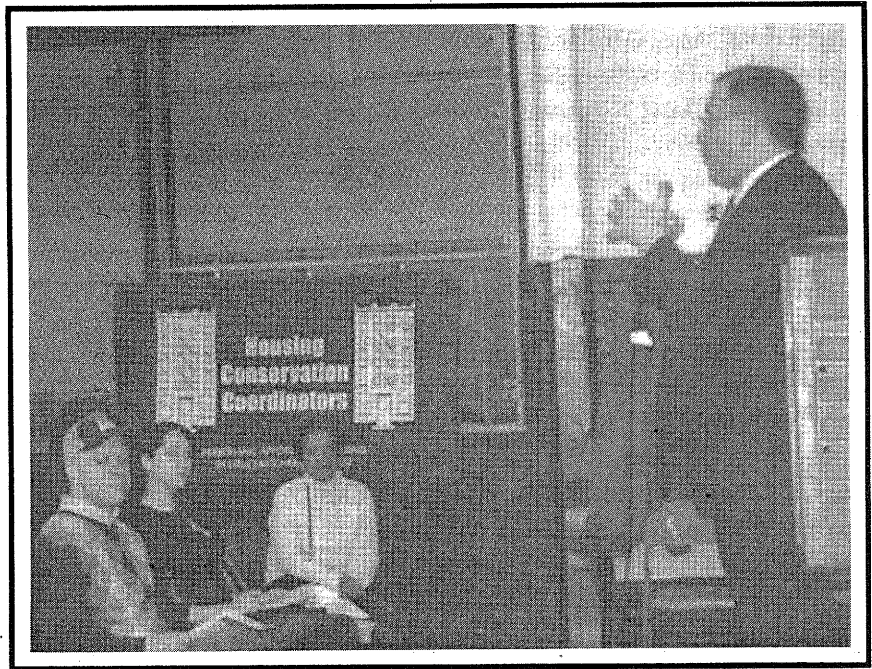


Affordable Housing Town Hall Meeting



Manhattan BP Scott Stringer Speaking To The Hell's Kitchen Community At The Affordable Housing Meeting

by John Raskin, Housing Conservation Coordinators, 212-716-1665

More than 250 Hell's Kitchen residents, fresh from their victory in the West Side stadium fight and thirsty for a say in the future of the neighborhood, gathered in the cafeteria of P.S. 51 on West 45th Street on April 4th to rally for the affordable housing development and school expansion promised to West Siders in the Hudson Yards rezoning.

"This deal was signed and sealed," Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer told the audience, "and now we have to make sure it's delivered."

The January 2005 agreement between Mayor Bloomberg and Council Speaker Christine Quinn allowed for a rezoning of much of Hell's Kitchen below 42nd street, with the promise that more than 3,300 affordable apartments would be built. 600 of those apartments are due to be constructed on the parking lots surrounding P.S. 51, on 45th Street west of 10th Avenue, and Mayor Bloomberg agreed that the City would fund a 110-student expansion of the school.

"We need to make sure these affordable apartments are built," said Anna Levin, co-chair of the Community Board 4 land use committee, "but we also want to make sure the affordable housing promise isn't used as an excuse to build a 40-story tower on 11th Avenue."

Bob Kalin, a tenant organizer at Housing Conservation Coordinators, the agency that organized the meeting, echoed Levin's concerns. "We've been promised affordable housing before that never materialized, and we've been overwhelmed before with huge towers where they don't belong. This time we're organizing early so the community can get out in front with our needs before the Mayor and the developer tell us what they want to put there," Kalin said.

P.S. 51 Principal Nancy Sing-Bock addressed the proposed school expansion, explaining to the audience of com-

munity residents and school parents that more space and upgraded facilities are desperately needed. Sing-Bock pointed out that the meeting space where the crowd had gathered also functions as the school's cafeteria, gymnasium, auditorium, art space and community room. "We use the auditorium at P.S. 111 for graduation," she said, "and when our kids get there they say, 'so this is what a real auditorium looks like!'"

Neighborhood residents working with Housing Conservation Coordinators to push for the low-density housing and school expansion exhorted audience members to participate in the campaign, noting that there will be opportunities in the months ahead to underscore the neighborhood's needs before the development is designed. Each audience member took home a packet of petitions calling on Mayor Bloomberg to build the apartments, expand the school and keep the development in the low-rise context of the surrounding neighborhood.

"We won the fight against the stadium, we won the fight against an 1800-seat circus on 42nd Street, and now we're going to win the fight for affordable housing in Hell's Kitchen," said Dahlia DuPerron, a tenant leader and resident of 790 11th Avenue. "Everyone here needs to participate, and you can start right now by talking to your neighbors about the affordable housing we were promised, and about how we have to expand the school, and you can get every one of them to sign our petition."

West Side residents who would like to join the campaign should contact John Raskin, the community organizer at Housing Conservation Coordinators, to pick up copies of the neighborhood petition and sign up for the campaign. John can be reached at 212-716-1665 or jraskin@hcc-nyc.org.

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