



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

Public Hearing on U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery

Proposed Action Plan Amendment 8

**Educational Alliance, Manny Cantor Center 6th Floor, 197 East Broadway, Manhattan
January 15th, 2015 at 7:00 P.M.**

My name is Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson of Community Board 1 (CB1). Our Community district includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge. Thank you for holding this critical public hearing on Amendment 8 of the CDBG-DR Action Plan.

At a height of seven feet, CB1 probably experienced the highest inundation levels in Manhattan and unfortunately two people drowned in our district. While great strides have been made in CB1 in terms of recovery and relief, there is still much that must be done to rebuild and revitalize what was destroyed, and to protect the area in anticipation of future extreme weather events. Recently the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) informed CB1 that they had announced the reallocation of the “Neighborhood Game-Changer Investment Competition” to projects outside of CB1 although Southern Manhattan was one of five areas impacted by Hurricane Sandy that was eligible to be awarded up to \$18 million with more than one award. In July 2013, CB1 adopted a resolution on this federal funding to catalyze significant long-term economic growth. Since that time, CB1 has periodically requested updates on this allocation and was told by NYC EDC that funding allocation will proceed.

On October 16, 2014, the City received a third allocation of \$994,056,000 of CDBG-DR funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Proposed Action Plan Amendment 8 to the City’s Action details the allocation of the City’s entire \$4.21 billion grant award. The amended Proposed Action Plan reallocates \$200 million to Build it Back from other prior allocations: \$96 million from business programs, \$44 million from infrastructure and other city services, and \$60 million from resiliency. The amended Proposed Action Plan was released on Friday, December 19, 2014. The public hearing is scheduled for Thursday, January 15, 2015, leaving a short time for preparation by those wishing to comment, especially considering the two major holidays during this time. We were disappointed to learn that there was no opportunity for public comment at this, or any previous public hearing on the Proposed Action Plan. We believe this is a critically important part of the review process.

Lower Manhattan is in desperate need of immediate resiliency and hardening measures. Existing plans for such measures, such as the Lower Manhattan Multi-Purpose Levee, are long-term projects that will not effectively protect Lower Manhattan for several decades. Resiliency plans for Lower Manhattan were included in the Rebuild by Design BIG U proposal, but \$335 million in allocated funding is only for the first phase of the project, spanning the coast of Manhattan from East 23rd Street to Montgomery Street, all north of the CB1 area. The BIG U proposal contains plans for resiliency infrastructure in “Compartment 3”, from the Brooklyn Bridge to the Battery in Community District 1. This proposal includes “Berms in the Battery” at the southern

tip of Manhattan, “strategically located so as to protect the ducts of the infrastructure below and create a continuous protective upland landscape” as well as flood protection in the Financial District which would help protect against massive potential damages, including critical infrastructure underneath (BIG U proposal). On June 24, 2014, Community Board 1 unanimously passed a resolution urging, “HUD to allocate dedicated funding for both study and implementation of this phase of the BIG U project.”

The CDBG-DR Action Plan provides \$3 million to be used to advance resiliency planning and feasibility studies for other areas of Southern Manhattan from Montgomery Street to the Battery Maritime Building. Roughly half of that area along the East River is south of the Brooklyn Bridge which is located in Community District 1. This comes out to roughly \$1.5 million – and this does not include the tip of Lower Manhattan nor any portion along the Hudson River. We support the allocation of funding for this feasibility study, but we request that the study be expanded to cover the entire coastline of CB1, including the Battery and the West side up to Canal Street. It is especially important to study how partially implemented resiliency measures, such as phase 1 of the BIG U proposal, would redirect water to surrounding areas. Furthermore, we are very concerned about the timeline, implementation and funding for such a proposal.

Of the City’s entire CDBG-DR \$4.21 billion grant award, only roughly \$10 million total has been allocated in Community District 1, specifically to small business and Build it Back programs, not on resiliency, although Superstorm Sandy caused billions of dollars worth of damage, causing major disruptions and permanently displacing some businesses. CB1 is not aware of any other allocation from the City of CDBG-DR funding from HUD to be allocated in our district.

CB1 has played an active and positive role in the public process of Sandy recovery with the City since October 29, 2012. We are concerned about both the short-term and long-term time frame because Lower Manhattan remains largely unprotected 2 ½ years after Superstorm Sandy and faces an increasing potential for extreme weather events as confirmed by experts in the field, and the subsequent financial damage to Lower Manhattan and the City at large.

