



Meeting Notes

Gravesend and Bensonhurst Planning Committee Meeting #3

August 5, 2014, 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Block Institute, 376 Bay 44th St, Brooklyn, NY 11214

Attendance:

Community Reconstruction (CR) Planning Committee Members: Ligia Guallpa, Executive Director, Worker's Justice Project (WJP); Marnee Elias-Pavia, District Manager, Community Board 11; Scott Barkin, Executive Director, Block Institute; Mel Wolfson, Homeowner; Pamela Pettyjohn, Coney Island Beautification Project; Peter Consolo, Homeowner.

NY State Representatives: Alex Zablocki, NYC Regional Lead, Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR); Chris Gorman, Community Planner GOSR.

Firm Representatives: Eric Fang, Perkins Eastman Architects (PEA); Ayo Yusuf, PEA; Jennifer Gonzalez, Louis Berger Group (LBG); Noah Levine, BFJ Planning (BFJ).

Guests: Shelia Boyd, Representative from NYS Senator Diane Savino

The 3rd Committee Meeting of the Gravesend/Bensonhurst NY Rising Community Reconstruction (NYRCR) Community began at approximately 6:05 p.m. Eric Fang (PEA) began the presentation with a summary of what we've learned since the previous meeting. The consultant team then presented the vision statement shaped by the Planning Committee. The majority of the meeting involved a discussion of the needs and opportunities for the six Recovery Support Functions as described in the notes below. Following the discussion, the Planning Committee set dates for the upcoming public engagement event and the next Planning Committee meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m. The following was noted:

Agenda Item: **Agenda and summary of what we learned from last meeting**

Presenter: **Eric Fang**

Summary of Discussion:

- Where we are in the process (2 month look ahead).
- Summary of 1st Public Engagement Event.
- Summary of meeting with NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and anticipated meetings with other agencies.
- Summary of existing and proposed projects

Discussion/Consensus:

- Preliminary vision statement was presented to Planning Committee
- Committee was in support of the vision statement with the following two (2) changes:
 - Remove “excellent” in front of transportation
 - Add the phrase “We will work in a *unified fashion...*” to the beginning of last sentence.

Summary of Discussion:

Discussion of needs and opportunities for the six (6) Recovery Support Functions: Community Planning and Capacity Building, Economic Development, Health and Social Services, Housing, Infrastructure, and Natural and Cultural Services.

Discussion/Consensus:

Economic Development

- General Comments
 - Shore Parkway Economic Corridor between Bay Parkway and 26th Avenue should be listed as an economic asset
 - Local businesses along Shore parkway were closed (HSBC Bank)
- Shore Parkway Economic Corridor
 - Transportation/Shore Parkway Needs and Opportunities
 - *Need:* The Shore Parkway Economic corridor has bad transportation access. Also, better transportation access along Cropsey and Waterfront is needed, especially after Sandy when there was no transportation (other than the B)
 - *Need:* There has been significant residential development as well as the BJs near completion which will lead to congestion. Additional problems include a singular access road, limited parking (on-street parking available on Shore Parkway), and competing traffic.
 - *Need:* Shore Parkway is a one-way street with only one entrance (Bay Parkway) and one exit. There is a bus route (B6) on Shore Parkway, but express service is a need.
 - *Opportunity:* Major intervention: suggestion was made to move the entrance of the Belt Parkway east from Bay Parkway, so that the Belt Parkway can be accessed in both directions (from Caesar’s Bay and BJ’s).
 - *Opportunity:* Belt Parkway / Shore Parkway - improve existing entrance to Belt Parkway – west, so vehicular traffic towards Verrazano is not awkward and unsafe
 - *Opportunity:* Introduction of a Ferry Service that would bring shoppers to area; Incentivize economic development to do what Ikea did in Red Hook (BJs)
 - *Opportunity:* Expanded transit opportunity (potentially express bus route). There could be partnerships with existing big box retail stores.

