

Chair's Report January 16, 2020 General Board Meeting

Investing in Our Community Partners

Happy 2020! As the Board begins the new calendar year, we are still very much in the middle of our normal calendar, which runs from September through June. I want to take a moment to thank all of the Board Members and our office staff who continued their work on behalf of our community through the holidays.

While we are eagerly anticipating City agencies' feedback on our budget priorities submitted in the fall, many of the committees have been focused on important strategic initiatives that will have lasting impacts on the future of our community. From reimagining how we can build partnerships between our district's schools and the institutions of higher education in our neighborhood to working to better equip members of our community returning from incarceration for success to investing in our local artists, much of what we as a community board can accomplish stems from our ability to bring different community partners and stakeholders together to find creative solutions to complex problems.

A number of those problems-- creating elevator access to subway stations, better-resourcing our schools, assisting businesses on 12th Avenue, and rezoning Morningside Heights to name but a few-- will likely take much creativity and time from our committee members and the public. I look forward to seeing how much progress we can make between now and June.

Support for Our Small Businesses on 12th Avenue

Since the EDC's street redesign of 12th Avenue and W 125th Street began in 2015, businesses that were displaced from Broadway by Columbia's Manhattanville expansion and moved to 12th Avenue have suffered greatly from a loss in business due to inadequate parking. We are working diligently with EDC, DOT, and the NYPD to attempt to mitigate these issues by restoring parking spaces, increasing foot traffic by adding continuous sidewalks along 12th Avenue, and exploring addition opportunities for the businesses, including Harlem's Floridita Restaurant, Dinosaur Barbecue, and 1-2-3 Bar, among others. Small businesses are a vital part of our community because of the employment opportunities, investment in community groups, and multiplier effects they create as more of our consumer dollars are kept local, rather than going to corporate shareholders of big businesses. Community Board 9 is committed to helping these businesses in our community succeed and thrive.

Jewish Theological Seminary Announces Contribution to Community Benefits Fund, \$1 million In-House Investment in Community Programming

Jewish Theological Seminary announced this week that it would be contributing \$250,000 over 5 years to the Morningside Heights community benefit fund at the New York Community Trust created by the Morningside Heights Community Coalition. This fund invests in projects and services to improve services in Morningside Heights and to preserve the neighborhood as a vibrant, diverse, and affordable neighborhood. JTS will also administer an in-house, \$1 million series of programs for the community, including library access and events. This comes on the

heels of JTS 21st Century Campus project, in which it sold buildings and air rights for over \$100 million and invested in a new library and other facilities upgrades. Community Board 9 looks forward to working with JTS to ensure the success of its community endeavors.

Union Theological Seminary to Break Ground on New Tower, Begin Funding Community Benefits Agreement

Union Theological Seminary has begun demolition on buildings on the northwest corner of its campus and will shortly break ground on its 400 foot tower as part of its Campus Renewal project. The base of the tower will contain academic space and faculty housing, while the upper part of the tower will be luxury condos. Proceeds from the development will go to repair and renovate the existing campus, which faces severe maintenance issues.

As part of the program, UTS committed to providing \$5 million in community benefit funds. \$700,000 will go to anti-displacement efforts for tenant organizing and legal representation in the immediate surrounding area to be carried out by P.A.'L.A.N.T.E. Harlem, and \$400,000 will go to the Morningside Heights community benefit fund at the New York Community Trust created by the Morningside Heights Community Coalition. This fund invests in projects and services to improve services in Morningside Heights and to preserve the neighborhood as a vibrant, diverse, and affordable neighborhood. The remaining \$3.9 million will be used in-house by UTS for programming and student support for issues around homelessness. Community Board 9 looks forward to working with UTS to ensure the success of its community endeavors. We will also be working with UTS to ensure that disruptions from construction are kept to a minimum and that we connect them with local contractors to help meet their voluntary minority, women, and locally-owned business contracting goals.

Follow-up on the Investigation in the Tessa Majors Case

Given the board's concerns around the investigation into the youth who are suspects in the Tessa Majors homicide case, the board is seeking additional information and community engagement from the NYPD, the Manhattan District Attorney's Office, and the Office of Corporation Counsel. Following Detective Harper's update tonight, we plan to discuss with the aforementioned offices ways to ensure that the community is not retraumatized as they continue their investigation and prosecution. I will be keeping the board updated on these efforts as they progress.

Census Recruitment is Still Happening!

Census 2020 is still hiring! Their goal for Manhattan is to have 10,000-15,000 people, as there is at least one census tract in every Community District that is considered "hard to count," with low response rates on previous counts. Community Board 9 held a Census Recruitment Day in partnership with Columbia University and the West Harlem Development Corporation, and we had over 20 people stop through the CB9 office alone to apply for census jobs. If you know of anyone who is interested in working for the Census next year, please send them to the Community Board office 15 16-18 Old Broadway for additional information on how to apply!

New York Post Features Homeless Encampment in MCB9

Unfortunately, the New York Post chose to feature a homeless encampment at W 138th Street and 12th Avenue in its January 1st edition. The article notably lacked any compassion for the individuals who lack shelter and have to sleep outside under the Riverside Drive overpass at the intersection. However, it appears that the article drove an interagency task force of DHS, Parks, Sanitation, and the NYPD to conduct another cleaning operation at the site.

This encampment, along with several others in the neighborhood around St. Nicholas Park, Riverside Park, and Jacob Schiff Park, remain persistent symptoms of the underlying housing crisis in our city. A lack of affordable housing, safe shelters, and adequate mental health resources means that our community is facing the very real problem of persistent street homelessness and its accompanying issues in the most severe way in years. This must continue to motivate our fights for additional supportive housing for the homeless and adequate mental health resources. In the short-term, the board is coordinating with DHS in an attempt to have a dedicated caseworker assigned to each existing encampment to build relationships with the individuals there and hopefully connect them with shelter options that meet their individual needs. Manhattan Borough President's 2nd Public Hearing on Religious Facilities on Tuesday, Jan 14th 6-8pm Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer is holding the second public hearing of the Religious Facilities Task Force on Tuesday, January 14th from 6-8pm at Harlem Hospital. While this is during CB9's Housing, Zoning, and Land Use Committee Meeting, I strongly encourage board members to attend. Our churches and other religious institutions have found themselves with valuable real estate and, frequently, shrinking congregations, putting pressure on them to sell or otherwise redevelop their land. It is very important that Harlem's voices be heard at this uptown public hearing.

Community Board Applications Are Now Open, Due February 14

As a reminder, Community Board applications are still open! If you are a Board Member on the 2018-2020 cycle, please be sure to submit your reapplication to the Manhattan Borough President's Office by going to www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov/cbapplication/. Paper applications can be requested individually from the office for those unable to apply online. Please also be sure to encourage others you know who may have the time, dedication, and interest to serve their local communities to apply! Applications are due by Friday, February 14th.

Yours in service,



Barry Weinberg