afford to occupy a unit significantly exceeds the average local household income, i.e., the area median income (AMI) for Washington Heights and Inwood. The buildings contain an over-concentration of smaller units, e.g., studio and one-bedroom units, which do not address the demand for family-size units or units that can be shared by adults. Despite the dearth of larger units, which increases the potential for bedrooms that must be shared, the bedrooms in the new developments are not

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large enough to be shared comfortably. The buildings' architectural design is frequently out of scale and character with the neighborhood setting; and

Whereas: CB12M's Land Use Committee ("Land Use") discussed the MBPO Housing Report at its February, March, April, and May 2023 committee meetings and is partnering with the Housing and Human Services Committee in the ongoing process of identifying additional sites in the district for the MBPO to review as potential sites for the development of affordable housing. To address concerns with new housing developments, Land Use drafted a set of planning principles (the "CB12M Planning Principles") as a framework to guide the programming, planning, and design of new housing developments in Washington Heights and Inwood to help produce buildings that are a better fit and more responsive to the district's housing needs. The CB12M Planning Principles, in no particular order, are as follows.

1. Define affordability by the area median income (AMI) in Washington Heights and Inwood as opposed to the city-wide area median income.
2. The architectural design of new developments should respect the scale, character, and density of their surroundings.
3. New residential developments must address the range of local housing needs, e.g.: senior housing, supportive housing, and housing for youth aging out of foster care.
4. The design and allocation of residential units must address local housing needs and demographics, e.g., provide family-size units as opposed to a concentration of studio and one-bedroom units, thoughtful architectural layouts, etc.;
5. Consider the mixed-use redevelopment of one- or two-story buildings on wide avenues with retail zoning overlays to allow for new retail and commercial spaces in addition to new residential units and community facility spaces.
6. Incorporate sustainable design features in all new development and substantial renovation projects.
7. Pursue opportunities for the adaptive reuse and revitalization of vacant or underutilized buildings.
8. Prioritize the development of vacant lots; and

Whereas: Members of CB12M and residents of Washington Heights and Inwood are not at the table when developers discuss potential new residential development with elected officials and agencies of city government, and, by the time projects are presented to CB12M and the community for review and comment, critical decisions have been finalized and the process is too far advanced for public comment to have a meaningful impact. Therefore, the elected officials who represent Washington Heights and Inwood and the agencies of city government must adopt and advocate for the CB12M Planning Principles; now, therefore be it

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Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan urges the Mayor, the Manhattan Borough President, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and other city offices and agencies involved in planning, promoting, reviewing, and approving the design, financing, and construction of new housing in Washington Heights and Inwood to adopt and advocate for the CB12M Planning Principles in the course of meetings and negotiations with any developers concerning the construction of new residential buildings or the renovation of existing buildings for residential use in the district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katherine Diaz', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Katherine Diaz  
Chairperson

cc:

Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate  
Hon. Brad Lander, Comptroller  
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman  
Hon. Cordell Cleare, State Senator

Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator  
Hon. Alfred Taylor, Assembly Member  
Hon. Manny De Los Santos, Assembly Member  
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Council Member  
Hon. Shaun Abreu, Council Member  
Hon. Adolfo Carrion Jr., HPD Commissioner