

CB9M Landmarks Preservation & Parks Committee Minutes and Updates

Wednesday, February 1, 2023

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting, Called to Order at 6:40pm

Co-Chairs: Hon. Heather Jason and Hon. Jonathan Thomas

Committee Members Present: Hon. Patricia Caldwell, Hon. Dan Cohen, Hon. Heather Jason, Hon. Carolina Ramirez, Hon. Jonathan Thomas, Hon. Hugo Torres-Fetsco, and Hon. Liz Waytkus.

Absent Committee Members: Hon. Kelsy Bettis and Hon. Michael Palma

Community Members and Park Representatives Present:

Leslie Wright (Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park), Mallory Craig (The Hort, DFRSP Greenhouse), Matt Genrich (NYC Parks), Wesley Hamilton (Riverside Park), Stephanie Caban (Riverside Park Outreach Coordinator), Karen Asner (Friends of St. Nicholas Park), Brad Taylor (Friends of Morningside Park), Kim Johnson (St. Nicholas Block Association), Garry Johnson and Michael Preston (Harlem Gateway Waterfront Initiative and Paradise Express Ferry LLC) (Doug Blomberg, Adrienne Thomas, Moire Davis (Heritage Health & Housing, Inc.), Louis Bailey (We Act for Environmental Justice), Shannon Richards (142nd Dog Run), Ada Uribe (Morningside Park Café Kiosk), Sandra Gale, Solima Smith, Luka, McLean, Nina Bernstein, Cheree Dillon (Community Gardener), Cheryl Rogers, .

MCB9 Members and Staff: Eutha Prince, Madison Ayala, Victor Edwards and others.

New Business: NYC Parks and Historic Harlem Parks Updates & Announcements

- **Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park:**
 - [Riverbank State Park \(Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park\)](#)
 - [Riverbank State Park | New York NY | Facebook](#)
 - **Capital Project:** Renovating the 30-year-old locker room facilities in both the athletics and aquatics centers with completion in spring 2023. The aquatic locker rooms and reception area will start in May. Trailers with portable bathrooms and showers will be used. The facility will remain open.
 - **Capital Project:** Resurfacing the outdoor track and replacing the turf field project set to start in February 2023 and end by June 2023. It will be offline during renovations.
 - **Capital Project:** Installing a new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system for the park's performing arts center. The project will start February 2023 and the anticipated completion is June 2023. If there are any delays, the contractor must provide temporary service.

- **Proposed Capital Project:** amphitheater, life guard and first aid stations, entrances, roof replacement, tile facades, elevator towers, stair towers, and offices between spring 2023 and summer 2024.
 - **Movie night on the Hudson** every Friday in February for **Black History month at 6pm.** Email DFRBSPCulturalD@parks.ny.gov or call 212-694-3634. 2/3: Black Panther, 2/10: Selma, 2/17: Creed, 2/24: The Great Debaters inside. **Every Saturday at 5pm will feature Documentary Screenings.** 2/4: Soundtrack for a Revolution, 2/11: Summer of Soul, 2/18: I am Not Your Negro, 2/25: The Apollo. Both programming activities will occur at the Robert Frederick Smith Center for the Performing Arts.
 - Ice Skating season including figure skating and ice hockey through March 12, 2023.
 - The **Community Garden Lottery** for 65 beds will occur **Saturday February 25, 2023 at 11am.** Doors will open at 10:00am and close at 10:59am. Six of the raised beds will be ADA compliant at 30" tall. Beds are assigned in numerical order as the pink color application card is picked. Proof of address such as utility bill and id are required. The lottery is for a two year period commitment.
 - **The Park turns 30 years old in May and is one of the most visited NYS parks!** There will be a community celebration the summer.
- **Friends of Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park** meets every second Saturday of the month in the Theater Rehearsal Room. (Reminder)
- **Greenhouse at Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park:**
 - The registration link for Winter 2023 Programming is as follows: [The Greenhouse Education Center](#)
 - The Greenhouse Manager is Diego.
 - **greenhouseeducationcenter.org**
 - Postcards distributed for the winter programs.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rOIV6cFefJoSyHwxM-OFrx8pquAgHLbT/view?usp=sharing>
 - **Tuesdays: Black History Month Soil Stories incorporating soil scientists such as George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington** at 10am to 1pm (A self-guided cozy nook in the greenhouse with curated books, games, and artmaking for quiet moments to enjoy with plants. Saute, Sizzle, Savor at 11am (Winter cooking & eating with guest chefs from around Harlem from Ethiopian and Vietnamese restaurants for examples.)
 - **Wednesdays:** 5:30pm – 6:30pm, Recipes and Rituals for Winter Wellness. Herbalists, wellness practitioners, and artists committed to healing help craft your own apothecary and toolkit for winter wellness.
 - **Thursdays:** 5pm, Botanical Arts, Learn new observational skills to combine the art and science of observation in weekly artmaking inspired by plants in the greenhouse. 6:30pm, Art and Agriculture, Create works of art inspired by the stories of foods you love and how they grow with different visiting artists each week. Food is connected to history and culture.

