

Community Board 12, Manhattan Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
D-R-A-F-T Minutes for Tuesday, April 4, 2017
530 W. 166th St., 6th floor

Committee members present: Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair; Osi Kaminer, Assistant Chair; Darryl Cochrane; Natalie Espino; Domingo Estevez; Barbara Frazier; Mitchell Glenn; Richard Lewis; Karen Taylor. **Other Board members present:** Richard Allman, Obie Bing; Gerard Dengel. **Others in Attendance:** Antonio Gonzalez; Alexis Marnel; Florie Charles; Jocelyn Lee, NYC Parks; Chermie Mondesire; Marshall Douglas; Stewart Desmond; Carolina Pichardo; Bennet Melzak; Denise Rickles; W. Lam; Pat Courtney; Sarah A. Fisher, Friends of Inwood Hill Park, NMAC; Graham Ciraclo; Jeanie Dubnau; Betsy Haggerty; Nancy Bruning; Miguelina Aristy, NYPL; Charlene Edwards, NYC Parks; Sarah Kiefer; Jeff Dugan; Michelle Kohut; Jennifer Hoppa & Charlene Edwards, NYC Parks; Trish Anderton, Inwood Canoe Club; Phil Simpson, Simon Kawitsky, HPD, Gabriela Biel, and several others who didn't sign in but who did speak, including George Mihaltsis & Christopher Platt, NYPL; Susan Russell, Sen. Alcantara's Office; Eva Farkas, Met Council on Housing.

7:03pm **Elizabeth Lorris Ritter, Chair, brought the meeting to order with announcements and updates:**

- Highbridge Anchor Parks resolution passed the full board 31-0-1-1. We will hear a presentation from the Parks Department on Phase II in June.
- Offered remarks in remembrance of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King on this 49th anniversary of his assassination. His speeches are worth re-listening to, particularly his comments on the Vietnam War which are especially timely.
- A number of TV shows filming in/around CD12. Although they can be an annoyance for the loss of parking, film/theatre is the 3rd-highest revenue-producing industry in NYC, and many of the actors and techs in these shows are our neighbors, and would otherwise be unemployed.
- United Palace: landmark status was approved by the City Council. (applause)
- May Meeting Change -- Will be on first Wednesday, instead of first Tuesday, in order to have a joint meeting with the Public Safety Committee. Since this date was announced more than two months in advance, an absence will NOT be automatically excused for being on other-than-the-usual-date.
- The NoMAA ArtStroll opening reception will be held on Wednesday, May 31st at the United Palace, and will honor four people, including CB12 PCA Committee Chair Liz Ritter.
- The June meeting agenda will include NYC Parks presentations on the Audubon Playground renovation and the Phase II Highbridge Anchor Park Initiative Proposals, both reso items.

7:10pm **Inwood Slave & Native American Burial Ground (Karen Taylor)** Located on what is now W. 212th Street & Tenth Avenue, were a number of bones from African slaves, Native Americans, as well as Anglo settlers. Only the Anglo bones were respectfully moved to Woodlawn Cemetery, including those of the Dyckman and Vermilyea families. She then told of her meetings and the discussion on the best way to memorialize those who had been buried there. Some suggestions included: plaque on a nearby school, a mention or marker of it at the Dyckman Farmhouse, activities at the Inwood Library to commemorate them, a stand-alone website documenting their history, a possible academic project for a nearby college student, a celebration of Indigenous People's Day in October in lieu of Columbus Day. There was talk of an eventual Board resolution to support some of these ideas as they become more fully formed.

7:25pm **Parks Department Programming Update & Presentation on Cabrini Woods** (Jennifer Hoppa, Northern Manhattan Parks Administrator; Jocelyn Lee) Jennifer Hoppa made a number of announcements regarding then-upcoming events; visit www.NorthernManhattanParks.org for more information. There will be a scoping meeting at J. Hood Wright Rec Center on April 19th for the green fitness area, and an Urban Wildlife Festival at Highbridge Park with porcupines and other animals, on May 6th, noon – 3pm.

Presentation from Jocelyn Lee (jocelyn.lee@parks.nyc.gov) on the Cabrini Woods Nature Sanctuary Project, a 4-acre wooded area at what appears to be the southwest corner of Fort Tryon Park but is really the northeast tip of Fort Washington Park. It is part of the northeastern fly-way, and home to

many different bird species. 2015 improvements totaled \$900,000. There are dozens of species of birds in the area. Fencing along Cabrini Blvd., has been repaired, and trash cans installed along the fence perimeter. New educational signage is in fabrication and will be installed soon. Q: (Richard Lewis) Other animals than birds should be included in the education effort. Q: will some of the educational signs would be in Spanish. Jocelyn also announced upcoming programs and stewardship days, including counts of users of Ft. Tryon and Highbridge Parks. For more information and to sign up for a shift on Wednesday, May 3rd or Sunday, May 7th (Ft. Tryon) or May 20th (Highbridge) contact Jocelyn at Jocelyn.Lee@parks.nyc.gov or visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2GBXKJ8> to sign up. Q: Why are you not doing this in Inwood Hill Park? Because IHP was done first, about a year ago.

