



Chairperson, Martha Taylor

*The City of New York*  
*Borough of Queens*

**Community Board 8**

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District Manager, Marie Adam-Ovide

**Library, Education & Youth Committee Meeting:** Briarwood Library Renovations  
**Date:** Monday June 26, 2023  
**Time:** 7:30 p.m.  
**Place:** **In-Person**

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**Alan Ong, *Library, Education & Youth Committee Chair***

**Board Members:** Michael Athy, Bhitihara Martha-Fulton, Amy Tse

**Also, in attendance:** Iris Kim of Verona Carpenter Architects, Charul Punia of Verona Carpenter Architects, Luisa Benedetto of Queens Public Library, Ari Gershman of DDC, Susannah Go representing Assemblymember Nily Rozic, DM Marie Adam-Ovide and CB8 Staff Member Soleil Griffin.

**Residents:** Saaif Alam, Albert Suhu, Jessy Miyasato, Rosalie Quinones

***Chairperson Ong called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He welcomed all attendees and asked that they introduce themselves.***

***Chairperson Ong asked Ms. Iris Kim to begin the presentation to the Library, Education & Youth Committee. A slideshow presentation was presented.***

Iris Kim presented, using the slides. These are some of the highlights of the presentation on the Briarwood Library Renovation

- The site faces complexities due to its location between three main roads – Main Street, the Van Wyck and Queens Boulevard.
- This project helps support New York City’s Sustainability Goals to receive gold status by using and creating renewable energy through new solar panels on the roof.
- The exterior of the library will have glazed terracotta tiles, which will make it easy to clean graffiti.
- The existing plaza will be renovated to be physically accessible.
- The west façade will be the main entrance of the building with brand new signage and canopy along with the 24-hour book drop off.
- The south façade will have large windows. This is so light and nature can be seen in the main reading spaces highlighting two historic oak trees that will be preserved.
- There will be a pop out window in the teen area of the library which will give them views of the plaza and green space.
- The east façade will have circular opening windows in the children’s area. They will be at their eye level.
- From the Van Wyck, there will be colorful banners showcasing the signage for the library.

- The north façade will have the emergency exit for the staff area.
- The layout includes: the adult reading area, teen reading area, children’s reading area, multipurpose room [this will be open after hours for certain QPL programming], staff area, circulation, restrooms (easily accessible), facilities and custodial and building systems/storage.
- Second, book drop (only open during business hours) located near self-checkout counter and printers.
- Each librarian desk will be in its respective area, so that patrons know who to go to for assistance.
- The children’s area has their own dedicated restroom for safety and accessibility, there’s a small seating area outside of the restroom for parents and care takers to assist the children while using the restroom. This area has soft seating, worktables, computer tables and the children’s librarian.
- The children worktable will be far from the teen and adult reading area since it’s going to be the noisiest part of the library.
- In the teen area, the children and the teens share a computer tech zone to maximize resources; there will be a teen librarian.
- The adult reading area has their own librarian and has seating along the windows so that people can enjoy the views. There will be working tables by the windows and lounge seating looking out to the green space.
- The multipurpose room will be equipped with audio and visual capabilities, and assisted listening for users with disabilities. Storage for furniture crafts and supplies.
- The plaza will have a rock garden inspired range of biophilic seating (curved benches) and low maintenance planting.
- In the evening, there will be lighting fixtures that will be lit at all times including in the plaza to ensure the area is safe for the community.

**Alan Ong – Where is the ramp? Is it in the front entrance?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – There’s a ramp in the front entrance and a small ramp leading to the plaza.

**Alan Ong – Will there be shades on the windows from east to west so that there won’t be a glare?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – Yes. We are planning on having shades for the multipurpose room. In terms of the reading room, the lighting will be configured to accommodate for actual light. We are currently looking at sunlight studies to understand how it works.