- **Saturdays:** 10am-noon, Family Farmacy (Food as Medicine in kitchen and learning garden) and Fall Tours at noon – 1pm, Wonder & Wander (Harlem residents are provided the history to understand the green roof on which the park is located. Lead a walk and dialogue about plants play space exploration.
 - **Two Art Classes are starting this week.**
 - **Youth High School Harlem Farm Apprenticeship Program: Incubator Farm to table.** Farming, Cooking and Horticulture. The application process is a simple Google form. Participants earn \$100 for a period of eight weeks. Community schools and Fieldtrip opportunities. Interns may participate during the entire year. Reservations are accepted. The hours are Fridays between 3:30pm – 5:30pm.
 - “One of our amazing chefs who facilitates with us is leading an MLK walk on food justice and uplifting Black-owned restaurants.”
 - “The greenhouse will be hosting lots of workshops to help new gardeners.”
 - **A seed Giveaway will be coming in March.**
- **NYC Parks**
 - Jacob Schiff seating area this summer and re-surfacing.
 - NYC Parks Job Fair is Saturday 3/4/2023 between noon – 4pm. Register at the following Link: bit.ly/highbridgejobfair [NYCP23226-Highbridge-Fair-Flyer-v3 - Google Docs](#)
Location is Highbridge Recreation Center at 2301 Amsterdam Avenue at 173rd Street.
 - **Morningside Park: Capital Project** Park Path Reconstruction along ball fields on the south side between West 110th and 114th Streets is closed, but will reopened before spring.
 - **Historic Parks: Morningside Park and Saint Nicholas Park:**
 - No report.
 - **Riverside Park**
 - Camel Park West 142nd Street Riverbank Playground. Power has been repaired by Con Edison.
 - **Riverside Park Conservancy:**
 - Jenny’s Garden fence at West 139th Street has been damaged since last summer. There was a 2021 flooding issue and part of the wall was lost. This needs to be a **Capital Project**. Funding will be necessary. Currently, there is a temporary fence.
 - Between West 120th and 181st Street there will be Summer Camps in Fort Washington with scholarships available for young children between 7/17/2023 and 8/18/2023. The Fort Washington location is new this year.
 - The West 102nd Street location will still be operational this year.
 - Team Corp Program provides paid internships to high school students on Tuesdays and Thursdays to engage youth in policy environmental issues. There 15 internships of which 15 are reserved for MCB9.
 - Suggestion to engage The Brotherhood Sister Sol and We Act in outreach efforts.

- **Friends of St. Nicholas Park**
 - Advocate for capital funding for improvements to the playground and stairs.
 - Harlem Youth Garden Program. WHDC Funding. Eight weeks of programming from mid-April until the first week of June for 24 teens. Approximately 5 weeks at St. Nicholas Park and 3 weeks at Morningside Park. Providing hands on gardening for MCB9 youth.
 - Dog Run construction is complete. This work was completed in-house. Several weeks required to install the deck with staircase.

- **Friends of Morningside Park**
 - Harlem Youth Garden Program started four years ago at Jackie Robinson Park Conservancy and Marcus Garvey Park and now St. Nicholas Park.
 - Morningside Café Concession successfully passed the NYC LPC Hearing process.
 - The RFP was in 2019. It has been 20 years since there has been a café at Manhattan Avenue and West 112th.
 - Ada Uribe reported on behalf of the Morningside Park Café Kiosk, that they are waiting on city agencies to move forward. They thanked MCB9 and the community for their support.

