



Lowline Community Engagement Committee Meeting Recap July 25, 2016, 6-8pm, Lowline Lab, 140 Essex Street

Longtime residents of the Lower East Side, local advocates and organization leaders gathered on July 25, 2016 for the Lowline's second Community Engagement Committee meeting. Below you will find a detailed meeting recap.

Questions and comments can be sent to info@thelowline.org.

Community Engagement Committee Facilitator: Amy Prince, Hillman Housing resident since 2002 and professional developer/facilitator at the City University of New York

This Committee meeting was outlined based on the following desired outcomes:

1. an enhanced sense of unity as a committee
2. a deeper and mutual understanding of the different stakeholder groups—their assets, needs, and concerns—and of the Lowline project
3. a concrete “charge” for the next stage of the Committee’s work
4. a sense of ownership and agency from within the committee

Committee attendees split into four sub-groups (programming and youth education; design; concerns, challenges, and opportunities; and committee governance). The following notes/comments were expressed at the end of their brainstorming session:

1. Programming and youth education:

- a. The group agreed on the suggested content areas of: art and culture, youth education, LES history, design, and horticulture. In addition to the suggested content areas, they discussed including the following:
 - i. STEAM-based programming using sunlight in a unique way
 - ii. Applied learning: how to design something from conception to creative production
 - iii. Integration of an urban studies element in programming
 - iv. Partnerships with local organizations and institutions, including: Tenement Museum, Nuorican Poets Café, etc.
 - v. Art festivals, with potential connections to art galleries in the neighborhood
 - vi. Public concerts
 - vii. Interactive edible garden component for visiting school groups
- b. The group discussed the following challenges and opportunities:
 - i. Access to the subway station from the South side of Delancey Street
 - ii. The threat of tourists coming into the new space outweighing the amount of locals in the space. The group questioned what could be done to balance that
 - iii. The group discussed the use of the space, including: whether there will be certain days or hours at the future park dedicated to local community groups; and how the Lowline will encourage use of the park by local residents on weekends. They suggested looking to other similar

organizations for strategies, including: The High Line and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden

- iv. The group suggested a dedicated space for education, including classrooms. They suggested that flexible space would be a positive way to address this
 - v. The group discussed the use of the plaza space above the underground site as an important element when considering programming
 - vi. The LES has more public/community gardens than any other area in the city. The Lowline should consider partnering with community gardens. One idea that surfaced is an organized “Garden Crawl”
- c. The group discussed potential audiences, and came up with the following audience categories for programming:
- i. Teens, and intergenerational programming for teens and youth of all ages
 - ii. Families and school groups
 - iii. Seniors
 - iv. People with disabilities (ensuring the programming is ADA compliant)

2. Design

- a. The group suggested the following design priorities:
 - i. Benches/seating; concession stands; open walkway, and theatre opportunities that include a potential area to screen films
 - ii. In order to make the Lowline a welcoming space, the group suggested the following: free admission; guided tours; and climate control
- b. The group expressed a need for more knowledge on the project to properly strategize and brainstorm, including:
 - i. Information on the surrounding area; the shape of the park, including a diagram; surrounding streets; number of entrances and their locations; number of solar collectors; what the street will look like above the site; what stage the design process is in; and what amenities and resources are being added to the neighborhood via Essex Crossing so as not to overlap The group was very eager to speak about the potential of a glass wall parallel with the station so visitors in the park can see the trains passing, and vice versa
- c. The group was also interested in seeing more opportunities for art, including potential installations and areas dedicated to film screenings
- d. The group addressed the following topics when brainstorming what the Lowline should keep in mind for the design of the future park:
 - i. Including a bunker or “safe zone” for natural disasters or otherwise; the potential of flooding and how to prevent this if it does present an issue; and train noise and overall noise pollution, including a design plan for sound

3. Concerns, challenges and opportunities:

- a. The group discussed the following concerns of their group, as well as concerns they have heard from community members:
 - i. Who is the park being made for? Is it a park for the local community, for the broader NYC-area, or for people around the world? How do you balance these goals, while ensuring the park addresses community needs, therefore serving an important role in the lives of local residents?
 - ii. How do we create a culture that makes the park accessible to people of all backgrounds, including: economic, cultural, ethnic

- iii. Maintenance and sanitation both inside and outside the park: ensure this does not negatively impact the surrounding area
 - iv. Safety and crowd control: ensure this does not negatively impact the surrounding area
 - v. Ensure that the community has input on programming
 - vi. The park's impact on gentrification is important to consider
 - vii. Fundraising: how is the Lowline raising money? How do we ensure that the funds are coming from diverse constituencies?
 - viii. How is this park going to be used? How do people get to use it? How are the uses of the park decided on? Permitting? Not permitting? Passive space? Recreational space?
- b. The group discussed the following opportunities:
- i. Actively perform outreach and appoint Chinese and Spanish speaking leaders who can play a role in the Committee. Reach out to audiences that may not otherwise attend these meetings: i.e. NYCHA and public housing residents, tenant leaders, local business owners, and other local residents who do not speak English and therefore may not feel comfortable approaching this group, or know it exists at all

