

**Civic Alliance Meeting Notes**  
**Tuesday, November 18**  
**8:30 – 10:30 AM**  
**Merrill Lynch**

1. Welcome

The meeting began at approximately 8:45 AM. Bob Yaro opened the meeting and introduced Al Butzel who represents the Friends of Hudson River Park. Bob Yaro thanked Mike Cowan and Merrill Lynch for hosting the meeting.

2. Presentation by Al Butzel for Friends of Hudson River Park

Al Butzel gave a presentation in which he proposed that \$70 million of Community Development Block Grant funds be used for the Lower Manhattan/ TriBeCa section of Hudson River Park.

The Friends of Hudson River Park is a coalition that advocates for public funding to build and expand Hudson River Park. The Hudson River Park Trust, Al explained, is the public agency that now manages and maintains the park.

Currently, the cost to build the entire park is \$400 million; of which \$200 million has been committed by the city and the state to build the Greenwich Village section and the part north of 27<sup>th</sup> Street. The 11<sup>th</sup> street through 26<sup>th</sup> street section is unfunded, and there is no immediate outlook for securing these funds. The Lower Manhattan/ TriBeCa section, which Al argued would provide immediate benefits to Lower Manhattan residents, workers and visitors, could be completed for \$70 million, which is the amount that the Friends of Hudson River Park is seeking from the LMDC from the CDBG funds that it administers.

Al noted that to understand the benefits of expanding the park, one only needs to look at the success of the Greenwich Village section, which is tremendously popular and provides an important amenity to the community. He showed many beautiful photographs of the waterfront views available from the completed sections of Hudson River Park, images of children playing in green space and playgrounds, people recreating along the rollerblade and bike trails, and people relaxing on the grass lawns. The current plan for the Lower Manhattan/ TriBeCa portion would create substantial new green space on piers 25 and 26, which are 1000 feet long, in addition to landscaping and greening all along the Lower Manhattan/ TriBeCa portion, docking and boat houses, volleyball courts, and an ecological pier that will provide a wildlife habitat for birds and marine mammals.

The immediate goal of the Friends of Hudson Park is to find money to complete the park quickly. They see the CDBG funding as the best chance for quick funding for the Lower Manhattan/TriBeCa portion. He pointed out that this section of the park has already completed the environmental review process, and enjoys broad support in the community, including the support of Community Board One, over forty-four New York-based organizations, and numerous political officials. They are now seeking the support of the Civic Alliance.

Questions and Comments

Discussion ensued regarding the Civic Alliance's potential support of funding for the park. One person asked whether the piers would be built to accommodate waterfront evacuation in the case of emergency. AI answered that yes, the piers would be built with facilities to allow boats to dock.

Robert Weber of the Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) noted that while "Basketball City" (a large domed structure currently occupying waterfront space on the west side) would likely be moved from the Hudson River waterfront when Hudson River Park is completed; there are talks of it coming instead to Pier 36 at Allen Street in Chinatown. Since this may not be the best use of the waterfront in Chinatown, he wondered if there was a way for communities on both sides of Manhattan to support the improvement of the waterfront by finding more appropriate sites for development projects that are not water-dependent or water-enhanced.

AI replied that there are several large buildings on Pier 57 and Pier 94 that would welcome Basketball City. Unfortunately Basketball City currently sits on one of the only available open spaces that is part of the Hudson River Park plan. He said that the Friends of Hudson River Park would be happy to work with the Chinatown community on this issue.

Paul Elston stated his support for the project, on behalf of the Waterfront Park Coalition. He pointed out that the project has twenty years of gestation and community visioning behind it. It's unique among the projects that the Civic Alliance has considered in that it is ready to go. The EIS has been completed, the planning has been completed. This is really a case of needing the funding to "kick it over the top" and get the plan implemented.