Infrastructure

- General Comments
 - Sandy impacts to subway lines: N was flooded, D had trees all over it, B was the only subway running after Sandy but was extremely congested.
- Communications network:
 - Consultant team to research fiberoptics availability, wi-fi hot spots, phone service providers (digital vs. analog)
 - Underground phone lines flood during regular heavy rains
 - Lack of investment in the infrastructure in the area, copper wires, few fiberoptics
 - Water goes into sewer and floods manholes, which flood phone lines
 - Many people only have cell phones, can't rely on them without power, spotty cell phone service after the storm
 - Gravesend is mostly overhead wires with large mature trees
 - Bath Beach - Con Edison cut the power on Monday and resumed Saturday afternoon
 - Bensonhurst never lost power
 - Cropsey Ave lost power, Sons of Italy without power (raised utilities when power was restored)
 - Power was restored without people being informed, led to damage especially in flooded basements.
 - Communication Needs:
 - Hardening overhead wires / telecommunications network
 - Reliable ways to communicate
 - Harden wireless systems
 - Reliable power systems
 - Communication Opportunities
 - Pruning trees regularly will reduce hazard of branches falling on lines.
 - Work with Verizon to provide mandatory backup batteries; fiberoptics don't have a backup battery therefore customers may not have access to 911 if the fios goes out.
 - Charging stations, solar
 - Improve natural gas connections and generators for resiliency of telecommunications and power networks
 - Solar/microgrid at Coney Island Hospital
- Water Drainage & Sewer Network
 - General information on sewer backups
 - Sewer backups happened near Cropsey Ave
 - Backups could be localized, one factor is dimension of pipe in the street, could be that pumping station wasn't operational, could have been sewer backup from Owl's Head Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - Low lying areas were effected the most
 - Water came up from the ground during sandy. Geysers at 26th Ave and Cropsey Ave. The water receded very quickly
 - Sewer Needs and Opportunities
 - Need: prevent sewer backups in homes
Opportunity: backflow preventer program
 - Need: prevent storm sewer backups in roadways
Opportunity: check valve system (need to coordinate with NYC DEP tide gate study – two outfalls recommended for further study?)
 - Coastal Needs and Opportunities
 - *Need:* lower water table to prevent sink holes

Community Planning and Capacity Building

- General information:
 - Lack of organizational and social infrastructure to ensure adequate communication between homeowners and city agencies
 - Gravesend was excluded from many recovery programs
 - NYC didn't identify the Community as needing help because they couldn't communicate with the City and vice versa
 - Misinformation was an issue
 - Residents ignored reverse 311 that was intended to alert people evacuate
 - Bensonhurst-Bay Ridge CERT was out with Inspectors, trying to get information to OEM
 - 311 was down, 911 was down, Community couldn't get info back to OEM
 - CERT members were effected themselves and were not able to provide full attention to emergency response duties.
- Needs and Opportunities
 - *Need:* Better communication from City agencies for recovery (didn't know where water and food was).
Opportunity: digital tool to map out food banks & supply store locations.
 - *Need:* More CERT classes locally
Opportunity: working with OEM to expand Community Disaster Network

Health and Social Services

- Needs and Opportunities
 - Connectivity is always an issue during storms,
 - *Need:* More reliable ways to communicate, harden communication networks
 - *Opportunity:* Requirement to have backup power with service providers
 - *Opportunity:* charging stations

Agenda Item: **Scheduling - Upcoming Meetings**

Presenter: **Eric Fang (PEA)**

Summary of Discussion:

- The Committee agreed to hold the 2nd Public Engagement Event on Tuesday, September 16th. Location and Time TBD.
- The Committee agreed to hold the 4th Planning Committee Meeting on Wednesday, September 3 @ 6:00. Location TBD.

Research institutional locations to hold public meeting Ayo/Noah 8/14/14

Discuss format/outreach and location with Co-chairs Alex/Ayo/Noah/Eric 8/14/14

Confirm Block Institute as location for 4th Planning
Committee meeting with Scott Barkin