

Date: August 16, 2023

Project Name: Long Beach NY Forward
Subject: Local Planning Committee Meeting #3

Meeting Location: 6th Floor, Long Beach City Hall, 1 W Chester St, Long Beach, NY 11561
Meeting Date: August 16, 2023
Meeting Time: 12:00-2:00 PM

Participants: **Local Planning Committee**

Resi Cooper (Co-Chair)
Myra Dejesus
Luke Heneghan
Pastor Mark Moses
Nicole Bergman
Darren Gallo
Johanna Mathieson-Ellmer
Rabbi Jack Zanerhaft
Anthony Rector

Not present: Ronald J. Walsh (Co-Chair), Rob Richards, Leah Rosensweig-Tozer, Jacquetta Odom, Brian Berkery, Tara Lannon-Stanton

New York State

Kevin Garrett, Department of State (DOS)
Pape Cisse (DOS)

City of Long Beach

Patricia Bourne, Director of Economic Development & Planning
John McNally, Director of Public Relations & Special Projects
Cindy Rogers, Deputy City Manager
Jordan Schieber, Assistant Planner
Tyler Huffman, Director of Community Development

Consultant Team

Peter Van den Kooy, Associate Principal, BFJ Planning
Silvia Del Fava, Associate, BFJ Planning
Suzanne Goldberg, Planner, BFJ Planning

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the Local Planning Committee (LPC) to the Open Call submissions and gather initial questions/comments. One member of the public joined the meeting as attendees. The presentation is posted on the [Long Beach NYF Website](#).

Introductions and NYF Code of Conduct

- Peter Van den Kooy of BFJ Planning started the meeting by introducing the LPC, consultant team, NY State team, and City staff.
- Resi Cooper read the LPC preamble for disclosure and recusal.
- LPC member Luke Heneghan recused himself from the Bright Eye Beer Co. project. Mr. Heneghan also has another potential conflict with the Kennedy Plaza Mixed-Use project (to a minor extent).
 - Kevin Garrett (DOS) clarified that members that have conflicts/potential conflicts of interest can state factual information about the project while avoid advocating for such project.

Planning Process & Engagement Updates

- Mr. Van den Kooy presented the NYF timeline, giving updates on the status of the Downtown Profile, project development, and upcoming community engagement opportunities.
- Silvia Del Fava of BFJ Planning recapped Public Workshop #1, which was held on Wednesday, July 12, 2023 from 7-9 PM. Approximately 35 members of the public attended.
- The first portion of the workshop consisted of an overview of the NYF program, who is involved, preliminary identified goals, challenges, and opportunities.
- The second portion of the workshop consisted of an interactive board exercise where attendees could provide feedback on the initial vision, goals, and project ideas.
- The following themes were observed through public feedback:
 - Goal #1: Street Safety & Connectivity
 - Slow traffic down, make pedestrian crossings safer, median can be re-envisioned.
 - Goal #2: Year-round Destination
 - Create more art spaces, affordable housing, family-oriented recreation, arcade/bowling/entertainment space.
 - Goal #3: Civic Spaces
 - More trees, landscaping and seating, tourist info center/map of Long Beach, year-round programming.
 - Goal #4: Streetscape & Wayfinding
 - Uniform signs, murals, façade upgrades.
- The Ideas Wall closed for comments on August 15, and consisted of:
 - 198 unique visitors
 - 27 comments
 - 47 engagements (likes/dislikes)
- Main themes gathered from the Ideas Wall aligned with feedback from the LPC and Public Workshop #1, including:
 - Park Avenue: bike lane, safer/more marked crossings, more greenery
 - More art activities
 - More bike racks
 - Improvements to train station area

- Sidewalk improvements to incorporate greenery, planters, seating and trash receptacles
- Enhance signage and lighting at intersections (specifically at Park Ave & Long Beach Blvd)
- Public engagement, and especially participation on the Ideas Wall, was comparable with other planning efforts in similar communities,

