



Eva Chan <harlemeastassociation@gmail.com>

Feedback and meeting request from Harlem East Block Association regarding the proposed Timbale Terrace Development

Block Manager <harlemeastassociation@gmail.com>

Fri, Apr 22, 2022 at 1:04 AM

Draft To: Mega Group <mail@megagroup.nyc>, Afro Latin Jazz Alliance <afrolatinjazzalliance@gmail.com>, info@lanterncommunity.org

On Mon, Jan 10, 2022 at 11:47 AM Block Manager <harlemeastassociation@gmail.com> wrote:

Mega Group, Lantern Organization, Afro Latin Jazz Alliance,

I hope this finds you well. We saw that your proposal is now being discussed in community board 11 this week. Is it possible to schedule a time to go over our concerns in the letter below? It would be better for all parties to have this discussion in private on zoom rather than the community board public meeting. If you propose a date and time, we will make ourselves available.

Best regards,

Block managers

On Thu, Sep 23, 2021 at 1:11 PM Block Manager <harlemeastassociation@gmail.com> wrote:

Lantern Organization, Mega Development, Afro Latin Jazz Alliance, Elected officials,

The block association has not received a response to our request.

Can we schedule a meeting with you to discuss these points? Please give us a few dates/times that work for you.

Thank you.

On Sun, Aug 29, 2021 at 4:41 PM Block Manager <harlemeastassociation@gmail.com> wrote:

Date: 29th August, 2021

CC: Council Member District 8 Diana Ayala

CC: Council Member District 9 Bill Perkins

CC: Democratic Representative Kristin Jordan

CC: Assembly Member for District 70 Inez Dickens

CC: Assembly Member for District 68 Robert Rodriguez

CC: Congressman Adriano Espaillat

CC: NY State Senator Brian Benjamin

CC: Department of Housing Preservation Commissioner Louise Carroll

CC: Commanding Officer of 25 Precinct Christopher Henning

CC: Community Board 10 District Manager Shastic Mitchell

CC: Community Board 11 District Manager Angel Mescaïn

To: Lantern Organization, Mega Development, Afro Latin Jazz Alliance,

Based on a recent news report, we believe you are developing the existing police precinct 25 parking lot between 118th and 119th street into a [330 unit building](#) and a [world class jazz performance center](#).

We are writing on behalf of the Harlem East Block Association that includes more than 400 households located next to your building site on 117th Street to 120th Street between Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue.

We look forward to welcoming new residents into our close-knit neighborhood. We would welcome opportunities to collaborate with you on events and to build an even better community jointly together. In this letter, we also want to share some of our common concerns in the hope you will account for them in your development and subsequent operations. And, ***we also request a meeting with the Lantern Organization, Mega Development, and Afro Latin Jazz Alliance as well as elected city officials and the Housing Preservation and Development Corp commissioner Louise Carroll to discuss these points below in detail.***

Some background information

Over the last 20 years, residents have moved to our blocks to enjoy this unique kid-friendly environment with open spaces and a quiet residential neighborhood with low density of pedestrians and car traffic. Here is a quote from a resident: "I am so glad I found this block because I love living in Harlem but it is just too noisy on every other street." Over the last 10 years, numerous block residents were involved in the rezoning plan and we believe that this outcome of creating a densely populated commercial zone with "world class music performance" in a residential area is far from what we have agreed upon. Adding to this, hundreds of original townhouse owners or Co-Op owners were promised long-term dedicated parking spaces on this block and we now know such claim turned out to be false as the car parks on [77 E 118th Street](#), [72 E 120th Street](#) are owned by a private company and are being redeveloped.

In sum, your development as planned, together with the two planned development for >400 new households on the west side of Park Avenue ([77 E 118th Street](#), [72 E 120th Street](#)), are going to bring in >700 households into this small residential block neighborhood and is bound to materially change the nature of our block, bringing in a large volume of people and car traffic and associated noise and air pollution, and simultaneously increasing demand and reducing supply of street and private parking spaces. As such, we are understandably alarmed and are keen to initiate a dialogue with you to mitigate the impacts on us.

For similar reasons, the installation of the music performance center in this space is potentially concerning to us. We find such an operation to be out of character of the neighborhood, currently dominated by healthcare facilities. This wonderful music center seems more appropriately placed on the main commercial thoroughfare such as 116th or 125th street, where the Apollo Theatre, the Caribbean Culture Center, and the Black Theatre are located.