4. Committee governance:

- a. This group raised a number of questions regarding the future scope of the Committee attendees, including: whether or not it should be a standing committee; whether or not it should be open to members of the public; whether or not it should have "official" members; and if it would be beneficial to include volunteers
- b. The group came to the conclusion that the Committee should initially be open to all, but then be fixed at a certain point. They were unable to determine when the open membership should conclude
- c. Member selection:
 - i. The group believed that preference should be given to the local community, but that it should not exclude individuals who do not live in the community as they may be able to share expertise regarding outside endeavors
- d. Meeting scheduling:
 - i. The group agreed that the Committee should have active meetings, but not too many so as to discourage people with busy schedules. They ultimately suggested monthly focused meetings, with quarterly meetings that draw in a larger crowd
- e. Community input:
 - i. The group agreed that input should come from the entire neighborhood, including: churches; schools; public spaces; every NYCHA building and co-op; and voices from people in the neighborhood via a more grassroots approach (knocking on doors)
- f. Youth in the Committee:
 - i. The group agreed that youth should play a role in the committee, including high school aged youth, and potentially younger
- g. Committee focus groups:
 - i. The group suggested the addition of an "outreach", totaling four main breakout groups
- h. Committee decision making process:



- i. The group suggested that the group decide based on consensus for now, ensuring that everyone is represented and everyone has a chance to speak

5. Next steps proposed by the committee:

- a. Implement monthly focused meetings, with quarterly meetings that are larger in scale
- b. The Lowline should ensure that the notes from past Committee meetings are present at the next meeting to encourage the conversations to continue
- c. Ensure additional and expansive information about the Lowline is shared so the Committee can most effectively lead future meetings based on past work with the community and relevant information and timetables
- d. Host an open community brainstorming forum, like a “town hall”, where the park as it currently stands is presented, and outcomes from the Committee are shared broadly
- e. Conduct more outreach to ensure sure many more voices are at the table. Consider new marketing and PR strategies, as well as more grassroots strategies like door to door outreach
- f. In regards to future governance and structure, suggest looking at other relevant committees and groups for potential models

6. Next Community Engagement Committee meeting:

- a. The next Committee meeting will be held on September 8, 2016 from 6-8pm at the Lowline Lab (140 Essex Street). By the end of the meeting we will:
 - i. Refine governance and structure of the Committee, as well as the potential creation of sub-committees or working groups
 - ii. Set an agenda for the year ahead

Attendee List for 7/25/16:

Jennifer Alderson, Stephen B. Jacobs Group
Katie Archer, Delancey Street Associates
Wendy Brawer, Collective Force, Green Map, Sara D. Roosevelt Park Coalition
Huy Bui, Huy Bui, An Choi and Plant-in-City
MyPhuong Chung, local resident
Talia DeRogatis, Henry Street Settlement
Chantara Ellis, Henry Street Settlement / Abrons Art Center
Becca Freer
Nu Gatea
Francine Gorres, Two Bridges Neighborhood Council
Mohammed Gueye, Manhattan Borough President's Office
Jan Hanvik, Cross the Bridges
Lynne Hayden-Findlay, local resident
Erik Hanson
Trever Holland, Two Bridges Tenant Association
Meghan Joye, local resident, local business owner
Sue Lalchan, Grand Street Settlement AmeriCorps Program
Gary Lam, Turner Construction
Shantelena Mouzon, Parent of Young Designers Program student
Anchael Ng, local resident
Marco Pariente-Cohen, Lowline volunteer, local resident



lowline

Underground Development Foundation c/o The Lowline
5 White Street, # 4b, New York, NY 10013
www.thelowline.org

Michelle Repiso, local resident
Howard Stern, Hillman Cooperative
Matthew Waldman
Kindall Zimmerman, local resident

Lowline Attendees for 7/25/16:

Dan Barasch, Lowline Co-Founder
Christian Bergland, Lowline AmeriCorps Community Builder with Grand Street Settlement
Jake Gianaris, Lowline Intern
Justin Rivera, Lowline Lab Site Manager
Vincent Rong, Lowline SYEP Youth Worker with Chinese-American Planning Council
Robyn Shapiro, Lowline Deputy Director
Marquise Stillwell, Lowline Board Member
Courtney Surmanek, Lowline Manager

Confirmed Committee members to date:

Dominic Berg, local resident
Rabbi Aviad Bodner, Stanton Street Shul
David Bolotsky, Friends of Gulick Park
Huy Bui, An Choi and Plant-in-City
Thanh Bui, Grand Street Settlement
Simon Chiew, Chinese-American Planning Council
Scott Conti, New Design High School
Talia DeRogatis, Henry Street Settlement
Alison Fleminger, University Settlement
Trevor Holland, Two Bridges Tenant Association
Linda Jones, local resident
Meghan Joye, local resident, local business owner
Sue Lalchan, Grand Street Settlement AmeriCorps Program
Tim Laughlin, Lower East Side Partnership
Brett and Ella Leitner, local residents
Gigi Li, local resident
Shantelena Mouzon, Parent of Young Designers Program student
Anchael Ng, local resident
Carmen Orta, Seward Park Extension
Nancy Ortiz, Vladeck Houses
Daisy Paez, Grant Street Guild Residents Association
Victoria Reichelt, local resident
Anne Saxelby, Essex Street Market
Risa Shoup, Fourth Arts Block
Carolyn Sickles, Henry Street Settlement / Abrons Art Center
Nadia Tykulsker, Fourth Arts Block
Alan Van Capelle, Educational Alliance
Thomas Yu, Asian Americans for Equality