

Community Board 7 (Youth, Education & Libraries Committee)
Community Education Council, District 3
President's Council, District 3
Public Hearing on the Need for New Public School at Riverside Center
May 24th, 2010, PS 199 Auditorium, 270 West 70th Street

Hearing began at 6:47 pm

Welcome and Introductions:

- CB7 thanks Noah Goatbaum, CEC 3, and the Presidents Council for co-sponsoring.
- Large turnout at this hearing shows how important this school is to our community.

Overview of Proposed Riverside Center Project:

- The proposed construction at Riverside Center ("RSC"), unlike most of RSS, varies from what may be built as-of-right, and requires discretionary permits. That gives us the power to negotiate.
- The historic Con Ed power plant across from the RSC site has been proposed for landmark designation. Alternate proposals by the community for RSC site seek to celebrate the power plant.
- Extell proposes 5 tall buildings, with a school placed in the NE corner of the lot.
- Extell's proposal includes open space bisected by a water scrim.
- Need to hear from the community about where and when the school needs to be built, also how big a school and with what attributes.

Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP):

- CB7 is the first step in a multi-step process in reviewing discretionary projects. We have 60 days to review the project, holding public hearings and ultimately voicing a recommendation.
- Next Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer will have 30 days to issue his advisory opinion.
- After the BP's recommendation, the project returns to the Department of City Planning and the City Planning Commission for up to 60 days.
- After approval by CPC, the project is taken up by the City Council, which has 50 days to consider and act. There are opportunities for Mayoral veto and Council override.
- All together the process elapses over 200-215 days placing the approval date in late December.

CB7's "Core Principles" for the RSC Project (presented by Mel Wymore, Chair of CB7):

- RSC as proposed includes two significant overriding implications: an increase in density (approximately 600K additional sq ft) as well as change in use (from mostly TV studios and office/commercial to mostly residential with mixed retail).
- Significant financial benefit to developer if approved.
- Site is designed as private enclave, uninviting to public.
- Contains public space that is neither useful nor accessible.
- The proposed density will stress infrastructure and public services, particularly schools.
- No outdoor play area is designed for school apart from a terrace set-back.
- Core Principles: Address topics including zoning (density and height of buildings); the need for accessible open space; ensuring connectivity and circulation through the site with city grid and to Riverside Park South; addressing the additional burdens on transportation and traffic; the need for vibrant streetscape including diversity of retail and cultural facilities; the requirement of inclusionary affordable housing to a mixture of incomes; mitigating the impact on public education; and the need for the entire design to be sustainable and ecologically responsible.
- These principles were ratified by CB7.
- Certain of the core principles translate into established "givens" that must be provided, including
 - a 6-section per grade school serving grades K-8 school, built in the first building constructed;

- a minimum of 20% permanently affordable housing (not the minimum permissible of 12%); and
- a sustainable, environmentally responsible design
- Beyond the "givens," CB7 with community and expert input is seeking ways to improve site plan, including:
 - Removing building 4 to create useful public open space (and possibly reducing density) - would also create open space proximate to and with a view of the Con Ed proposed landmark power plant;
 - Extend 60th St. to Riverside Boulevard on an angle, surrounding open space created by the elimination of Building 4 with streets to increase access and define public space;
 - Bring the site to grade at 59th Street and Riverside Boulevard to integrate the complex with streets, increasing accessibility;
 - Optimize above and below ground uses: vibrant retail and museums, minimize parking and develop protections against flooding or earthquakes;
- Also will seek to have the developer contribute to strengthen infrastructure and local economy:
 - Additional contribution to Riverside Park South Fund;
 - Build a local Metro North rail station at or near the complex;
 - Develop employment programs for area residents;
 - Contribute to future burying of west side highway
- CB7 is happy to come to building or community gatherings to present the project and garner feedback.

Remarks by Elected Officials:

Scott Stringer, Manhattan Borough President:

- We are in good hands when we have such an articulate chair.
- Land use review process can be very complicated. It is crucial that the community participate on this level to help me make my recommendation.
- The school proposed in the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) is not big enough.
- It is good news that Extell recognized that the community would not play games about the need for a school. The school must meet the community's needs and demands, and I will be working in partnership with CB7 and all stakeholders to leverage my office to get the community's demands met.
- Office of the Borough President will offer land use training to anyone in the community to make sure as many as possible can fully participate in this process.

Gale Brewer, City Council Member, 6th District:

- Need specifics about the kind of school that the community needs.
- Working together with CB7 and the community to press for our needs.

Jared Chausow, State Senator Tom Duane's Office:

- Sen. Duane in Albany re budget negotiations.
- Sen. Duane supports the building of a school that meets the community's needs in the face of the explosion of overcrowding in elementary schools in District 3.

Lindsey Allison, Assembly Member Linda Rosenthal's Office:

- A-M Rosenthal also required to be in Albany on budget issues.
- Statement in support of seizing the opportunity to secure a school on this site.
- Has been involved in the fight to get a school at this site for decades.
- Concerned that by the time the school is built it may not be big enough to satisfy needs.

Presentations about impact of overcrowding and specific recommendations for the school to be built:

Questions on which community views are solicited include:

- Should the school be put in the bottom left corner? A possible advantage would be dedicated play space at ground level. A possible disadvantage is that the school would be close to the elevated highway and deep into the site, which will be under construction for years.
- School must serve the needs of the whole District and not just one area.
- We should not discuss catchment lines or specifically who will attend this school because overcrowding may very well change by the time the school is online.
- Essential that the overcrowding that was visited upon PS 199 from RSS NOT be repeated at PS 191 with RSC.
- Equally essential that PS 191 not be marginalized by the creation of this new school.

