

CB7 Town Hall Transportation and the Environment Meeting Minutes September 17, 2018

Introductions:

- Cesar Zuniga, Chair of CB7 thanks Town Hall participants, gives recap of past town halls, and sets ground rules.
- Councilman Carlos Menchaca gives remarks, and discusses importance of community participation and involvement in this process
- John Fontillas thanks town hall participants, reviews purpose of town hall and next steps in the rezoning process
- Speakers Introduced:
 - Ryan Chavez: Uprose, Infrastructure Coordinator
 - Ryan Lynch: Policy Director for Brooklyn Borough President's Office, former Vice Chair of CB7

Moderated Discussion:

- John Fontillas asks question about gentrification: *"There have been a lot of changes on the waterfront/Sunset Park in the past 10 years - new parks, rejuvenated warehouses, new infill housing, area seems more desirable, is attracting new people, increased tax base and investment, safer streets, more business opportunities and jobs. Why isn't this a good thing, are there things here we need to be aware about?"*
 - Ryan Chavez gives a brief background on Uprose, a community based organization, founded in 1966 in Sunset Park by Puerto Rican activists that fought for basic social services, civil rights, dignity, and against police brutality. They were a social service organization until the mid-90s when the mission, at the request of community, shifted to address environmental and public health concerns. They stopped the siting of major power plants and built new waterfront park, street trees. They have worked on transportation justice and pedestrian safety, and ensuring community members are given tools and contexts to advocate for their own agendas.
 - Chavez expressed excitement that the conversation is framed around the 197-A plan which was a community-led plan that outlines how Sunset Park as a community should develop. Ryan notes that this community thrives on change, beginning with Scandinavian immigration, Latin American immigration, Asian Immigration, Middle Eastern immigration--change is a central asset to the community and its important not to let these conversations about displacement, economic investment to be about anti-change. He notes community when talking about development and change needs to ask the fundamental question of who is driving that change given the recent radical change that in the community that puts at risk Sunset Park's working and middle class character, ethnic diversity, and industrial employment base. He notes that the 197-A plan makes a central priority the preservation of affordable manufacturing and

industrial space, which is a source of public health hazard, but also a fundamental source of economic opportunity for community members who aren't getting the degrees needed for the tech sector.

- John Fontillas: Follows up and says its beyond the local and calls out the discussion of the innovation economy in the development on the waterfront, or the idea that creative businesses and design, media, fashion technology have ascended. He asks Ryan Lynch: *Can the innovation economy and the blue collar jobs in industrial manufacturing coexist? Is it an either or proposition?*
 - Ryan Lynch says these ideas are not mutually exclusive, blue collar and the innovation sector have to work hand in hand if they're going to be successful. There are back of house operations that have to be in place when talking about blue collar jobs and blue collar jobs that are necessary to see to fruition the innovation sectors' investments. He notes the Borough President's belief that one of the most untapped resources is our youth and has committed over 100 million dollars over the past 4 years to funding computer science and tech innovations to ensure creation of pipelines from elementary to high school to career to train a workforce that is ready to take innovation sector jobs. Ryan notes there is a place for blue collar job in Sunset Park in Brooklyn, but you have to invest in both blue and white collar jobs to be successful
 - Ryan Chavez responds and clarifies what they mean by industrial and manufacturing revitalization. He wants it to be understood why the community is advocating for manufacturing expansion and revitalization -- because jobs in the manufacturing sector pay double the amount that service and retail and hotel service sector jobs pay, which is important in the conversation of commercial and hotel development on the waterfront.
 - Ryan Chavez notes that the community needs to ask questions about innovation economy industries and whether they are good targets of public investment and what the impact will be on attracting those types of businesses and workers.
 - Notes Sunset Park has a long history in the garment industry and fashion could be a sector that builds on garment sector, but it is important to note that this is concurrent with the unravelling of the garment district in Manhattan and the community needs to ask how many jobs in the industry will be new companies and how many will be companies that are pushed out of Manhattan?
 - Chavez also raises questions of pathways of community members to access to those jobs and tech sector development on working class communities (i.e. Silicon Valley)
 - Chavez raises question of the film industry, which he notes is already booming across the city, and may not be an industry that needs government subsidies.
 - Ryan Lynch: notes that there are a series of existing garment manufacturers and notes that the Borough President agrees--they don't want a relocation of jobs they want new jobs, and new opportunities for residents.

