



Robert Rodriguez  
**Chair**

George Sarkissian  
**District Manager**

## COMMUNITY BOARD ELEVEN

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### Economic Development Committee

April 8, 2008

Bonifacio Seniors Center

7 East 116<sup>th</sup> Street

Present: Chester Asher, Nadir Aslam, John Brown, Judith Febraro, George Figueroa, Garry Anthony Johnson, Rafael Merino, Marina Ortiz, Daniel Perez, Kyndell Reid, Robert Rodriguez, Derrick Taitt, Matthew Washington

Absent: Frank Brija, Peter Paris, Celia Ramirez, Hilda Vives-Vazquez, Brian Armstead, Bernard Dixon

Excused: Cesar Ortiz, Jim Greene

Guest(s): Gary Spindler, Roy Schoenberg, Michael Kramer, Damon Bae, Marion Bell, Judy Jones, Brunilda Vega, Raymond Plumey, Evan Blum, Susan Goldfinger, Rachael Buskin, Doug Jones, Jaime Ortiz, Edwin Marshall, Carolee Fink, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Diane Collier, Jewel Jones

### **Presentation:**

*New York City Economic Development Corporation(EDC) – E 125<sup>th</sup> Street Development  
- Carolee Fink*

Staff from EDC and the Department of City Planning came before the committee to discuss some details regarding the E. 125<sup>th</sup> Street Development.

Carolee Fink gave a brief overview of how this project has changed. She stated that when the community unanimously opposed the first iteration of the project and community taskforce was created in response. The major community concerns with the “Uptown NY” project was economic development; local participation in development, employment and retail; affordable housing; impact of development on health and services; and the promotion of arts and culture.

In October 2006 the taskforce and the city established a consensus on the RFP goals and guidelines which addressed most of the concerns listed above. Some of the major

achievements the taskforce was able to introduce to the RFP was a substantial focus on affordable housing and a strong local component (local developer, local hiring, local investment fund, etc).

In January 2007, 7 proposals were first received and the taskforce reviewed them with a focus on selecting finalists by July 2007 and beginning the public scoping process. The project features included approximately 4,000 construction jobs and 1,500 permanent jobs as well as approximately 850 units of affordable housing, local participation in development, a focus on developing at minimum LEED Silver buildings and space for the arts and culture.

This development would require a number of actions, including, a zoning map amendment, zoning certification, disposition of real property, urban development action, urban renewal plan amendment and a modification of a large scale plan.

The timeline that EDC presented was as follows:

March 2008 –	Certify ULURP
Summer/Fall 2008-	Designate Developer
October 2008 -	Complete ULURP
Spring/Summer 2008 -	Disposition/Begin Construction
2012 -	Complete Construction

Some committee members questioned why EDC had chosen to certify the project with three developers remaining instead of waiting and allowing the taskforce to select one developer. EDC responded that by doing the certification in this manner they would be able to minimize the re-trade risk and be able to gain more leverage that would ensure that the community benefits that were included in the RFP were secured. EDC also stated that there were other examples of certification being done this way and listed projects such as the Stapleton Home Port in Staten Island, the Downtown Brooklyn rezoning, Saratoga Square in Bradhurst and the 168<sup>th</sup> Street Garage in Jamaica, Queens as comparable examples.

EDC was then asked when this decision was made. They stated that the taskforce was first told in September 2007. Chairman Robert Rodriguez responded that this was untrue and stated that the taskforce was never told that EDC would be certifying the proposal in this manner in March of 2008. Councilmember Mark-Viverito disagreed with this assessment and stated that EDC had made it clear to the taskforce that they would be doing this in the first quarter of 2008. This point was not clarified further and remains as a point of contention.

Committee members then raised concerns regarding the way information is being disseminated. EDC stated that the role of informing the community and the community board was that of the taskforce. With three Community Board members on the taskforce, the expectation was that they would inform the full board of any activity that took place in the taskforce. Marion Bell also suggested that in order to improve communication that

not only the volunteer community board members report back but that the Manhattan Borough President and Councilmember Mark-Viverito also make information available as they also sit on the taskforce.