Presentations:

- **West Harlem Piers Park: Harlem Gateway Waterfront Initiative including Ferris Wheel: Garry Anthony Johnson**, CEO & Co-Founder Paradise Express Ferry LLC, CCNY-Architecture, NAACP NYS Conference Economic Development Chair, Former MCB11 Economic Development Chair and member of the Zoning Committee, Very active in the Harlem Community.
 - Three Phase Plan: Re-activate the Harlem Pier Waterfront to its former glory from a historic perspective.
 - Harlem Rocket Tour Operation to commence Summer 2023
 - 93 Passenger Tour Boat
 - 25 total staff to include deck hands, customer service, administrative, marketing, drone operations and security.
 - Support existing restaurants, retail, cultural, hiring and traffic.
 - Increase usage of parks including Denny Farrell Riverbank S
 - Received Letter of Support from MCB9 February 27, 2019. Presenter believes the Harlem Rocket is As of Right.
 - Operational 6-7 days per week from the end of May until the end of September.
 - “Harlem Rocket by Paradise Express would be the first family-friendly attraction in Harlem in 30 years. 45-minute tours will depart on the hour from 10 am to 6pm. The West Harlem Piers’ strategic positioning allows easy accessibility via nearby Subway lines (#1, #2, #3, A, B, C, D) to West 125th Street, as well as via MTA buses and Tour buses.”

- Create Harlem Maritime Technology Center & Museum. Adaptive Reuse of the 135th Street Marine Transfer Station that has been vacant since 1999.
 - First National Maritime Museum to showcase the significant contributions of people of color to the Maritime industry.
 - Training Facility for Maritime skills necessary for the Offshore Wind industry.
 - Possible NYC Ferry or NY Waterway stop from Edgewater, NJ as well as the delivery of foods via boats, such as Harbor Harvest which utilizes an environmentally friendly hybrid catamaran to transport foods from up the Hudson River and CT. MCB9 is still considered a food desert.
 - Gift Shop, Café, Offices for Maritime Operations
 - Rest Office for US Coast Guard or NYPD Harbor Police.
 - Emergency Maritime Command Center for NYC/USCG during Natural Disasters
 - An additional floor would be added to the top of the current structure.
 - Staging areas in Brooklyn, Long Island and Staten Island for Offshore Wind. Manufacturing in Albany in conjunction with NYSERDA.
 - Barges will be transported through this area.
 - Future proposal for an Electrified Pier in Harlem.

- The Harlem Wheel is a 190 feet Wheel to be built on new city-provided Pier –
 - Visible from New Jersey, George Washington Bridge and the West Side Highway.
 - Anticipate attraction of 800,000 visitors per year.
 - Operation will employ a local staff of 50.
 - The Ferris-Wheel will attract tourism, shopping and support local businesses.
 - This FIRST Ferris-Wheel in NYC will be built on a pier that will support electric charging for boats.
 - Operations 9 hours per day; 15-minute cycles; 4 cycles per hour
 - Expansion of the Pier for the Ferris-Wheel. Outdoor performance, landscape and design are important.

- Questions, Comments, and Concerns from the Community and Answers
 - Economic/Environmental Impact and Parking? No impact study has been done.
 - Exit and entrance to the highway. More traffic downtown. Primarily mass transit to this site. Will work with Columbia to mitigate parking.
 - The Ferry mitigates the need to drive. Also, walk to the waterfront.
 - Impact to reinstatement of Kayak Launch? No impact. This is not a high speed boat. Vessel can't operate at 40 knots. It will be slower at approximately 23 knots at a time.
 - Harlem Rocket tour sites of interest? Grant's Tomb, Riverside Conservancy, New Jersey Palisades, Spuyten Duyvil, The Little Red Lighthouse, a Sunset tour, Culture and History of the neighborhood, South to the Statute of Liberty and return. Plans for future sites such as The African Burial Ground.

- Expansion of the Pier: Structural analysis based on records that exist. Upgrades will be required in conjunction with the city.
 - Has a structural analysis been done of the Marine Transfer Station? Who would pay for any needed upgrades to that facility? There has been a structural analysis done but if upgrades are needed, the city and the developers will have to discuss when that time comes who will pay for what.
 - Have you presented to CB9 EDC? Yes.
 - Who will pay for what? TBD.
 - It's important that profits are reinvested back in the community.
 - We don't want the image of tourists observing us, but we prefer a co-partnering experience. Culture, seniors, schools, and the aesthetics in terms of what this development will look like is important.
 - Our community wants to experience each phase of this development in the same degree of tourists.
 - Tie the Ferris-Wheel to the culture of Harlem? The Ferris-Wheel is iconic and will attract people who want to be a part of the experience. Designed to bring spend to the community.
 - Create an Eco System that wraps around the project.
 - Land and Sea experience. Committed to Education.
 - "A kid can't be, what a kid can't see." Free tickets will be available to expose youth to these experiences.
 - How will the financial model be sustained? Discounts for seniors, kids and local residents. There will be charter rates.
 - Cost of the Harlem Rocket: \$30-\$40, and \$25-\$30 for seniors and kids.
 - What energy source is used by the Rocket? Diesel fuel. The boat is currently being refurbished in Connecticut. Its downtown speed will be between 10-15 knots and the uptown speed will be 20-25 knots. In the future electric charging vessels will be hybrid or fully electrified.
 - Status relative to the Marine Transfer Station? Discussion: Marine Transfer Station was owned by Sanitation and returned to NYC in 2020. The applicant will operate as a Concession for the Pier.

