

Community Board 10 - Manhattan

Testimony on Empire State Development Corporation,

The New York City Economic Development Corporation and National Urban League's

Plan to Redevelop 121 W 125th Street - NOVEMBER 7, 2013

My name is Brian Benjamin and I Chair of Community Board 10's Land Use and Landmarks Committee. I am making this statement on behalf of our Chairperson Henrietta Lyle and the rest of the board of Community Board 10. The primary purpose of the Community Board is to ensure that city services are accessible and responsive to residents, organizations, businesses and institutions of Central Harlem.

On Thursday, September 19, 2013, the Empire State Development Corporation, National Urban League and the developers made a presentation to Community Board 10's Land Use & Landmark Committee describing the project. At that time, we discussed the actual project and Community Board 10's three major concerns regarding this project.

To our understanding, the proposed development is a mixed use building that will serve as the headquarters for the Urban League and also host a Museum of Urban Civil Rights, a job training center, a conference center and community facilities. There will also be a retail component, office space, housing and parking for 200- 300 vehicles. 5% of the office space and 5% of the retail space will be reserved for local businesses. The criteria to qualify for this preference still need to be defined, though the presenters say they are willing to discuss the possibility of maintaining existing businesses.

This leads into our first concern. What is to be the fate of the existing Harlem small businesses on 125th Street? A number of these retailers have been in Harlem for years and have provided a tax base when a number of other businesses were not there. We believe that they should be treated with dignity and respect. We were told that all current businesses have leases expiring before construction begins and that the ESDC/Urban League team will meet with them soon to explore relocation options during construction. We asked the team to come back to Community Board 10 to present once they have a comprehensive plan worked out with the businesses on 125th Street. We were told that will happen.

Our second concern relates to the development of affordable housing. We are acutely aware as a board of the pressing need for more affordable housing in our community. The housing component of the proposed development consists of 114 units, including approximately 40 studios, 34 1BR, 28 2BR and 12 3BR. The residential entrance will be on 126th Street. 20% of the units will be reserved for people earning under 50% (approximately \$29k -\$33k, depending on household size) of AMI and 30% will be reserved for people earning under 130% of AMI (approximately \$80k-\$105k, depending on household

size). The remaining 50% of the units will be at market rates. Building amenities will be open to all residents regardless of income limits. We were told that 50% of the affordable units will be reserved for residents of CB 10, 5% for municipal employees and 2% for people with disabilities.

Our third concern relates to the potential job creation and its impact on our community. We know that if our community is going to grow and prosper that we need real job creation that will employ members of our community board. The presenters estimate the project will create 1250 to 1500 jobs per year during construction (70% direct jobs and 30% indirect) and 200 - 400 permanent direct jobs thereafter. They estimate that after opening the economic impact on NYC will be of \$307 million along with \$120 million in annual compensation and \$4.4 million in new tax revenue. 50% of the workforce during construction will be MWBE in accordance with the RFP and the presenters stated their willingness to partner with Community Board 10 and the community on this aspect of the project.

In closing, we at Community Board 10 like the idea of bringing the National Urban League headquarters to Harlem as well as the civil rights museum and job training center however we want to make sure that it is done in a way that is respectful to this community. We are very concerned with the potential displacement of the existing 125th Street businesses and we want to make sure that accommodations are made to assist them in this transition. We cannot support hurting some of us in the efforts to support others of us. We look forward to hearing more about this development project that will have a significant impact on the culture and direction of 125th Street. Thank you.