



Inclusive City

Strategies to achieve more equitable and predictable land use in New York City

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Mayor Bill de Blasio's first term was marked by many accomplishments, including the enactment of one of the most expansive inclusionary housing programs in the nation.¹ At the end of the first term, the administration was on track to surpass its 2013 goal to create and preserve 200,000 units of housing,² and even increased the goal to 300,000. Yet, one area of the administration's housing plan had seen slower progress. Efforts to upzone 15 communities to create more capacity for affordable housing across the City encountered fierce resistance. To date, only three of these rezonings have passed, while one stalled and others are making much slower progress to address community and stakeholder concerns.

The public remains in the dark about why these places were chosen, how other neighborhoods will contribute to the citywide goal of addressing the affordable housing crisis, and whether sufficient resources exist to aid communities in accommodating the growth without displacement. The de Blasio administration's proposed neighborhood rezonings have been almost exclusively in low-income communities of color. While it isn't wrong for the city to turn an eye toward these neighborhoods — many of which have been disinvested in and ignored for decades — efforts to upzone these and other neighborhoods would be aided by a public rationale for how the neighborhoods are selected, and clarity about how resources will be allocated to ensure fair neighborhood outcomes.

A comprehensive citywide planning framework would provide this rationale. It would create publicly accepted criteria and guidelines for where and how rezonings should occur, and more broadly, it would enable the City to reach a shared vision with community level targets for its accomplishment. Creating an Office of Community Planning would enable more local stakeholders to have a say in the future of their neighborhoods, and could

serve to strengthen the entities most likely to engage in neighborhood-level planning efforts, including community boards. More community based plans would be a boon to the city's planning efforts, as these surface important priorities and ideas that are often broader and more holistic than what can be contained in individual land use proposals, including opportunities for schools, jobs and economic development, daycare, housing, open space and more. Next, increasing transparency in land use processes before and during formal procedures would improve public faith in the city's land use procedures. In a city with a comprehensive planning framework and strong community planning, less pressure would fall on environmental review studies used to analyze actions that are not as-of-right. Still, transparently revising the analysis tools and formulas in environmental review would ensure stakeholders have the best information available to make land use decisions where environmental review is triggered, and ensuring adverse impacts are mitigated as promised would restore public trust.

As the mayor and New York City elected officials enters their second term, they should explore how land use governance reform can yield better outcomes for all stakeholders, including for developers who seek less local opposition and more predictability, and especially for the most vulnerable in our city who fear displacement from their neighborhoods.

A land use reform working group of over 40 community and land use experts convened to identify strategies for reform. Facilitation was provided by the Offices of Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, City Council Member Antonio Reynoso and Regional Plan Association. The working group drew on recommendations from the Campaign for Community Based Planning's taskforce, active from 2000 to 2009, with the goal to support and strengthen the role of community planning citywide. The working group updated the taskforce's proposals to reflect today's planning landscape, but the goals remain similar and are perhaps even more relevant as the city's economy continues to improve, and communities seek to balance the need for growth against the displacement pressures of gentrification. The working group also drew from the white paper titled "*Proposal to Increase Community Engagement in Private Development Plans*" produced by the Office of Council Member Antonio Reynoso in 2016, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's strong positive results with pre-

¹ New York City. 2016. "Builders of Affordable Housing Applaud Passage of Historic Housing Reforms." Retrieved from: <http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/296-16/builders-affordable-housing-applaud-passage-historic-housing-reforms>

² de Blasio, William and Alicia Glen. 2013. "Housing New York: A 5 Borough 10 Year Plan." Retrieved from: http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/housing/downloads/pdf/housing_plan.pdf

ULURP planning processes and community screening and training initiatives, and Regional Plan Association's *Fourth Regional Plan* recommendations on local planning. The challenges and opportunities identified by the working group are summarized below.

Challenges

There is no overarching public framework driving land use decisions; entities charged with making land use decisions are under resourced; processes including environmental review requirements for evaluating and approving proposed development projects are time-consuming, expensive, arcane and inefficient; and finally, public review requirements often exclude residents, many who are shut out of the process until it is too late to affect decisions, especially in low-income communities of color.

