

Mt. Olivet Makes a Difference in Harlem

At a time when the Harlem community needs leadership, Mt. Olivet Baptist Church rises to the occasion. Led by Senior Minister Charles Curtis, Mt. Olivet has stepped up to support Voices of the Everyday People (VOTE People) in its work to defeat the City's proposal to rezone Harlem's main street.

New York City is proposing to drastically change Harlem – what it looks like, who lives here, who does business here. These changes will occur if the City Council approves a proposed rezoning of 125th Street which would allow developers to build towers, some twice the height of the Teresa Hotel, along 125th from Broadway to Second Avenue.

In the face of this plan, which would bring thousands of market-rate, luxury apartments, and would force out many long-time businesses and residents who would no longer be able to afford the cost of the new Harlem, local elected officials appear to have deserted their community.

On March 1, 2008, Minister Curtis took a step to change that when he opened his doors to VOTE People, a community-based advocacy group, to hold a public meeting, where members of the community could learn about the rezoning plan and how to become involved in stopping it from happening.

VOTE People is organizing property owners in the immediate vicinity of the proposal, on 124th and 126th Streets, to sign a petition that



From left to right: Sikhulu Shange of The Record Shack; Marina Ortiz of East Harlem Preservation; Janine Green-Doh of VOTE People; Senior Minister Charles A. Curtis of Mt. Olivet Baptist Church; Erica Razook of VOTE People; Craig Schley of VOTE People; Hiba Quraman of VOTE People; Norman Siegel, Civil Rights Attorney; Carlton Berkley of 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care; Mylinda Lee of MHN Show

would become a part of a challenge to the rezoning proposal.

“Property owners have a special role to play. In New York law, they are given the right to challenge rezoning proposals. Harlem needs their help now,” said Craig Schley, Executive Director of VOTE People.

The rezoning, and consequent restructuring, of Harlem can be stopped, but it will take the courage and commitment of community leaders like Pastor Curtis, and the people of Harlem. VOTE People needs help and is looking for volunteers to support the challenge to the rezoning.

If you care about Harlem and can help save what we all love about it, please contact VOTE People, and become a volunteer, at: 917.720.8341, or info@votepeople.net.