Goals and Revitalization Strategies

- Mr. Van den Kooy introduced the updated Goals and Revitalization Strategies:
 - Goal #1: Improve street safety and connectivity along Park Avenue to make it pedestrian-friendly, accessible, and easy to navigate for all.
 - Continue implementing Complete Street and traffic calming measures along Park Avenue, side streets, and by City Hall area.
 - Create clear paths and seamless connections between the train station, bus terminal and Kennedy Plaza.
 - Improve walkability along and across Park Avenue through sidewalk, crossing and pedestrian amenity enhancements.
 - Goal #2: Establish Downtown Long Beach as a year-round regional destination that leverages its multi-modal transit-oriented location to provide job and housing opportunities, as well as a diverse range of activities including arts, entertainment and recreation for residents and visitors alike.
 - Facilitate redevelopment of opportunity sites to promote a wide range of uses including entertainment and recreation.
 - Integrate and support arts and cultural offerings to create opportunities for the active Long Beach arts scene.
 - Maximize the transit-rich and high foot traffic location to create opportunities for more activities, jobs and housing (where possible) that make Park Avenue a vibrant, “true” downtown.
 - Goal #3: Improve public spaces through the integration of landscaping, street furniture, wayfinding and public art to strengthen and enhance connections between civic spaces.
 - Improve public spaces to allow for year-round activities, flexible events and programming.
 - Make the train station area, bus terminal and Kennedy Plaza more cohesive and welcoming through multiple placemaking improvements.
 - Create a sense of place through the integration of landscaping, green infrastructure, street furniture, public art, and wayfinding elements in targeted areas.
 - Goal #4: Foster an attractive downtown environment through cohesive streetscape treatments, including façade upgrades and gateway improvements, as well as signage and wayfinding enhancements, to reinforce Long Beach’s identity and create a unique sense of place.
 - Improve the Park Avenue business district (CBD) environment by supporting façade upgrades.

- Create uniform signage and wayfinding to make downtown easy to navigate on foot and to orient visitors to key locations and amenities both within the District and also within greater Long Beach City.
- Enhance the CBD's identity through Long Beach-themed gateway and streetscape enhancements.
- A member of the City staff raised concerns over the term "Downtown" Long Beach since there are different downtown areas in Long Beach.
- The consultant team suggested defining "Downtown" as the Central Park Avenue area at the beginning of all presentations to ensure a common understanding of the geographic area.
- An LPC member stated that this discussion aligns with the need to create a more centralized, distinct downtown Long Beach area through NYF, which is addressed in Goal #2 and its revitalization strategies (a "true" downtown)..

Project Evaluation Criteria:

- Mr. Van den Kooy reviewed project eligibility requirements and the following criteria for project evaluation:
 - Alignment with State and Local Goals: NYF State Goals
 - Catalytic Effect
 - Eligible Project Type
 - Cost Effectiveness
 - Co-Benefits
- A member of City staff asked if there is a way to ensure project sponsors will fulfill the commitments made in their project applications.
 - Kevin Garrett of DOS stated that all project sponsors who are awarded NYF funding will enter into a contract with the State to ensure project completion. Projects should start within two years from the grant award.

Discussion of Potential NYF Projects:

- Mr. Van den Kooy then shared an overview of the total responses submitted during the Open Call for Project Proposals thus far. The Open Call consisted of:
 - 11 total private/non-profit submissions
 - 3 public projects (still being worked on)
 - Wide range of project types:
 - Façade improvements
 - Library upgrades
 - Mural and public art
 - Interior renovations
 - NYF funding requests range from \$99,000 to \$1.9M
 - Total NYF request from Open Call projects is about \$4.6M, leveraging an additional \$4.5M, for a total investment of more than \$9.1M
 - This total does not include the three public projects that are anticipated for submission.
- Mr. Van den Kooy introduced the initial NYF evaluation project categories as following:

- Strong NYF Projects
 - Projects that may stand a good chance of being included in the plan and ultimately funded by the state. Note that this categorization does not guarantee inclusion in the plan—that decision is up to the LPC.
- Potential NYF Projects with Questions
 - Projects that are likely eligible but raise questions about project readiness, private leverage, site control, etc. Sponsor’s response to preliminary questions could make each of these projects stronger or may demonstrate that they’re not quite ready for NYF.
- Project Ideas That are Not Eligible or Ready for NYF.
 - Projects with ineligible activities, such as ongoing programming expenses or removable equipment.
 - Some projects are potentially eligible for NYF funding, but there are significant questions/issues, such as site control, capacity to implement, etc.
 - Some of these projects could be suitable to be implemented through the Small Project Fund (max. \$300,000)
- Questions to guide the LPC’s initial evaluation included:
 - Does this project meet the State and Long Beach NYF Goals?
 - Does the project have the potential to create a catalytic effect?
 - Is the project ready to be implemented?
 - Is the project cost effective?
 - Does the project have co-benefits?
 - Do project sponsors have the capacity to implement the project?
 - Is there a demonstrated need for funding from the project sponsor?
 - Which projects will have the greatest impact on the downtown?
 - Any other requirements the LPC wants to consider?
- Mr. Van den Kooy encouraged members of the LPC to familiarize themselves with the proposed projects. All submitted Open Call materials will be shared on Google Drive with LPC members. These materials are for LPC viewing only, and should not be shared outside the LPC.
- The LPC should review the projects and send questions/comments to the consultant team by August 23.
- Throughout the next section of the presentation, the consultant team alternated presenting Open Call submissions. The notes below reflect the LPC discussion. More details regarding each project submission are included within the presentation slides.
- LPC Discussion of Open Call submissions:
 - Park Ave Improvements
 - LPC members agreed that the taxi stand creates unsafe conditions for people exiting the train station.
 - The City is looking into the ownership and leasing of the taxi stand property.
 - An LPC member stated that it’s necessary to know cost estimates for the public projects, since it will impact the amount of funding that could be allocated to other projects.