We strongly urge the City to ensure that Lower Manhattan gets adequate funding to address critical needs in order to fully recover and prepare for the next extreme weather event, and that the City reallocate the \$18 million of cancelled Neighborhood Game Changer funds back into the CB1 area specifically into initiatives outlined in the SIRR report such as Coastal Projection “(A) Install an integrated flood protection system in Lower Manhattan” and “(1) Create an implementation plan and design for an integrated flood protection system for remaining South Manhattan areas,” as well as other flood resiliency measures. These other measures can include funding for short-term interim measures, such as rapidly deployable flood barriers to protect the South Street Seaport neighborhood and other areas critically damaged during Superstorm Sandy, or dedicating a portion of the roughly \$1 billion in CDBG-DR funds, the last of the total \$4.2 billion CDBG-DR allocation, be reserved for a resiliency investment competition be used for the study and implementation of “Compartment 3” of the Big U proposal.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

COMMUNITY BOARD #1 – MANHATTAN
RESOLUTION

DATE: JANUARY 26, 2015

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: PLANNING

COMMITTEE VOTE:	13 In Favor	0 Opposed	0 Abstained	0 Recused
PUBLIC MEMBERS VOTE:	1 In Favor	0 Opposed	0 Abstained	0 Recused
BOARD VOTE:	0 In Favor	0 Opposed	0 Abstained	0 Recused

RE: Proposed Action Plan Amendment 8 and NYC EDC’s reallocation of “Neighborhood Game-Changer Investment Competition” funds intended for Southern Manhattan

WHEREAS: At a height of seven feet, Lower Manhattan experienced one of the highest inundation levels in Manhattan and unfortunately two people in Community District 1 drowned. While great strides have been made in Lower Manhattan in terms of recovery and relief, there is still much that must be done to rebuild and revitalize what was destroyed, and to protect the area in anticipation of future extreme weather events; and

WHEREAS: On June 25, 2013, The NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) announced, “A Transformative Opportunity: Announcing the Neighborhood Game Changer Investment Competition” which included Southern Manhattan as one of five areas impacted by Hurricane Sandy that was eligible to be awarded up to \$18 million with more than one award; and

WHEREAS: In July 2013, Community Board 1 (CB1) passed a resolution on this federal funding which was part of the Hurricane Sandy recovery initiatives approved by the United States government in May 2013 to catalyze significant long-term economic growth. Since that time, CB1 has periodically requested updates on this allocation and was told by NYC EDC that funding allocation will proceed; and

WHEREAS: Recently NYC EDC informed CB1 that they had announced the reallocation of the “Neighborhood Game-Changer Investment Competition” to projects outside of CB1; and

WHEREAS: On October 16, 2014, the City received a third allocation of \$994,056,000 of CDBG-DR funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The [Proposed Action Plan Amendment 8 to the City’s Action](#) details the allocation of the City’s entire \$4.21 billion grant award; and

WHEREAS: The amended Proposed Action Plan reallocates \$200 million to Build it Back from other prior allocations: \$96 million from business programs, \$44 million from infrastructure and other city services, and \$60 million from resiliency; and

WHEREAS: The amended action plan was released on Friday, December 19, 2014. The public hearing is scheduled for Thursday, January 15, 2015, leaving a short time for preparation by those wishing to comment, especially considering the two major holidays during this time; and

WHEREAS: Although it is 2 ½ years after Superstorm Sandy, the City has not yet allocated any funding for coastal resiliency protection systems in the CB1 area, although the Proposed Action Plan accounts for \$355 million in new coastal resiliency funding via the HUD Rebuild by Design program, including: **\$335 million** for a massive flood protection system of the East Side of Manhattan. The project will create a multi-layered protective system that will also provide social and environmental benefits to the community; and

WHEREAS: CB1 has long advocated for funding and implementation for resiliency measures in Lower Manhattan. Our prioritized budget requests for Fiscal Year 2016 included that “EDC provide funds for the design and construction of short to medium term resiliency infrastructure in anticipation of future extreme weather events” (#2) as well as “EDC provide funds for the design and construction of long term resiliency infrastructure, such as the ‘Compartment C’ phase of the BIG U project, in anticipation of future extreme weather events” (#10); and

WHEREAS: Lower Manhattan is in desperate need of immediate resiliency and hardening measures. Existing plans for such measures, such as the Lower Manhattan Multi-Purpose Levee, are long-term projects that will not effectively protect Lower Manhattan for several decades. Resiliency plans for Lower Manhattan were included in the Rebuild by Design BIG U proposal, but \$335 million in funding awarded in June 2014 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are only for the first phase of the project. This phase spans the coast of Manhattan from East 23rd Street to Montgomery Street, all north of the Brooklyn Bridge, and does not include any protection for the Community Board 1 area. The BIG U proposal contains plans for resiliency infrastructure in “Compartment 3”, from the Brooklyn Bridge to the Battery in Community District 1. This proposal includes “Berms in the Battery” at the southern tip of Manhattan, “strategically located so as to protect the ducts of the infrastructure below and create a continuous protective upland landscape” as well as flood protection in the Financial District which would help protect against massive potential damages, including critical infrastructure underneath (BIG U proposal). On June 24, 2014, Community Board 1 unanimously passed a resolution urging, “HUD to allocate dedicated funding for both study and implementation of the ‘Compartment 3’ portion of the BIG U proposal, which would contribute to the overall hardening of Lower Manhattan and assist in bridging the gap between short-term measures such as rapidly deployable flood barriers, and long-term strategies like the Lower Manhattan Multi-Purpose Levee;” and

