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The City of New York
Manhattan Community Board 8

Parks Committee Meeting
Thursday, June 7, 2012, 6:30 PM
New York Blood Center, 310 East 67th St.
Conference Room 1 & 2

CB8 members present: Michele Birnbaum, Molly Blayney, Susan Evans, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder

Excused: Scott Falk, Judy Schneider, Barry Schneider, Helene Simon

1. Further discussion of the NYC Planning Dept.'s proposed revisions to the NYC Waterfront Revitalization Program.

At the May Land Use Committee meeting, CB8M members asked the Parks Committee to continue discussions of the City's proposed Waterfront Revitalization Program that had been presented at that May meeting.

After review of each issue of the revitalization plan, the Parks Committee unanimously passed a resolution urging the City to prioritize the refurbishing of the East River Esplanade. The committee also made recommendations, included in the following resolution, for each policy issue covered in the City's Waterfront Revitalization Plan.

RESOLUTION 1:

WHEREAS the East River Esplanade in the CB8M district is badly deteriorated and in need of urgent repair and refurbishing; and,

WHEREAS this deterioration has created dangerous conditions for users of this esplanade; and

WHEREAS the Dept. of City Planning has proposed revisions to the NYC Waterfront Revitalization Program; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan, urges the Dept. of City Planning to make refurbishing the East River Esplanade in the CB8M district a priority in its Waterfront Revitalization Plan.

VOTE: 6-0-0. In favor: Michele Birnbaum, Molly Blayney, Susan Evans, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder.

RESOLUTION 2:

WHEREAS the Dept. of City Planning has submitted proposed revisions to the NYC Waterfront Revitalization Program; and

WHEREAS the City will be soliciting public feedback on the revisions it has proposed to its waterfront revitalization plan; and

WHEREAS CB8M wishes to add a number of specific recommendations involving the CB8M district to the City's proposed waterfront revitalization; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8, Manhattan, urges the Dept. of City Planning to incorporate into its proposed Waterfront Revitalization Program the attached list of recommendations that apply to the CB8M district.

VOTE: 6-0-0. In favor: Michele Birnbaum, Molly Blayney, Susan Evans, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder

The New York City Waterfront Revitalization Program
Proposed Revisions for Public Review

CB8M recommendations for the policy areas covered in the City's waterfront revitalization program:

1. Residential and Commercial Redevelopment:

Limit commercial development along the waterfront in the CB8M district to the possible creation of a suitable restaurant or café, possibly on the pier.

2. Maritime and Industrial Development:

Prevent industrialization of the East River waterfront in the densely populated CB8M district.

3. Waterways Usage:

Create ferry service, both to Randall's Island for general use of this recreational area, and to other points in the city.

4. Ecological Resources Protection:

Clean up polluted waterways to improve the fishing environment.

5. Water Quality:

Institute studies of water quality that result in increased marine life.

6. Flooding and Erosion:

Repair the crumbling sea walls in the CB8M district to prevent flooding.

7. Hazardous Material:

Remove any hazardous materials, which could be released in case of hurricanes or floods.

8. Public Access:

Quickly repair the surface of CB8M's East River Esplanade to promote safe walking and biking.

7. Visual Quality:

The East River Esplanade should be redesigned to create an inviting and enhanced parkland environment,

2. Status of Repairs Along the East River Esplanade

A Parks Committee member provided an update on repairs of dangerous sites along the East River Esplanade. This information had come from a report to the May meeting of the East River Esplanade Task, headed by Rep. Carolyn Maloney and Council Member Jessica Lappin.

--\$3.6 million has been allocated for repairs along the East River Esplanade. Of that total, \$2 million has come from mayoral funds and the remainder from the City's budget, obtained by Council Member Lappin.

--The Parks Dept. has so far repaired at 10 sites along the East River Esplanade between E. 66th St. and E. 104th St.

--The Parks Dept. hopes to complete the repair of 22 additional problem sites over the next year-to-year-and-a-half. Nine of these 22 locations are in the CB8M district, while the remaining 13 are at more northerly sites.

--A \$4 million dollar repair of the Esplanade at 124th St. is now underway.

--In August, Con Ed will start removing property north and south of the service building at E. 74th St. Once completed, the move will open up some 225 feet of space on the Esplanade. However, Con Ed currently has no time frame for removing the "pink" service building.

----A Parks Dept. study of conditions along the Esplanade was scheduled to begin this month and be completed in the fall. Once the study's results have been accessed, the Parks Dept. will develop a budget that addresses the long-term costs of upgrading the Esplanade.

