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Manhattan Community Board 2's Land Use & Housing Committee met on Wednesday, May 10, 2023 @ 6:30 PM via video conferencing.

Land Use Committee Members present: Eugene Yoo (Co-Chair), Anita Brandt, John Paul DeVerna, Stella Fitzgerald, David Gruber, Michael Levine, Donna Raftery, Frederica Sigel, Susan Wittenberg

Land Use Committee Members absent with notice: Katy Bordonaro (Co-Chair)

Land Use Committee Public Members present: Sean Sweeney

CB2 members present: Susan Kent (CB2 chair), Jeannine Kiely (prior CB2 chair), William Benesh, Carter Booth, Valerie De La Rosa, Shirley Secunda

Presenters from the NYC Department of City Planning: Andrew Cantu and Abby Ryder

The NYC Department of City Planning outlined the program "City of Yes." The presentation is available here (add link)

As this is a citywide zoning change, all the community boards have to respond to the proposal by July 3, 2023. There will be three text amendments over the next year. This is the first one and is entitled "Carbon Neutrality." The Carbon Neutrality amendment is focused on reducing greenhouse gases, especially from buildings. Later in the year, the city will present proposals on economic opportunity and housing opportunity. In August, DCP plans to hold a public hearing. By October the plan will be submitted to the City Council for a vote. Once the Council votes, the new rules will become effective immediately.

The Carbon Neutrality text amendment aims to deliver zoning relief to property owners who want to save on energy costs and reduce **emissions through retrofits, "but who were stymied by current zoning rules and regulations."** **In New York City, the goal is to reduce the city's emissions by 80%, by 2050. The buildings are the largest source of greenhouse emissions so retrofitting them is top priority in order to reduce emissions. The object is to clean the grid by switching from fossil fuel powered electricity to renewables like solar and wind, and lastly, to electrify all remaining energy needs.**

There are four major goals with 17 sub-goals.

- 1. Decarbonize the energy grid**
- 2. Decarbonize our buildings**
- 3. Decarbonize our vehicles**

4. Decarbonize our waste streams

One of the ways to achieve decarbonization of the buildings is through the expansion of solar panel usage. The plan calls for allowing a greater percentage of a roof to be covered by solar panels. This change produced questions from the committee and public as well.

Solar panels and Landmarks. DCP said that all modifications to landmarked buildings or buildings in a landmark district will go through a Landmark review as usual. Comment from a Board member: Solar panels do not work well in a landmark area. The buildings may not even be able to carry the weight. The committee asked for some examples of buildings typical to our community board as the examples in the presentation were not representative of our neighborhoods.

Solar Panels and Building codes. DCP said that all modifications to buildings will also have to go through a DOB permitting process.

Solar panels and existing roof recreation requirements. DPC will get back to us but thought that the owner would have to provide the required recreational space on another part of their property.

Charging Stations. In the first phase the goal is to get charging stations installed in garages, basements, and outside parking lots. In the future, sidewalk/curbside chargers will be considered. When the question of access to charging stations in private garages was pursued further, the presenters said they had to get back to us with details. If a car owner has to go to a garage to charge, they may have to pay a parking fee and a charging fee. Those fees may be a disincentive.

Bike parking. There will be new rules about providing bike parking in new buildings and there will be future rules about bike parking in more public areas.

Permeability. Our streetscape is quite different from other areas of the city because of hollow sidewalks, cobble streets, and stretches of granite pavers. DCP has to get back to us with more info on whether the permeability applies to city infrastructure or private areas. The committee questioned the suitability of rain gardens and broad permeability in an area with so much underground infrastructure that is vulnerable to over saturation.

There was overall concern that the one size fits all approach does not work in our community board which has an idiosyncratic built environment.

Financial Issues. Retrofitting the buildings will be expensive so the city is trying to save money for owners by streamlining the zoning.

Business Session

Concerns

- One size fits all does not work for our community
- Putting solar panels on landmark buildings is very difficult. There are more expensive materials that blend in but they represent a financial burden.
- There are several committees which need to comment on this proposal so we have to be co-ordinated within the Community Board
- How will solar panels impede the Fire Department in an emergency?
- We have to get clarity on how extensively permeable solutions can be used in our dense neighborhoods.
- How do we preserve required rooftop recreation space when solar panels must be installed/?
- We need community education on the new requirements.
- We need funding sources for some the retrofitting which will be expensive for building owners

Next step

- Break the EAS up into manageable pieces and assign those to individuals
- Have everyone become familiar with the opening section.