



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
BOROUGH OF THE BRONX
COMMUNITY BOARD 7



HON. VANESSA L. GIBSON, BOROUGH PRESIDENT YAJAIRA ARIAS, CHAIRPERSON KARLA CABRERA CARRERA, DISTRICT MANAGER

HOUSING, LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Chair:	Yajaira Arias
Meeting Date:	March 11, 2025
Meeting Time:	6:30 pm
Meeting Location:	<u>The Bedford's Community Room</u> 211 East 203rd Street, Bronx, NY 10458
Members In Attendance:	✓ Yajaira Arias ✓ Sandra Erickson ✓ Barbara Stronczer ✓ Kimali Corley ✓ Momodou Sawaneh ✓ Edgar Ramos ✓ Jesús López-Jensen
Minutes done by:	Yajaira Arias

Minutes:

- I. Meeting Guidelines & Code of Conduct read by Yajaira Arias**
- II. Introductions/Attendance - Quorum was met**
- III. Review of Previous Minutes - Seconded by Barabra Stronczer and minutes were approved**
- IV. Follow-up from Previous Month**
- V. New Business**
 - A. The Fordham Building (Old Fordham Library) Update by Santiago Abena - Budget Director for Council Member Feliz:**
 - 1. Library located at 2556 Bainbridge Ave, Bronx, NY 10458
 - 2. Zoning Application Portal Link:
<https://zap.planning.nyc.gov/projects/2020X0493>
 - 3. **DCAS Project Tracking: Four-Year Overview**
 - a) The project has been tracked for four years.
 - b) Suggestions were made and organizations were brought in to utilize the space, but DCAS showed little responsiveness.

THIS MEETING'S MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION, CONTACT US AT:

229-A EAST 204TH STREET ♦ BRONX, NY 10458 ♦ PHONE: (718) 933-5650

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- c) A strongly worded email was sent two weeks ago, escalating a communication issue ongoing since 2021.

4. Funding Loss for Urban Revitalization Project

- a) A city agency's plan to utilize the space for youth engagement and recreation faced setbacks.
- b) Initial funding of \$30 million was withdrawn, thus leaving the project without financial support.
- c) The agency is now responsible for activating the space without the previously allocated resources.

5. City Project Funding Discrepancy

- a) The city council allocated approximately \$5 million for an initial phase of a \$40 million project. However, complete renovations required an estimated \$40-60 million.
- b) A communication breakdown regarding the project's total cost was identified.

6. Space Renovation Funding

- a) There is insufficient funding for a complete renovation of the building.
- b) Available funds are significantly less than the \$60 million needed and the building's current state of disrepair is a major factor.

7. Building Demolition and Redevelopment Plan

- a) DCAS recommended demolishing the building and creating a public-private partnership.
- b) The redevelopment could include housing or community spaces, but the high costs makes local non-profit involvement unlikely. As a result, focus is shifting towards a housing development partnership.

8. Preservation or Demolition of Historic Library

- a) A proposal to potentially demolish the historically valuable library is being considered.



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- b) However, concerns regarding the library's demolition need to be addressed before proceeding and input from the board is being sought before further discussions about the library's future.

9. Project Funding Status and Reallocation

- a) A project initially had \$4 million remaining from a needed \$40 million. However, securing the additional \$35 million was deemed improbable.
- b) The remaining funds were then transferred to the Webster Police Athletic League.

10. Decrepit Building and Development Delays

- a) The sixty-year-old building is in disrepair with heat lacking and a damaged roof.
- b) Delays plague the project due to ownership issues and communication challenges.
- c) City ownership necessitates an RFP process, allowing community input on future development, including the possibility of a community space.

11. Optimizing Property Usage and Ownership

- a) They are exploring home ownership opportunities as a council priority.
- b) Utilizing the RFP process to refine the final product of property development.
- c) Renovating and leasing excess space offers flexibility in choosing community partners, potentially with nominal rent.

