

CWG Draft Minutes, 2.1.2021, 6:30pm via Zoom

Members present:

Art Against Displacement (Vanessa Thill); Bowery Alliance of Neighbors (Mitchell Grubler); Chinese Staff and Workers Association (Zishun Ning); Citygroup (Michael Cohen, Violette de la Salle); Downtown Independent Democrats (Tom LaGatta); East River Park Action (Fannie Ip); Lower East Side Preservation Initiative (Richard Moses, Deborah Wye); National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (Steph Kranes, Briar Winters); Sixth Street Community Center (Howard Brandstein) Youth Against Displacement (Caitlin Kelmar)

Also present:

Harry Bubbins (Village Preservation); Rob Hollander (Lower East Side Residents for Responsible Development); Leslie L (friend); Jan Lee (friend); April Li (Two Bridges); Kaiyu Li (UIC); Jay Sanders (Artist's Space); Joanna W (friend); Susan Yung (artist);

Meeting called to order 6:35pm, Briar Winters facilitating

January Draft Minutes approved without objection.

Agenda:

LESON lawsuit

East River Park Preservation (Track House)

Meeting with Grand Street Dems

Update on NoHo/SoHo rezoning

Campaigns

Citygroup CWG Visualization Project

NYCHA

Agenda approved without objection.

LESON Lawsuit

Steph Kranes (Notetaker: Vanessa): We had our court case on the 27th of January, the hearing on the appeal of the Lower East Side Organized Neighbor's victory against the towers. In the lower court, we won, securing a temporary injunction. The developers and the city government subsequently appealed that victory. Prior to the hearing we had a positive virtual rally with speakers from across the city.

The basis of our lawsuit is that the developers had to prove they weren't violating the LSRD with written findings that they weren't going to block air, sunlight, or harm the character of the community. The towers are obviously going to do that at 1,000 feet, and they would overburden infrastructure and cause displacement. We weren't able to argue on that point during the hearing because the judges require direct response to their questions in order. The main question related to the statement the lower court had made when they issued the

injunction--that the developers can't change the Site Plan. The Site Plan in Two Bridges approved in 1972 was very explicit- developments in this area will not block air and light. The developers had to submit a new Site Plan showing they wouldn't violate those rules. The appellate judges were questioning the validity of that argument. Our lawyer had to reply to that directly. It's not bad, because the Site Plan is a lynchpin of our case. The fact that you can't modify the site plan without explicit permission, without submitting findings showing you won't harm the neighborhood. We can request an appeal if the ruling is not in our favor.

East River Park Track House Preservation

Deborah Wye: the City plans to demolish the track house and tennis center comfort station near the waterfront, buildings have unique design and history; LESPI applied to NYS Preservation office to restore the structures; received approval from CB3 and support from BP Brewer and other groups to restore instead of demolish. The replacement buildings would have the homogenous look of other new comfort stations in nyc [and don't seem necessary for function]. [LESPI submitted restoration plans].

Briar Winters: CWG would definitely support the [restoration]. Is that what you're looking for?

Richard Moses: Yes. The restoration would not interfere with the City's closure of East River Park, and would be much greener. Would like CWG's support.

Briar Winters: What are the next steps?

Richard Moses: Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is overseeing. We have the support of BP and CB3, we'd like support from as many community groups as possible.

Vanessa Thill: How does this relate to the East River Park closure?

Richard Moses: Regardless of whether the park is raised 8-10ft [as part of the closure] this restoration can go forward.

Briar Winters: Should we take a vote to support?

Zishun Ning: What would it entail?

Michael Robinson Cohen: I would want to know if LESPI is standing with the groups opposing the Park's closure.

Richard Moses: It's sort of outside the scope of what we're doing, we see the closure as a flood proofing initiative so we haven't taken a position.

Fannie Ip: We support the preservation, regardless of what happens with the park the buildings will be saved.

Mitchell Grubler: We should take a vote.

Rob Hollander: We operate with consensus so maybe it would be helpful to ask if there are any objections to signing on.

Briar Winters: What does it mean for CWG to be in support?

Richard Moses: It would be great to have a letter of support from Chinatown Working Group.

Briar Winters: Is anyone in opposition?

Rob Hollander: If we write a letter it should include a statement that if restoration does not interfere with reconstruction of the park then we approve, but if it does interfere it would pit us against NYCHA residents who want resiliency.

Fannie Ip: Richard, at the last CB3 meeting they wanted you to reach out to NYCHA residents?

Richard Moses: We're working on covering a broader swath of residents.

Briar Winters: In the interest of time let's revisit this at a later point.

Grand Street Democrats Meeting

Steph Kranes: We're meeting with neighbors and the Grand Street Dems in the Seward Park Coops who support the CWG Plan and hosted their neighbors in an info session last year.

Fannie Ip: The Grand Street Dems want to endorse the CWG.

Update on NoHo/SoHo rezoning

Harry Bubbins: Our community plan opposes the City's plan and we are trying to pass it as an alternative to what the Mayor is doing.

Campaigns

Zishun Ning: We encourage people to support Marte's campaign as he supports the CWG Plan.

Briar Winters: And there's a suggestion to create a questionnaire [about CWG].

Citygroup's CWG Visualization Project

Michael Robinson Cohen: We have images of the CWG visualization project but we can email them so people can start to think about how to use the images to advocate for the Plan.

Briar Winters: Maybe a synopsis for now in the interest of time. Let's also welcome our new member, Downtown Independent Democrats (DID).

Michael Robinson Cohen: A lot of us are architects so it's great to be able to work on a project that supports the Plan; we've been working on translating zoning into images that would show what the neighborhood would look like if the Plan is passed, and what it would look like under the existing zoning without the protection. We selected one or two sites within each subdistrict of the plan, specifically sites that are vulnerable without the Plan.

NYCHA Infill

Briar Winters: NYCHA is not protected from Infill, whereas CWG protects NYCHA by requiring 100% affordable housing on NYCHA.

Vanessa Thill: I attended a Residents to Preserve Public Housing meeting, there are a lot of groups and perspectives but they're opposing the City's Blueprint plan that is promoting Infill/market rate housing on NYCHA land. I'm wondering how we can support this effort. There's a video that's helpful.

Briar Winters: It would be good to build a strategy around this. We've done a lot of outreach in NYCHA around CWG and it would be good to help connect people in NYCHA more to CWG to show how the Plan protects them.

Tom LaGatta: The video is great. Yuh-Line Niou has been opposing Blueprint.

Briar Winters: Yuh-Line has not been as strong an advocate of CWG as we've wanted her to be, maybe now is a chance to renew that possibility and reach out again, especially as CWG grows we have more power and influence over these things.

Respectively submitted

Steph Kranes

Sec'y pro tem