

Summary Findings

Webinar and Online Engagement

Comprehensive Neighborhood Planning: Mobility and Sustainable Infrastructure

Your LIC

The data summarized here comes from community outreach activities conducted by the Your LIC team. These activities included public input posted on the [Your LIC Community Comprehensive Neighborhood Planning: Mobility and Sustainable Infrastructure site](#). Because of the declared State of Emergency by Governor Cuomo due to COVID-19, the planned public workshop on March 9, 2020 was changed to an online webinar, which included real-time questions and comments from the community. The rapid changes in the public health advisory resulted in an announcement of the change from an in-person to an online format less than eight hours before the start of the webinar. Nonetheless, more than 80 community members logged on and asked questions during the 90-minute webinar. A full video of the webinar and questions submitted online and during the webinar can be accessed [here](#).

The webinar focused on the potential infrastructure and design elements that would improve sustainability of the 28-acre site and enhance mobility. The goal of the activities was to engage community participants to help inform the plans that the four developers (TF Cornerstone, MAG Partners, Simon Baron, and Plaxall) propose for the area under consideration.

The webinar began with an announcement by Ebony Young, Vice President of Corporate Social Responsibility for TF Cornerstone, about their intentions for the use of a portion of the City-owned land within the district. In response to clear messages delivered by the community in prior public Your LIC workshops, she announced that there will be no luxury, market-rate housing on the two sites that TF Cornerstone was designated to develop by New York City through an open RFP process in 2017. She further announced that the sites would incorporate a school, job-generating commercial uses, and significant public open space. Vice President Young reminded the participants that the publicly owned Department of Education building is controlled only by the City of New York, not TF Cornerstone.

Young was followed by a 35-minute presentation by three experts in urban planning and sustainable infrastructure. Riley MacPhee from SHoP Architects, the masterplan architect on

the project, introduced the overarching structure of the webinar and encouraged participants to use the Q&A function on the webinar site. He told participants that questions would be answered via the webinar's Q&A chat function, through the YourLIC.nyc site, or live during the webinar following the three presentations. MacPhee then presented a brief overview of the importance of sustainable infrastructure in relation to mobility, water and energy use. MacPhee noted that:

- In NYC, buildings use 83% of energy (compared to 37% nationally);
- Buildings produce 71% of NYC's carbon emissions;
- NYC sewers overflow 25 million gallons of sewage annually into the East River during storms; and
- Vehicles are not efficient in dense cities such as NYC and are responsible for only 27% of carbon emissions.

MacPhee spoke about the opportunity for a larger benefit to the environment through sustainable infrastructure afforded by four developers working together on a district-wide basis that could create a more efficient level of density where more people are served by fewer and more consolidated systems that can work across building sites. He outlined some of the strategies that could be used to meet the 28-acre site's goal of reducing daily water usage and the carbon footprint of residents by 50-75% compared to current City averages. The site is considering how to create district-wide energy solutions and reduce net building energy use and carbon emissions. MacPhee stated that the project's goal is to significantly reduce average resident daily carbon footprint and projected a reduction from 6 tons to 2 tons.

MacPhee presented information about existing mobility issues, including with transit and road infrastructure, the problems existing sidewalks pose for people with disabilities, and the high rates of pedestrian complaints along Vernon Boulevard, 44th Drive, and along 45th Road.

MacPhee presented the goals of the project to improve mobility through better waterfront access, traffic reduction, connection to jobs within the district, improved pedestrian safety, accessibility and affordability. He reviewed maps of the current public transit network, encouraging participants to specify their own experiences with issues to improve the planning for any future changes. MacPhee emphasized how improved bike lanes, new roads, pathways to ferries, buses and subways, shuttle buses, and on-site jobs can positively impact mobility. He reviewed multiple maps that reflected the potential of the site to develop a people-first street network with attention to safe access to schools. He indicated that the focus of the district by the four developers is to make the site more walkable and accessible, to create infrastructure that supports alternate transportation (such as protected bike lanes and bike sharing opportunities), and to provide shuttle buses that could link to areas outside of the district,

including Queensbridge Houses. MacPhee encouraged participants to think about the future, and what transportation should look like 10 to 30 years from now.

