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PARKS & WATERFRONT COMMITTEE MEETING

September 1, 2021

The Parks & Waterfront Committee of Community Board #2, Manhattan, held its monthly meeting on Wednesday, September 1, 2021 at 6:30 via Zoom.

The meeting covered one topic: Presentation by the Union Square Partnership on the Union Square-14th Street District Vision Plan.

Board Members Present: Rich Caccappolo (Chair); Susanna Aaron (Vice Chair); Coral Dawson; Matthew Metzger; Shirley Secunda; Kristin Shea; Georgia Silvera Seamans; Frederica Sigel

Public Members Present: Nancy Brous; Elizabeth Gilmore; Sharon Woolums

Other Board Members Present: Jeannine Kiely (CB2 Chair); Susan Kent, Michael Levine

In total, approximately 12 people attended the meeting.

There were no resolutions created from this meeting.

MINUTES

Presentation by the Union Square Partnership on the Union Square-14th Street District Vision Plan:

Jennifer Falk, Executive Director, Julie Kantor Director of planning and Tali Kantor, Director of Planning, of Union Square Partnership (<https://www.unionsquarenyc.org>) the community-based, non-profit organization that “works to ensure the best possible neighborhood for its residents, businesses, and visitors” and is the “leading advocate for the Union Square-14th Street community” came to discuss their Union-Square-14th Street District Vision Plan (presentation, press release and renderings can be seen <https://www.unionsquarenyc.org/vision>) Their efforts to create this plan kicked off in 2018 and they expect this to be 10 to 20 year, multiphase initiative. They conveyed the five key goals of the plan:

1. Transform 14th Street into a world-class boulevard and permanent crosstown transit way; they noted that Union Square is crucial as a central meeting point and the junction of many transportation routes.
2. Increase public open space 33% by expanding Union Square Park to the surrounding building edges; currently there are inconsistent park edges, curbs, roadways.
3. Streetscape elements including new trees, lighting, trash containers, and pedestrian-friendly “micro parks”; they shared their proposed common “tool kit” of features.
4. Enhance the “Broadway plaza” at 17th Street (the NW corner of the park), the gateway to Union Square and the terminus of the 2.5-mile pedestrian corridor stretching down from Columbus Circle.

5. Address, by way of a Park master plan, infrastructure such as landscaping and utilities, ADA accessibility, permanent farmers market stalls, and new subway entrances.

Some highlighted features of the vision plan include

- Bringing roadways up to sidewalk-level to emphasize pedestrian connection to park and slow vehicles
- Curbless roadway to improve mobility for wheelchairs and strollers
- Fixed bollards on 14th St. to protect pedestrian spaces from encroachment by vehicles
- Removable bollards for emergency vehicle access on Union Square west
- Permanent plaza paving to unify park design
- Expanded sidewalks to increase space for pedestrians and retail activity on south side of 14th St.
- Extending paving patterns from Union Square Park to the building edges across the streets
- Permanent flexible greenmarket infrastructure
- Preservation of old trees via improved soil conditions
- New, advanced curbside systems to consolidate waste and reduce sidewalk clutter
- Raised planters with attached seating

Though still early in the process, the estimated budget to deliver the full vision is expected to be close to \$100M. The plan is for \$2-10M to come through BID fees, \$10-20M from private donations, \$60-80M from government sources. Our committee expressed their appreciation for the vision plan presentation and pledged to stay in touch and supportive with the caveat that this spending is deemed worthwhile versus other priorities by government agencies.