



MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD SIX

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Mark Thompson
Chair

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District Manager

June 27, 2012

Ms. Edith Hsu-Chen
Director, Manhattan Office
NYC Department of City Planning
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Ms. Hsu-Chen:

Thank you for attending the June Land Use & Waterfront committee meeting of CB6 and presenting the “East Midtown Study: Midtown Modernization” plan. We believe a plan to modernize East Midtown can have many advantages and can benefit our city and our community. However, we would like to share several concerns.

Retain residential character. Along Second Avenue, special care must be taken to preserve residential and mixed-use character. One of the graphics from the June meeting shows very clearly the residential character of Second Avenue. Portions of Turtle Bay are incorporated into the study area. The Sutton Place community, at the study area’s edge, will also be affected. Residential character must be preserved.

Identify potential landmarks. The Landmarks Preservation Commission should be consulted prior to any rezoning to assess potential Landmark buildings, prior to rezoning to preserve architectural gems that could be threatened. We do not want to see a building with landmark potential demolished then realize that we have lost an important piece of our city’s architectural legacy.

Examine infrastructure capacity. The presentation emphasized that existing buildings in east midtown could not be replaced with a building of equal square footage, due to current zoning floor area ratios. This implies rezoning to increase capacity, perhaps even beyond that of existing buildings’ floor area. We encourage you to explore the capacity of city services, such as transit, electricity, and other utilities, prior to considering up-zoning.

Identify public space improvements. Any major redevelopment effort should be led by improvements in the public realm. Streets, open space, and subway improvements must be completed *first*, with full public process and full community support. Community District 6 has less open space than any other Manhattan district. This needs to be addressed. We would like to see public space improvements identified and planned in advance of zoning changes.

Promote Class B office space. While modernization is a worthy endeavor, it is important that commercial office space remains available for vital services to sustain the city’s economy. There are start-up companies, attorneys, medical practitioners, and others whose services are critical, and who will not likely consider leasing Class A office space. We do not want to push middle-market office tenants out of east midtown.

Identify sites. Potential sites for large-scale developments should be identified in advance, with pedestrian improvements preceding the development.

Extend the time frame. We are encouraged that the original time frame for ULURP certification, October 2012, has been pushed back to January 2013. However, we believe that even this revised time frame is overly aggressive. This process has to be carefully considered - it takes time to be thorough. We do not believe it should be subject to an unrealistic deadline. We all benefit from a plan fully vetted, and with full community support.

We will continue to partner with you for the development of a carefully considered modernization plan, and thank you again for including us as an integral part of the process.

Sincerely yours,



Terrence E. O'Neal AIA, LEED AP
Chair, CB6 Land Use & Waterfront Committee

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