There was then some discussion of what kind of support was needed to endorse the project. AI Butzel asked if the Civic Alliance would write the Governor and the Mayor in support of the project, preferably before the end of the year. He expressed his concern that the Governor may be waiting for the results of the transportation study next May before lending his support, but hoped that this was not the case. He added a final sentiment that this project is not just a good project – but it is a transforming project. It will generate economic activity and will transform an important section of Lower Manhattan. It deserves to be singled out among projects for funding by the CDBG money.

It was agreed that the Civic Alliance will vote on a resolution supporting the project at the next general meeting on December 16 at Pace University.

## 2. South Ferry

The next item on the agenda was the South Ferry Project of the MTA. To begin, Bob Yaro and Petra Todorovich reported on separate meetings that took place with members of the Civic Alliance steering committee and representatives of Community Board One and the Downtown Alliance, respectively, to discuss the South Ferry Project. Bob Yaro reported that Community Board One informed the Civic Alliance that they do not support the South Ferry Project. The reason was not so much that they were opposed to the project itself, but rather they feel its benefits are not primarily conferred on residents and workers in Lower Manhattan. They feel that its benefits are more for users of the Staten Island Ferry and other commuters moving through the station. For this reason, Community Board One does not feel that federal transportation dollars for the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan should be used to build this project. They also have concerns about impacts on Battery Park and disruptions to the community during the construction period.

Bob Yaro mentioned that he asked in the meeting whether Community Board One had considered the possibility that an improved South Ferry station could connect the subway system (via the Staten Island Ferry Terminal and Battery Maritime Building terminal) to a harbor-wide enhanced ferry system that would provide connections to different waterfront locations including Governors Island. This aspect had not been considered.

Petra Todorovich then reported on a meeting she had with the Downtown Alliance on the same issue. The Downtown Alliance also does not feel that funding from the \$4.5 billion federal transportation allocation for 9/11 rebuilding should be used for this project because the problems of the South Ferry station are problems that existed before 9/11. The Downtown Alliance's position is that this project is not a priority and not essential to the rebuilding of Lower Manhattan, and polls of residents and workers in Lower Manhattan that they and Pace University have conducted also indicate this fact. The Downtown Alliance also feels that the funding for rebuilding transportation projects in Lower Manhattan should be used to plan for and build something ambitious and transformative, something that will capture the imaginations of residents and business leaders, such as transit access from Lower Manhattan to the JFK airport.

A resolution in support of the project was then introduced for the Civic Alliance's proposal. The resolution was drafted in response to the general meeting on October 14 at which Bill Wheeler of the MTA gave a presentation on the South Ferry project, and members indicated via a "sense of the room" show of hands that they favored the project. The transportation working group of the Civic Alliance also originally included the renovation of the South Ferry station among their list of priority projects in their recommendations in the Civic Alliance Planning Framework, finalized in September 2002.

The floor was then open for discussion.

Caroline Martin of Community Board One suggested that wording should be included in the resolution that references Community Board One's reservations about the project because they share the concern of the Battery Park Conservancy that 40 trees will have to be displaced during the construction period of the project.

Paul Epstein, of the NY Chapter of the American Society for Public Administration expressed his frustration of seeing transportation projects presented to the Civic Alliance in isolation of one another. He desired to see a comprehensive plan for transportation investments so that we can better judge which projects to support.

Jeff Zupan of Regional Plan Association expressed his support for the project and responded to several arguments of the Downtown Alliance. First, he noted that the JFK access project will certainly not be fully funded from the \$400 million it will take to complete the South Ferry project. South Ferry is more ready to go than anything out to JFK, in fact it is likely that only studies on preliminary engineering on the JFK access project could be completed with 9/11 rebuilding funding from the federal government. In contrast, the South Ferry project could be funded entirely and completed with that funding.

Furthermore, he argued that polls can be sensitive to wording used, and the particular polls that the Downtown Alliance referenced were more specific in describing the benefits of other projects but referred to generic South Ferry improvements, possibly tilting the results. Finally, if you were to make the argument that any problem before 9/11 should not be fixed with rebuilding

funds, as the Downtown Alliance and CBI have made, then the Fulton Street Transportation Center should not advance either, although it is almost universally supported.