Jason Loiselle, from Sherwood Design Engineers, outlined the ways in which the comprehensive planning of the 28-acre site allows for the creation of a district-wide water re-use systems and energy-efficient management. Loiselle emphasized the positive ecological impact of green infrastructure (using vegetation and soil to clean water), targeted storm water retention (reducing sewer overflows by collecting and holding district storm water until after rain events) and water reuse (collecting and cleaning district wastewater for reuse on site). He went into detail about how holding storm water until after a rain event lessened impact on the combined sewer system.

Loiselle spoke of the way in which coordination allowed for a district-wide approach to energy conservation, through decreased reliance on non-renewable energy sources currently in use, and reduction of overall building energy use through environmentally sensitive design. The goals of the energy reduction initiative are to:

- Improve air quality through use of renewable energy resources;
- Ability to expand energy reduction processes to the neighborhood, particularly to Queensbridge Houses; and
- Create a path toward a carbon neutral district.

Loiselle presented details on three possible energy management systems to use in the heating and cooling of buildings: river water heat exchange, geothermal heat exchange, and sewer heat exchange.

Bernardo Matalucci from SHoP Architects presented information on how the 28-acre district could advance sustainable infrastructure through healthier buildings. Among other things, Matalucci noted that:

- NYC buildings currently contribute 71% of NYC's greenhouse gases and we have a finite amount of time to reduce carbon emissions as the population grows; and
- Current buildings may contain hazardous materials with long-term health impacts.

Matalucci noted that some key goals for new buildings on the site would be to:

- Deploy sustainable materials and building design that will minimize energy loss and maximize efficiency;
- Improve internal air quality through technical and personalized controls and increased use of natural ventilation to create better internal micro-climates; and

- Support mental and physical health through circulation, proximity to shared amenities that foster community, and access to nature and restorative spaces.

MacPhee, Loisel, and Matalucci then gathered to answer many of the questions posed by participants online. The entire webinar is available for viewing on the YourLIC.nyc site.

The summary below synthesizes the questions asked and answered live during the webinar by theme. A complete listing of all questions asked and answered either during the webinar or on the YourLIC.nyc site can be found [here](#).

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS BY CATEGORY

I. Sustainable Infrastructure:

Question *“What should our goals be in terms of sustainability? What is the global best practice?”* – Workshop 4 Webinar Participant

Answer: *“Right now, we are in the stage where we are trying to define what those best practices are or what those goals should be. But I can say that working at this level with this unprecedented collection of four different developers working together on an NYC waterfront development that we are able to co-optimize the different mixed uses with this type of different mixed uses creates a neighborhood. This creates a balance of the vitality and activity in a site and also gives you the opportunity to have infrastructure systems that are optimized that are maximized to their maximum potential.”* – Riley MacPhee, SHoP Architects

Questions from participants ranged from issues of comprehensive planning for the East River (“...bring in the [Army] Corp of Engineers and the State”) to questions about the relationship of density to the resiliency efforts (“You cannot talk about infrastructure in the abstract”), to specific technical questions about NYC requirements for building in a flood zone.

There is clear community sentiment that sustainable infrastructure is highly valued. The aspirations of many of the participants is to go beyond the resiliency efforts for the 28-acre site and provide improvements for a larger segment of Long Island City community. Participants want to see as many strategies in use for resilient infrastructure as possible. There was little participant response to the proposed 25-50% reduction in daily water usage or carbon footprint, the use of district-wide energy generation, or pedestrian safety or waterfront access.