2. Letter in Support of a Plan to Index Public Open Space in the CB8M area

The CB8M Parks Committee is planning an April 2013 forum on the need for more public open space on Manhattan's Upper East Side. To ensure maximum visibility of this forum, the Committee will be partnering with the organization, New Yorkers for Parks. That 104-year old independent, non-profit group is dedicated to helping New York City's communities provide greener, safer, cleaner parks.

Known for such activities as the Daffodil Project, the Report Card on Parks, the Report Card on Beaches and Parks Advocacy Day the group has also been undertaking an assessment entitled, "Open Space Index." This project identifies the public open space in a particular area and provides 15 assessment targets based on research and best practices. Targets include such areas as the number of athletic fields and playgrounds per capita, percent of permeable ground surfacing and tree canopy. Results of this indexing allow communities to identify and advocate for their own open space priorities.

New Yorkers for Parks has already indexed open space in East Harlem and Lower Manhattan areas. The group now hopes, with City funding, to undertake a similar project on Manhattan's Upper East Side. As planned, the project in the CB8 district would begin in the fall, with results to be presented at the Parks Committee's April forum.

This information would provide the forum with hard data on the lack of open space in the CB8M district. It would not only reveal the amount of—or relative lack of—parkland in our district but also would identify how this parkland is being used. The information would help set the tone for the forum's discussion on what our community needs and how to obtain it.

Officials of New Yorkers for Parks has asked CB8M to write a letter to local Council Members Lappin and Garodnick asking them to support the Open Space Index project for Manhattan's Upper East Side.

RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS the non-profit organization, New Yorkers for Parks, has proposed to undertake an assessment of the amount and types of parkland on Manhattan's Upper East Side, using the group's Open Space Index; and WHEREAS the group, New Yorkers for Parks, has asked CB8M to write a letter to Council Members Daniel Garodnick and Jessica Lappin supporting its plan to index open space on Manhattan's Upper East Side; and WHEREAS results of this assessment would be presented at the CB8M Parks Committee's forum on the need for more public open space on Manhattan's Upper East Side; and

WHEREAS CB8M would express support only for the New Yorkers for Parks' plan to carry out open space indexing in the CB8M district; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8 Manhattan approves of New Yorkers for Parks' request that Community Board 8, Manhattan, write a letter to Council Members Daniel Garodnick and Jessica Lappin in support of its plan to index open space on Manhattan's Upper East Side using the group's Open Space Index.

VOTE: 4-0-2

In favor: Susan Evans, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder

Abstaining: Molly Blayney, Michele Birnbaum

Letter:

Dear Council Members Garodnick and Lappin,

Community Board 8, Manhattan, wishes to express its support of a plan by New Yorkers for Parks to conduct an open space assessment of Manhattan's Upper East Side using the group's Open Space Index.

We know that parks are essential to the health of New Yorkers, the livability of its neighborhoods and the economic development of the City. Yet, Manhattan Community Board 8 is extremely lacking in parks and open space. In order to address that problem, we need the detailed data about open space quality, maintenance, access, variety and environmental sustainability that NY4P's Open Space Index will provide.

With this tool, we will all be able to champion for the green spaces our community needs. Therefore, we urge you to back the plan by New Yorkers for Parks to carry out its open space indexing of the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

Sincerely,

Old Business: Use of the Queensboro Oval Park

At the late April Parks meeting, Commission Castro told the Parks Committee that he was working on a deal that involved the new arrangements for use of the Queensboro Oval, and promised to get back to us within three weeks. When no response was forthcoming, the committee co-chairs tried several times unsuccessfully to reach the Commissioner. As a result, the committee voted unanimously to send a letter, to be signed by the CB8M Board Chair, to Rep. Carolyn Maloney, asking her to intercede for the committee and for the community. The committee chose the Congress member because she has been actively involved in parks development in our community and has the clout to influence a decision on the use of the Oval.

RESOLUTION:

WHEREAS William Castro, Parks Dept. Commissioner for Manhattan, told the Parks Committee in late April that he would provide information within three weeks about possible new arrangements for use of the Queensboro Oval; and

WHEREAS such information still has not been forthcoming despite repeated attempts to contact the commissioner; and

WHEREAS Rep. Carolyn Maloney has been actively involved in park development in our community; therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that Community Board 8, Manhattan, requests that the CB8M Board Chair to send a letter to Rep. Maloney, asking her to contact the Commissioner Castro on behalf of the CB8M community about any new plans for use of the Queensboro Oval.

VOTE: 6-0-0. In favor: Michele Birnbaum, Molly Blayney, Susan Evans, Rita Popper, Peggy Price, Barbara Rudder.

Margaret Price and Barbara Rudder, Co-Chairs for the Parks Committee