



Upper Eastside Greenmarkets Very, Very Close

Posted by [Glenn](#) on April 11, 2006 - 10:55pm in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

Tags: [eli zabar](#), [food](#), [greenmarkets](#), [oil](#), [peak oil](#), [upper east side](#) [[list all tags](#)]

Regular readers know that I've been agitating to bring more locally grown food to [my neighborhood](#) for [quite some time](#). This is because locally grown food consumes a lot less (about 75% less) fossil fuels than factory farm, industrial agriculture from long distances. This will be important as energy prices increase in preserving local farmland and decreasing the lines of supply for our food.

Well, that dream just got one step closer to becoming a reality tonight: The Streetfair committee of Community Board 8 voted in favor of both locations - PS 6 (82nd bet Madison & Park) AND St. Stephen's church (82nd bet 1st & York).

It was like a scene from Woody Allen movie about local democracy on the UES: Angry co-op boards, Park Avenue socialites, PTA moms, local food celebrity, politicians...if only I wrote screenplays!

The first site up for debate was the PS 6 location, which was on the richer side of town. First up was a building next door to the school which offered up a litany of complaints against the school's, well, waste management problems. It seems they have rats in the building (I won't reveal their identity to protect their property values). That issue was easily dealt with by a combination of the PTA president who said that they have a new janitor and Tom Stromolo from the Greenmarkets organization's assurance that the Greenmarket vendors will clean up after themselves.

There were Park Aveune socialites earnestly defending their neighborhood's identity as "Residential Only", saying how much they love greenmarkets in principle, but just not anywhere that might attract "people" into their neighborhood, especially those pesky tourists at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This despite the obvious logic of [mixed use zoning](#) in dense urban areas. They even proposed an alternative location at 95th Street and Lexington Ave which they considered "more appropriate for commercial purposes". I countered by asking a clarifying question if greenmarkets could only be placed in so-called commercially zoned areas - the answer was "No, they can go anywhere". The upside is that the school, PS 198, might become the third location for a greenmarket.

Then finally, Eli Zabar spoke out against the greenmarket at PS 6 because it would hurt his business at Eli's on 80th and Third. Along with many other people in the audience, I explained how greenmarkets can help set a good minimum standard of food quality in a neighborhood and like Union Square, even serve as [economic development](#) by attracting great stores like Whole Foods and Trader Joe's as well as great restaurants.

Despite having about 4 or 5 votes on the board, the combined opposition interests lost their motion to table the discussion of the two greenmarkets to a later date. Instead, a motion supporting the greenmarket at PS 6 passed by just a couple of votes. This was largely due to both of the local city councilmembers, Lappin and Garodnick speaking out strongly in favor of the greenmarkets. In particular CM Lappin cited the over 100 signature we had collected on a

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petition in favor of the greenmarket locations. CM Garodnick emphasized that we should not lose momentum on a worthwhile project and that if many of the community's concerns turned out to be true, that the locations could always be changed at a later date.

Then the St. Stephen's site passed easily with a unanimous vote.

Then, in the department of "if-you-can't-beat'em, join'em", Eli Zabar asked if he would be able to sell some of his locally grown produce (he grows stuff on the roofs of his building) at the greenmarket. Tom Stromolo from the Greenmarkets group seemed genuinely interested. I think that would be great, and perhaps it could start a new category at the greenmarkets - green roof food!

The final vote by the Full Community Board will be next week on April 19th at 6:30pm at Chapel of the Good Shepherd Church, 543 Main Street, Roosevelt Island, The Community Room. It should be interesting!



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