

Former PS 90 Site

Wednesday, December 9, 2020 from 6-8pm | Task Force Meeting #1 Notes

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Attendees

Name	Organizational Affiliation
Ryan Lynch	Office of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
Mathieu Eugene	District 40 Council Member
Shawn Campbell	Community Board 14
Carol Reneau	Community Board 17
Sherif Fraser	Community Board 17
Lauren Collins	Flatbush Ave. BID & Church Avenue BID
Samantha Bernardine	Erasmus Hall High School for Youth and Community Development
Chantal Eugene Desdunes	Erasmus Hall High School for Youth and Community Development
Ron Schweiger	Brooklyn Borough Historian
Natiba Guy-Clement	Center for Brooklyn History at Brooklyn Public Library
Robin Redmond	Flatbush Development Corporation
Tyrone McDonald	Neighborhood Housing Services of Brooklyn CDC Inc. (NHS Brooklyn)
Byron Todman	Neighborhood Housing Services of Brooklyn CDC Inc. (NHS Brooklyn)
Naima Oyo	Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy
Dr. Ben Talton	Ifetayo Cultural Arts Academy
New York City Agencies + Task Force Technical Advisors	
Ricky Da Costa	NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
Aileen Gorsuch	NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
Lena Ferguson	NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
Monique Woods	NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
Perris Straughter	New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
Uriah Johnson	New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
Erin Buchanan	New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
Timothy Frye	New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)
Cece Saunders	Historical Perspectives, Inc (HPI)
Faline Schneiderman	Historical Perspectives, Inc (HPI)
Kristina Drury	TYTHEdesign
Hillary Clark	TYTHEdesign

Agenda for the Meeting

Goals for the Task Force Meeting

- To intentionally kickoff the engagement process regarding the Former PS 90 site:
 - To build alignment regarding the process, expectations, and timeline.
 - To build baseline knowledge regarding the history of the site and the RFQ/RFP process.
 - To collect questions, concerns, and capacity from the Task Force members.
- To provide an opportunity for each member of the Task Force, including the City Team, to formally introduce themselves and share their knowledge, perspectives and interest in this project.
- To build alignment and expectations for the roles of the Task Force that will create recommendations to be included in the HPD RFP on aspects of future development project, on- and/or off-site memorialization, and appropriate handling of additional artifacts and human remains, (if discovered in the future).
- To build a framework of shared leadership amongst the Task Force Members and the City Team:
 - To determine our vision and aspirations for this process, public participation and outcomes.
 - To clarify our approach to transparency and communications.
- To communicate what's next, what to expect, and gratitude for participation.

Introducing the Task Force

Each Task Force member had the opportunity to introduce themselves individually. Introductions featured names, preferred pronouns, organizational affiliation and titles, as well as their personal and professional connections to Flatbush and the former PS 90 Site. Task Force members represent a diversity of sectors, including two local community boards, the local business improvement district, a local community development corporation, a public high school in the neighborhood, a youth and cultural organization, as well as the Center for Brooklyn History at Brooklyn Public Library. They all shared their interest in the project site, as well as their expertise's which range from affordable housing advocacy, to community development, to African/African American history and culture. All members either have a connection to, work, or live in Flatbush, and a majority highlighted the many years they've spent in the neighborhood.

Following the introductions of the Task Force members, the City Team (NYCEDC, HPD, LPC, HPI and TYTHEdesign) introduced themselves, and provided an overview of the role they each play in this project, and in support of the Task Force.

Task Force Stakeholder Map

During Task Force member introductions, TYTHEdesign began to populate this interactive chart to create a Task Force resource and stakeholder map. Each sticky note with a member's name is movable and editable.

Please take a look and edit your sticky notes if appropriate:

<https://app.mural.co/t/tythedesign6976/m/tythedesign6976/1607458394397/c507c353f6101199c12f62c87745066394fb5e5e>

Site History Presentation

HPI presented on the site's history and archaeological investigations that have been completed to date. Their work has found that available primary documentary records do not reference a cemetery on the PS 90 site. However, secondary documentary sources vaguely describe a burial ground near the site, with burials reportedly having been found to the north and east. HPI's archaeological investigations found no undisturbed burials on the site but did find a small number of disarticulated human remains near Church Avenue. Additional disarticulated human remains should be anticipated on the site, and these people deserve the utmost care and respect with regard to their proper handling, removal, reburial, and memorialization. HPI's presentation has been attached in the post-meeting email. The presentation includes links to the research documents completed for the site.

Intentions for Shared Leadership

The following is a summary of the discussion regarding what success for the project and process looks like. These are not written in any particular order.

