



Diane Collier
Chair

Angel D. Mescain
District Manager

COMMUNITY BOARD ELEVEN

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN
1664 PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10035
TEL: (212) 831-8929/30
FAX: (212) 369-3571
www.cb11m.org

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Denise J. Pisani
Senior Project Manager
Mayor's Office of Sustainability
253 Broadway – 14th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Ms. Pisani,

The following are Community Board 1's comments on the Draft Scope of Work for the 126th Street Bus Depot Project:

The proposed project at East 126th Street and 2nd Avenue is of the potential size and scope to have numerous significant effects on the District 11 and East Harlem. These are effects associated with the creation of dwelling units, destination and local retail, community facility, additional bulk, and various economic impacts associated with all of the foregoing.

Community Board 11 and its members express sincere concern about the potentially deleterious impacts of this project, and respectfully request that they be addressed:

1. The Project Description is wholly inadequate for the consideration of the Community Board. The cultural significance of this site; the creation, quantity, level of affordability, permanence or duration of affordability of housing created by the Project; the type, quantity, composition, and specific makeup of commercial and retail space, to include its eventual use; the mass, bulk, height, shadow potential, and other impacts of the project are of crucial importance and are not addressed by the Project Description. Without detail on the proposed project, the Board cannot evaluate the impacts of this project. Further, the Project Description insufficiently recognizes the sanctity of the burial ground and must preserve and pay homage to indigenous peoples and African American people who stewarded this land in past generations and whose spiritual preservation was desecrated by previous development on this site. The Board recommends that 50% of the total units should be permanently affordable and tied to the deed; 50% of those units must have community preference within the CB11 catchment zone and must be enforced; affordability should be maintained within MIH and the district's needs in regards to the lowest income qualifications; and the developer is required to establish a fund to keep

those apartments in the surrounding area affordable (M1 Zone: 125th– 126th Street, 1st– 2nd Avenue).

2. With respect to the memorial, the Board incorporates the comment of the Harlem African Burial Ground Task Force.
3. The City Environmental Quality Review method for assessing impact on schools is not successful in East Harlem. It estimates the number of children in a household based on borough-wide averages. Because of the differing makeup of households in East Harlem as compared to other parts of Manhattan, such as Midtown and the Financial District, this estimate dramatically undercounts the number of children that will likely end up attending public schools in Community School District 5. Also, it is worth noting that while the proposed project is in CB 11, most of CB 11 is in CSD 4 while this project is in CSD 5. We ask that that this review be conducted utilizing data from the NYC Administration for Children's Services that more accurately reflect the average children per household or per dwelling unit bedroom than the borough standard as the current proposal will underestimate the number of school children and result in insufficient mitigation.
4. Development is rapidly underway in East Harlem, and a forthcoming up-zoning in the neighborhood is likely to significantly accelerate this trend. Assessing the impact of this project in a vacuum renders it impossible to determine the impact of the proposal. This year, hundreds of dwelling units have already been found to have no effect, rendering an EAS sufficient for those projects. There are thousands of additional dwelling units proposed in the adjacent blocks, as well as a new Department of Sanitation consolidated garage facility, and this is a small fraction of development underway in the proximate area. We object to the review of this project without consideration of other proposed or approved projects in the Community District.
5. The indirect residential displacement potentially caused by this development must be comprehensively studied. The Reasonable Worst Case Development Scenario provided by NYC EDC provides for over 700 dwelling units and over 300,000 square feet of commercial space, along with community facility and 300 parking spaces. Since it only contemplates 50% of those dwelling units as affordable, and the income cap is only specified as low as 80% AMI, this project could have a significant economic impact on the neighborhood. Since 80% AMI for a family of three is still more than double the median income of the Community District, CB 11 requests a more complete study of the impact on housing prices and affordability.

6. With respect to transit and transportation, the EAS aptly notes that the project is well-connected to transit. However, the subway lines (No. 4, 5, and 6) closest to the project are already significantly beyond capacity at peak times and suffer from increasing delays due to crowding. Further, the EAS states that the proposed project would not generate more than 50 bus person-trips on any one line in one direction, therefore abrogating the need for a bus line haul analysis. However, though there are multiple bus lines serving the area of the project, some are more likely to suffer from peak ridership than others, rendering such a calculation flawed.
7. The development site has been determined to be the site of the Harlem African Burial Ground. The Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation recommended further study and fieldwork, and, given the historical importance and sensitivity associated with the site, we request that this need be more fully addressed during the EIS.
8. In light of the large scale of this development, we request a careful study of shadows and alternate development scenarios that examine urban design guidelines that limit height, including at the street face.
9. The RWCDs would likely obscure views and access toward the Harlem and East Rivers and Queens, as well as the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge. We request a study of the impact on visual resources including with studies of additional wayfinding.
10. With respect to natural resources, the EIS must incorporate the findings of the [Resiliency Study] in progress by the New York City Parks Department, especially with respect to wetlands and waterfront resiliency above 125th Street, at least as far as 135th Street.
11. We request an alternative development scenario that maps the African Burial Ground footprint as parkland, removing it from the FAR of the project. Open space and natural resources are a crucial amenity to our community that has been insufficiently addressed by the draft EAS.
12. The Board requests that the EIS incorporate the impact of workforce changes, and that the project maximize local workforce participation, job training and placement associated with the project--both construction and post construction business--and economic development for the community as part of the means and methods of construction to be incorporated into the RFP, in this community which has been historically underserved.
13. The Board recommends that the results of the geological study be incorporated into the EIS.

14. The Board reiterates the need to assess water and sewerage capacity to ensure continued access to clean water.
15. The Board asks that the EIS examine the noise impacts of the proposed buildings of the development on the Harlem African Burial Ground memorial to be constructed.
16. With respect to construction and public health, the Board emphasizes the importance of evaluating the potential for additional rodent and other pest population problems to be caused, especially given the waterfront location.

If your staff has any further questions, please contact our District Manager, Angel Mescaín, at 212-831-8929.

Sincerely,



Diane Collier
Chair
Community Board 11