



March 27, 2024

Pamela Soto, Senior Project Manager
Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination
100 Gold Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10038

Dear Ms. Soto,

We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed Science Park and Research Campus (SPARC) Kips Bay project. This project would be situated in a part of Manhattan that already has a rich offering of life science uses. By bringing life science, healthcare, and education uses together onto one campus and public realm, SPARC will help grow the life sciences industry in New York City for current and future generations, providing 3,100 permanent jobs for New Yorkers. We commend the work that the City's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) has done thus far to engage with stakeholders and are eager to continue our partnership to ensure the success of this campus.

As this proposal prepares for approval through the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), we'd like EDC to ensure proper analysis of the issues we outline below.

Transportation

This project would be situated next to the FDR Drive, as well as 1st Avenue, which gets a lot of vehicular traffic. This context, paired with the types of vehicles that would be entering and leaving the SPARC campus, poses various challenges for the campus. We therefore ask that the traffic analysis include a careful analysis of the drop off locations at the Health and Hospitals (H+H) ambulatory facility, the impacts of traffic on East 26th Street as a two-way access drive, and any other loading needs for the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), along with other campus uses.

We also urge the applicants to prioritize the safety and ease of pedestrian circulation in and around the SPARC campus. The construction of this facility should be accompanied by significant pedestrian safety improvements, including around the FDR Drive exit on East 25th Street and in locations where pedestrians may interact with vehicles, including the potential drop off lane for H+H. Similarly, pedestrian improvements between the campus and the subway, including sidewalk widenings around the campus, should be considered. We also ask the applicants to ensure there is adequate bicycle infrastructure on and around the campus, including the citibike station on East 25th Street and First Avenue, parking for personal bikes, and bike access to the waterfront.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

We commend the project for the inclusion of .75 acres of open space on the site, and we encourage the inclusion of any additional passive recreation space as possible, whether on site or in the surrounding area such as the waterfront. The urban design and visual resources analysis of the pedestrian experience should include looking at potential mitigations, particularly in making the open space inviting and accessible from the street level, and transparency when possible given building uses.

We celebrate that this project will include much needed improvements to the 25th Street pedestrian bridge, to finally upgrade the aging infrastructure and provide much needed ADA accessibility. We know the applicants will adhere to all required standards for modern and accessible pedestrian bridges, but we hope that they will go above and beyond to hear from bridge users about any particular needs that could be addressed in the final design.

Socioeconomic Conditions

While there is no direct or indirect residential displacement that would result from the SPARC project, the project would replace 711 dorm beds (575 of which currently utilized). Dormitory housing provides critical, affordable housing for students and ensures that they don't have to navigate and further strain our rental housing market. We urge the applicants to study the impact of this project on students who use this housing, and work with CUNY to identify replacement dorm space or otherwise provide affordable housing within Community District 6.

Construction

This project is anticipated to take five years of construction. We ask the applicants to ensure that proper notice on phasing and updates are given to surrounding residents, particularly related to the pedestrian bridge and access to the river.

Community Space

We have heard consistently from local stakeholders on the need for additional space for the surrounding community's many active organizations. There are many groups in need of space to utilize for their programming, meetings, and community events. We ask for the final design of the project to address this need.

Our offices look forward to seeing the completion of this project, along with all the related improvements it will bring to the neighborhood and the life sciences industry in New York.



Mark Levine
Manhattan Borough President



Keith Powers
Council Member, District 4