

Flatbush African Burial Ground Remembrance and Redevelopment Task Force

September 1, 2021, from 5:30-8:00pm | Task Force Meeting #7 Notes

Table of Contents

- I. Meeting Summary
 - II. Community Visioning Report Overview and Development Presentation
 - III. Discussion Reflection: Task Force Feedback on Recommendations
 - IV. Questions and Answers
 - V. Next Steps
 - VI. Attendance
-

Agenda for the Meeting

I. Meeting Summary

FABGRR Task Force Meeting #7 was held on Wednesday, September 1st in the evening from 5:30-8:00pm. This meeting provided the opportunity for the Task Force to review and discuss the draft recommendations to be included in the Community Visioning Report before they are shared with the public. The meeting included presentations from the City Team (TYTHEdesign and HPD), Q&A, and full group discussions. 6 FABGRR Task Force Members, along with 5 City agency staff and 3 consultants were in attendance. The meeting was recorded on Zoom and made accessible to the public via livestream.

II. Community Visioning Report Overview and Development Presentation

Before discussing the Community Visioning Report and Request for Proposal documents, the City Team reminded the group how public materials can be accessed, including the documentary research report from Historical Perspectives, Inc. published at the end of July 2021.

Next, HPD provided an overview of the topics to be covered by the Community Visioning Report and how the report will inform the Request for Proposals (RFP) evaluation. More specifically, the HPD team explained how a competitive RFP process serves to maximize public benefits; how it allows for competitive review of proposals; how the RFP and Community Visioning Report guides prospective RFP respondents to craft proposals for memorialization and affordable housing uses; and finally, reminded the group of the expected next steps as this phase of community engagement prior to the release of the RFP concludes. As an introduction to the contents of the Community Visioning Report, the City Team confirmed that the recommendations identified are directly sourced from feedback provided in the 6 prior Task Force Meetings, 3 Public Workshops, and the Community Questionnaire. Additionally, the TYTHE Team also acknowledged the limiting factors of the engagement and its ability to reach all members of the community, and detailed how the Public Report Back events will be used in finalizing the Community Visioning Report.

III. Discussion Reflection: Task Force Feedback on Recommendations

To support the discussion regarding the draft recommendations to be included in the Community Visioning Report, TYTHEdesign presented the draft recommendations and provided time for the Task Force to share any feedback. The following is a summary of these discussions.

Feedback on Memorialization Recommendations

- There should be more emphasis placed on the need for adequate outdoor space. Outdoor spaces were briefly alluded to near where the memorial will be situated. But in the context of developing in a Community District that has extremely little park space, the need for open green space may be more appropriate over housing.
- The memorialization and the housing development recommendations have always felt separate, but they are not two separate things. If the housing is going to be built, it should consider the memorial and they should be seen as one.
- The recommendations here are not the clear and concise recommendations that the community had stated and do not give an honest reflection of the feedback that no housing or a building should be erected on the site now that they are aware of the burial ground. The only way to be responsive to the concerns heard from the community is to pause the RFP process and take development out of the conversation.

Feedback on Affordable Housing Recommendations

- Regarding housing need data for the neighborhood, it is important to not single out CD17. There is overcrowding in both CD14 and CD17. It is important to make that correction.
- HPD has not done enough due diligence when explaining how to operationalize community land trusts. An overview was provided, but did not go into enough detail. It is important that a conversation and presentation around the mechanics of community land trusts takes place with the community to ensure that decisions such as forming a community land trust can be arrived at in a manner that is informed, concrete and transparent.

Feedback on Future Engagement and Relationship with the City and Future Developer

- It might be helpful to include a section in the report on the opportunities and challenges that are presented in the context of Task Force/Developer partnership.
- As this process move forward, many of the stakeholders for this project may change. No matter the new individuals involved, Task Force members hope that everyone's further participation will further reflect community insights, needs and voices. This would lead to the best outcomes and process moving forward.

IV. Questions and Answers

During the meeting, FABGRR 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 in-person responses that are for informational purposes only and are not written in any particular order.

Q: Will the community visioning report be shared via press mediums, or are there available details on how the report will be shared more broadly? What is the distribution plan?

The City Team will be emailing the report to all Task Force members in addition to community members who have signed up for project updates or have provided their contact information during the three community workshops. When the RFP is officially released, it will also include the community visioning report. Notice of the release of RFPs are generally advertised in the city's newspapers, but if there are additional ideas for distribution and publicity, we welcome the feedback.

Q: How prescriptive will the community visioning report be, and how will it illustrate how the recommendations will be operationalized? Who oversees that the recommendations are addressed?

When we evaluate RFP responses, the review team's job is to take that feedback, and evaluate how prospective development teams are proposing to meet the needs and operationalize the recommendations outlined in the community visioning report. This could be in terms of design, or how certain components will be addressed through the development programs proposed. HPD, in part, reviews how the proposal submissions achieve the recommendations that are put forth in the community visioning report. Once a development team is selected, the pre-development process will involve HPD working with the development team's community engagement lead to identify key stakeholders they should liaise with, additional community organizations they can consult further in achieving their work, and continue building a relationship with the Task Force to support community outreach.

Certain elements could be reflected into the RFP responses, while others are established further along the process in introducing the selected team to different stakeholders and community members, and setting expectations for the life of the project. For example, how the memorial operates in the future will in part be based on how they are responding to the community feedback related to the honoring of the site history as cited in the report. However, additional details and development of an initial plan though will rely on the developers' ongoing level of engagement with the community, an expectation set forth by the RFP. Ensuring that the development team is responsive to the community will require ongoing engagement beyond the team being selected.