II. Mobility:

QUESTION: *“How will you promote sustainable transportation to and from Anable basin? As a community member, it is important to me that the development does not encourage car usage, which is dangerous, polluting and unnecessary?”* – Workshop 4 Webinar Participant

QUESTION: *“What if you don't ride a bike and how does this help us get into Manhattan?”* – Workshop 4 Webinar Participant

ANSWER: *“We are planning comprehensively with every mode of transportation available to us, including increased bike lanes, new roads and pathways to ferries, buses and subways, and shuttle buses. In addition, by introducing jobs in LIC, we are reducing the dependency on transportation to Manhattan.”* – Jason Loiselle, Sherwood Design Engineers

QUESTION: *“Any plans for 44th Dr.?”* – Workshop 4 Webinar Participant

ANSWER: *“44th Drive is the spine of this development. We agree it's very important and could use real improvement, and we're hopeful as we advance our rezoning, we will engage with the City agencies that control the public streets to make enhancements. Ideas may include installing a protected bike lane, traffic calming measures, and more.”* - Jason Loiselle, Sherwood Design Engineers

Participants actively engaged in questioning the structure and future of mobility measures in the 28-acre district and beyond. Some participants wanted to understand how public transportation actions are determined (“Who decides where the bus routes go?”), the status of current changes (such as the MTA's recently released a Draft Queens Bus Network Redesign Plan), or the status of other major transportation projects (“What is the status of the Brooklyn Queens Connector (BQX)?”).

A significant gap noted by participants in all the current transportation maps shown at the beginning of the session was the paucity or lack of public transportation from the NYCHA Housing developments and the 28-acre site. One participant noted “I'm really missing a mapping of increased mobility from and to all NYCHA housing in Queens West.” Your LIC responded, “We have been considering a private shuttle. Looking at the transit map, there are definitely some areas that have holes. The answer is that we're open to all transit options and trying to think about a multi-modal approach where we're bringing potentially a protected bike lane all the way down from north of Queensbridge into the district and extending that through into Queens West. And then also tying that into a much wider network.... We see the

waterfront esplanade as a key connector north and south of the district that can be used by pedestrians, bikes, and less traditional transportation methods like scooters or others.”

Participants were very interested in the possible changes to existing transportation conditions. One participant asked, “Will the existing streets stay the same? Or do you have a plan to build new roads in and around the site?” Your LIC responded, “One of the benefits of four stakeholders working together is the ability to improve the roads comprehensively throughout the district for the neighborhood. The streets will be modified to enhance connectivity and create a comprehensive plan across the 28 acres. We want to make the streets wider, make them more pedestrian and bike-friendly, and more.”

Several of the participants had questions about public transportation. One participant asked, “Is an extra subway station closer to the water in the cards? Are the MTA buses going to be re-routed to the district? Your LIC responded, “This is controlled by the MTA. We look forward to a fruitful dialogue with the agency as part of the public process,” although another participant replied, “No subway on the waterfront!!! are you people crazy?”

Another direction of the participant questions was the status of current talks with the MTA, asking, “How far along are the developers in talking with the MTA about these transit improvements? Is the MTA on board? to which Your LIC responded, “We look forward to a fruitful dialogue with the MTA as part of the public process.”

And participants wanted more details on the public transit situation, asking “How do I get from home to work and back?” Your LIC responded, “Our goal is to reduce reliance on public transit by creating a place where people can live and work.”