The result is that our land use governance tools and processes are not delivering the homes, commercial space and other infrastructure the city sorely needs. Even beneficial projects take too long or cost too much to reach completion. And for projects that do reach completion, the benefits are often uneven, with adverse impacts overlooked and unmitigated. At the neighborhood scale, these inefficiencies come together to deepen inequality as wealthier neighborhoods are often able to identify resources to navigate the complex processes, while low-income communities are less able to affect outcomes.

Opportunities

To create growth that better meets the city's needs and ensure current residents benefit, New York City's planning and approval processes should be reformed to be more inclusive, equitable, and predictable, using the best tools available for addressing a wide range of impacts. The working group offered four primary strategies for consideration:

1. Dramatically increase the amount of proactive planning in New York City.

- ▶ Create a citywide comprehensive planning framework with community-district level targets, including for housing creation and public facilities siting, in collaboration with communities and local elected officials.
- ▶ Increase resources and support for neighborhoods to engage in community planning, with standing, by creating an Office of Community Planning.



- ▶ Reform community boards by standardizing the application and selection process, taking steps to ensure they are representative of the communities they serve, professionalizing and resourcing boards, and increasing their visibility to the general public.
- ▶ Ensure citywide and community goals are transparently met through cross acceptance, a negotiating process to achieve alignment between the citywide framework and community plans.
- ▶ Explore new revenue streams to increase resources and support for communities to engage in planning.

2. Increase communication, participation, and transparency in development decisions before and during formal procedures.

- ▶ Improve and democratize available information about private and publicly initiated land use proposals to ensure that residents have a voice in the decisions that shape their communities.

3. Improve accountability, oversight, and enforcement in the City Environmental Quality Review process.

- ▶ Address inaccuracies in environmental review report preparation.
- ▶ Ensure funding and implementation of mitigation measures identified in environmental impact statements.
- ▶ Track neighborhood outcomes after land use actions are approved for lessons learned.

4. Update the City Environmental Quality Review technical manual to ensure accuracy.

- Convene an expert panel to review and propose updates to metrics and evaluation methodologies in the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual, and subject updates to public review and comment, and update regularly.

In addition to these strategies, the working group recommended that New York City examine best practices from other cities, both in and outside of the U.S. Many cities complete reviews and approvals in far less time, and often with more effective public engagement.

Getting it done

Implementation of these strategies would be through one of three mechanisms: administrative changes, legislation or the convening of a Charter Revision Commission. Some strategies could be implemented through simple administrative changes, such as the convening of an expert panel to review CEQR guidelines, while others might best be accomplished through legislative action. Still others would require more fundamental changes best achieved through reforms to the New York City Charter. Reforms are not without precedent in New York City. Charter Revision Commissions have been convened as close together as every four years,³ with the last one taking place in 2010,⁴ and one was recently proposed in Public Advocate Letitia James and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.⁵ Charter revision commissions may be convened through State or City legislative action, as well as by public referendum, but all except one in New York City's history have been convened by mayoral action.^{6,7}

³ Katz, Miranda. Gotham Gazette. 2016. "Why Do NYC Community Boards Have So Little Power?" Retrieved from: http://gothamist.com/2016/04/12/nyc_community_board_explainer.php

⁴ New York City Charter Revision Commission. 2010. "Final Report of the 2010 New York City Charter Revision Commission." Retrieved from: http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/charter/downloads/pdf/final_report_of_the_2010_charter_revision_commission_9-1-10.pdf

⁵ James, Letitia and Gale Brewer. 2017. "Introduction 1830-2017: A Local Law in relation to establishing a charter revision commission to revise or draft a new city charter." Retrieved from: <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3297424&GUID=C21E8C6D-88B1-49E1-8F1E-4440A8C592A3&Options=ID|Text|&Search=charter+review>



⁶ New York State Division of Local Government Services. 2015. "Revising City Charters in New York State." Retrieved from: https://www.dos.ny.gov/lg/publications/Revising_City_Charters.pdf