- John Fontillas asks about EDC and City Renewal Policies: *The City inherited a lot of the waterfront land after the demise of the port industry. They are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on improving the Brooklyn Army Terminal to build a freight transfer station, the Made in New York campus at Bush Terminal are slated for fashion and media, and new developments at the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal. It seems like we are at the mercy of an agency that doesn't have much interplay with the community. Can you talk about what we as a community can do to determine how that land is reused. What do you think about their strategy or progress to date?*
 - Ryan Lynch notes progress has been made through Councilman Carlos Menchaca, with the Sunset Park task force and initiatives that allow the community to have a real voice at the table. He notes this has had a ripple effect in NYC, and notes EDC has duplicated what is being done in Sunset Park and brought a community task force together to talk about the vision for a Broadway Triangle development effort the Borough President's office has initiated. He notes that 10 years ago when he was Vice Chair of the Community Board, EDC had a heavier hand in the direction of investments and development, but now there is more improvement in empowering the voices of community in a meaningful way in these discussions and a momentum with how EDC is viewing their role vis a vis the community.

- John Fontillas asks Chavez: *What do you think about their strategy (EDC) and them being largest landowners in waterfront area, and what can we do to have impact on their decision making?*
 - Ryan Chavez notes it's important to points out that half of the industrial space is owned by EDC and half is privately owned. Notes EDC will play a critical role in in the fate of NYC's last and largest industrial waterfronts. Chavez notes that with properties like the Brooklyn Army Terminal, there have been steps in the right direction but notes EDC should run a transparent community engagement process from the get-go so that they have a say from day one on how public assets are used. Chavez notes big opportunity to create a base for offshore wind industries and incentivize actual manufacturing uses along the waterfront.

- John Fontillas asks: *A lot of the industrial land is a low-lying area. After Hurricane Sandy a lot of blocks were inundated, how can you have industrial zone with hazardous waste areas, how can we ensure development going forward takes climate change into account?*
 - Ryan Chaves notes Community could benefit from climate solutions, set out the renewable energy infrastructure that will fortify and adapt the city to the centuries of trouble ahead. Chavez notes there are properties in Sunset park that are industrial and contain hazardous chemicals and Uprose has done mapping of where chemical source points are in Sunset Park, where storm surges are likely to occur, to come up up with climate adaptation programs and strategies to make sure they can maintain industry and jobs while adapting to real effects of

climate change. Chavez notes that this is an example of where it's important to listen to community voice and adopt a nuanced view on how the community can change and address real concerns while not undermining the economic health of the community.

- John Fontillas asks question on truck routes: *Sunset Park has suffered from the number of trucks using neighborhood streets, not just on the waterfront, but connecting thru residential neighborhoods to other parts of Brooklyn. We've seen a rise in traffic-related accidents, deaths, congestion, health-related impacts from elevated carbon monoxide levels. What can the community do about it?*
 - Ryan Lynch notes there is a lot of opportunity as we're thinking about rezoning to rethink mobility. He points out the 3rd ave elevated gowanus, which presents a physical and psychological barrier. Lynch notes if you want to reconnect communities to the waterfront, you need to break down those barrier and create safer connections
 - Notes that to break down psychological barrier the community needs to institutionalize ideas just as the DOT has done with the "Under the Elevated" initiative to create spaces that people want to be around-- whether it's through murals, lighting, beautification.
 - Also notes need for increased mobility options like protected bike lanes, citibike, which is headquartered in Sunset Park but doesn't provide city bike stations in the community.
- John asks about the regional proposal plan to bring freight to 65th and truck traffic: *You hear that this plan will reduce truck traffic, but how do we address that in terms of planning? How can we as residents of Sunset Park be okay with the idea of having more trucks in our area because it reduces traffic regionally?*
 - John Lynch notes we need a DOT comprehensive truck plan, as Jeremy Laufer of CB7 has advocated for for decades. DOT hasn't provided the vision to address that comprehensive truck need. He notes a need to use the waterfront as much as possible and rethink rail infrastructure to keep vehicle amounts down, use freight and water, and think of ways to be innovative with mobility.
 - Ryan Chavez notes NYC relies 90% on trucks for delivering goods in and out of the city, which is not sustainable. He notes that in the plans for rethinking how we are moving freight across the region, discussion is largely around regional reduction of truck trips, but it remains unclear what impacts will be felt locally in Sunset Park. Chavez notes importance of local engagement to ensure they are considering local public health concerns, and pushing for non-dirty uses of fuel in private and public sectors.
 - Ryan Lynch notes that there also needs to be consideration of using clean fuel for vehicles operating on site as well
- John asks: *Combined sewer outfalls, street reconstruction, electrical generators, waste transfer stations, concrete plants, federal detention center--the Sunset Park waterfront*

seems to always be the repository for these noxious uses. Why does this have to be, why aren't other communities burdened?

