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The City of New York Manhattan Community Board 8

ZONING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 29, 2012

The Nightingale-Bamford School
20 East 92nd Street (Fifth-Madison), Auditorium

The meeting started at 6:30 P. M., ended at 8:45 pm

Present: Elizabeth Ashby, Barbara Chocky, Michele Birnbaum, Jeffery Escobar, Larry Parnes, Ruth Halberg, Marco Tamayo, Teri Slater (Co-Chair), Elaine Walsh (Co-Chair)

Excused: Kenneth Austin, Larry Parnes, Jane Parshall

1. Public Plaza Presentation:

Melissa Cerezo, Department of City Planning, conducted an informative presentation on the history and regulations of public plazas or Privately Owned Public Space (POPS).

- There are 500+ spaces in NYC.
- 93 are located in the Upper East Side. 26 are residential and 67 are other types. They total 5,100 sq. ft. or 1.18 acres. 90% of the POPS in the UES are associated with residential buildings.
- Public plaza types were first created in 1961.
- The NYC Department of City Planning reform of public plazas took place from 2007-2009.
- The night time closing of public plazas is not permitted. However, requests can be made to close the plaza at night. Requests are sent to the NYC Department of City Planning citing reasons for request.
- Post 2007, public plazas are required to report compliance every 3 years to DCP as well as to Community Boards.
- The only POPS that can currently be built in the UES are ones for community facilities only.

2. Update on Illegal Signage:

Department of Buildings representative Stephen Figueiredo reported that the DOB has a new auditing unit stationed in Queens. The unit will conduct audits on possible illegal signage. If an objection is found, the applicant will have 15-30 days to address the objection, otherwise a stop work order will be issued.

Mr. Figueiredo also reported that if an after hour variance is issued by DOB, this information is now available, to the public, on their website.

The committee raised concerns regarding construction at the following sites: 147 East 86th Street, 129 East 79th Street, and 200 E. 79th Street. They also raised concerns for the signage being used by Brookstone.

3. **DISCUSSION: The Department of City Planning's Application to rezone certain blocks along Broadway, Amsterdam and Columbus avenues in an effort to "preserve the small store retail culture and create an incentive for mom and pop stores to open in the area."**

The committee and members of the public voiced their concerns regarding the proposed rezoning to take place on the Upper West Side. The proposed rezoning mainly pertains to C1 and C2 districts. It restricts the linear feet of frontage space allowed for commercial uses.

The committee discussed how this can potentially impact the CB8 district. It is an urban planning issue that needs to be addressed in a forum. Committee members expressed interest in seeing a special task force formed to address this matter.

4. **New Business:**

The Committee and/or Board should look into requesting a zoning text amendment that will require new and stricter signage laws (ie. a law that will restrict the use of neon sigs behind a building's front window).

5. **Old Business:**

The R8B mid-block zoning text amendment is gradually moving through the system.

Teri Slater and Elaine Walsh, Co-Chairs