

**Chair Report**  
**January 21, 2021**  
**General Board Meeting**

***New Year, New Hope***

I, like many others, experienced an enormous feeling of relief knowing that yesterday was the last day in office for a man who has used the Presidency to enrich his family and cronies, advance the cause of white supremacy, and criminally neglected a pandemic that has cost the lives of over 400,000 Americans, including one of our own Manhattan Community Board 9 Members. Like many others, however, I am still grieving for the events of January 6<sup>th</sup>, of the past year, of the past four years, and more. While we as an institution are gearing up for more fights—fights for vaccine sites, fights for resources for our community in the coming budget, fights for a fairer state tax system—I encourage us all as individual human beings to be honest with ourselves and each other about what we need to do to take care of ourselves as we embark on this journey into 2021. We cannot fight for our community if we are not taking care of ourselves. I miss seeing you all in person, and I want you to know that you can always call me or text me just to talk or catch up.

Here in West Harlem, the ZIP code 10031 (Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill) currently has a 5.97% positivity rate from the trailing 7 days, which is a welcome decline from level nearing 8% in the previous weeks. ZIP code 10027 (Manhattanville and portions of Morningside Heights and south Central Harlem) remains high at 3.63%, although not as high as 10031. While I share everyone frustration and growing sense of isolation as the restrictions on gatherings and indoor dining continue, these measures are working. We must continue to hold fast, practice social distancing, mask-wearing, hand washing, and semi-quarantine until our City is vaccinated and this pandemic is finally under control. I also want to thank Grisel Ortiz-Thompson, the 3333 Tenants Association, Lorean Valentin, former Chair Padmore John, Dr. Karen E. Thornton, and everyone else who helped bring the mobile COVID-19 testing van to 135<sup>th</sup> and Broadway by 3333 Broadway on Tuesday, January 19. That effort helped 98 individuals in our community get tested for COVID, and many more received free PPE. We are hoping to have additional pop-up testing sites throughout the community, but I strongly encourage folks to not wait to get tested. The public site at 21 Old Broadway on W 126<sup>th</sup> Street remains open 7 days a week and does not require an appointment.

On the vaccination front, we must also fight. Sadly, the entity that we are fighting against is our own City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Despite professing that racial inclusion and equity (RIE) was to be a key priority in the vaccine rollout, Manhattan Community Board 9 is still without a public vaccination site available on the City's online vaccine finder. We are a Community District that is over 60% Black and Latino, and every single portion of our district is comprised of one of the 27 ZIP codes identified by the Mayor's Task Force on Racial Inclusion Equity as a priority ZIP code for COVID response. So why are we completely ignored in vaccine distribution? If racial equity is to mean anything, it must mean making hard decisions and doing the work to set up distribution sites in our community, even if it means that there are fewer days' supply at other existing vaccination sites. We are working with our elected officials to convince the DOHMH to set up vaccination sites in each of the neighborhoods in CB9. We have already provided a list of almost 30 potential sites to the DOHMH.

As I mentioned last month, we will also need to work to combat misinformation and educate our community about the vaccine. While folks' suspicions may be based in very real lived and historical

experiences of our community and our complex relationships' with this country's medical establishment, I would submit that the very fact that there are no sites in our district is evidence that this vaccine is an unequivocally good thing. If it weren't, vaccine sites would be as plentiful as methadone clinics in our neighborhood. The FDA has worked hard to make the science and process as transparent and scientific as possible. More information on this, including video of the hearings on emergency authorization, can be found online at <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19/covid-19-vaccines>

Please stay safe, continue to practice social distancing, mask-wearing, hand-washing, and other safety measures, and get your vaccinations as they become available! I look forward to the work we will do this spring.

Your Chair,

Barry Weinberg

***Press Conference on 1763 Amsterdam Ave/Child's Memorial Site on Monday, January 25, 2021***

Manhattan Community Board 9 will be holding a press conference this coming Monday at 10am at the former site of Child's Memorial Tabernacle Church at 1763 Amsterdam Avenue between 147<sup>th</sup> and 148<sup>th</sup> Streets to call on the Department of Homeless Services not to approve an inappropriate contract with a shelter provider to allow a developer to construct a building consisting entirely of studio units to be leased to the provider for 7 years to be used as a shelter for homeless families with children. In addition to the fact that studio units are not adequate or dignified shelter for families with children, CB9 believes that this development site should instead be used to develop permanent affordable and/or supportive housing for homeless individuals or families so that they can escape homelessness and finally have permanent homes. We call on DHS to work with CB9 to acquire the site for such housing. We welcome all attendees at the press conference.

