

BY THOMAS COGAN

At the first Community Board 2 meeting of 2008, the board and other listeners in the room at Sunnyside Community Services heard about Mayor Michael Bloomberg's PlaNYC 2030. Judging from their reactions, many of them seemed to believe the plan consisted mainly of congestion pricing and a few other items hard to remember. They heard also about text amendments pertaining to stairwells and architectural requirements in low-, medium- and high-density residential and commercial districts. Then they heard information about a national study of children and how it is to be applied locally. When it came time for the committee reports, land use committee matters predominated, with voting on the stairwell amendment and residential matters in Sunnyside and Woodside.

The members of the team from the city that delivered the PlaNYC gospel were young, perhaps on average in their mid-20s. They suggested that by the time they are twice as old and 2030 has arrived, New York will be a finer place if only their successors in government—they must leave office in 2009—are as resolute at problem-solving in years to come as they are now. There are problems indeed, they disclosed: thousands of acres of polluted "brownfields", foul water tributaries in every borough, overcrowded mass transit, countless others—but if each can be identified, there may eventually be a solution for all. However, when board members and others got the chance to ask questions, congestion pricing became the chief concern. If vehicle drivers cannot get into the heart of Manhattan without paying heavy fees, will those drivers approach as near as they can, park their vehicles in Upper Manhattan and the other boroughs, and get to their Midtown and

Board 2 Reiterates Congestion Pricing Concerns

Downtown destinations by public transit and taxi? As a consequence, will Upper Manhattan and the other boroughs become endless parking lots and hired car circuses? These questions were not easily answered. It is apparent that PlaNYC begins with congestion pricing, which may be so large a problem that the other ones will just have to wait.

The Department of Buildings is aligning itself with international building codes and has announced a stairwell text amendment that was explained to the meeting by Penny Lee of the Department of City Planning. Currently, stairs must be 36 inches wide in buildings 125 feet high or higher. It is proposed that the width be increased to 44 inches, and the additional space be deducted from the floor-area ratio (FAR). The amendment was submitted to the board for a vote. The motion to approve carried, with one board member voting no. The citywide text amendments proposed by the New York chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) were explained by Mark Ginsberg. Five of the six proposals were for medium- and high-density districts. The one amendment concerned with R3-1 to R5 districts would, the AIA asserts, allow for "wider, better designed residences on small lots" after review by the Board of Standards and

Appeals and community boards. It was not submitted for a board vote, not having reached that stage yet.

The National Children's Study, explained by Barbara Brenner, director of community relations at Mount Sinai Medical Center, would follow the development of 100,000 children over a two-decade period. Brenner said that in Queens, where the study is to begin, this means enrolling 1,250 women of childbearing age in a long-term commitment that would allow observation of their children and the taking of hair and urine samples. To get that many Queens women will probably require knocking on 14,000 doors, she added, saying also, "This study needs your cooperation." Barbara Coleman of the board was skeptical that all the information—to be gathered between now and circa 2030, it so happens—would eventually affect policy. But Carol Terrano, also of the board, remembered AIDS studies and said they were helpful in reducing the severity of that plague, and she foresaw this study as helpful in improving the health of children in the next two decades.

The land use committee also brought up the issue of a Woodside building at 50-34 69th St. that is seeking a BSA variance to make the ground floor commercial while the area above it remained

residential. The land use committee opposed such a request. The ground floor had been used commercially for an extensive period before the businessman running the operation was told by authorities to cease and desist. Richard Gundlach of the board said that simply putting in a request to legalize what had been illegal was unacceptable. A motion to oppose was made and passed unanimously. Another Sunnyside Gardens issue came up: a house at 39-52 47th St., where the owner is repairing his porch with brick, though the Landmarks Preservation Commission has said it must be done with wood. Al Volpe of the board complained that such quibbling matters were likely to be brought to the board ceaselessly, now that the Sunnyside landmarks war has been won by the preservationists though insurgent actions persist. He abstained from a vote on the motion, which was to support the owner's action and entreat the LPC to change its mind about wood. Two others opposed the motion, but most supported it. Another motion was a restatement. In 2005, the board voted approval of a motion to make 72nd Street one way westbound between 45th Avenue and Woodside Avenue. Another vote was required, for reasons that were unclear, so the motion was again passed. The road at that point passes between two schools, P.S. 12 and Rainbow Christian Preschool and Kindergarten of St. Jacobus Lutheran Church.

Penny Lee of Planning announced that the development plan for Jackson Avenue and Queensboro Plaza was proceeding and actual work will begin "before the hot weather". She said she wished to correct media coverage that implied the recent resignation of Dan Doctoroff as deputy mayor for economic development and rebuilding meant that the project would be curtailed.

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BED BUGS BITING???



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