12. Long-Term Lease Challenges for Nonprofit Property

- a) Nonprofit tenant replacement is easy for short-term arrangements but long-term leases require a competitive bidding process.
- b) There is loss of control over tenant selection in long-term leases due to highest bidder selection.
- c) The property conditions necessitates moderate rehabilitation and improved space utilization.



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13. DCAS, Cost Savings, and Private Equity

- a) DCAS declined responsibility, citing disinterest.
- b) Cost-saving measures, including eliminating civil service exams, were implemented and private equity investment is anticipated due to budget constraints.

14. Community Development Project Discussion

- a) A collaboration with community-minded individuals is preferred for project input.
- b) Commercial spaces on lower floors could subsidize residential units above, thus increasing affordability.
- c) Concerns were raised about delays and unmet community expectations regarding a specific space.

15. Development Challenges: Demolition Costs and Environmental Concerns

- a) Demolition costs are prohibitively expensive due to location and potential traffic issues.
- b) Existing pollution and air quality problems exacerbate the situation.
- c) The project faces significant constraints regardless of the chosen approach.

16. Building Renovation Timeline and Scope

- a) A 40-60 month renovation time frame is suggested.
- b) Existing building structure can be utilized since it is structurally sound, but discrepancies exist between desired interior changes and the extent of exterior work.

17. High Cost of Structural Renovation

- a) Significant structural work is required.
- b) High liability discourages private investment.



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- c) Cost estimates range from \$40-60 million to potentially \$80 million or more due to the age and existing structure.

18. Site Resolution and Liability Concerns

- a) City ownership is the best solution for the site to avoid insurance and liability issues.
- b) Private entity ownership presents challenges related to sufficient for-profit activities and liability.
- c) Government involvement raised concerns regarding recreational activities and transparency.

19. Liability Concerns Regarding Property Accident

- a) An accident occurred, which resulted in a fall and potential injuries.
- b) Concerns about liability are raised, involving a not-for-profit organization and property management.
- c) Discussion focused on preventing loss of the space and determining liability through evidence and insurance.

20. Dilemma: Preserve or Demolish?

- a) A difficult decision regarding a building's future is presented.
- b) The option is to demolish the building and find a developer.
- c) Concerns about the cost of land and rehabilitation are discussed.

21. Property Sale Decision Process

- a) No suggestions were provided on board actions independent of the office.
- b) Current progress is stalled due to uncertainty about the city's desired outcome.
- c) The city's primary goal is to sell the property, regardless of financial implications.

22. Interagency Space Allocation Challenges

- a) There are communication difficulties with HPD and DYCD regarding city agency involvement in space allocation.



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- b) Unsuccessful attempts to secure space were made, despite outreach to multiple city agencies.
- c) Budgetary constraints and agency responses hindered space acquisition efforts.

23. Securing Annual Funding for Public Projects

- a) A \$5 billion annual capital funding allocation was secured through advocacy partnerships.
- b) A potential increase of \$15-20 billion is discussed, contingent on further collaboration.
- c) Shifting financial responsibility to other agencies is deemed unfeasible.

24. Early-Stage Demolition Proposal

- a) A recent conversation regarding a proposal for building demolition was made.
- b) A decision to consult the community before proceeding was made and the exact square footage of the building is currently unavailable.

25. Community Redevelopment Proposal

- a) A proposal for a community redevelopment involved selling demolished city land to a developer.
- b) The plan included a request for proposal (RFP) to reflect community desires for the project.
- c) Concerns exist about securing a developer with the necessary funding (\$60 million) and experience in similar Bronx projects.

26. Developer Communication Concerns

- a) A pre-selected list of developers for discussions was made with the possibility of including other parties in these discussions.
- b) Previous communication issues highlighted the need for improved transparency and collaboration.