7:38pm **Morris-Jumel Mansion update (Alexis Marnel):** Announced upcoming kids' programming; gala on May 11th; event in October, "Soles for Souls," where shoes will be donated and given to those in need. They also are looking into the possibility of a green market on the premises. Annual visitorship has risen recently from 5k to 25k, thanks in part to greater collaboration and programming, as well as a connection to the musical Hamilton. The presentation was a strong message to let people know that they are very willing to collaborate and partner with various groups. The presentation was a strong message to let people know that they are very willing to collaborate and partner with various groups.

7:45pm **Broadway Mall Association (BMA) (Stewart Desmond):** There will be a new sculpture installation on the malls, with three pieces within CB12: one in Ilka Tanya Payan Sq. (at W. 157th St.) and a pair in Mitchel Sq. (at W. 166th St.). The pieces, which are large (up to 11' long or 6' high and weighing 1,200-1,700 pounds) and meant to be both charming and indestructible, are to be installed in May and will be in place for six months. BMA hopes for greater interactivity by utilizing social media and/or technology to direct people to sites about the art, but are still in the process of determining how that will look. Q (Sally Fisher): why there are no installation planned for Inwood? A (Mr. Desmond, Ms. Lorris Ritter): that is out of the parameters of BMA's designated area. The Broadway Malls Association's area is the Broadway Malls, not all of Broadway. There are other venues for pursuing public art installation.

7:54pm **Announcements:**

Sally Fisher: Weekend of events for Earth Day (April 22nd) including a sunset walk in Inwood Hill Park on Friday, 4/21, a recycling day on Saturday, and clean-up on Sunday.

Pat Courtney: Community event Inwood Library on April 9th

Nancy Bruning: announced a series of new walks for seniors and the general public in Inwood Hill Park

Jeannie Dubnau: "Are we facing fascism?" at Holyrood Church (W. 179th St. & Ft. Washington Ave.), April 10th, 4pm-6pm.

Charlene Edwards (J. Hood Right Park Recreation Center): Belly dancing; Studio 54 dancing; Latin dancing; Family Field Day. For details on these events and more, visit <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/j-hood-wright-park>.

Sarah Kiefer: Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrants Rights is organizing a march for immigrants' rights on Sunday, April 23rd; meet at Broadway & W. 137th St. at noon for 1pm step-off. *[Note: this subsequently was changed to St. Nicholas Ave. @ W. 145th St.]*

Natalie Espino: announced upcoming NMAC (Northern Manhattan Arts & Culture) events for April.

Barbara Frazier: Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez is hosting a "car free" day on April 22nd on St. Nicholas Ave., between W. 170th & W. 177th Streets.

Liz Ritter: call for artists for the June ArtStroll; deadline to be in the printed listing is May 1st. Kickoff event will be May 31st at the United Palace.

Jennifer Hoppa: work on IHP Nature Center water service begin in May. Bathrooms to open Spring '18.

8:01pm **Presentation by HPD & NYPL on proposed development of Inwood Branch**

Presentation by HPD (Simon Kawitzky): NYC has a \$40 billion, ten-year, five-borough plan to build 21,000 affordable housing citywide, and so far there has been only 1 (ONE!) unit of affordable housing built in Inwood, at 228 Nagle Ave., ten years ago. We can and must do better, but there is virtually no available city-owned land. We are proposing a project that is 100% affordable, to meet local income needs. We also will be paying special attention to the housing needs of seniors, the homeless, and people with disabilities. There is no development incentive to buy the property and flip it; HPD will be supervising the development.

We have had two CB12 presentations plus this evening's and another tomorrow at Land Use, and are working on meetings with the Youth/Ed and Housing Committees, or one joint meeting at the discretion/preference of the respective Committee Chairs. We have had three community workshops, attended by more than 300 people (many for more than one). We have received more than 700 responses to a questionnaire which only closed at the end of March so we don't yet have those results tabulated. All of these results will be compiled into a community response, including the raw responses, and attached to the RFP. The successful applicant will be the one that best addressing the agency goals as well as the community concerns and needs.

In the community workshops and open public comment period, there were 6 major areas of concern:

- Affordability: most people want to focus on low income. Most people opted for some moderate | some also wanted middle-income housing.
- Height: 40% wanted smallest (8 stories/70 feet or less); 60% wanted taller (roughly even split among 11 / 14 / 17 stories).
- Design: top three priorities are arts/culture/placemaking; environment/conservation; housing design/architectural context/active ground floor.
- Top priorities of library programming are: quiet space, teen space, more computers, more books (especially non-English); more charging ports; engaging kids' area' additional community programming; story area.
- Ownership structure: two condo'd units owned/controlled by NYC & NYPL, or some other structure of public (not private) ownership.
- Temporary Library space: the last renovation was a huge problem in that there was nowhere to go in lieu of the closed library; a small trailer was not nearly enough.