***New Eviction Moratorium Allows for Hardship Declaration to Delay Proceedings Until May 1, 2021***

In December, the State Legislator Passed and the Governor signed the COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2020. This act stays pending eviction proceedings and residential mortgage foreclosure actions for 60 days, stays actions and proceedings first filed in December for 30 days, and allows tenants or mortgagors to file hardship declarations that will further stay any proceedings and actions until May 1<sup>st</sup>. If you are facing eviction or foreclosure, I strongly urge you to consider going to <http://www.nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/SSI/images/corona/HardshipDeclaration.pdf>, download the Hardship Declaration form, and send it to your landlord or mortgage holder. More information can be found at <https://www.nycourts.gov/covid-eefpa.shtml>. Please note that this does not constitute legal advice, and I am not an attorney.

***Senator Schumer, President Biden to Reimburse City for Full Cost of FEMA Relief During COVID***

One welcome item of news delivered by U.S. Senator Schumer was that President Biden plans to relieve the City of over \$2 billion dollars of the bill for federal disaster relief from FEMA efforts to assist during the pandemic. It is only just that the federal government, which failed abysmally to contain the pandemic and assist states and municipalities, not further penalize the City. However, given the significant \$2.5 billion drop in property tax revenues due to the decline in the value of office buildings

during the pandemic, this aid must just be the beginning to help our City recover, as we continue to have to mandate that businesses remain closed and our unemployment rate is over 10%.

### ***Governor Proposes Deep Cuts to Medicaid, Aid to Cities, and Schools if \$15 billion in Federal Government Aid***

On Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup>, Governor Cuomo released his budget plan for Fiscal Year 2022. It contains a dire forecast for cuts to New York City's budget, school aid, Medicaid, and more if the federal government does not step up and use its borrowing power to support states and municipalities in rebuilding after the COVID pandemic. We urgently need rent relief, funds to distribute the COVID vaccine, and more. The full budget release can be viewed at <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-outlines-fy-2022-budget-reimagine-rebuild-renew>. The State budget will have a major impact on our community. I encourage everyone to call our U.S. Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and our Congressional Representatives Adriano Espaillat and Jerry Nadler and urge them to make sure New York gets all of the federal assistance we need to help repair after the disastrous federal failure to contain the pandemic.

### ***Governor, State Legislature Agree that More Tax Revenues are Needed***

In February of this year, before the pandemic upended all of our lives, Manhattan Community Board 9 was the first Community Board to pass a resolution calling on our State Legislature and the Governor to address an apparent budget shortfall by increasing taxes on the highest-income and wealthiest New Yorkers. Many of the proposals most likely to be adopted, including a possible tax on high-value second homes (the pied-a-terre tax), increasing the millionaire's tax, and removing the rebate for the stock transfer tax were included as possible solutions in our resolution. I want to commend all of our Board Members for their early advocacy on this issue.

### ***December Federal Stimulus Bill and Additional Round of Paycheck Protection Program***

On December 27<sup>th</sup>, a second federal COVID relief bill was signed into law. Provisions include an additional \$600 in Economic Impact Payments, \$300 per week in federal unemployment benefits, \$25 billion in rental assistance, \$82 billion for local schools, and \$284 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program. This is a start towards much-needed federal assistance for individuals and businesses to survive the ongoing pandemic. Please be on the lookout for scams around the Economic Impact Payment. Individuals who received a first EIP in 2020 should automatically receive a check in the mail. You can also go the IRS website at <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payments> for more information.

If you own a small business or know a small business that needs assistance from the Paycheck Protection Program, please see the information page here at <https://www1.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/article/paycheck-protection-program-ppp>

### ***Tax Lien Sale Delayed Until 2021, Measure Up for Renewal***

When property owners do not pay their tax and water bill debts owed to the City, those unpaid debts become liens on the property. Since a law passed during the Giuliani administration went into effect, the City can choose not to take possession of those properties and instead can sell the liens to private Wall Street financial institutions for cash upfront. The financial institutions that purchase the liens can then

attempt to collect the debt on an accelerated basis and with higher fees and rates. This process is called a tax lien sale.

The tax lien sales have been delayed until at least 2021 by Executive Orders issued by Governor Andrew Cuomo. Additionally, the City law allowing such sales is due to expire, requiring a renewal from the City Council. Given the dearth of real estate available for affordable housing and other priorities, this is an important opportunity to rethink and potentially end the practice of selling tax liens. Intro 2166-2020, introduced by Councilmember Adrienne Adams of Queens, would delay any future tax lien sales through at least December 31, 2024 and change what properties are subject to the sales. CB9 will be exploring proposed changes to the tax lien sale ourselves to submit to the City Council for further review.