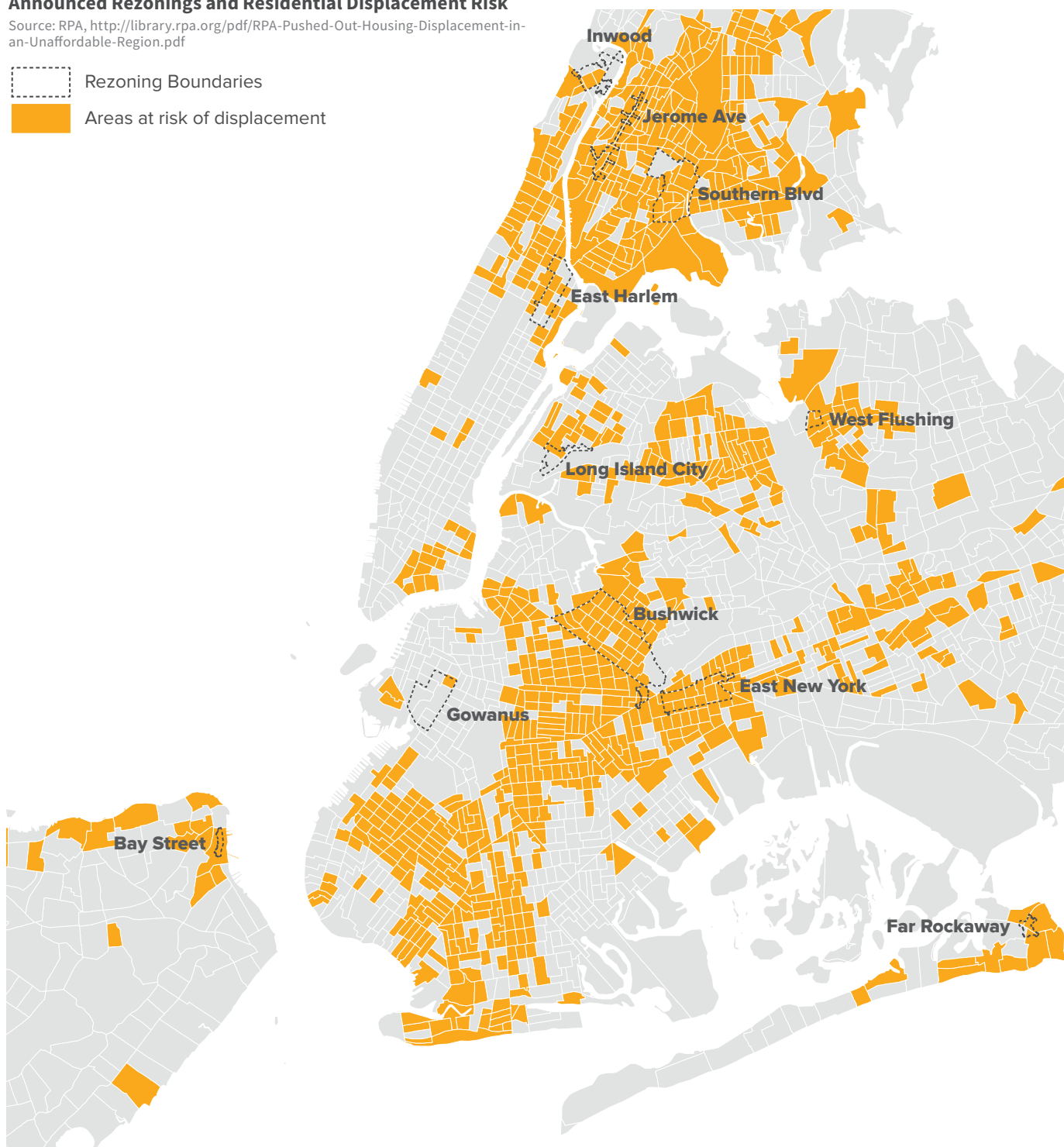
⁷ Friedlander, Jeffrey. 2003. "New York City Charter Revision." New York Law Journal. Retrieved from: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/law/downloads/pdf/ar092203.pdf>

Working Group Recommendations

Announced Rezoning and Residential Displacement Risk

Source: RPA, <http://library.rpa.org/pdf/RPA-Pushed-Out-Housing-Displacement-in-an-Unaffordable-Region.pdf>

-  Rezoning Boundaries
-  Areas at risk of displacement



Objective 1

Dramatically increase the amount of proactive planning in New York City

New York City has heard from prominent civic groups and academics for decades about potential benefits that would come from a comprehensive planning framework that sets direction for neighborhood and site proposals.^{8, 9, 10, 11} Attempts in 1939 and 1950 were defeated,¹² and in 1969, the City even prepared a comprehensive plan with community targets but failed to adopt it.^{13, 14} Reasons often cited for the failure include how onerous it was to obtain information, and a sense the plan was obsolete by the time it was complete.