27. Project Update: Developer Search and Brainstorming



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- a) No discussions with developers have occurred regarding the project.
 - b) Familiarity exists with developers from past funded projects and a brainstorming session with experienced individuals is recommended.
- 28. Community Space Evaluation: A Four-Year Retrospective**
- a) A community space secured through the RFP process differs significantly from the initially envisioned space.
 - b) The current space, suitable for meetings, lacks the dynamic activity (e.g., children's programs, tutoring) needed for optimal nonprofit utilization.
 - c) The space's size (approximately 24200 square feet, 41-foot high ceiling) is noted, but its suitability for intended purposes remains under discussion.
- 29. Space Utilization and Redevelopment**
- a) A large space, including a landing and stairs, is described where the area previously functioned as a library in 1985.
 - b) Potential for commercial development on the ground floor is noted, with significant buildable square footage.
- 30. Preserving Historical Facades in Urban Development**
- a) Maintaining historical building elements is favored, even without the landmark status.
 - b) Demolition costs are a factor influencing preservation decisions.
 - c) The area in question is 14,2960,68 square feet with 76 feet of frontage.
- 31. Preliminary Review of Mixed-Use Development Project**
- a) Internal review suggests a mixed-use development, likely residential.
 - b) The proposed structure is 11 to 14 stories for financial viability.
 - c) The location is described as a congested, commercial area near Kingsbridge.
- 32. Project Development Status and Cost Analysis**



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- a) They are waiting for a full breakdown of demolition costs, which are based on projections from 4-5 years ago.
- b) The cost and responsibility for the project are key concerns.
- c) The office hopes to receive a cost breakdown by the end of the week, with a decision expected in a couple of weeks.

33. Preserving Community Spaces: A Funding Challenge

- a) Concerns exist about the future of a community space and its potential loss.
- b) The long-term preservation of the space requires a significant funding campaign.
- c) Securing funding is identified as the primary obstacle to saving space.

34. Property Management and Funding

- a) The property's status as city property is ideal for community access.
- b) The city seeks to divest itself of the property due to financial burdens, estimated at a couple of million dollars annually.
- c) Offsetting costs through rent or sponsorship is a potential solution for maintaining the property.

35. City Lot Status and Funding-Oliver's Place

- a) Concerns were raised regarding the continuous funding for building maintenance.
- b) Discussions were made about the current status of a city lot and lack of updates.
- c) There was a mention of a meeting with the council member last year without subsequent communication.

36. Funding Partnership and Legal Delays

- a) Materials were sent to Joe from Bridge Arts to establish a groundwork for future funding.



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- b) A follow-up with Anthony Perez, Department of Transportation is underway regarding the legal department's involvement.
 - c) Significant delays were encountered in obtaining a maintenance agreement, which took 16 months due to legal processes.
- 37. Property Development Requirements**
- a) A for-profit entity needs to fulfill specific requirements.
 - b) Necessary steps include paperwork confirmation and filing for clarification.
 - c) To secure capital funding and make property changes, a 5-year lease, 3 years of contracts with New York City, and a \$50,000 evaluation are needed.
- 38. Securing Funding and Partnerships for a Building Project**
- a) Materials are provided to facilitate expense funding and city contracts.
 - b) Incorporation as a nonprofit is being pursued to meet requirements and collaboration with the horticulture society is being explored for project management expertise.
- 39. Fordham Plaza Cleanup Challenges**
- a) Fordham plaza cleanup is being hampered by significant issues including needles and discarded appliances.
 - b) Sanitation services are currently constrained due to new commercial containerization regulations.
 - c) Ongoing communication with the Department of Transportation (DOT) and Community Board 6 regarding these problems is in progress.
- 40. Project Update and Environmental Concerns**
- a) A progress update was requested on a project and discussion involved the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Brownfield cleanup program.



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b) Concerns were raised regarding a large area, possibly over 1000 feet, and its environmental impact.

41. Property Ownership Change and Remediation

a) Significant remediation work is needed due to unclean conditions and improper tagging.

b) Removal of materials from the ground is required.

c) A property ownership change occurred approximately one year prior, with the manager's office located on West 231st Street.

VI. Next Meeting Date: April 8, 2025

VII. Discussion on Next Agenda - TBA

VIII. Adjournment - Meeting is adjourned.