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### Memorandum

Date: 4/4/13  
Project Name: Gowanus BOA Nomination Study  
Project No.: 12007.10  
Subject: 4/3/13 Stakeholder Workshop Summary



10 stakeholders and two Community Board members attended the April 3<sup>rd</sup> stakeholder group meeting, as well as representatives of the project team and the Department of City Planning, the NYC Law Department, the Department of Parks and Recreation, The Mayor's Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency, New York State Department of State, and the US Environmental Protection Agency. Stakeholders comprised representatives from Gowanus-focused community groups, property owners, and business owners.

Since the last stakeholder meeting in September, the study team has analyzed many factors that are believed to influence business investment in the neighborhood. The team presented their work interactively, setting aside half an hour at the start of the meeting for attendees to circulate among 6 posters and discuss findings with team members.



A brief presentation recapped the details of the BOA program and goals, the Gowanus project area, and conditions and trends observed in the area. Following the presentation, stakeholders evaluated the project goals, and worked on interactive exercises to craft neighborhood-wide recommendations for the study area and evaluate possible strategic sites.

## Gowanus BOA Stakeholder Meeting 2 Summary

4/4/2013

Page 2

### Exercise 1: Neighborhood Recommendations

Participants worked in four teams to evaluate the study team's proposed recommendations for the neighborhood and add their own. Recommendations were ranked from most to least important.

Top-ranked recommendations (received 3 votes declaring them "essential") were:

- Enforcement of existing/manufacturing zoning;
  - One table wrote in that it is necessary to clarify the City's policy on manufacturing in Gowanus looking toward the future (i.e. affirm that the district will remain zoned for manufacturing).
- Investments in green infrastructure and sewer improvements; and
- Provision of broadband solutions for the neighborhood (original text said "installation of fiber-optic," but one team objected since fiber-optic is supplied by only one vendor, whereas there are a range of dependable broadband technologies that could be employed to fill the gap).

Second-ranked recommendations (2 votes of "essential") were:

- Allow FAR increases to stimulate development;
  - Conversation and co-incidence with votes for zoning enforcement indicate that these increases should promote higher density industrial rather than move the neighborhood toward residential conversion.
- Restore 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue bus service to reduce parking demand:
  - 3 tables wrote in additional recommendations to do with transit and transportation access:
    - Additional public transit options
    - Bike lane connections
    - Union Street bus
  - While the 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue bus may not be seen as the ultimate solution to transit/parking issues in Gowanus, transit and alternative modal access is seen as important.
- Create funding instruments to support building resiliency;
- Reward property owners for on-site storm water management;
- Create & distribute database of government incentives for business development; and
- Establish a street hierarchy to minimize traffic conflicts.
  - One team who voted this "unimportant" later indicated that after discussion of the specifics involved (more than greening and traffic calming), they would change their vote.

Seen as less important (1 vote of "essential") were:

- Start a year-round series of business-to-business network events;

## Gowanus BOA Stakeholder Meeting 2 Summary

4/4/2013

Page 3

- This was modified variously:
  - Include government agencies
  - Discuss BOA topics at other existing meetings
- Improve street conditions where deteriorated.
  - Some participants felt that deteriorated streets worked in their favor to deter traffic and non-business use.

The teams also wrote in recommendations for waterfront access and amenities; food trucks and restaurants; incubators for food manufacturing or green technology; and film/media attraction.

### Exercise 2: Strategic Sites

Participants were given a worksheet showing the 18 preliminary sites selected by the project team, and the criteria by which they were selected. Participants were asked to evaluate and add criteria, rate the properties according to those criteria, and work in teams to select 3-5 sites that they thought would stimulate investment in the neighborhood.

#### CRITERIA:

Participants added three criteria for evaluation, with no overlap between teams. The criteria were: potential for public use and programming, suitability for temporary uses, and “good bones” – meaning that the building in place was suited to re-use.

#### CLUSTERS:

In general, participants were drawn to the idea of property clusters, and identified three such clusters: at the northwest corner, 255 Baltic Street and the vacant Con Ed site; along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street near the new Whole Foods (Verizon lots & Con Ed site; only one team identified the Coignet Stone building as a strategic site); and along 9<sup>th</sup> Street at 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (Kentile building, Roulston grocery complex, and 2 underused sites along the Lowes’ 9<sup>th</sup> Street frontage).

#### ADDITIONAL SITES:

Other sites of popular interest included the Under the Tracks playground (the area beneath the Culver Viaduct between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenues), underused lots along 9<sup>th</sup> street below the viaduct, and 260 Butler Street, a manufacturing complex of 5 buildings with an owner who has expressed interest in the BOA program.

#### REASONING:

Among the reasons named for nominating popular sites, some themes emerged:

Gowanus BOA Stakeholder Meeting 2 Summary

4/4/2013

Page 4

- Location was the most consistently cited factor, mentioned for 60% of the sites
- Size of property/cluster, potential for development, and potential for open space, public access, or other community benefits were each factors in 50% of the sites' selection
- 40% of the sites were identified on the basis of being underutilized and/or good for industry and jobs.
- Historic value and owner interest featured less prominently in stakeholder selections.