Q: How would a development team responding to the RFP articulate how they would go about operationalizing the recommendations? How would the City identify the most thoughtful applicant?

Part of the purpose of the RFP is to identify developers who are interested in working on these projects. They are looking to be awarded a site based on a competitive criterion, which includes how they thoughtfully respond to the recommendations sourced through community feedback. For example, if a community is asking for more housing opportunities for families with low incomes, a fitting proposal would include a development program that prioritizes creation of affordable housing for that group. Additionally, the competitive component of an RFP is calling on teams to generate new ideas based on the community feedback that we might not be thinking about as an agency.

Q: Is it up to the developer to build the memorial in addition to the housing? Do you have confidence that the developer would give both projects the same justice?

We believe the developers would understand the importance of both, especially when thinking of the size of the space. When the developer is selected, they are bringing along a team that could include community organizations that meet the programming and design needs for a project as it is further developed after selection. The development team will have to work with the community to come up with a more specific memorial design, and guidelines for maintenance and operation. This will require an effective team to hold ongoing, grassroots level discussions about how well their design and planning meets the community vision as it

evolves throughout the process from initial community engagement to further engagement once a development team is part of the project.

Q: How will human remains discovered be handled? Will the development be halted?

Before any development on the site begins for either the housing or the memorial, an archaeological work plan and protocol for the sensitive and respectful handling of any human remains that may be found in the future will be created and then reviewed and approved by the LPC. This protocol will set out who should be contacted, what sort of ceremonies should be conducted, what sort of testing or analysis should happen, and where and how human remains should be reburied. The engagement process to date has helped identify priorities for this protocol and who should be consulted throughout the process. The plan will ensure that future work would be halted if human remains are discovered during future work to the site, construction activity would pause until requirements of the plan are fulfilled to ensure for sensitive and respectful treatment.

Q: What is the status of the process from HPD? Has an RFP already been drafted and circulated? Has there been a Memorandum of Understanding as to the requirements of what the community is looking for regarding a construction agency?

The site is still under city ownership and no development team has been identified to move forward with plans to develop the site. The transfer from city ownership to a developer entity cannot be finalized until the ULURP process is complete, including a City Council vote, and a land disposition agreement takes place. We understand concerns from this community and mistrust in the government process to ensure a project will meet the many goals for this site. We hope that by maintaining open communication that we can continue transparency and get all questions answered. Again, nothing is finalized in terms of ownership or plans for the site, until the public approval process (ULURP) is completed. This process mandates opportunities for formal public commenting before it goes through a City Council vote.

Q: What exactly is the Request for Qualifications?

The RFQ was a document issued to ask development teams interested in participating in a future RFP to submit their qualifications. By doing this, our goal is to ensure this is not a process where any developer can simply apply, but message that the development team must have a vision for the site that is mission-driven and can prioritize the multiple goals of the project, rather than looking to turn a quick profit.

Q: Is it possible for the Task Force to get a list of those developers who submitted or inquired to the RFQ?

HPD can follow-up with the Task Force on this. Sometimes in a competitive process there are privacy and conflict of interest concerns and are not reviewed outside of the agency. We will also provide this transparency at the Public Report Back meeting.

Q: Is there a precedent as to how the developer will be held accountable? And how will the developer interface with the Task Force?

When thinking about the process, it is about holding developers accountable. There is no financing of a project unless there is public approvals in place. It would be in the utmost interest of developers therefore to comply with these requests coming from the agency, with additional pressure from the Task Force and community boards. There are many different scenarios of how that plays out, and we are aware of the dynamics that could happen when a developer is not cooperating with the community, and we would work to ensure that will not happen here.

Q: Are you concerned about hosting the Public Report Back on September 11th given the expected focus and collective remembrance on the 20th anniversary of the 2001 tragedy?

HPD wanted to ensure there was sufficient time to incorporate any feedback at an in-person event into the community visioning report. We anticipate releasing the RFP in early October. And given the timing that has elapsed, this date was the only one that worked within this timeline, with the following Saturday, 9/18 on hold as a rain date. It was a difficult constraint to work with, but we must be able to respond to the public and make tweaks to the report before it is issued.

IV. Next Steps

To close the meeting, TYTHEdesign presented the next steps and expectations for the FABGRR Task Force related to the development of the Community Visioning Report. Additionally, presented expectation for the upcoming Public Report Back Events on September 9th and September 11th.

V. Attendance

Name	Organizational Affiliation
Ryan Lynch	Office of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams
Samantha Bernardine	Erasmus Hall High School for Youth and Community Development
Shawn Campbell	Community Board 14
Reverend Sheldon N.N. Hamblin	St. Paul's Church in the Village of Flatbush
Tyrone McDonald	Neighborhood Housing Services of Brooklyn CDC Inc. (NHS Brooklyn)
Robin Redmond	Flatbush Development Corporation
New York City Agencies + Task Force Technical Advisors	
Perris Straughter	New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
Josh Saal	New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
Uriah Johnson	New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
Lena Ferguson	NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC)
Timothy Frye	New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)
Kristina Drury	TYTHEdesign
Claudie Mabry	TYTHEdesign
Hillary Clark	TYTHEdesign