

LAND USE COMMITTEE - MEETING MINUTES

November 7, 2018

Committee Members Present

Wayne Benjamin, Chair
Osi Kaminer
Jim Berlin
Nicholas Martinez
Curtis D. Young

Committee Members Absent

Chris Ventura
Jay Mazur
Steve Simon

Board Members Present

Sara Fisher

Public Member Present

Vivian Ducat

Public Member Absent

Staff: Ebenezer Smith

Guest: J. W. Dell – Vicar, Patricia MacLauchlan, Pai Catton, Violeta Ramos, Alanna Burke, Nancy Preston, Paul Hinterstiener, Tim Koelle, Elizabeth DeMayo, Kelli Emerson, Jim Nedelka, Alyssa Chan, Jeannie Ruslin, Valour K., Cecila Malm, Danita Nicholas, Adele Bartlett – MBPO, Leena Charlton, Esq.; Cosette Nunez, G. Biel

1. Having established quorum, the meeting began at 7:05 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. Rev. Jack Dell, Vicar of Holy Trinity Church Inwood (“Holy Trinity” or the “Church”) presented an update on the Church’s development plans. Members of the Church’s Advisory Board and congregation in attendance introduced themselves. Re. Dell stated that Holy Trinity is an active church of 60 people, is one of only two Episcopal churches serving Upper Manhattan north of the George Washington Bridge, has served the community for over 90 years, and looks forward to the future as a revitalized spiritual home for the people of Inwood, and a “go to” destination for education arts and other community groups. He reviewed existing site and building conditions noting that the sanctuary was built as a temporary structure circa 1925-27 that was intended to be replaced with a larger gothic building, construction of which was halted by the Great Depression. The Parish House, designed by noted architect John Russell Pope, has a compromised building envelope that leaks, interior environmental hazards including asbestos and lead paint, and deferred maintenance estimated at \$4-6 million. Rev. Given its connection to John Russell Pope, the Parish House may be eligible for designation as an individual landmark, but is not landmarked or under consideration for designation. Dell also stated that the retaining wall between the Church property and a neighboring property is buckling and needs stabilization.

Two years ago Holy Trinity was faced with the choice of essentially being taken over by the Diocese and eventually closing or developing its property. The Church chose to stay, remain open and active in Inwood, increase membership, and develop available land to address both physical and financial challenges. In early 2018 Holy Trinity engaged Denham Wolf, a real estate company that specializes in working with non-profit organizations, to manage a competitive RFP process. The RFP asked for as-of-right development proposals. Although Holy Trinity had the opportunity to opt-out of the R7A zoning instituted by the recent Inwood Rezoning Plan, thereby keeping the site’s original R7-2 zoning, in response to community concerns about preserving neighborhood context, the Church agreed to accept the R7A zoning, ceding some development rights and reducing development potential. The RFP asked for a gut renovation of the Parish House to include multi-purpose sanctuary and performing arts space,

a chapel and vicarage, community meeting spaces, hazardous materials abatement, building envelope repairs, ADA compliance and new mechanical systems. The RFP also includes demolition of the over 90-year old temporary sanctuary and construction of a residential structure on its site. Several development proposals were received; a term sheet was signed last week but details of the project are still to be negotiated and design proposals/concepts are not yet developed. The residential building will be a mixture of affordable and market rate housing; the affordability level is not yet established. Decommissioning of the Parish House to allow for the gut-renovation is expected to begin in mid-2019. Significant rock excavation is not anticipated.

The Committee and members of the public in attendance inquired about the Church's plans to coordinate with the Manhattan Borough President and HPD to explore options for city funding that can help achieve an affordability level that makes sense of Washington Height and Inwood, parking, and the impact of the development project on an existing garden space, among other matters. The Committee also expressed appreciation for the approach taken by Holy Trinity in keeping CB12M updated and informed on its development plans.

3. Old Business: The Committee discussed the development proposal for 2050 Amsterdam Avenue published online on October 22nd in YIMBY. Chair Benjamin stated that, at CB12M's October General Meeting, members of the public questioned why the YIMBY article was their first notification of the project and why elected officials were not aware of the project. He stated that the proposed project as described is as-of-right, is not seeking any discretionary city action and therefore is not required to come before the community board, any elected official or any city agency other than those required to secure a building permit. However, Land Use can invite the architects - Marin Architects, the developer (which is not named in the YIMBY article) or both, to provide Land Use with a presentation for informational purposes. He also stated that although the article refers to the project as being an expansion of the existing two-story building, the rendering appears to show new construction. Also, since the project site includes an entrance to the 163rd Street subway it would be interesting to pursue with the developer the possibility of adding elevators to the station as part of the development project to achieve ADA compliance for this newly-renovated, but still inaccessible, station.

On an unrelated matter, Board Member Sally Fisher inquired about the impact on the North Cove of the building proposed to be constructed immediately adjacent.

4. The Meeting adjourned at 8:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Wayne Benjamin