Noah Gotbaum - CEC3 President:

- Expects every school below 105th St. to be overcrowded in the coming years.
- This problem will also soon hit middle schools.
- Many new units created in our District without the addition of any school seats.
- CEC is drafting a resolution in support of CB7's call for a 6-section per grade K-8 school built first.
- Needs to include space for arts education as well as gymnasias and cafeterias commensurate with its size.
- Must include ground-level outdoor play and recreation space.

Michelle Lipkin - PS 199 PTA Co-President:

- Need to address population growth head-on. PS 199 is one of NYC's fastest growing catchments.
- 10 new buildings since 2000 - 163 kids (22 %) come from those schools.
- Enrollment has grown 37% since the new buildings came on line.
- PS 199 has 8 K classes this year - 2 more than can be sustained.
- For 2010-11, PS 199 was forced to cap K enrollment, creating a 50 kid wait list.
- Addition of PS 452 not enough to stem this growth.
- A new school at this site must be a prerequisite for development.

Rachel Laiserin - PS 87 PA Overcrowding Committee Chair:

- P.S. 87 has the largest K waitlist in City.
- K enrollment from within the catchment has increased by 60% in the last 3 years alone.
- Increase driven by small development, the economy, and the success of the school itself.
- PS 87 was designed to hold 826 students, presently serves over 1,000. Have lost classrooms, cluster rooms, dedicated space for OT/PT, and combined rooms for art and music so lessons now compete.
- The RSC School must have common spaces that accommodate large class sizes, not ideal sizes.
- New RSC school should have cooking-capable cafeteria (PS 87 can only reheat).
- Great opportunity for integration of green facilities.
- Must minimize traffic at school intersection for school safety.
- Must create a dedicated space for drop-off/pickup.

Peter Szabo - Anderson School:

- Strongly supports new school construction, and that it be built early.
- School that shares facilities across grades K-8 will need the following:
 - -- 2 separate cafeterias
 - -- multiple entrances
 - -- large library with full-day access
 - -- extra-wide hallways (with lockers for upper grades)
 - -- 2 gyms

- -- dedicated computer lab.

Rebecca Woodard - Computer School:

- The overcrowding crunch is already being felt in middle schools. Too few choices in District 3.
- New School needs 2 cafeterias, 2 gyms, 2 distinct outdoor spaces, and auditorium space to serve diverse age needs.

Marcy Drogin - Prospective PS 87 Parent:

- Emotional rollercoaster due to overcrowding at zoned schools.
- Tremendous work ahead in developing PS 452.
- RSC School needs age-appropriate indoor and outdoor play spaces, multi-use auditorium, distinct spaces for art, music and dance. Dedicated spaces for PT, OT and speech therapy. Healthy cafeteria.

Robin Fontaine - PS 9:

- We are not building the RSC big enough.
- 1 gym at PS 9 is not enough for a school that has fewer sections.
- Need at least 2 lunchrooms capable of cooking food - vast waste in reheated food.
- Need multi-purpose space beyond auditorium.
- RSC school at the scale proposed would be entitled to 6 cluster rooms. Should also include a computer lab, science labs, and language rooms.
- Lockers for all ages of students. Scooter/bike lockup area. Teachers lounge.

Stefanie Goldblatt - PS 166:

- P.S. 166 has been sleeper school in overcrowding discussion. Small school building puts added pressure on over enrollment.
- No longer able to offer general education seats to siblings of out-of-catchment Gifted & Talented program students. 107 kids registered for 50 gen ed spots last year, 95 registered this year. Need to open 5th K to satisfy waiting list by losing cluster rooms, but it is not sustainable.

Joe Fiodaliso - Prospective PS 199 Parent:

- Despite choosing to live across the street from PS 199, is now being given an alternate offer for a different school. Long process.

Helen Rosenthal - District 3 Overcrowding Committee Data Team:

- Build it first, build it big! Strong community support, including 240 people attending this meeting, and over 1,200 signatures on the petition to ask the City to build it big and first.
- New school must be built, and not left to SCA to exercise an option for the school we need.
- The construction of the entire school must be placed in the restrictive declaration that governs the building and use of the site.
- Developer in the DSEIS is planning a 1300 seat school, but will only build half, leaving it to SCA to exercise an option to build the rest. This does not meet the community's needs.
- Since 2000, 6,500 apts. have gone up below 86th St.

Melissa Levy - PS 84:

- Need middle school for Dual Language French students to move to.
- School needs to be ADA-compliant.

Bijou Miller - District 3 President's Council:

- Need more middle schools. Stay true to the k-8 throughout negotiation process.
- Make sure this school is supported - recent new middle school in District 3 was not given a fair chance to succeed.

Wendy Clapp-Shapiro - PS 163:

- Already feeling mid-district space crunch.
- 4 classrooms are in aging trailers.

Minna Elias - PS 87 Parent:

- It would be in the developer's interest to accommodate those in the development as well as rest of neighborhood b/c otherwise the new residents will be without school seats.

Varda Steinhardt - Parent:

- Schools are the heart and soul of the community.
- Middle school is non-negotiable -- the Computer School turned away 200 first-choice applicants this year.
- Should include a PreK.

Nadine Gerber - Prospective Parent:

- Concern about impact of zoning for PS 452 next year on the RSC school.
- RSC school long overdue.
- Safety concerns for proposed Metro North rail station.

Concluded at 8:45 pm.

Present: Mark Diller, Louis Cholden-Brown, Marisa Maack, Helen Rosenthal, Gabriella Rowe, Eric Shuffler.
Board Chair Mel Wymore. **Non-Committee Board Members:** Ken Coughlin, Page Cowley, Klari Neuwelt, Roberta Semer.