WHEREAS: The CDBG-DR Action Plan provides \$3 million to be used to advance resiliency planning and feasibility studies for other areas of Southern Manhattan from

Montgomery Street to the Battery Maritime Building. Roughly half of that area along the East River is south of the Brooklyn Bridge which is located in Community District 1. This comes out to roughly \$1.5 million – and this does not include the tip of Lower Manhattan nor any portion along the Hudson River; and

WHEREAS: Of the City’s entire CDBG-DR \$4.21 billion grant award, only roughly \$10 million total has been allocated in Community District 1, specifically to small business and Build it Back programs, not on resiliency, although Superstorm Sandy caused billions of dollars worth of damage, causing major disruptions and permanently displacing some businesses; and

WHEREAS: CB1 is not aware of any other allocation from the City of CDBG-DR funding from HUD to be allocated in our district; and

WHEREAS: On June 11, 2013, the City released “[A Stronger, More Resilient New York](#)” (SIRR), a comprehensive plan that contains actionable recommendations both for rebuilding the communities impacted by Sandy and increasing the resilience of infrastructure and buildings citywide; and

WHEREAS: The Initiative Summary includes Coastal Protection measure is to “(A) Install an integrated flood protection system in Lower Manhattan” and (1) Create an implementation plan and design for an integrated flood protection system for remaining South Manhattan areas” (pp. 381-382); and

WHEREAS: Although it is 2 ½ years after Sandy, CB1 is not aware of the City’s plan in either of these areas except for the allocation of roughly \$1.5 million for a feasibility study on the East side between the Brooklyn Bridge and the Battery Maritime Building; and

WHEREAS: Much can be done to additionally assist the South Street Seaport area in their efforts to rebuild and revitalize. The City should make efforts to fast-track construction in the area (such as the Brooklyn Bridge Rehabilitation Project), and ensure that future projects (such as Peck Slip Park), are completed with a focus on resiliency and reflecting the new needs of a community that is changing rapidly. In August 2013, \$8 million was allocated for the Brooklyn Bridge Park portion of the East River Blueway Plan. We understand that the feasibility study and findings were to be completed by Fall 2014. CB1 urges that this park include resiliency measures and be completed as soon as possible; and

WHEREAS: CB1 has played an active and positive role in the public process of Sandy recovery with the City since October 29, 2012; now

THEREFORE
BE IT
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 strongly urges that the City to reallocate the \$18 million of cancelled Neighborhood Game Changer funds back into the CB1 area specifically into

initiatives outlined in the SIRR report such as Coastal Projection “(A) Install an integrated flood protection system in Lower Manhattan” and (1) Create an implementation plan and design for an integrated flood protection system for remaining South Manhattan areas” as well as other flood resiliency measures; and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 supports the funding for short-term interim measures, such as rapidly deployable flood barriers to protect the South Street Seaport neighborhood and other areas critically damaged during Superstorm Sandy; and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 supports the allocation of roughly \$1.5 million towards a feasibility study for resiliency measures on the East side, but we request that the study be expanded to cover the entire coastline of Lower Manhattan, including the Battery and the West side up to Canal Street. It is especially important to study how partially implemented resiliency measures, such as phase 1 of the BIG U proposal, would redirect water to surrounding areas. Furthermore, we are very concerned about the timeline, implementation and funding for such a proposal; and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 is concerned about both the short-term and long-term time frame because Lower Manhattan remains largely unprotected 2 ½ years after Superstorm Sandy and faces an increasing potential for extreme weather events as confirmed by experts in the field, and the subsequent financial damage to Lower Manhattan and the City at large; and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 strongly urges the City to ensure the Manhattan Community Board 1 District gets adequate funding to address critical needs in order to fully recover and prepare for the next extreme weather event; and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 strongly urges that a portion of the roughly \$1 billion in CDBG-DR funds, the last of the total \$4.2 billion CDBG-DR allocation, be reserved for a resiliency investment competition be used for the study and implementation of “Compartment 3” of the Big U proposal; and

BE IT

FURTHER
RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 calls upon Mayor Bill de Blasio, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, and Councilmember Margaret Chin, U.S. Congressman Jerrold Nadler, U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Assembly Member Deborah Glick, and State Senator Daniel Squadron to advocate for the equitable distribution and reallocation of CDBG-DR to address unmet resiliency needs in Community District 1.