Paul Elston made a suggestion regarding the substance of the draft resolution. He pointed out that the action item suggesting the MTA cooperate with Battery Park stakeholders to resolve issues regarding disruption to the park be contained in the paragraph beginning “Whereas the Battery Park Conservancy...” should be separated out and preceded by a “Now therefore be it resolved...”.

Michael Bradley of Riverside South Corporation noted that Joe Seymour [ED of Port Authority] recently said at a breakfast program that the Port Authority needs help prioritizing capital projects at a regional level. Perhaps the JFK project should be put in the category of large-scale, long-term projects such as the Second Avenue subway.

Bob Yaro disagreed, saying that projects like Access to the Region’s Core – ARC [expanding trans-Hudson capacity to midtown Manhattan] and the Second Avenue Subway were committed projects.

Robert Weber, who commutes daily from New Jersey to Chinatown [although not via the 1/9] made the observation that if the time savings along the 1/9 resulting from improvements to South Ferry are only five minutes, this is not a significant improvement for a commuter who already takes almost two hours to get to work everyday.

A suggestion was made that the revised resolution incorporate acknowledgement of the improved user experience that will result from improvements to the station.

The resolution was moved to a vote, with the proposal to incorporate the proposed changes including: acknowledgement of CB1’s shared concerns regarding disruptions to the park, addition of language about the improved user experience, and clarification of an action item regarding MTA’s cooperation with Battery Park stakeholders.

The resolution was unanimously passed by voting member organizations present at the meeting, and seven voting members who submitted their votes ahead of time, with one abstention by the Fine Arts Federation of New York.

#### 4. Rebuild Chinatown Initiative: Presentation by Jennifer Sun

Next on the agenda, Jennifer Sun gave a presentation on the work of the Rebuild Chinatown Initiative, a project of Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE). Jennifer was introduced by Robert Weber, who is the policy director for AAFE.

Jennifer’s made the following points in her comprehensive presentation about the revitalization and economic and community development in Chinatown after 9/11. The study aims to:

- Anchor Chinatown’s role and centrality in the city and the region
- Create a multi-generational neighborhood
- Improve physical connections between Chinatown and Lower Manhattan neighborhoods

To do this, the Rebuild Chinatown Initiative is employing three sets of strategies for *Anchoring*, *Opening* and *Unifying Chinatown*. They include:

- Anchoring Chinatown

- Family Neighborhood:
  - Preservation of affordable housing through an anti-eviction network and the creation of an affordable housing trust fund.
  - The development of mixed-income housing through policies like inclusionary zoning.
- Enhancing Chinatown as a cultural destination
  - Supporting the creation of a performing arts center, but also multiple informal spaces for cultural groups.
  - Providing incentives (density bonuses) for a mixed cultural-office district along the highly visible and accessible Bowery and Canal corridor
- “Industrious Chinatown”
  - Promoting Chinatown as a generator of jobs and services.
  - Bolstering the fashion/garment industry linkage with incubators and design centers.
  - Enhancing the health care industry in Chinatown, especially the integration of alternative medicine in patient care
  - Expanding the restaurant sector to include catering and hospitality
  - Shaping the concentration of banks and import/exporters into a “Pacific Rim” office and cultural district
- Establishing a Night Market
  - This could be a platform and showcase for existing retail merchants, as well as a new, regional attraction for city and regional residents.
  - Allen Street could be an ideal location
- Opening Chinatown
  - Enhance and improve transportation connections to surrounding communities and the rest of city and region by strengthening neighborhood gateways, pedestrian connections and mass transit options
  - Create a Learning Campus that provides vocational ESL and job-training programs to Chinatown residents and workers, as well as Mandarin and Cantonese language classes for a diverse student population that includes non-Asians.
  - Waterfront Parks, Attractions, linkages
    - A new amenity for Chinatown and Lower East Side residents: a continuous waterfront park that joins with South Street Seaport with East River Park.
    - Economic development that One idea that for a waterfront attraction that would capitalize on Chinese culture and cuisine is a floating restaurant/ banquet hall like they have in Hong Kong
  - The New Bowery
    - Improve signage, landscaping, lighting, visual continuity to articulate Water/Pearl/St. James and Bowery as a unified corridor between the Seaport and the Manhattan Bridge.
- Unifying Chinatown:
  - Allen Street: Avenue of the Immigrants
    - Co-name Allen Street “Avenue of the Immigrants” to celebrate the historical and contemporary contributions of immigrants to New York City’s vitality
    - Redefine Allen Street from a Robert Moses arterial to a Frederick Law Olmsted boulevard that serves as a meeting place for the immigrant groups of Chinatown and the Lower East Side.