We are also talking with the Department of Education to incorporate part of the parking lot in the plan to increase the site's flexible use.

Presentation by George Mihaltsis & Christopher Platt, NYPL Formed in 1895, and now serving Manhattan, the Bronx, & Staten Island; we work collaboratively with the Brooklyn Public Library and the Queens Public Library but these are two separate systems. NYPL had 13 branches in 1091, 61 in 1950, 90+ now. In the current location in Inwood since 1950; showed old photos from 1923 at 178 Sherman Ave. (since 1902), and from sometime in the 1930's at 215 Sherman Ave. Circulation is flat-lining, but programming is up. EFL, literacy, cultural programming, and tech are all booming. This branch is the third-largest in terms of EFL classes; we are ramping up citizenship classes and EFL conversation sessions and classes. Our core business is still reading and research. We have robust collections in all formats. One in five books withdrawn is an e-book. Most reference questions are online, and are not reference-related, but are how-to questions. People are also looking for connectivity for their own devices, as well as providing computers for public use. We rely as well on local partnerships for a variety of programming.

Questions from Committee Members

Liz Ritter: Please explain the legal ownership? A: In order to qualify for the tax abatements which make the development feasible, the developer must own the property. So they will own it for the duration of the development and then once the property is developed the ownership reverts back to the City.

Domingo Estevez: Why partner with a developer when you could partner with a Community Land Trust? A: We released an RFEI (Request for Expression of Intent) for a Community Land Trust to look at how to do this. We are interested in and open to pursuing that.

Richard Allman: Can you de-link library renovation from affordable housing development effort? <Much applause.> A: There is no other publicly-owned land in Inwood -- the vacant properties in Inwood are not publicly-owned – and the Library needs improvements – new roof, new elevators, new basement, and more; this project is a good opportunity to do both. A (George): We don't have the money for a renovation.

Mitchell Glenn: The housing situation is desperate, but during construction we must have a temporary library space of equal size/capacity. A (George): That's 18k square feet which would be almost impossible, but our goal is to have a sizeable temporary space, and to provide programming in the spaces of other community partners so that we can continue to operate with no loss of programming services.

Barbara Frazier: Is the affordable housing in perpetuity? How long would the City control it? Would there be a deed restriction? Why is \$20k s/f an unusual size and; why not larger? What about a community theatre and performance space? Can you acquire the car wash next door which has just gone out of business and is for sale? This is a great moment of opportunity. A (Simon): We don't have a process for acquiring the car wash. <Liz Ritter: "Yes, you do; it's called "eminent domain."> A (Christopher) It's not just a matter of size but also having the staff to provide programming and coverage. A (Simon): re length of affordability, if we were to change the zoning to allow a taller building, it would trigger MIH (mandatory inclusionary housing) which would make the affordable housing permanent; it would be in the deed. We also are working to refine financing to require additional affordable units. Typically these are for 30 years, after which they would be in the rent stabilization program. If the housing is built under current zoning, there would be no guarantee of affordability for any of the units.

Karen Taylor: Is there a renovation plan of just the library? A: No, we cannot afford it.

Daryl Cochrane: Regarding the median income figure, when is that figure determined and when is it applied, given that this could take several years? A (Simon): It is determined annually and they go with the figure that is available at the time of the financial closing. Additionally, what are the community needs for housing? What are population growth figures; what is the breakdown of the type of housing that residents currently have? A (Simon): those would be interesting stats to have.

Questions & Comments by Members of the Community

Sarah Kiefer: What happens if we don't give kids enough space during the renovation? Why don't you know what the temporary space will look like, where it is, and how big it is? A (Christopher): we are mindful of all of the programs, and will continue to be so when we look for temporary space. A (George): For some renovations we do not have a temporary space, we redirect patrons to the nearest other branches. Because this is a heavily-used branch, we are committed to a temporary space, but we haven't yet retained a broker to scope out potential locations this far in advance, as the actual renovation and temporary branch closure is several years away.

Bennett Milsack: The survey left out the option for not doing construction at all. There is no way this project will take only two years.

Jeanie Dubnau: We had a meeting with 100+ people. This is a big issue. We need affordable housing. But these aren't deeply affordable enough. Why wasn't a CLT (community land trust) discussed initially? A (Simon): we haven't yet determined the levels of affordability, and we want to include deep levels of affordability in the RFP.