Key themes regarding success for this project and process:

- **Task Force process is impactful.** Task Force members shared their concerns that their time, commitment and recommendations would not be heard. They are hoping to go beyond advisory, to have maximum input and be reflective of the community.
- **The community is engaged.** Almost all Task Force members highlighted the importance of fully, authentically, and transparently engaging the community. Members emphasized the importance of going beyond informing the community, folding them into the decision-making process. A few members pointed to the importance of including youth and senior voices and ensuring engagements were reflective of the diverse community.
- **The site, remains, and history are honored.** For Task Force members, it is immensely important to appropriately honor, memorialize and draw significance to the complicated history of the site. Task Force members emphasized that this part of the work needs to be done with patience and reverence – we are dealing with trauma. Task Force members suggested that part of appropriately honoring the site could be to ensure that its historical significance is preserved so that the burials do not continue to be disturbed by development after this project.
- **African Burial Ground memorialization as part of a national conversation.** Task Force members voiced that whether the PS 90 site itself is where the burial ground was can be seen as less important on some level because the site represents a desecrated African burial ground. Members would like to see this process be part of a city-wide, state, and national conversation on honoring desecrated African burial grounds.
- **Affordable housing reflects real community needs.** For Task Force members, any affordable housing and services would need to reflect the current and projected future local needs. Members mentioned their hope for contextual design, housing that helps residents stay in the neighborhood for decades, and that units have 2 to 3 bedrooms, no studios.
- **Transparency.** All Task Force members emphasized the importance of being transparent with the community throughout this process. Members shared ideas on having a website with recordings of meetings and resources available, or an outreach campaign. There is concern that the pandemic will hinder traditional methods of community engagement.

Questions and Answers

During the meeting, Task Force members raised the following questions. The answers are a summary of what was shared through discussion and Zoom Chat by the City Team. These are not written in any particular order.

Q: When was this Task Force formed and is this project set on housing?

- This was the first meeting of the Former PS 90 Task Force, which was just formed by Borough President Adams and Council Member Eugene in conjunction with the City Team (EDC, HPD, and LPC). In October 2020, Council Member Eugene and Mayor de Blasio announced the creation of the community led Task Force and future development of the site for affordable housing and a space dedicated to educational and a vocational training program for young Brooklynites. This Task Force will produce specific recommendations that inform aspects of the future development project, on- and/or off-site memorialization, and appropriate handling of additional artifacts and human remains, if discovered in the future.

Q: What is the community's current temperature and understanding concerning awareness of the site?

- That's a big part of the reason why you're all here, and one of the things we want to discuss is how to share this with a wider audience as we move through the process. We're starting a conversation here with this group, but obviously, it's too important a conversation to just live with this group. Through this process, we will have touch points to bring the conversation to a wider audience through a public meeting and public survey, but we want to better understand the Task Force's desires for how to engage and reach a wider audience.

Q: Can you talk a little bit more about what an Unanticipated Discovery Plan is, and what that would mean with respect to the site and the memorialization of any potential human remains that are found?

- The Unanticipated Discoveries Plan is a protocol that lays out exactly how any remains that may be found will be handled including who should be notified. We follow both New York State and City requirements, New York City Landmarks, and the New York State Historic Preservation Office. The Unanticipated Discoveries Plan is a set of very strict procedures that have to be adhered to, to make sure that everything is being handled very sensitively.
- Memorialization is something entirely different: Part of the objectives for this group is to identify recommendations for what that could look like.

Q: Is it true that the remains are disarticulated because of constant development in the area and the land constantly being disturbed, and that they were actually removed, or cast away from their original burial site?

- We did not identify any intact undisturbed burial shafts or burials on the site. Because all the human remains that were found were located in disturbed soils, it is likely that the original burials were disturbed at some point in the past. It is possible that intact burials exist in areas that were not tested, such as under the sidewalks on Church Avenue, but based on the documentary research, the subsurface conditions observed below grade, and the mixed soils, at this point in time, we believe the remains found on site are most likely from previously disturbed burials.

Q: Around the affordable housing portion of this. Do you have a layout? Do you have parameters?

- In short, the City hasn't predetermined the layout of the site or the program that will be used to develop the affordable housing. It's up to these stakeholders and the community at large to articulate what the priorities and goals are for the site, whether in terms of site layout or populations served by the housing. That said, there are various design and financing parameters HPD and all developers must follow because of federal, state and local laws including zoning and building codes. The financing parameters are often determined by the which HPD program we use and are outlined in the corresponding term sheets. We will spend more time in the Task Force going into at least the basics on these different programs, the corresponding terms sheets, and their requirements.

Q: What is the maintenance of the lot currently?

- The DSNY Lot Cleaning Unit has previously provided maintenance at this lot, but their capacity has been limited by budget cuts. We can discuss as a group how best to address this issue.

Additional questions were captured following the meeting as part of a post-meeting survey. All questions will be captured in a new document that will become a resource for the Task Force members and public.

Next Steps

At the end of the meeting, the follow set of next steps were outlined to the attending Task Force members.

- **All members should review all additional resources**, including slide decks with links to Historical and Archeological research reports, etc. All of these resources are attached along with these notes in the post-meeting email.
- In early end of December and early January we will schedule **1-on-1 sessions with each Task Force member and/or organization** to hear firsthand your perspectives, needs and intention for the process. To prepare, please gather your thoughts on any questions or insights you would like to discuss. These conversations will help inform our next touch points and overall community engagement plan.
- TYTHEdesign is utilizing the information shared today to build a **robust community engagement plan** (that will take into account your interests, needs and the condensed timeline). The plan (including calendar dates) will be shared in early January.
- **Next Task Force meeting will be in January.** Expect communication (emails, calendar invitations) to come from TYTHEdesign in the future.