



THE CITY OF NEW YORK MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 3

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Dominic Pisciotta, Board Chair

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To: Community Board 3 Members

From: Dominic Pisciotta, Chairperson, Community Board 3, Manhattan

Date: December 21, 2010

Subject: Seward Park Urban Renewal Area Background and Status Primer

The Community Board 3, "CB 3," Land Use, Zoning, Public and Private Housing Committee is very close to finalizing discussions and hopefully reaching agreement on the Seward Park Urban Renewal Area. It is important for CB 3 members and others to read this primer and learn about the recent multi-year effort that has taken place to get us the furthest we have ever been with resolving the issue of having over 40 years of undeveloped sites in our community.

The recent effort to come up with an agreement for the Seward Park Urban Renewal Area (SPURA) started in October 2008 and gained steam in January 2009. The committee adopted Guiding Principles in June 2009 to provide a framework for ongoing discussions. Go to this link for a full record of meetings and presentations:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/html/landuse/landuse.shtml>

SPURA was usually discussed and could be found on the posted CB 3 agenda, with a couple of exceptions, at each monthly public committee meeting through March 2010 when the committee agreed to start in April 2010 to meet twice a month so that one meeting would be dedicated to discussing SPURA only. By this point, the Committee had grown to approximately 22 members (full board and public members) who represented a broad range of constituencies.

Facilitated Discussions

Since April 2010 there have been six professionally facilitated meetings by the well-respected urban planner John Shapiro and his close associates. He led the Cooper Square Urban Renewal Proposal process as well. Only four meetings had been planned by Economic Development Corporation, which is sponsoring the independent facilitator. Positive progress has allowed for EDC to fund the additional two and soon to be three facilitated meetings. We are told that funding beyond January is very uncertain, thus it is important for the Board and community to understand the long process we have been through and why both the Board Chair and Committee Chair have a strong desire to finalize an agreement in January.

All of the meetings have had Mandarin, Cantonese, and Spanish translators, except for one meeting that did not have a Mandarin translator. No one from the public has ever expressed an inability to participate due to a language or any other kind of barrier. Additionally, the last five meetings have had a public session before each plenary session and often had the public provide input during some points in the meeting.

The facilitated meetings have been held in various locations throughout the CB 3 District: PS 124 in Chinatown (Division St.), University Settlement (Eldridge St.), and Henry Street Settlement (Henry St.). Both the Board Chair and Committee Chair have also presented at information sessions for two different housing associations at their request.

Draft Guidelines Development

A set of "Draft Guidelines" were presented at the November 16, 2010 meeting. They were based on the June 2009 Principles and discussions both in and outside of the facilitated meetings. **These Guidelines are not a full-blown plan but will help us cross a major milestone** to get to the next stage of determining urban design, understanding what is deemed feasible in our Guidelines as assessed by various City agencies, and the City investing funds in the Environmental Impact Statement and Uniform Land Use Review Processes. Without these Guidelines, the City will not invest resources to further along this project. With them though, we cross major and contentious thresholds for various constituencies.

Reviewing and Commenting on the Draft Guidelines

The Guidelines were made available (in PowerPoint format) on the CB 3 website a few days after the meeting. Committee members as well as the public were asked to provide comments by 11/27/2010. Comments were received and incorporated into an updated Version 2 document for discussion at the December 13, 2010 meeting.

Comments and discussion on the Version 2 document received during the December 13, 2010 meeting have now been incorporated into a Version 3 document that is on the CB 3 Website at: [http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/downloads/cb3docs/- sp - guidelines v3 - 12-16-10 FOR CB3 Site.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/downloads/cb3docs/-sp-guidelines_v3-12-16-10_FOR_CB3_Site.pdf). The CB 3 Office will have hard copies available for those without Internet access.

Committee Members, Full Board Members, and the public are welcome to send comments on the Version 3 document to spura@cb3manhattan.org by Tuesday, January 11, 2011 (1/11/11) at 5:00 P.M. A new version will incorporate appropriate comments and be posted again on the website on or around January 17 for review before the January 24 facilitated discussion. This may be the last discussion before a vote is taken, so it is important for members and their constituents to review the most recent versions of the Draft Guidelines prior to the January 24 meeting.