- Ryan Lynch notes the need to organize, given historically Sunset Park is a largely immigration community with not enough political power and was not given the chance to organize around the noxious uses that have been cited along the waterfront. Lynch notes that as political pushback in Sunset Park grows, there's an opportunity to prevent this from happening.
- John Fontillas asks Ryan Chavez to *discuss social infrastructure, imminent threats to waterfront moving forward, and what should be done to defend against them?*
 - Ryan Chavez notes the proposed rezoning of Industry City is the most radical and consequential proposals and is guaranteed to fundamentally change the face, fabric, culture, and the essence of Sunset Park. He notes displacement has a way of chipping away at networks, the strength of institutions, the folks that make up those institutions, and of weakening social cohesion and resilience. Notes the need to keep the conversation on what the implications of the rezoning proposal are and the impacts of many different aspects of community and what it means for resilience and social cohesion
 - Ryan Lynch notes that the Borough President has a hand in this rezoning as well, and are eager to take input on this particular issue. He says on the point of the social needs of the community, even before industry city existed, the city has needed to better connect people to resources they are entitled to.

Questions from the Audience:

- *What would be so bad about the garment sector coming here as opposed to New Jersey?*
 - Ryan Chavez: It's not matter of it being bad, its a question of whether jobs that are emerging in the garment center in Sunset Park will be relocations from the garment district in Manhattan or will there be businesses setting up shop looking to hire (including local community members)
- *Who owns the BQE and what about the thought about getting a ramp for trucks in the BQE?*
 - Ryan Lynch notes that in terms of feasibility, unsure if its possible given federal capital investment and and current administration priorities.
- *Do you anticipate proposed rezoning affect residents of industry city what will that do to tenants rent of industry city? When elements of innovation economy were discussed, neither retail or hospitality were mentioned. Are retail space and hotels necessary to have for an innovation economy?*
 - Ryan Chavez notes that Jamestown Properties properties is a high end commercial real estate developer (Chelsea Market, etc) and thinks the types of jobs that are easily accessible to typical sunset park community member will see their chances at doing business in Industry city get any easier. Chavez notes on

the second question, the community should ask about the impacts not just on the existing tenants of industry city but the industrial sector throughout Sunset Park. Chavez believes there has been no justification for why hotels are need in the middle of an industrial area, though there is a business case for making more money per sq ft for commercial, residential and hotel development. Chavez does not think it is compatible to promote hotel and retail with the need to promote affordable manufacturing and industrial space.

- *How will parking be addressed from this development, if they cant park because of Citibike stations, will additional parking facilities be added? And is so won't these provide an impact of emissions and more traffic coming into the area?*
 - Ryan Lynch notes need for parking demand management study. Offstreet parking is not the most efficient use of land, especially considering need to maximize economic value of land in terms of making more jobs. Building more parking doesn't create more parking, it incentivizes more people to drive. Lynch notes need to come up with a solution of more mobility options, discouraging of car use, and figuring out ways to manage the demand for parking.
- *What about considering the role of the regional rail network from BAT interfaces with SBMT. What's happening with the BAT SBMT conversation are we looking at a further connection between the two to tie together the regional railways that exist all the way to Long Island and CT.*
 - Someone from audience notes that they work for company of Design of cross harbor tunnel, and the money has not found to build it yet.
- *Do you know example of similar industrial projects that were done well?*
 - Chavez notes you can find private industrial development bringing industrial life to underutilized, but if you are rolling back rules and regulation to protect industrial business developments and when there is a concerted attack on industry in the heart of industrial business center, it is challenging.
- *How about affordable industrial space? What we can do to ensure that?*
 - Ryan lynch notes bringin mom and pop shops to the area requires connecting them to resources they need, and the incentives to stay in business and grow jobs to strengthen industrial business zones--the issue is a huge lack information on resources available.
- *What can we do to support people walking to work?*
 - Lynch notes Sunset Park is the highest walk to work neighborhood in the city, raising the need to invest in pedestrian safety underneath elevated gowanus, double down on investment, create better cyclist infrastructure, and new transit investments into allowing free metrocard transfers to the ferry of citibike and using the waterfront to improve mobility.