EDC also made it clear that it was not their intent to disband the taskforce and that they would continue to be part of the process.

Committee members and some community residents present raised concerns about the possibility of eminent domain. EDC and Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito both stated that they did not want to see condemnation as part of this project. EDC went on to state that when the project began they had sent letters to the landowners and had started some conversations with them. Some landowners who were present disagreed with this assessment and felt that EDC was not being forthright with their information. They also felt that by not going through the usual certification process their ability to negotiate a good deal had been compromised. In addition, by not being allowed to negotiate based on the future zoning changes they also felt that they were losing out on any deal that could be struck before condemnation was an option.

Other issues including details regarding the MTA bus depot were discussed. EDC reported that there had been some discussion about the bus depot being moved off the development parcel. Currently there are some logistical and financial impediments but it is a topic matter that will continue to be discussed throughout the process.

EDC was informed that the Community Board has sent a letter to Deputy Mayor Lieber requesting that the ULURP be withdrawn so that the taskforce and Community Board, in addition to many other reasons, could get more information on issues of eminent domain. Carolee Fink from EDC stated that she would take that information back but could not make any commitments to the request.

### **New/Old Business:**

#### *Liquor License Application*

A draft of the Community Board 11 Liquor License Application was presented to the committee. The committee reviewed the application and made some comments on how to improve the application. George Figueroa suggested that the application should include a space where the applicant could list any citations or convictions that they had received in the past. In addition, Garry Anthony Johnson made a suggestion that official documentation be provided to prove that a certificate of occupancy had been issued.

Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito stated that she had talked to the Deputy Commissioner of the State Liquor Authority (SLA) and that she would have some information to present at the next full board meeting. She also introduced Ede Fox from her office to give some further information on the liquor license procedures.

Committee member Marina Ortiz asked staff that all correspondence that has been sent from the office regarding liquor licenses be submitted to the committee for review. Staff responded that to their knowledge no correspondence had been sent to any applicant. Staff also informed the committee that all the application notices are in the office for review and a database has been created for their convenience.

A motion to approve the Community Board 11 draft liquor license application was made by Nadir Aslam and seconded by Derrick Taitt. The motion was approved unanimously.

#### *Mission Statement*

The mission statement of the economic development committee of Manhattan Community Board 11 was circulated to all board members for review. The mission statement reads, “The Economic Development Committee of Manhattan Community Board 11 (East Harlem) strives to enhance and establish economic opportunities for its residents and business owners. The committee seeks to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for the community by creating and retaining jobs, helping shape opportunities for our small business owners and fostering an atmosphere that encourages future generations to continue the work that has been initiated.”

John Brown made a motion to approve the mission statement and was seconded by Debbie Quinones. The motion passed unanimously.

#### *Other Actions*

Marina Ortiz made a motion that Community Board 11 appointees to local economic development agencies such as UMEZ and the Empire Zone be required to provide monthly reports to the Economic Development committee regarding all programming, funding, and action items that pertain to our district. The motion was seconded by Rafael Merino and passed unanimously.

#### **Announcement**

Marina Ortiz distributed a flyer regarding the “Hands Across Harlem” event that would take place on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008. For more information she directed people to the East Harlem Preservation website (<http://www.eastharlempreservation.org>)

#### **Adjournment**

Judith Febraro made a motion for adjournment; it was seconded by Derrick Taitt and passed unanimously.

## **Action Items**

1. A motion to approve the Community Board 11 draft liquor license application was made by Nadir Aslam and seconded by Derrick Taitt. The motion was approved unanimously.
2. John Brown made a motion to approve the mission statement and was seconded by Debbie Quinones. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Marina Ortiz made a motion that Community Board 11 appointees to local economic development agencies such as UMEZ and the Empire Zone be required to provide monthly reports to the Economic Development committee regarding all programming, funding, and action items that pertain to our district. The motion was seconded by Rafael Merino and passed unanimously.