**Alan Ong – Going back to the layout of the children’s area, do you have dampening material for the walls and the ceiling to make sure sound doesn’t bounce since this will be the noisiest part of the library?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – Yes. We are planning on acoustics spray for above the children’s reading room, panels above the computer tables for the entrance, teens, and adult areas. We’ve already done a study of the noise that comes off the Van Wyck.

**Answer** [Charul Punia] – We are working with Longman Lindsey, which is a very good acoustic consultancy firm.

**Alan Ong – Does the library have PA Systems?**

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – We do have AV and tech systems at the library that goes for every library.

**Alan Ong – For safety concerns such as from active shooters, is there a PA System to alert patrons of a possible emergency?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – We will have a life safety plan when the building is up to code.

**Answer** [Charul Punia] – We can follow up with you since that will be protocol for us.

*He opened the floor to questions from committee members.*

**Amy Tse – Are there enough bookshelves?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – We are working to ensure that we are getting the book counts to where QPL has requested they should be. At present, the QPL counts are not where they would like to be. We are trying to maximize the space seating and programming needs.

**Answer** [Charul Punia] – This is an ongoing conversation.

**Amy Tse** – You mentioned something about a pantry, there's no eating in the library?

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – Yes. There is no eating in the library. We have a pantry for the staff.

**Amy Tse** – Is there anything in the plan to put recycling bins before entering the library?

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – There are garbage cans on the sidewalk. We will include that in our drawing of the library. We will add it to our main greeting room which will be at the entrance somewhere. There is a refuse storage which at the back of the library.

**Amy Tse** – How many computer stations and printers will there be?

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – I can get the numbers for you.

**Alan Ong** – Will computers, print stations and faxing be available?

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – Absolutely.

**Michael Athy** – Do you have an estimate of what the capacity of the building will be? What will be the capacity of the multipurpose room?

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – We are not changing the occupancy of the building.

**Answer** [Charul Punia] – We can follow up with you on that number.

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – I don't believe we're a public assembly.

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – We are not, and we are trying to keep it that way since that would trigger a lot of different codes.

**Marie Adam-Ovide** – Luisa, do you have the current number of the people allowed to be at the library?

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – No I don't have it. For the public occupancy such as the meeting room, I believe the limit is 74.

**Statement** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – Yes. If you have more than 74, then you would need a public assembly permit.

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – Correct. For the entire library, I would have to get back to you.

**Bhitihara Martha-Fulton** – Does funding already exist for this project? What is the source of financing?

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – I can get that for you. The community has been very supportive of this project. We are very thankful for the elected officials who are also very supportive of this project. The total cost is approximately \$16 million for the project. This stems from the Mayor, the Queens Borough President, and the Council Member.

**Bhitihara Martha-Fulton** – So, is the funding nailed down already?

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – Yes. That's funding that's allocated in hand.

**Alan Ong** – When is the project slated to start and expected to finish?

**Answer** [Ari Gershman] – Right now the plan is to start the first half of 2025. We have that first quarter, but everyone should be aware of when we have the start date since that's when the contractor gets the notice to proceed. Then after that we have site preparation; setting up the field office; installing construction fencing, signage which is included in the preparatory work. We are looking at about 2<sup>1/2</sup> to 3 years of construction.

**Michael Athy – The Hillcrest Branch Renovation will be finished before this renovation begins than?**

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – Yes. Right now, Hillcrest is a roof and HVAC update. This usually takes around 9 months to 1 year to complete.

**Statement** [Ari Gershman] – It's already a few months in.

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – Yes. I think it closes in February.

**Marie Adam-Ovide – Does the emergency door have an alarm if anyone leaves through that door?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – Yes.

**Marie Adam-Ovide – In front of the children's bathroom, though there's an area for parents to wait, will there be a camera that directly sees who goes in and out of the children's bathroom for safety? We have \$16 million and we're starting in 2025. Did QPL take into account the actual cost of the project when budgeting?**

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – Our capital department is consistently analyzing and assessing along with the coordination of DDC, about forecasting if the funding takes inflation into account. We have the funding in place, and we believe that this amount will carry us through.

