Community Board 11 Housing Committee Meeting and Summary in Regards to East River Plaza Residential Project (ERPRP)

El Barrio Unite (EBU) attended the Community Board Housing subcommittee on 2/3/2015. There were 7supporters of EBU in attendance. Our goal at the meeting was to present to CB11 a letter requesting that they provide EBU with FEMA permits obtained by the development groups for the ERP (East River Plaza shopping center) (Blumenfeld Development Group, BDG, and Forest City Ratner, FCR) for the construction of the existing shopping structure because the structure was built on a Flood Zone AE and requires certain flood insurance mitigations in accordance to flood zoning code. We would like information on the type of mitigations used as we do not know whether or not the existing structure is mitigated for a potential mixed use residential building. We also asked that CB11 ensure that an environmental impact statement be requested from BDG and FCR.

We gave the chair of the committee the letter and hoped to speak on our request during the new business portion of the meeting. The meeting ran long with discussion about the issue of homelessness in NYC and an audience member asked the board about a discussion of the ERPRD. The district manager, Angel Mescain, spoke briefly on the proposal. First and foremost, he assured EBU that there will be several opportunities for the public to be involved in the discussion of the ERPRD. Since the proposal calls for zoning changes, BDG/FCR will first need to present their plans to the Land Use Committee. From the Land Use committee the plans will be referred to all sub committees that will have a stake in the proposed development, housing, economic development, culture and tourism, etc...

A member of EUB mentioned that the land was in a flood zone and Angel diverted the inquiry stating that flood zones and rezoning must go through Land Use. Later, he told us that a public scoping session on the proposal will take place most likely at the end of February and he will absolutely let us know of the date.

The public scoping session is EBU's opportunity to present to cb11 all of our concerns regarding the proposal. I believe that this session we should present a report to cb11 that clearly outlines all of EBU's concerns: displacement, gentrification, rent increases, tax increases, public health and safety. I also believe that there is a major labor component here. How can we expect the construction of the towers to not disrupt the jobs and commerce already going on at the East River Plaza?

As a group we should call another meeting within the next week or two to tighten our message and perhaps to assign tasks to willing supporters to research our concerns and to put together a summary addressing each one.