III. District Water:

QUESTION: *“How does the system of pulling water from the river for heating and cooling differ from similar methods that have drawn criticism from environmentalists and river advocates when it has been done at nuclear power plants?” – Workshop 4 Webinar Participant*

ANSWER: *“The heat dissipation required for nuclear power is different in magnitudes in comparison to residential and commercial building demands. difference is in temperature we are trying to mitigate are very minor. We have a team of world class marine engineers and geo-hydrologists on the team right now who are doing preliminary studies to understand what the actual heat differential is going to be over time in the range of degrees. That degree differential translates into significant energy savings. There will be no contamination of the water, in fact it*

will go through a filtration system and return the water cleaner than when it was taken in. The water will be transferred back into the river where there is the least amount of ecology. A degree differential of half or a quarter of a degree will be dissipated immediately and we are undergoing significant studies to do that and it will be monitored by the state through its lifetime.” – Your LIC Online Response

Participant questions about water centered less on the proposed water usage reduction, water reuse, and water environmental mitigation strategies than on the relationship of number of residents, building any structure, and a long-term future horizon for any building along the water in New York City.

IV. Process Issues:

QUESTION: *“Maybe you should plan the next meeting for after the coronavirus? + If the coronavirus is still an issue on 3/23 then there will be a real need to have a community meeting therefore can rescheduling be possible?” – Workshop 4 Webinar Participant*

QUESTION: *“How does this webinar fulfill the need to reach out to as much of the community as possible?” – Workshop 4 Webinar Participant*

ANSWER: *“All of our public workshops to date have been in-person with 100-200 attendees from the community. Due to the state of emergency in New York regarding coronavirus, we decided we had to put public health and safety first and move this workshop online to a webinar. We hope things improve and that we will be able to hold our 3/23 workshop in-person. That said, thank you to the nearly 100 people who tuned in for this webinar! Our next meeting is planned for 3/23 and we'll be monitoring the situation closely with the hopes that things improve.” – Your LIC Online Response*

Several participants wanted to begin the discussion about density of building within the site. One participant said, “We need to increase the density, don't we? I think the city is so expensive because housing and office space is in short supply”, and another participant commented, “How many apartments/residents are planned for the 28-acre site? Hard to assess without that information?” Your LIC responded, “We look forward to discussing the topics of density and uses, including public amenities, commercial and residential at our next public workshop planned for 3/23.” (Note: Due to the ongoing public health emergency related to COVID-19, the workshop planned for 3/23 is being rescheduled to a later date.)

Several participants' questions concerned the new way the four developers have engaged the community prior to any of the mandated public review processes. Some participants express mistrust that the community engagement will actually impact developer's plans. Interesting, this continues to be stated after evidence of clear impact was shown (for example, one participant commented on TF Cornerstone's announcement that in response to the community engagement process, it had committed to no luxury development by stating, "So TF is saying no to luxury development, but yes to a million square foot office building (Amazon anybody??) ..." Your LIC responded, "None of the developers are in touch with Amazon. We have heard from the community the need for good jobs, pathways to careers, and economic empowerment. In addition to public open space and a school, TF Cornerstone will be pursuing commercial uses to bring good jobs to the neighborhood."

Some participants expressed doubt that the community had participated, with one saying "Here's what's problematic too. During all these Your LIC Workshops that vast majority of attendees are either employees at the developers or on the payroll of developers through PR companies", to which Your LIC responded, "Not true. We are proud that hundreds of LIC residents have come out to our public workshops and participated in our online engagements to share their voice for the future of their community."

A variety of question about how New York City's Economic Development Corporation functions to spur development were also raised by the participants. One participant asked, "Why is public land given to TF Cornerstone? Please explain the relationship that the EDC has fostered with TF Cornerstone that the EDC is literally handing over public city property to them (the DOE building and DOT lot): that is public city land and is not the EDC's to just hand over to a developer. Please explain to residents why this was done, especially with zero public input." Your LIC responded, "TF Cornerstone was designated to develop two of the three the public sites along the waterfront in an open request for proposal (RFP) process from the New York City Economic Development Corporation in 2017, with the goal of advancing a project that would benefit the community and the city with a diversity of job-generating uses. The lots that TFC was selected to develop do NOT include the DOE building, which remains under City ownership and control."

Read all of the questions asked during Workshop 4: Mobility and Sustainable Infrastructure online at <https://community.yourlic.nyc/neighborhood-planning>.