**Alan Ong – Is there safety surveillance within the library?**

**Answer** [Charul Punia] – We're still in schematic right now. That will come when we start to nail down the program layout, and then we'll go in and develop that.

**Statement** [Alan Ong] – There was just a recent incident that happened in Fresh Meadow library where someone painted swastikas in the bathroom. The police were notified, and they are going to check out the videos but hopefully it catches who is going in and out of the bathroom.

*Chairperson Ong opened the floor to questions from the public.*

**Saaif Alam – Will there be assisted technology to ensure that those who are visually impaired are accommodated? Have the disability nonprofits been informed about the ADA compliance.**

**Clarification Question** [Iris Kim] – Can you clarify the disability nonprofits?

**Statement** [Saaif Alam] – The Queens Center for Progress is one of the nonprofits in the district.

**Answer** [Charul Punia] – For engagement, we can speak with DDC about this.

**Answer** [Ari Gershman] – This is something that community board can help with. In terms of getting the word out.

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – Making the space accessible is important to us, as a firm. In terms of specifics, we have our assisted listening for the multipurpose room, our signage will go over the rail. As for everything being up to code, we will ensure that a lot of your concerns will be taken care of.

**Amy Tse – So the bathroom will be wheelchair accessible?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – The children's restroom is accessible; we have a public and staff accessible.

**Alan Ong – Marie, how does it work if we would like to see if Martha could present this to the community board meeting?**

**Answer** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – Our next board meeting will be the second Wednesday of September.

**Marie Adam-Ovide - Does DDC and QLP have a deadline as to how fast they need to move on this project? Can you wait until September for a recommendation?**

**Answer** [Ari Gershman] – Our request from this committee is to give a letter based on this meeting to indicate full support. If in the future the whole board is looking for a presentation, then we can certainly discuss that, but we would look for the letter of support based on this presentation.

**Statement** [Alan Ong] – We can have the support letter go out and then after that, whatever progress is happening in September, we can add you into the agenda for either September or October meeting to give the community board and the community updates.

**Rosalie Quinones** – **Has the siting area been considered to be used as an extra room? We have a lot of homeless people in the community.**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – We are hoping this becomes a safe and nice space. The curved fence on the south façade and the lights will make the space feel much safer and more open to everyone.

**Rosalie Quinones** – **Will there be a gate going down to the slope?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – Yes. There will be a gate that will be closed and won't be accessible since it's not very safe. We want to make sure the back fence is off limits.

**Statement** [Alan Ong] – At a minimum, raise the fence a little bit to show that it's secure and place cameras outside.

**Marie Adam-Ovide** – **What is your design ideas for the seating? We don't want it to be turned to beds.**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – The seating will be curved and granite. They will not be large enough to be beds. The area will look like a Japanese rock garden.

**Rosalie Quinones** – **Is there a possibility of extending that wall to give more space to the library?**

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – Extending the wall isn't feasible.

**Jessy Miyasato** – **The space looks bigger than it actually is, are you expanding behind the building?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – We tried to make the building feel bigger through higher ceilings, more windows to make it more open since it's not feasible to expand the building.

**Albert Suhu** – **Will there be a temporary location set up while the library is being renovated?**

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – No. We will have mobile library service.

**Alan Ong** – **How often will the service be available?**

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – It's hard to say this far in advance.

**Alan Ong** – **Do you have the flexibility to increase the frequency if needed?**

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – It depends on other projects that we're working on. If we're doing a similar renovation, we would want to have a mobile service library at both locations.

**Statement** [Luisa Benedetto] – Construction can last 2<sup>1/2</sup> to 3 years, but then once DDC turns it over to Queens Public Library, we go in there and get the books up, computers which takes an additional 3 to 4 months.

**Rosalie Quinones** – **Where is the construction machinery going to be parked?**

**Answer** [Iris Kim] – Due to the complexity of the site, we're assuming it'll be on Manton and Main Street.

**Alan Ong** – **Have you spoken to the friends group and gotten any input from them?**

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – Our volunteers services department who oversees the friends are in touch with the chapter.

