

WHAT WE HEARD

SPARC KIPS BAY Open House | 2.7.2024

INTRODUCTION

New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) and their partners in this project (City University of New York, New York City Public Schools, Health + Hospitals, Office of the Chief Medical Examiner) hosted the SPARC Kips Bay Open House on February 7th, 2024, inviting members of the Kips Bay community, life sciences industry, and the public to learn more about SPARC Kips Bay. This open house provided attendees with the opportunity to ask questions about the project, learn more about the historic investment coming to their neighborhood, and share feedback.

NYCEDC's objectives for this meeting were to:

- **Build excitement for the project** by sharing the story and need for SPARC Kips Bay
- **Help community stakeholders understand** SPARC Kips Bay's value for them and New York City
- **Identify key community priorities and concerns**

The NYCEDC project team and agency partners facilitated an interactive 2-hour open house featuring a mix of informational and interactive boards. Facilitators walked participants through the boards, answered questions and gathered feedback. Over 150 guests attended the open house, generating feedback that will guide elements of SPARC Kips Bay in its next phases.

SUMMARY OF KEY FEEDBACK

The importance of open space to the community

Participants emphasized the need for additional open space, parks, and greenspace near the SPARC Kips Bay campus. Improvements to existing playgrounds and open spaces along the waterfront were of specific interest to open house attendees. Several open house attendees conveyed that improving the accessibility and connectedness of open space in the neighborhood is a high priority. Many expressed a desire for improvements to the pedestrian experience through renovation of sidewalks and maintenance of pedestrian circulation during construction.

Concerns about traffic

Concerns about traffic increases along East 25th and East 23rd street were interspersed with general concerns about pedestrian safety and accessibility of key streets surrounding SPARC Kips Bay. A desire for pedestrian connectivity was most explicitly

expressed through broad support for the renovation of the East 25th street pedestrian bridge.

The importance of the pedestrian bridge

Many residents eagerly await improvements to the existing East 25th Street pedestrian bridge over the FDR– a critical connection for the Waterside Towers community, United Nations International School, and public waterfront access. The renovated East 25th pedestrian bridge will be universally accessible, enhancing connectivity for various users. Open house attendees expressed that the bridge is heavily used and vital for connectivity across the FDR, yet it lacks proper lighting and is not fully ADA compliant. The project team received many questions about implementation, and if both sides of the pedestrian bridge will be reconstructed to make the bridge ADA compliant. Open house participants asked questions regarding implementation timeline and when the bridge would be completed.

Interest in proposed SPARC Square

The project team heard general and broad support for the proposed SPARC Square, a publicly accessible central open space that will enhance the public realm for community members and users of the SPARC Kips Bay campus. Participants were excited about all the possible outdoor amenities, particularly open lawn space, flexible seating, and public art. In addition to enthusiasm for the new open space, some community members expressed concerns about securing the campus at night and maintaining the space.

Desire for an active ground floor

Attendees were excited by the types of amenities that may be offered at SPARC Kips Bay; having spaces that are public and spaces that are available for mingling were the top priorities. The project team heard a high demand for space available to community groups for free use. Additionally, some life sciences professionals wanted to see free community space for topical gatherings, lectures, and workshops. Other attendees expressed interest in increased food and retail along 1st Avenue and were excited by the possibility of having a livelier streetscape.

When asked about their preferred amenities inside the SPARC Kips Bay campus, attendees expressed the most interest in community space, followed closely by spaces for collaboration--specifically near the Eastern portion of the site where the NYCPS and CUNY facilities will be. Creative ideas of what a collaboration space could look like were brought up at the open house, with most people favoring spaces that support career pathways, workforce development, and collaboration between the SPARC Kips Bay users.

Interest in the type of collaboration possible among SPARC users

The project team heard interest and excitement for the types of collaborations that will be made possible by SPARC Kips Bay. Throughout the open house, the project team

heard innovative ideas of what partnership could look like from members of the life sciences industry, parents of prospective students, and current CUNY students. Attendees favored collaboration surrounding possible internships the most, cross-cutting educational opportunities, entrepreneurial innovation, and public-private partnership in life sciences. There was broad support for SPARC Kips Bay's potential to create career pathways, deepen workforce development and foster private sector and public sector partnership in life sciences.

Attendees are looking forward to the new NYCPS facility on the site and the potential connections between students and members of the life sciences industry. Many attendees stated that the possibility of collaboration between NYCPS and CUNY is one of the most exciting aspects of SPARC.

Concern about retaining the existing uses of the Brookdale Campus

Many open house attendees noted concerns about the lack of affordable housing in this area. Participants also shared concerns that some of the existing uses of the campus won't be replaced, including the dorms. The project team conveyed that access to affordable housing is a priority citywide, and the city is committed to addressing this need through the Blueprint for Housing Our Neighbors Plan, the recently announced City of Yes, and other plans and strategies to create more housing in this district and citywide. The planned program at SPARC Kips Bay provides an extraordinary opportunity to establish an innovative job and education hub for health, learning, wellness, and workforce training all on one city block.