



Medgar Evers College

OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

1127 CARROLL ST.
BROOKLYN, NY 11225

THE PROPOSED MEDGAR EVERS REDEVELOPMENT COMPLEX

The area known as Central Brooklyn comprises the neighborhoods of Bedford Stuyvesant, Ocean Hill-Brownsville, East New York, Fort Greene and Crown Heights.

For a number of years a good many organizations, both public and private have been active in this area seeking to bring about a cultural and physical upgrading and to reverse the general trend of deterioration.

At the start of the OEO Program, umbrella anti-poverty agencies were established in the various neighborhoods. These include Bedford Stuyvesant Youth in Action, East New York Community Corp., the Brownsville Community Council and the Crown Heights Community Corp. These agencies continue to run programs for economic development, education, job training and placement, youth activities and other needs of the area.

The Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation was subsequently founded. It has been active in the renovation and rehabilitation of residential and commercial buildings in the area. It has also been concerned with the general economic and cultural development.

When Central Brooklyn was designated a Model Cities area, the office of Central Brooklyn Model Cities became active in overall planning for the area and in many projects involving housing, police training, home repair service, paraprofessional training and a host of other community concerns.

BLEDCO, the Brooklyn Local Economic Development Council, has worked to help local residents start new businesses and is developing a large tract of land along Atlantic Avenue as a shopping Center and housing complex.

The local school districts and school boards have developed a number of pioneering projects for the schools in the area. The churches have also been active.

Medgar Evers College which opened its doors to its first student in the summer of 1971 is a relative new comer to Central Brooklyn. Its foundation, however, was the result of 10 years of effort by the local community to locate a higher education facility there. A senior college in the CUNY system, it is unique among the CUNY colleges in that it was founded to serve the educational and social needs of the Central Brooklyn Community. Alone among the colleges in the city system it has a community council made up of representatives from the locality, including the elected officials, with the responsibility not only to advise the administration of the college on all aspects of the college goals and development, but also to take a role in the designation of the President of the college.

The college opened in various rented spaces in and around the Brooklyn Masonic Temple in the Fort Greene area. Next year it will move some of its operations to its intermediate site in the present Brooklyn Preparatory buildings in Crown Heights which have been acquired for use by the college. While additional rental space is being sought in the vicinity of Brooklyn Prep it is clear that the college will out-grow these facilities in about 5 years. The college officials in conjunction with the planning committee of the Community Council have turned to the problem of locating and developing a permanent campus. This campus should have an area of about 50 acres, so that it can accommodate the expected ultimate enrollment of 10,000. It should ideally be located on a site in Central Brooklyn, which would be convenient to all of the neighborhoods. The site should be one that is already far along in the process of deterioration so that the location of the college will represent a desirable upgrading of the locality and cause minimum disruption and relocation. It should also be in an area whose surroundings lend themselves to the development of a whole spectrum of other projects which would further improve the general area and which would make the area more desirable as a site for a college.

After consultation with the agencies active in the district, college leaders have located a site spanning Atlantic Avenue running from Herkimer Street to Bergen Street and from Ralph Avenue to Hopkinson Avenue which ideally fits these criteria. For the most part the housing in the area is deteriorated beyond rehabilitation, and the cancer of abandonment and decay which has completely eaten away the area to the South is beginning to move in on this area. While there are no projects under active consideration for the actual blocks proposed for the campus, the site is ringed by blocks on which various projects are either completed, in progress, under consideration or possible.

To the North West the Brevoort Houses already exist. Two blocks immediately North of the site are under consideration by BLEDCO for low income housing. On two other blocks North of the campus Bedford

Stuyvesant Restoration is considering a housing project. Immediately to the East, Atlantic Towers a middle income twin tower high rise, is already standing. To the South the area as far as Eastern Parkway has been almost completely cleared and several of these blocks will be developed with low income housing under various sponsorships. To the West BLEDCO is developing housing and a regional shopping center, and the Fulton park area is being redeveloped with housing and a new high school.

It is the conviction of the college that the development of the new college campus on the proposed site could serve as the focus of a large scale renewal of the whole surrounding area. Each project would benefit by the presence of the college and the college in turn would benefit from each project.

The type of projects in mind are low and middle income housing; housing for the elderly, day care centers, experimental elementary schools, demonstration high schools, adult education centers, play grounds, a hospital which would help train nurses and medical paraprofessionals, branch public library, shopping centers, the encouragement of neighborhood businesses, experimental social welfare centers, pedestrian malls, and a host of other endeavors.

It is hoped that the college can provide a neutral focus around which the various agencies now active in Central Brooklyn can rally along with other agencies of the Federal and State government in an effort of total redevelopment which will exceed the capacity of anyone of those organizations. The college officials and the Community Council will be seeking foundation money for an initial planning grant to investigate the ways in which all the agencies may participate in this overall projects.

FLC:mjt

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