- Mr. Garrett explained that the LPC must recommend more than \$4.5M in project funding for the State to decide awards (recommended range: \$6-7M).
- Resi Cooper (Co-Chair) explained that next steps in the process will include discussions with project sponsors to specify funding needs and potential public benefits.
- An LPC member asked if there will be more details about greenery. Mr. Van den Kooy explained that further details will be provided before the LPC conducts final votes.
- Coordination with MTA for the area around the train station is needed. Conversations with them are ongoing as they are preparing a scope for station improvements which are anticipated to be implemented in the next 3-4 years.
- Dance Loft
 - The Dance Loft is just one tenant that would rent the space.
 - The developer of the site is concerned that the State is not responding quickly enough to approve remediation efforts. This may impact their ability to complete the project within the NYF timeline.
 - LPC members raised questions of amount of funding requested at this stage (would that fill a gap in funding that the owner does not have available?)
- Dream Factory
 - Applicant is working on creating an entity. Question on whether this will be a for-profit or non-profit entity.
 - ADA compliance is important since this would be on the second floor of a building.
 - There are other available spaces in the City that could be renovated to fit this use.
- Long Beach Public Library Auditorium
 - LPC members agree that this room is well-utilized and could benefit greatly from improvements.
 - It is important to recognize the duplication of services across different projects.
 - Will this renovation affect capacity?
 - If the stage is replaced, would the stage be available to be reserved for public usage?
- Performing Arts Studios
 - It is unclear if the property owner is involved or aware of this proposal.
 - Have there been conversations about who will be leasing the space? City expressed interest in the past to turn this space in performing arts center
 - From discussions with the City, property owner was considering bringing retail on that site.
 - \$1M does not seem feasible for a full renovation of this building. The space has been emptied.
- Art Gallery, Surf Shop
 - Concerns about ADA accessibility for the second floor.

- The entire building is owned by the project sponsor.
 - Currently used as office/printing space
- Professional Youth Theater
 - They have been operating from that site for a while.
 - The consultant team will check the boundary to see if it's inside the boundary (part of the same parcel as Temple Israel).
 - LPC members mentioned wanting more details on the project.
- Kennedy Plaza Redesign (Public Project)
 - Project needs more details.
- Kennedy Plaza Mixed-Use Building
 - Enclosed space in Kennedy Plaza that incorporates existing uses like the Farmers Market
 - Some LPC members liked the idea of a covered space with available rooftop area.
 - This project is proposed on public land and is not a capital project (only for conceptual design), making it ineligible for NYF funding.
- Art by the Sea Murals
 - There would need to be coordination with public and private property owners.
 - The cost estimate seems high for murals. City has contracted local artists in the past for \$3-4k per mural.
 - Could this be part of the Small Project Fund? DOS will ask HCR about eligibility requirements.
- Bright Eye Beer Co. Façade Improvements
 - The façade work will involve altering the steel and concrete structure, which is too expensive for the business owner to complete without NYF funding. It would be full glass (there is an updated rendering) to improve the lighting, the space and the experience.
 - Operation of the expanded upstairs (without the façade work) should begin at the end of this year.
 - Consultants will reach out regarding potential decarbonization requirements for NYF funding.
 - This space hosts many community events.
 - Bright Eye Beer Co. has already invested close to \$2M in this building.
- DiscoverLB
 - Who would operate and maintain these digital kiosks?
 - Would advertising be used to cover the cost of the building?
 - Potential to combine this project with other wayfinding efforts from the City.
- Long Beach Public Library Exterior
 - The library previously had outdoor seating that were removed.
 - The library is heavily used and well-programmed.
 - The signage is particularly lacking.
- Wayfinding and Signage
 - This is important to improve pedestrian safety and direct train passengers to shop at local businesses.

- Could the City work with the Bank of America space to create a welcome center outside the train station?
- LPC members discussed the potential for a project related to housing. Increasing housing options in downtown areas is one of the objectives of NYF and the State. Although the zoning does not currently permit housing on Park Ave, there are precedents for mixed-use development in this area.

Next Steps:

- The consultant team will continue to revise the list of preliminary projects and follow up with sponsors.
- The LPC will complete the initial project evaluation handout by August 23th. Submitted Project Forms will be shared via Google Drive for LPC review.
- Upcoming Public Outreach Events
 - LPC Meeting #4: Weds, September 20th (12-2, City Hall, 6th Floor)
 - Second Public Workshop: October 4th, 7-9 PM at the Library
 - LPC Meeting #5: Weds, October 18th (12-2, City Hall, 6th Floor)