To also provide more context and background of this block, over the last few years, even before the pandemic, this neighborhood experienced a range of quality of life issues such as [high crime rate](#)[1], gun violence associated with nearby businesses, a rat infestation driven by selected poorly managed buildings/businesses, bad neighbors who don't care about the neighborhood leaving dog poop and trash strewn over our pavements, occasional human defecation and urination, drug use near or inside our front yards, and open air drug trading and drug use activities. To add insult to injury, building owners in this block are often hit with fines for trash on the streets and for rat sightings out of no fault of their own. These issues have markedly deteriorated throughout the pandemic. These daily issues our residents battle with are bringing us to a breaking point, so we are extremely weary of additional environmental stress that new developments might impose on us.

A list of concerns and associated suggestions

With this backdrop explained, below are a list of our concerns together with our suggestions of ways to mitigate the concerns. In general, we hope to establish an on-going dialogue with the building operators to work through these matters and to build a better community for all of us.

1. Excessive car traffic and associated air pollution. The 119th and 120th blocks are the two last blocks before Mount Morris Park that connect East and Central Harlem. Therefore, the side streets we live on already witness heavy traffic, excessive noise and air pollution, and grave safety concerns for kids. With >700 households moving into this block, traffic congestion is bound to worsen. To partially mitigate this,

- a) *We believe that it is essential to deter more residents from owning cars.*
- b) *We request that your marketing agents set clear expectations that this is an area already in extreme shortage of parking space and do not set false expectations to tenants that this is a car friendly community, like many others do.*
- c) *We also request that your building not provide any incentives for residents to own a car such as discounted parking rates in your parking lots*

2. Severe shortage of parking space. With the loss of ~80 private parking spaces in the two existing car parks at [77 E 118th Street](#) and [72 E 120th Street](#), the loss of the police car park, ~700 new households to be added, and groups of attendees at music performances, it is inconceivable that there will be enough parking spaces for existing residents, so most current residents will have to fundamentally change their way of life by getting rid of their cars. To partially mitigate this,

- a) *We urge your architect to create a building that has adequate underground parking spaces, not only to accommodate personal cars owned by the police officers, but also to accommodate police cars and to replace the pending loss of >80 private parking spaces.*
- b) *We also recommend that your building's underground parking space be priced at market rate instead of discounted rate to help deter more residents moving in with expectations of owning a car. Your car park could be a good income source to subsidize the building operations.*

3. Excessive foot traffic and car traffic associated with the music performance center. The reason why music studios or music performance centers are specifically zoned is because they can create a negative impact to their neighbors. Living next to just one small music studio, [@aurikhouse](#), at 1674 Park Avenue has demonstrated this point; their clients sometimes double park, making noise after 6pm in front of the studio, eat and loiter in front of our houses leaving trash behind, and two patrons were involved in illegal firearms in the last 3 years. It is disappointing that after years of complaints, instead of removing the music studio, which is illegally occupying a space not zoned for music studio usage, the government is now adding multiple music studios next to our block. On top of the music studio, we fear that the planned music performance center could lead to even more traffic, congestion, noise/air pollution in a quiet block, well into the night when there are performances. To partially mitigate this,

We urge you to reconsider placing the music facility inside this particular housing development as this is a residential area. Many other commercial buildings to be built on 125th or 124th street appear to be better options as a host for this center. Or, such a center could be setup at the multi-use center at 413 E 120th Street. Wherever this music facility will be located in the future, we urge you to find a space for [@aurikhouse](#) as we do hope that this business can flourish in an appropriate location.

If this music center has to be placed in this building, then we recommend:

- a) **To prevent crime:**
 - i) *The operation and performance center should end operation by 6pm*
 - ii) *There must be metal detector at the entrance to help deter anyone from carrying guns or weapons*
 - iii) *There must be video cameras recording all users inside all rooms as well as on all 3 exterior sides of the center*
 - iv) *The center must be staffed with security guards who take attendance and check IDs inside and security guards who patrol at least a one block radius around the center*
- b) **To deter excessive congestion of people and cars during music events:**
 - i) *The operation and performance center should end operation by 6pm*
 - ii) *There needs to be security guards to prevent loitering and control parking throughout the day*
 - iii) *The design of the exit and entrance of the performance center should be as far from our block as possible, ideally on 118th Street and as close to Lexington Avenue as possible.*
 - iv) *Each music performance auditorium should be limited in size to accommodate say 30 people to prevent a glut of people coming in and out at the same time to overwhelm the neighborhood*
 - v) *As audience or performers disperse at night, they should be encouraged to travel directly to 116th or 125th Street. Perhaps during a large event in the evening, security guards should block out our side streets on 117th to 119th street between Park Avenue and Madison Avenue*
 - vi) *No alcohol should be permitted on premise in the building*