### ***NYCHA Blueprint for Change Proposes Privatization of NYCHA, Erodes Tenant Protections***

With the public comment period for NYCHA's Blueprint for Change ending on December 28<sup>th</sup>, it is of the utmost importance that NYCHA residents and the public in CB9 give their feedback on the plan. The Blueprint proposes to turn NYCHA over to a private Preservation Trust, led by Mayoral appointees, that will have the ability to borrow money against the properties to make repairs. Borrowing against public housing is prohibited by law, which is why the buildings would have to be first transferred to a private trust. As with all debt, there is a danger that if the new Preservation Trust is unable to repay the debt, then New York could lose its public housing that have kept hundreds of thousands housed for generations.

Public housing is an integral part of any housing strategy that can meet the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century New York. The nearly 30 year deliberate disinvestment and austerity campaign, begun by Congressional Republicans in the 1990s, has starved NYCHA of previously-available federal funds for repair and maintenance. The resulting long, slow decline of our public housing stock was specifically engineered to bring about the privatization of this housing. Community Board 9 will work together with NYCHA residents and others to make sure that NYCHA and our federal officials are held accountable and stop the march to privatization and, potentially, erosion of tenants' rights.

The feedback page is: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nycha/about/contact/transformation-plan-public-comments.page>

### ***Free City COVID Testing at 21 Old Broadway***

The coronavirus continues to spread in New York, albeit at a greatly reduced rate compared to the spring. New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation offers free coronavirus testing at the clinic at 21 Old Broadway at W 126<sup>th</sup> Street 7 days a week, Monday-Sunday, from 9am-7pm. No appointment is necessary. Please call 844-NYC-4NYC if you have any questions. Help us keep coronavirus in check and keep your friends, neighbors, and family safe. It pays to get tested!

### ***Get Your Flu Shot!***

Flu season has unfortunately arrived. This year it is more important than ever to be vaccinated for the flu so as to avoid getting sick and requiring medical attention, which may further expose you to COVID. Per the DOHMH, "Flu vaccines are widely available at doctor's offices, pharmacies, community health clinics and through employer-sponsored programs. Most health insurance plans cover flu vaccination

without a co-pay.” Many of the drug stores in our area offer flu shots with no copay and with no appointment necessary. To find the nearest location offering flu shots near you, you can go to <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/flu-seasonal-vaccination.page>

### ***Proposed Development at W 142<sup>nd</sup> Street and Riverside Drive***

Manhattan Community Board 9’s Housing, Zoning, and Land Use Committee saw a preliminary presentation by a developer seeking to build a 17 story residential tower on the north corner of W 142<sup>nd</sup> Street and Riverside Drive. The proposed tower would contain 81 apartments, 21 of which would be affordable. In order to develop the site, the owner would have to destroy two of the historic townhouse on the site. The development would require an upzoning on the site from the current R6A designation (which has a 70 foot height cap) to R9A, which has a 170 foot height cap. The developers have not yet formally had their application at the Department of City Planning finalized, which would begin the formal Uniform Land Use Review Process (ULURP), at which point the Community Board 9 would hold a hearing and formal vote to recommend for or against approval of the rezoning application.

If you are interested in this development, please email [mcb9housing@gmail.com](mailto:mcb9housing@gmail.com) to sign up for the HZLU Committee mail list and plan on attending the upcoming meetings of the Committee, which meets the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30pm.

### ***December 21 Uptown Town Hall on COVID-19 Vaccine Now Online***

Manhattan Community Board 9 will be cosponsored a virtual town hall about the COVID-19 vaccine with Columbia University, Ryan Health, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, and Manhattan Community Boards 7, 10, 11, and 12 at 6:30pm on Monday, December 21<sup>st</sup>. The town hall was a success, and can be viewed at <https://neighbors.columbia.edu/events/community-briefing-covid-19-vaccine-nyc>

### ***St. Luke’s Episcopal Church Potential Sale and Redevelopment***

The Episcopal Diocese of New York is exploring a sale of the property and building of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church on Convent Avenue and W 141<sup>st</sup> Street. CB9 has engaged in preliminary discussions with the Hamilton Terrace Block Association about the future of the site, which is in a Historic District. If you are interested in being part of the research and discussion around the site, please email [mcb9housing@gmail.com](mailto:mcb9housing@gmail.com) and mention St. Luke’s Church in the subject line.