Bhithara Martha-Fulton made a motion to send a letter of approval from the community board committee to move forward with the plans.

Amy Tse seconded the motion.

The members voted unanimously in favor (Bhitihara -Martha Fulton, Michael Athy, Amy Tse)

Marie Adam-Ovide will send the letter of support to DDC and copy Queens Public Library.

**Rosalie Quinones – Can you display the photo of the library so the community has something to look forward to?**

**Answer** [Luisa Benedetto] – That’s something DDC and the contractor would need to have a conversation on.

**Statement** [Ari Gershman] – The presentation will be posted on the DDC website. Please share it with your group members and other community board members can see it.

*Chairperson Ong had a short recess before continuing with the second part of the meeting on the expansion of Francis Lewis H.S.*

Alan Ong presented information about a building being sold, 175-05 Horace Harding EXPWY, which is owned by St. John’s University

- The building is right off Horace Harding between Jerry’s Hardware and Progressive Marshal Arts (PMA).
- The best thing would be for the Department of Education to purchase the property to expand the high school.
- Chairperson Ong reached out to SCA and found that purchasing the property isn’t in the plans.
- Chairperson Ong suggested that the committee bring it to Martha to write a letter of consideration to the DOE and elected officials to help advocate for it.
- He would like to work with Citywide Council on High Schools (CCHS) to see how we can advocate for the building.

**Statement** [Albert Suhu] – I met with the President of Francis Lewis High School, Dr. David Marmor. He is aware of the building be sold. He is interested in DOE acquiring the property.

**Statement** [Alan Ong] – Francis Lewis High School won’t have to reconstruct the building if they purchase the building across the street. I would like for the committee to vote on it to see if it’s a good idea to bring it to the executive board and ask the community board to write a letter of consideration.

**Alan Ong – Do we need to vote on it to bring it to the executives?**

**Statement** [Michel Athy] – I spoke with the principal and Paul at CB11. CB11 isn’t aware of St. John’s University selling the property and Francis Lewis High Schools interest in purchasing the property.

*Michel Athy provided stats on Francis Lewis High School’s building capacity.*

Michel Athy presented information about Francis Lewis High School

- The current capacity is 2,807.
- With an annex they expand to 555 seats.
- Current enrollment is 4,269 which puts them at 152.1%.
- The average rate in queens 97.1% capacity usage which is based on the new blue book.
- There’s a procedure in place that ties the construction of new buildings directly to the class size law.
- If Francis Lewis High School roughly stays at 4,000 students and maintain full enrollment under the current situation if they went full triple section.
- There’s \$109 million (it’s on C12 of the Capital Plan) that’s in the budget.
- Differs in CB8 writing a letter until CB11 acts on wanting to by the property.

**Alan Ong – Where does our CB8 lines end?**

**Answer** [Michel Athy] – Horace Harding

**Statement** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – Alan, you could speak with Martha about it. Martha can speak with Paul Benedetto, who is the chairperson for CB11, to make them aware of the building for sale.

**Alan Ong** – Marie, can you reach out to the District Manager to let him know that the committee mentioned this?

**Answer** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – Yes. I can reach out.

**Statement** [Alan Ong] – The plan of action is for Marie to reach out to the District Manager, to get the executive for CB8 to write a letter of support and notify elected officials to pursue their support.

*Chairperson Ong presents new business to the committee on M.S 216.*

**Alan Ong** – The school was approved for an expansion which will take up half their yard. The question raised is where are the students going to have their activity? Something to consider is to have DOT close the street that is a commercial area for the students to use the street.

**Statement** [Albert Suhu] – Department of Health has a program called Play Street, where the street can be closed for a certain number of hours for kids to use. They place cones to close the street and during school hours the kids can play in the street. The principle is concerned about the kid's mental health since they won't be able to play outdoors. 174<sup>th</sup> street has three residences and then the rest are commercial businesses and a church which is the rear of the building. This would affect three or four houses that are close to Horace Harding. Someone has to submit the paperwork and give it to the community board for approval.