c) To systematically address the above concerns on an on-going basis,

- i) *The contract with Afro Latin Jazz Alliance must include clauses that incentivize the Alliance to promote good behavior from its patrons to minimize disturbances to the nearby neighborhoods. E.g., The contract can be terminated if their patrons cause violence, crime, excessive noise, or other quality of life issues in the neighborhood. Numerous houses in this block association have video cameras and so bad behavior from their patrons will be recorded, and we request a formal mechanism to address these issues.*
- ii) *Related to this, we request building management to assign a key point of contact for the block association to address urgent requests and to give advanced notice to the block association. The building management must also host a regular community engagement forum, with Afro Latin Jazz Alliance and Harlem East Block Association in attendance, to address concerns from the neighbors. There should be public minutes taken to record our raised concerns, so as to allow tracking of closure of these concerns.*

4. Unacceptably high crime rates and the lack of good neighbor behavior: As discussed above, we are keen to encourage good neighborly behavior for residents living near our block. Considering the persistently **unacceptably high crime rates**[2] on 118th Street between Park Avenue and Lexington Avenue, we request the Lantern Organization that:

- a) *Residents should not be allowed to reside in Timbale Terrace, Prospero Hall or Shafter Hall if they are convicted of crime or misdemeanor while residing in its supportive housings*
- b) *Timbale Terrace, Prospero Hall or Shafter Hall must have rules and regulations that impose consequences for residents who create quality of life issues near the block. For example, residents must pick up after their dogs, not cut flowers from people's front yards, not litter on the street, not deal or use drugs openly, and not defecate or urinate in public spaces*
- c) *Building management must be vigilant about rat issues*
 - i) *Advise your architects to create an enclosed environment to prevent rats in your backyards from coming out to the community and vice versa*
 - ii) *Try to put in chicken wire in all your tree beds and any surfaces not covered with concrete*
 - iii) *Rat related issues must be swiftly dealt with to prevent infestation*
 - iv) *Please put trash receptacles in front of your building*
- d) *To systematically address the above concerns on an on-going basis, we request that the Lantern Organization assign a key point of contact for the Harlem East Block Association to address urgent requests. We also hope the building management would host a regular community engagement forum with Harlem East Block Association, building management from Timbale Terrace, Prospero Hall and Shafer Hall in attendance to address concerns from the neighbors. There should be public minutes taken to record our raised concerns, so as to allow tracking of closure of these concerns. Numerous houses in this block association have video cameras and so bad behavior from your residents will be known, and thus here we request a formal channel to address these issues on an on-going basis*

5. There is a chronic lack of street lighting on these blocks. This creates unsafe walking conditions especially in the winter and under the railroad tracks on Park Avenue. The location of your site gives you a unique opportunity to improve the lighting for all 3 sides of your future buildings.

- a) *So please ensure the building architects place abundant bright lights around all 3 external walls of your building.*

6. There is a high risk of displacement of Harlem residents. If indeed the city must bring in 700 households into our already congested neighborhood, we hope something good for the neighborhood will come out of it. So we ask

- a) *that the building operator and the government agency reserve all 330 affordable and supportive housing for Harlem residents who risk being displaced, or for Harlem based city workers such as police, teachers, social workers, ... etc,*

We appreciate your attention to this. Again, we welcome you into our neighborhood and we sincerely look forward to working together to improve the well-being of the neighborhood. We look forward to a response from your organization.

Regards,

Harlem East Neighborhood Association

www.harlemeastblockassociation.org

Representatives Annie Lu, Alex Preda, Denise Rogers, Christina Solomon, Collin Clarke, Enid Waite, Eva Chan, Dorothy Wallace, Jane Murphy, Janene Outlaws, Jean Rosenfeld, Jessica Ng, Jimmy Chen, Judith Febbraro, Kim Barrajanos, Leon Bligen, Lydia Butler, Margot Edman, Monica Ng, Naeemah Adams, Rick Ortiz, Sarah Noda, Stephen Waite, Steve Travis, Yvette Green

[1] <https://www.trulia.com/n/ny/new-york/upper-east-side/85381/>

[2] <https://www.trulia.com/n/ny/new-york/upper-east-side/85381/>