

Good evening. My name is Garry Anthony Johnson. As someone who studied Architecture here in Harlem at City College of New York in the late 80's, then came back to set up my Zoning and Code Consulting business in the late 90's I consider this community my home.

As we've watched all of Harlem change in front of our eyes during that time, we've see new buildings, new faces, higher rents, skyrocketing real estate values, and still a lack of adequate services.

In my hand I have a list of approx. 34 new building projects that have been or are under construction in Harlem as a whole. I'm sure my list is not complete, but frankly I had other things for my staff to do, and was getting more discouraged with the results of the data uncovered. Of these 34 projects, only four (4) were designed by Latino or African-American Architectural firms. We have Architects like Ray Plumey and Victor Body-Lawson who live and work in our community, yet can not get projects in the community.

Now we're here to discuss what to do with 3 parcels of land, two of which are virtually entire city blocks, 600 feet in length by 200 feet in width, and the city proposes to give these 3 parcels to 1 developer.

Why is it that Cornerstone projects can be distributed to multiple developers, why is it that Battery Park City can be sliced and diced for multiple developers, but Uptown NY must go to 1 developer? I propose to you tonight that the 3 sites are 2 different animals. The northernmost site from 126th to 127th is predominantly residential in character, though it may have some commercial uses on the avenues. The large site on 125th to 126th is predominantly commercial in character, though it may have residential above. And the smallest parcel is predominantly residential in character, though it may have commercial on the 1st floor.

But why 1 developer? Why can't this community deserve the right to select developers that most appropriately fit the different sites being offered? Why can't smaller developers, from the community be given the opportunity to develop the last available parcel of land in our community for the next generation? Why can't our Architects, Engineers and Consultants, who live, work, breathe and understand our community be given the opportunity to make a statement that will last for 100 years or more. Why can't our children be given the opportunity to look at, live in, and learn from the professionals who will influence their lives and the vibrancy of the community for the next 100 years?

The MTA bus parking lot is another problem. Were this site needed by Yankee Stadium that bus parking lot would be moved. This is more than a land allocation issue, this is a health issue.

Talk about scale and bulk is good. Desire for cultural components is great. Thinking Green is appropriate. Wanting participation on the construction end with minority suppliers and construction workers is fine. But that's small change. Instead, we should take the work of this Task Force, combined with the further needs and skills of our community, and tell our elected officials that 'Hey, this is it – there is no more. This is where we take a stand. We want a project, but a project that's planned by us, designed by us, and programmed for us. For after this, there is no more. Not for the next 50-100 years. Don't let this massive project be predetermined and solely given to 1 developer. No one is saying that a major player can't participate, but not at the expense and sacrifice of the people who live and work here.

Thank you for your time.