**Albert Suhu** – Who submits the paperwork? My guess is the principal.

**Answer** [Alan Ong] – Yes.

**Alan Ong** – Did you speak with her?

**Answer** [Albert Suhu] – Yes. I had a meeting with her, and she asked us to help her get the street closed off. She's not aware of how the process works; however, I found the paperwork.

**Statement** [Alan Ong] – Residents and people in the community needs to know that the streets won't be closed 24/7.

**Michel Athy** – Do you know how many years of construction is this supposed to take?

**Answer** [Albert Suhu] – 3 years.

**Statement** [Alan Ong] – Our intention is to close the street area starting after the residential homes all the way to the church.

**Statement** [Albert Suhu] – Yes. That's 65<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**Alan Ong** – Was the school originally recommending 175<sup>th</sup> which is in front of the school? I believe that's why the community was opposed to it since across the street was all residential.

**Answer** [Albert Suhu] – Yes. The area is all houses.

**Amy Tse** – Does the school have enough crossing guards or school security?

**Answer** [Alan Ong] – It's never enough.

**Amy Tse** – So the school staff would have to watch the student?

**Answer** [Michel Athy] – The staff would have to go out there and stand on each end where the street is closed off.

**Statement** [Alan Ong] – On 64<sup>th</sup> Avenue, by the Arby's parking lot, Fresh Meadows advocated to place a traffic light. They should have placed a turning signal to allow people to turn going west over. We need to work with them to get a turn signal that will ease traffic flow.

**Alan Ong** – CEC 26 had SCA come and present. They came to us for a vote about expanding MS 216.

**Statement** [Amy Tse] – There was concern about parking.

**Statement** [Alan Ong] – The intention is to have Ben Goodman from SCA come in September and give the community board an update on where everything is. Hopefully we'll have updates as to what Dr. Daphne VanDorn may put in so we can advocate for the Play Street.

**Marie Adam-Ovide** – Would closing the street where the commercial buildings affect the businesses?

**Answer** [Albert Suhu] – No. It's the back of the businesses.

**Marie Adam-Ovide** – Does the business enter from that side?

**Answer** [Alan Ong] – Even if they did, they would have to compromise because they take up a lot of space, especially the auto body shop.

**Amy Tse** – Where's the firehouse?

**Answer** [Alan Ong] – The firehouse is between 64<sup>th</sup> Street and Utopia Parkway.

**Alan Ong** – Marie, I mentioned that I would like to invite Ben Goodman in our September or October meeting to give the community an update since they gave one at the CEC 26 meeting.

**Statement** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – Martha is the one who decides along with the Executive Board.

**Alan Ong** – I would need to present it to the Executive Board to see if they're okay with that?

**Answer** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – You can send Martha an email or give her a call about placing them on the agenda.

**Alan Ong** – Albert, work with Dr. VanDorn. We can't do anything regarding that process of applying. We can provide support after she applies, I would assume that Department of Health and Hygiene would need the DOT's collaboration to close the street.

**Statement** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – The school should start the construction now so that it can be done by September.

**Alan Ong** – When are they anticipating the start of construction?

**Answer** [Albert Suhu] – September.

**Statement** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – They might have to act on this project quickly.

**Answer** [Albert Suhu] – I can speak with the school about it.

**Statement** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – As long as you have majority of the block that's okay with closing the street then it'll probably be okay.

**Albert Suhu** – The residence or the commercial buildings?

**Answer** [Marie Adam-Ovide] – Those who are there.

**Answer** [Alan Ong] – The commercial too? The first thing is to have the paperwork in.

**Answer** [Albert Suhu] – I'll speak with her.

Michel Athy made a motion to adjourn this meeting at 9:13 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Soleil Griffin, CB8 Staff  
July 11, 2023*