- **ACTION ITEM: Heritage Health and Housing, Inc.: LPC 23-04823 1649 Amsterdam Avenue, NY, NY 10031 facade:** Doug Blomberg, CFO and Martina Bacarella, Architect
 - 1649 Amsterdam Avenue is owned by Heritage Health and Housing, Inc. and known as the Harry Simmons Residence. Harry Simmons was an African American architect.
 - Harry Simmons taught classes in the late 1980s and died in a plane crash in 1992.
 - The Harry Simmons Residence houses individuals from the community who were previously homeless. Heritage Housing program manages 100 of the units in the building and provides direct services to the tenants. The remaining 40 rooms on the second and third floors are sublet to a NYC Housing Partner (ACMH) to manage the tenants in those rooms.

- ACMH tenants will be relocating to their new location on Convent Ave in the next couple of months to accommodate the new design configuration in which 84 SRO units in total will remain at 1649 Amsterdam Avenue.
- Heritage Health is being displaced from 1727 Amsterdam Avenue, which has precipitated the displacement of two commercial businesses at this location including a deli and laundromat in exchange for a pharmacy which is of concern to many residents who rely on these services. Additionally, security will also be located on this 1st floor.
- “Quality of life issues are important. This should not be a community of social services.”
- The bottom three floors will be comprised of medical and dental practices.
- The 4th through 7th or top four floors will be dedicated to housing the single room occupancies that will have a separate entrance, elevator bulkhead and stairs from the medical center.
- The applicant seeks to implement the following property restorations:
 - Build two new stucco façade bulkheads with painted steel cornices to match existing cornice. These separate residential and medical service entry bulkheads will be visible from the street.
 - Approximately 60 Solar panels as well as condensing units for commercial and residential energy efficiency utilization will be installed on the roof.
 - Remove the non-historic fire escapes and build inner stairs to each bulkhead in addition to a new elevator for the residential entrance. The existing center bulkhead elevator will remain.
 - Install a new precast cornice above the storefront to match existing.
 - Install a new center entrance door with transom and sidelights.
 - Replace several storefront windows and entrance doors.
 - New aluminum dark bronze anodized lower infill panels will be installed at the storefront. Existing storefronts must be painted to match new. The storefront glass will be clear. The new storefront awnings will be burgundy in color.
 - Patch spalled stone in Lintel.
 - Repair cracked sill.
 - Repair step crack in brick and repoint brick.
- MCB9 requests that the many accomplishments of architect Harry Simmons and the history of the property originally built as a hotel/residence for African American performers be memorialized with design elements such as a mural and/or plaque that will educate the community on the historical significance of this property.
- The two new roof bulkheads will be visible from the thoroughfare, due to the unique narrow width of the facades.
- This committee unanimously supports the improvements requested herein pending the submission of the mock-ups to include the specific heights of the bulkheads.

Old Business:

- **Donnellan Square between West 149th and 150th Streets at Saint Nicholas Avenue**
 - Hon. Patricia Caldwell reports she is working with Kyshia Smith at the MBPO to have a pine tree installed at this location.
- **Proposed West Harlem Historic District and Conference** - Yuien Chin, West Harlem Community Preservation Organization and Harlem One Stop. **Proposed conference is anticipated to be held April 23rd and 24th.**
- **West 142nd Street Development** unpermitted Scaffolding, Liz Waytkus
 - Prepared Letter **RE: 639, 637 and 635 West 142nd Street, NY, NY 10031. DOB inspector Scaffolding violation and roof removal. Properties could be in jeopardy of demolition by neglect.**
 - **Also include in the letter a sense of Urgency for LPC to Calendar the West Harlem Historic District.**
- **RKO Theater** – Exploring the possibility of the Jazz Museum as anchor tenant and space for other tenants. No new report.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:05pm: Next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Respectfully submitted by Heather Jason