

Admirals Row Public Meeting
22 July 2008

Synopsis

On July 22, 2008, the National Guard Bureau (NGB) hosted a public meeting at Brooklyn Borough Hall, 209 Joraleman Street, to elicit public comment on the proposed property transfer of 6.07 acres from the Secretary of the Army to the City of New York. The City of New York, through the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation (BNYDC), intends to demolish buildings on the property and construct a supermarket, with associated parking, and a light industrial building on the site. Approximately 250 people were in attendance at the public meeting with 125 written comments submitted to NGB staff and several verbal comments submitted to NGB staff during the course of the evening.

Before the meeting, local elected officials held a news conference on the steps of the Borough Hall featuring the views of local elected officials, BNYDC officials and community leaders strongly in favor of the BNYDC development plan. Attending the gathering were about 150 local residents. Speakers included City Councilmembers Letitia James and David Yassky, Senator Velmanette Montgomery, representatives from the Brooklyn Borough President's and Congressman Ed Towns' offices, Andrew Kimball and Alan Fishman of BNYDC, Carl Hum from the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from the Ingersoll, Whitman, and Farrugut Houses.

The meeting was held in a "science fair" format with several tables organized with NGB and Army Corps of Engineers, New York District, present to discuss pertinent issues, answer questions, and provide information about the preservation issues related to the proposed property transfer. Each table pertained to different aspects of the historical and cultural work underway or completed by the NGB. "Stations" throughout the room included:

1. An introductory table presenting information about the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) process;
2. A table presenting information about the Beardsley Design/Crawford Associates, *Assessment of Admirals Row Buildings K-L, H-C, D, E-F-G, and I, Brooklyn New York* (final – January 2009), which evaluated the structural and historic integrity of the buildings. This table included copies of the document to peruse;
3. A table presenting information about the draft Cultural Resources Phase IA report –which evaluates the potential archaeological resources present on the property;
4. A table presenting information about identified alternatives to full demolition which have been identified; and

5. Several additional tables were present for the public to take time to write comments regarding their position on this project and their opinions about the preservation potential, future development, and goals for the property's future.

General and specific questions were answered at each table. For example, the alternatives table fostered questions on the methodology that was used to come up with alternatives, how the alternatives were presented in the report, the scope of the report, and when the report would be available. Individuals throughout the evening were encouraged to submit comments regarding the alternatives analysis using the comment cards that were provided.

Several local news affiliates were present at the meeting and took interviews with both local community members who attended and representatives from the NGB and the BNYDC. These included The New York Daily News, the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, the Brooklyn Eagle, and Newschannel 12 (Brooklyn Cablenews).

Meeting Notes

Unlike our previous public meeting, held on December 11, 2008, during which time it was difficult to categorize opinion because the comments could not be clearly defined as either "pro-preservation" or "pro-supermarket/new construction," written comments during this public meeting were clearly defined as either "pro-compromise," ie willing to discuss both preservation and redevelopment on the site, or "pro-demolition" of all historic properties within the project area for favor of new construction.**

Position	Number of Comments	Percentage of Comments
Pro-Compromise	29	23.2%
Pro-Demolition	93	74.4%
Unknown	3	2.4%
Total	125	

**** It is important to note that these statistics only deal with the public meeting. Multiple opinions have been sent to NGB previous to the meeting and since the meeting both through the project website and through regular mail and email. For example, over 10 email submissions in support of "pro-compromise" were sent within a week after the meeting on the project website. ****

Below are selections of comments and suggested alternatives/compromises that the public submitted during the meeting. In general terms, the below comments encompass the majority of differing opinions submitted during the meeting and provide an example of the range of views held by the public on this topic.

Pro-Demolition Comments

- "A beautifully done press conference. Wonderful speakers, beautiful people. The grocery store and employment will WIN THE DAY!!"
- "Tear houses down. Build supermarket."

- “I would like to see a supermarket built so that I wouldn’t have to go so far for groceries... We need the buildings torn down so that we can have a better and healthy people and better surroundings.”
- “Tear down the buildings put in training center put job training”
- “The houses on Admirals Row have not been maintain for years. If they had been I would have said to preserve them – they need to be torn down – thank you.”
- “I know that it is time to tear down these buildings
(TEAR DOWN)
(TEAR DOWN)
(TEAR DOWN)
- “bring them down today”
- “Please tear down the buildings and build the supermarket and employment center. I strongly support the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation Redevelopment Plan.”

Pro-Compromise Comments

- “I find it totally irresponsible to Brooklyn history to knock down a number of historic buildings on the grounds in the name of a parking lot. The current plan does not benefit the locals – the space is poorly used...”
- “It should be a major priority to develop a plan to save the buildings due to the historic importance and potential to attract retail. Build the supermarket on the yard but save the buildings and commercial tenants will come. Look at SOHO, DUMBO, 5th Ave corridor in Brooklyn. All once deteriorated and blighted and now have development in small little buildings. Also, we need to protect our history and these buildings can be spectacular. Lets keep something that the future can use.”
- “The entire community is united in wanting a few produce grocery and related services. However, this should not be at the expense of tearing down the Admirals Row houses. The “gut rehab” of these houses can provide more intimately scaled space for job training, counseling, and a variety of social services.”
- “The site should only be transferred to the City of New York with some level of preservation restriction included in the land transfer. A supermarket can and should also be built, but without a large surface parking lot.”
- “I think if possible they should preserve the buildings otherwise use the property to build a supermarket...”
- “we can do both”
- “I support adaptive reuse in the context of a new neighborhood oriented supermarket plan. The emphasis should be on non-automotive transportation alternatives – walking, biking, and public transportation...”
- “I take strong exception to the remark Mr Kimball of BNYDC made urging all the people who came to support the supermarket telling them to specify on their comment card that they advocate tearing down the buildings.”