- Improving and creating Public spaces to enhance the pedestrian environment, including time-of-day closings in the Historic Core of Chinatown.
- Sanitation: support community education and beautification campaigns that bring together merchants and residents to create a “green and clean” Chinatown.

#### Questions and Discussion:

Diane Dreyfus asked whether inclusionary zoning was a tactic used in Chinatown to provide affordable housing. Jennifer replied that yes, it was one of the tactics they were pursuing.

Paul Elston thanked Jennifer for a very informative presentation and asked if there was a particular issue coming up that the Civic Alliance can lend its support to, or if there was a particular way that the Civic Alliance could bring attention to planning efforts in the neighborhood.

Catherine McVeigh Hughes commented that she was in Chinatown a few evenings ago with her family and that her young children always enjoyed playing in Columbus Park. She recommended the further enhancement of that park.

Bob Yaro observed that two issues that the Civic Alliance would most likely engage in would be the opening up of Park Row and promoting improvements to the East River waterfront.

The group thanked Jennifer Sun for her presentation and asked her to get back to us with specific proposals for Civic Alliance action or endorsement when they arise.

#### 5. Memorial Competition

Finally, Rick Bell, the executive director of the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter, brought to everyone’s attention the release of eight finalist memorial designs for the World Trade Center site that were to be released the following day by the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. Rick introduced a draft press release written on behalf of the AIA New York Chapter, which praised the memorial competition process so far, and called attention to the importance of evaluating the different memorial proposals qualitatively when they are released, as opposed to rushing to judgment and ranking them in internet and newspaper polls.

He noted that Imagine New York was planning a three day series of workshops, co-sponsored by the Civic Alliance, and open to the public to elicit feedback and foster dialogue on the qualities of the different memorial designs. He also announced that Imagine New York would hold a press conference that day, promoting public participation and comment on the memorial designs. The AIA NY Chapter, possibly with New York New Visions, planned to release a statement encouraging people to take part in Imagine New York, and also reinforcing the importance of the jury process, and not allowing public opinion of the “popularity contest” variety to dominate the memorial discourse. He expressed his desire for the Civic Alliance to take part in the press conference, acknowledging that we had not been given enough time to pass a formal resolution or prepare a written statement on this issue.

There was some discussion about the trickiness and inherent contradictions of encouraging public participation, particularly in urging people to take part in Imagine New York, but also stressing the importance of an un-tampered jury process. Some expressed their reticence to release any sort of written statement on behalf of the Civic Alliance when before the results of the memorial competition were released, in case the results were not of high quality. One

person commented that above all, local residents should have a say in the selection of the memorial design. Another person contended that this was an issue that transcended local opinion and really belonged to a greater constituency.

While there were many different viewpoints and meeting time was running out, it was generally decided that the Civic Alliance would not release any sort of written statement before the release of the memorial designs. Bob Yaro proposed that a statement be written later in the week in response to the designs and circulated by email for approval. It was also discussed that since the Civic Alliance was a co-sponsor of the Imagine New York project, it was appropriate for Civic Alliance members to attend the press conference and lend their support for Imagine New York.

The meeting concluded at approximately 10: 45 AM.