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**The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Housing Committee
Wednesday September 29, 2021
This meeting was conducted via Zoom**

Minutes

Present: Gayle Baron, Alida Camp, Saundrea I. Coleman, Ed Hartzog, Wendy Machaver, May Malik, Gregory Morris, Rita Popper, Margaret Price, Barbara Rudder, Rami Sigal, Russell Squire, Marco Tamayo, Yma Rodriguez-Thoma, Elaine Walsh.

Co-Chairs Hartzog and Morris introduced everyone to the meeting. Mr. Hartzog provided a brief update on the health of Co-Chair Chocky and encouraged all attendees to be in contact and keep her in their thoughts and prayers.

Item 1: Refining and Prioritizing Action Steps to Support the Preservation and Expansion of Affordable Housing in the District and City.

Guest Speakers: Vic Bach and Sam Stein, Community Service Society.

Mr. Morris announced that Vic Bach and Sam Stein from the Community Service Society would join us at a future meeting. Mr. Morris shared their thoughts about strategies and approaches that the Housing Committee might pursue in support of the expansion of affordable housing:

Inventory potential development/conversion sites in CB-8:

- 1) Vacant lots and properties, underused parcels;
- 2) Available public land; and
- 3) Any hotels available for residential conversion?

Inventory available resources for housing:

- 1) Is up-zoning an option in CB-8?
- 2) Are there development rights that can be transferred to potential sites?

Preserve At-Risk Assisted Housing:

- 1) Inventory federally subsidized or Mitchell-Lama developments that are at risk of expiration and buy-out. Work with tenants to press for preservation.
- 2) Inventory NYCHA developments, options for restoring decent resident living conditions. Work with residents to obtain improvements.

Mr. Hartzog opened the discussion on the rental assistance program and the disappointment and frustration that exists in the absence of the release of these funds. *He noted that New York State was now ranked first nationally in payments made or obligated, with more than \$1.2 billion for this money.* It appears as though this money is “queued up” and we should have a focus on efforts to facilitate access to this money either through a weekend clinic or events with pro-bono attorneys.

Ms. Popper asked if elected officials had any update specific to rental assistance.

Ms. Price asked if accessing the press would be helpful or impactful in getting access to elected officials. *What data exists to tell us the story of who is need of rental assistance?*

Mr. Hartzog asked how renters can get access to this application and how to fill out the forms.

Ms. Price asked if a resolution would be helpful.

Mr. Hartzog asked if we could identify an application.

Ms. Coleman asked that we consider all of the following questions regarding rental assistance: *There's a waiting period, but are they informing them of the stages? What's next and what is the turnaround time to know if you're approved or not? What's the feedback?*

Ms. Camp suggested a one-on-one clinic and encouraged focus on underdeveloped lots.

Mr. Squire suggested that we get information from state agencies specifically applicant numbers and pay out numbers.

Mr. Raveschiere noted that 14,000 units were lost in the district over a 12-year period.

Ms. Rudder is struck not only by the number of apartments but also the length of time that apartments are empty. She noted the future involvement of the Environment Committee.

Mr. Hartzog suggested that land as a fixed cost is roughly somewhere between 30 and 40 percent of the real cost.

Ms. Thoma suggested that we think about the elderly people in her development (Normandy Court.) She encouraged us to hold workshops. The landlords have not come to the table.

Ms. Popper shared a contact to assist with legal matters. She identified the southwest corner of 78th Street and First Avenue as a location to focus on. Ms. Rudder pointed to 86th Street.

Mr. Squire did not think we could make a nuisance claim- but we could ask for assistance with rats.

Ms. Camp asked about legislation related to ending warehousing. Can we have a resolution on this topic? She suggested that we include George Janes at future meetings.

Ms. Machaver noted that the economics for the developers is that it makes sense for them to knock buildings down as quickly as they can because it lowers the value of the property without an improvement on it, so they pay a lower tax rate. *What the feasibility of pursuing a moratorium?*

Ms. Thoma updated the committee on the lawsuit at Normandy Court. *But what do we do until then?*

Mr. Morris provided a brief update on Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams interest in affordable housing, specifically hotel conversions.

As a recap, he emphasized the following action items he heard during the meeting:

Holding the electees accountable for sharing progress on the rental assistance program

Supporting Normandy Court residents

Looking into warehouse legislation

Determining if there is action that can be taken on vacant lots

Receiving updates on the stability of NYCHA housing (work orders, etc.)

Ms. Popper suggested rent strikes as an option. She also noted the reporting that has been done about NYCHA failures to meet the needs of residents.

Ms. Camp wondered if federal elected officials would be the most helpful in responding to NYCHA issues.

Mr. Ravaschiere asked about speaking to the Attorney General's Office for assistance.

Ms. Coleman reiterated the lack of accountability regarding NYCHA issues. It is a state of emergency.

Ms. Price referred to short-term rental issues. *We agreed to follow up that too.*

As the conversation ended, there was a formal motion to adjourn.

Ed Hartzog and Gregory Morris, Co-Chairs