Jeffrey Wallach: I am a 30-year Inwood resident. The benefits of a new library sound like what we already have. There's no problem, so why "fix" it if it's not broken? This idea of putting housing on top of libraries is twelve years old, dating back to the Bloomberg Administration, and they only just came to the community five years ago and didn't give the community the choice to NOT do this.

Pat Courtney: You showed library projects but none have housing. Can you give us an example of housing on top of libraries? A (NYPL): Battery Park City, Morningside Heights (CU dorm), Morris Park in the Bronx. Others are also mixed use, not just residential above the library.

Nancy Bruning: I went to all three sessions, and only at the last two was there an 8-story option. SO the statistics of the responses will be skewed since at least some of the people at the first session would have indicated that option had it been available. A (Simon): Yes, we offered that option in the subsequent sessions in response to the community feedback we received at the first session. We can statistically iron that out.

Deinse Rickles: There has to be a way to capture what people want. The wording choices force people to choose from among options that don't necessarily include what people want. I use St. Katherine's branch on the Upper West Side all the time and it was difficult during that renovation, the next branches were too far, and we had no service. A: I believe you mean St. Agnes? We didn't do a temporary branch for that renovation, but as stated we are committed to having a temporary branch here. We don't usually do that with renovations, but it's important to do that in this case because the branch is so heavily used.

Marshall Douglass: The vacant lot next to the "Stack" building across from PS/IS176, the owner has died. Why not use that. You have a lot of information beyond what is in these slides. A (Simon): you can go online to get all of the feedback from the public sessions; this is just a summary.

Phil Simpson: There is a need for an Environmental Impact Study considering the former gas station across the street. A (Simon): I apologize for not getting back to the CB regarding an EIS, which was asked at the last CB meeting. If there is no rezoning then there is no need for an EIS. There will be a ULURP on this project in 2018 and at that time it will be determined if an EIS is required.

Sally Fisher: Why didn't we hear about this during any of the InwoodNYC meetings? And what do you mean that "no other sites make sense"? There are many other vacant sites in Inwood. A (Simon): There are vacant sites but they are privately owned. We focused our attention on publicly-owned land in Inwood, and this is the only site.

Eva Farkas (representing both the Met Council on Housing and Northern Manhattan is Not For Sale): We need to focus on affordability. Building on a public site means more deeply affordable housing. But the options presented at the workshops didn't allow for that. Uptown is poorer than the rest of Manhattan. MIH is not the best answer since 70% of the units revert to market rate after 30 years. A (Simon): That's not true, they'd go to rent stabilization. We structure the financing with a balloon mortgage that accrues millions and millions at the end so that there is a strong disincentive to opt out of the program, and an incentive to refinance within a public program to ensure continued affordability. Eva: That is a good answer and really good information, but if we had a non-profit developer or a CLT that is mission-driven it ensures that the housing is saved for Inwood. A: yes, we are working on financing to ensure that the units are affordable. We haven't general restricted to a non-profit or CLT, but we can look at that.

Carolina Rodriguez (Inwood resident & DNAinfo Reporter): Your team stated that in order for a CLT to be included they'd have to apply along with the other RFP applicants. A: Yes.

<There was a segue into a long discussion on statistical representation, and how best to not only adjust for the lack of the 8-story option at the first workshop and on the questionnaire, but also that it was misleading to lump the three roughly equal higher options (three at ~20% each) as showing that the community wants height. HPD agreed to present the numbers in a more statistically accurate and neutral way in the draft report.>

Daryl Cochrane: What are the population trends since 2002? A (Simon): We will be including that. Q: How do you freeze affordability? A: it is pegged to AMI (average area income) as defined by HUD.

Catherine O'Sullivan: This plan was concocted by billionaires, some of whom now control the library. A: (NYPL): We are not selling the library to create cash. We are using the land to get a new library and also affordable housing.

Pat Courtney: This is a spot-rezoning. A (Simon): We don't yet have a plan so we can't say what the zoning would be.

Susan Russell (for Sen. Marisol Alcántara's Office): How do we stop this? Assuming it's going to be decided yet. When will there be a meeting when a decision will be made regarding height and affordability? Who's making the decision and can we be there? A (Simon): we have experience developing affordable housing, but we don't have a development team in place yet for this development. We are in the process of identifying community needs and concerns to include in the RFP for the developer.

Gabriell Beale: I am a lifelong Inwood resident. You're not reaching out to the Hispanic community. The developers are predatory and the community is not being served. A CLT is not the answer. There has been no outreach to Tenth Ave. and to schools. A (Christopher): we spent a lot of time reaching out and some has been very effective – we got a lot of responses to the written survey from Latinx Library patrons – and some has been less so. We are working on that.

Simon indicated that the PowerPoint presentation is available online at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/community/inwood-library.page>; and questions/comments may be emailed to: inwooddev@hpd.nyc.gov.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:59pm.

Respectfully submitted: Daryl Cochrane & Liz Ritter.