

LAND USE COMMITTEE - MEETING MINUTES

October 10, 2018

Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair
Chris Ventura
Jim Berlin
Nicholas Martinez
Steve Simon

Committee Members Absent

Osi Kaminer (Excused)
Jay Mazur (Excused)
Curtis D. Young (Excused)

Board Members Present

Public Member Present

Staff: Ely Silvestre

Public Member Absent

Vivian Ducat (Excused)

Guest: Paul Hintersteiner, Natalie Espino (MBPO), Cristina Corujo – NY City News Service, Jacob Priley, Rekha Shanmigan, Maria Veira – RiseBoro Community Partnership, Adam Zeidel – Coconut Properties, Jon Beuttler – RiseBoro, Orlando Rodriguez (MBPO)

1. The Meeting began absent a quorum at 7:15 PM; quorum was established at 8:00 PM. Land Use Committee (“Land Use” or the “Committee”) Chair Wayne Benjamin began the meeting by welcoming committee members and guests. Committee members introduced themselves.
2. RiseBoro Community Partnership (“RiseBoro”) and Coconut Properties (“Coconut”) presented the proposed 37 Hillside Avenue Project. The site is owned by Rocky Mount Baptist Church (“Rocky Mount”), where the church is currently located. Chair Benjamin stated that two previous development proposals for 37 Hillside Avenue have been presented to Land Use and Community Board 12 (“CB12”). In 2009 CB12 passed a resolution in opposition to the 19-story project proposed by Rocky Mount and its development partner that required zoning variances from the Board of Standards and Appeals (“BSA”); in 2010 CB12 passed a resolution supporting a 10-story as-of-right project proposed by Rocky Mount and a different development partner. The low income tax credits required to facilitate financing the 10-story project were not awarded and the project did not advance. RiseBoro Community Partnership and Coconut Properties in partnership with Rocky Mount propose to build a 10-story low-income senior citizens residence.

Jon Beuttler of RiseBoro led the presentation on behalf of the development team. He stated that the proposed senior housing project (the “Project”) is as-of-right and that they are not here seeking approval of any discretionary public action, but rather to introduce them, the project and inform the community at large. RiseBoro is a 40-year old non-profit that manages over 2,000 units of housing in Brooklyn and Queens including approximately 600 units of senior housing. Coconut has a relationship with Rocky Mount. The Project includes 158 units of senior housing (110 studio and 48 one-bedroom units) and one Superintendent’s unit, 8,500 square feet of community facility space for Rocky Mount, and a 4,460 square foot landscaped courtyard. No parking will be provided consistent with revised zoning requirements for affordable housing. Development of the Project will double the space available to Rocky Mount. The Project will be built to Passive House standards, will have laundry rooms on each floor, community rooms on the 2nd and 8th floors, and will provide on-site case management and social services. The existing building will be demolished; Rocky Mount will lease temporary space during the Project’s construction, which is expected to begin summer 2019.

The Committee inquired about the apartment layouts, overall quality of the building to be constructed, which community-stakeholders are being engaged, why no two-bedroom units are to be provided, how the project is to be financed and how will affordability be ensured.

RiseBoro and Coconut stated that the design of the Project is a work in progress, the Project will be financed using tax credits, HPD and HDC funding programs, and that these City funding programs have minimum and maximum square foot standards (a studio is on average 350 to 375 square feet). They also stated that Rocky Mount recognizes it has a congregation that is aging-in-place and that they are located in a community with many residents who are also aging -in-place. The City programs require the head of household to be at least 62 years old. Site and development agreements and deed restrictions to be executed with the City will require affordability for 30 years. Development financing will include subordinate loans that balloon after 30 years; these loans can be refinanced in exchange for an extended affordability term. RiseBoro stated that it is a non-profit that has been in the development industry for a number of years, that there are people working on the Project with heart that will develop the property passionately, and invited the Committee to visit properties they manage.

Design and construction issues associated with the Project were also discussed. RiseBoro stated the development team wants to achieve a quality architectural design and hired, at added expense to the Project, two architectural firms. The architects are working with Rocky Mount to create a design that reflects the history and legacy of the African-American Baptist church. RiseBoro and Coconut previously met with CB12's Aging Committee and is scheduled to meet with the Housing and Human Services committee next month.

3. Chair Benjamin introduced Shawn Rickenbacker, Director of the City College J. Max Bond Center for Urban Futures (the "Bond Center"). Mr. Rickenbacker previously met with Land Use at its June 2018 meeting. He provided the Committee with an overview of the Inwood Rezoning Report (the "Report") completed by the Bond Center with the involvement of several CCNY departments in late July 2018. The Report focused on: 1) Best practices and Community investment; 2) Improved metrics for assessing Displacement; and 3) Strategies to support small business and economic development. A short summary was carried in the Daily News. Among the recommendations included in the Report is the inclusion of a cost-benefit analysis in any future rezoning action.

Although the Inwood Rezoning has been adopted its implementations needs to be tracked and the various community benefits and investment must be negotiated. There are a lot of moving parts. How are these benefits evaluated? How will the current economic market change? The Report can be a useful tool in addressing these issues.

The Bond Center would like to do is to understand what measures are in place or can be put in place that would allow small businesses to thrive in other parts of NYC. There are some historical models from 125th Street. Economic equity must be understood and distributed more equally. It plans to create a data-rich platform to provide a transparent means to view patterns and track, among other things, landlord behavior, displacement, and building information. .

Mr. Rickenbacker extended an invitation to the Committee and community members to visit the Bond Center and inquire about how it may be able to assist.

4. The Committee reviewed its expense and capital budget items from last year's Budget Priority Ranking and agreed to slightly modify the items and submit them again for the current Budget Priority Ranking.
5. The Meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Wayne Benjamin and Nicholas Martinez