



Robert Rodriguez
Chair

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**Full Board Meeting
Community Board 11
La Guardia House
307 E. 116th Street
March 31st, 2008**

Presentation(s):

Green Space Developments – Diego Ricalde & Marjorie Torres

Representatives from Green Space Developments (GSD) came before the board to discuss their organization and how they could play a role in the E. 125th Street Development and assist with structuring an East Harlem Local Development Corporation.

GSD amasses capital funds from foundations and banks (through the Community Reinvestment Act) and brings it to communities. In addition, they are an agency that is able to bring their own equity. They then take all the various money from foundations, banks, low interest grants/loans and reinvest it in the community.

They have gone in front of the E. 125th Street Taskforce to present their model to them and explain how it could work in conjunction with the project. Their goal would be to supplement the community ownership portion of the project and not take away from the local partners already involved. They stated that they would bring a specific expertise in major development projects in addition to equity. They also provide low cost capital to assist the local community in making the project work. As an added point they also stated that all development that they work on is environmentally friendly, which brings more long term savings.

Once the presentation was completed, board members had a number of questions. Members were concerned with the lack of web presence the company had. GSD responded that they work under an umbrella organization and therefore their web presence is limited, however it is something they are working on. Board members also questioned why this item was deemed to be so important that a special meeting had to be held. Chairman Rodriguez responded that this could potentially be part of the E. 125th Street development and that since everything else is moving quickly it was beneficial for the board to see this presentation immediately.

Questions were raised as to what exact areas of the E. 125th Street development GSD would be interested in. GSD stated that they would specifically assist with the cultural component, affordable housing and retail. Garry Anthony Johnson raised some more questions about the partnership that could be forged. He also stated his disappointment with the process as now that a group like GSD has been presented it would have been possible for smaller local developers to take part in this project.

Board members and representatives from Operation Fightback then began to question GSD and their role in an LDC. They stated that they would just assist with the organization of the LDC but explained that they would hold no ownership position or serve on the Board of Directors and that the LDC would truly be the communities. Sergio Valentin, Operation Fightback, gave some context to the issue of LDC creation and asked that his organization be given a chance to complete the process which they began. He was informed that nobody was trying to minimize their role by using GSD but rather that they could be used in a complementary role.

East 125th Street Development

Chairman Rodriguez began the discussion by giving a summary of the process. He stated that a taskforce was formed due to the community's outrage with the "Uptown NY" project. Since that time the taskforce has been able to work in conjunction with EDC to develop an RFP that includes a substantial affordable housing component as well as other community benefits and the requirement for local partners and ownership.

The RFP yielded proposals from 7 different development teams. That list has since been brought down to three. The taskforce was in the midst of reviewing those last three development teams when they were told that EDC would be certifying the project without one development team selected. When the taskforce was told about this plan they immediately drafted a letter expressing their disagreement. The letter was signed by the majority of the taskforce members, including the Borough President and the Chair of Manhattan Community Board 11.

The Chairman expressed his disappointment that the application was certified on March 24th, 2008 and felt that this would now compromise the intended goal of making this process a true model of community development. He also stated that no formal notice of their intent to certify was made available until the last taskforce meeting. He also expressed his concern with this fairly untested process and was discouraged that this would now make getting a signed community benefits agreement very difficult.

The taskforce has stated that they want the ULURP certification withdrawn, an opportunity to select a final development team and negotiations for a CBA to begin before certification. This is something the Chairman is in agreement with.

Ellie Sanchez, member of the E. 125th Street Taskforce, stated that because the letter that was sent from the taskforce was not signed by all members and specifically local Councilmember Mark-Viverito, its value was compromised. Lee Chong added that she thought it was unfortunate that the Council Member did not sign the letter and stated that the community now has to hold her accountable.

Board member Rafael Merino then stated that this community has a history of being ignored in these processes and that it has been a fault of the leadership. He suggested that now was an opportunity to hold our Elected Officials accountable and let them negotiate with the City. Garry Anthony Johnson added that this community is treated this way because it is made up of minorities. He argued that the process was flawed from the beginning and that noise needs to be made now.

A local property and business owner, Damon Bae, stated that he hoped the Community Board would be looking out for the existing building owners and would work towards ensuring that eminent domain was not used.

Other community members expressed their outrage that the taskforce and the community's right to negotiate this deal had been taken away. Marion Bell expressed her deep concern about whether a CBA would be able to be created and suggested that the board look towards legal grounds for appeal of the decision. She also suggested that the board start reaching out to other council members to get support on this issue. Brunilda Vega suggested that before we start reaching out to other council members that we focus on our local council member.

Agnes Rivera, Community Voices Heard, expressed her anger that the community was not invited into this process earlier. As an affordable housing advocate for years she was outraged that this was the first she was hearing about this and encouraged the board to start organizing immediately.

For clarity, Rafael Merino stated that all these conversations were not new and that a lot of this information should have been disseminated to the board and the community a long time ago. At this remark, George Figueroa asked why no CBA negotiations had begun and why the board and the community didn't have more information. Rafael Merino stated that this was a question that should be addressed to the E. 125th Street Taskforce and its Chair, Robert Rodriguez.

Marina Ortiz then added that to her knowledge, every time EDC wanted to come before the board they were told not to attend. She also asked why EDC was not at this meeting in order to clarify the situation. In addition she also demanded to see the petition that was created prior to this meeting.

Petitions addressed to Council Member Mark-Viverito, and opposing the EDC decision, were distributed to all members in attendance. Questions regarding the usage of Community Board 11 funds to provide postage for the petition were raised. In response Marion Bell made a motion to approve the usage of Community Board 11 funds to provide postage to the petitions. The motion was seconded by I. Miranda and approved (3 against – J. Goldbloom, R. Merino, M. Ortiz).

A motion to ask EDC to withdraw the ULURP certification was then made by I. Miranda and seconded by B. Vega. The motion was approved (1 against – D. Perez).

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by D. Collier and seconded by I. Miranda and approved unanimously.

Action Items:

1. Marion Bell made a motion to approve the usage of Community Board 11 funds to provide postage to the petitions. The motion was seconded by I. Miranda and approved (3 against – J. Goldbloom, R. Merino, M. Ortiz).
2. A motion to ask EDC to withdraw the ULURP certification was then made by I. Miranda and seconded by B. Vega. The motion was approved (1 against – D. Perez).