But decades later, more advanced technologies have greatly expanded access to information, and the City has the tools to create and maintain a comprehensive planning framework as never before. *PlaNYC* and *OneNYC* demonstrate the City's ability to think long term and holistically, and a citywide comprehensive planning framework would go a step further by including community district level targets, including those for housing creation and public facilities. A comprehensive planning framework would greatly ease public concerns around disproportionate impacts by ensuring proposed zoning changes and other actions analyze and disclose how they further or undermine adherence to the comprehensive planning framework, which would in turn have been produced with strong, meaningful public participation.

The City already has the building blocks for the creation of a comprehensive framework. It has a strategic plan, collects statements of district needs annually from each community board, and maintains updated public dashboards with

copious amounts of information, including facilities needs and updated demographic and economic information for each community district. The City also has long-range plans for some agencies and on specific topics such as *Housing New York*. The initial framework could be a publicly digestible compilation of these existing priorities and needs, with borough and community district level goals informed by the public, and updated regularly via a prescribed process.

Once the comprehensive planning framework is in place, it would serve as a foundation for community-based planning efforts. Strengthened community planning would help set specific planning goals at the neighborhood level that are aligned with the citywide framework, but would need greater administrative support in order to function well.

Through adopting a process like New Jersey's "cross acceptance" — a negotiating process designed to align plans produced at different levels of government — both the citywide planning framework and community goals can be met. In the case of private applications, a comprehensive planning framework would help communities better respond to developers, and give developers more certainty with respect to what projects are likely to be approved.

Strategies

1. Create a citywide comprehensive planning framework, in collaboration with communities and local elected officials.

The initial framework could be an integration of existing priorities and planning resources made public, in robust conversation with communities and local elected officials. The framework would provide much-needed guidance and context for both public and private planning proposals, and would ensure planning takes place through an equity lens as the City continues to grow. The framework would:

- ▶ **Engage all stakeholders** including community boards, community-based organizations, and borough presidents' offices in establishing guiding principles for future developments.
- ▶ **Be based, initially, on existing citywide and community district level planning resources, such as agency strategic plans, needs statements, *OneNYC*, *Housing New York*, as well as existing community-based plans.** As such, the framework would create a thorough inventory of existing needs.

⁸ Citizens Housing and Planning Council. 2010. "Land Use and the City Charter." Retrieved from: <http://chpcny.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/City-Charter-CHPC-Final-Position-Paper.pdf>

⁹ Pratt Center for Community Development. 2010. "City Charter Revision: Where Land Use Fits In." Retrieved from: http://prattcenter.net/sites/default/files/prattcenter_Charterbrief.pdf

¹⁰ RPA. 2017. Fourth Regional Plan: Fix the Institutions that are Failing Us - Make the planning and development process more inclusive, predictable, and efficient." Retrieved from: www.fourthplan.org

¹¹ Angotti, Tom. 2010. "Land Use and the New York City Charter." Retrieved from: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/ccpd/repository/files/charterreport-angotti-2.pdf>

¹² Murphy, Jarret. 2010. "Five Boroughs. One City. No Plan." Retrieved from: <https://citylimits.org/2010/12/21/five-boroughs-one-city-no-plan/>

¹³ Dunlap, David. 1992. "Some Land use History Highlights." The New York Times. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/12/realestate/some-land-use-history-highlights.html>

¹⁴ New York University Center for NYC Law. 2013. "Former CPC Chair Discussed 1969 Plan for NYC." Retrieved from: <http://www.citylandnyc.org/former-cpc-chair-discussed-1969-plan-for-new-york-city/>

- ▶ **Be updated regularly in an integrated fashion with the documents that inform it**, via a prescribed process. The framework should be updated at least every 10 years.
- ▶ **Be publicly available online at all times**, for public consumption and to aid community planning efforts.
- ▶ **Include citywide and community district targets** for growth, affordable housing, fair share of facilities siting, infrastructure needs, economic development, sustainability benchmarks, and propose how these targets could generally be achieved citywide and at the community district level, in collaboration with community boards, community-based organizations, and borough presidents' offices.
- ▶ **Protect residents from displacement.** The framework should account for the need to protect vulnerable communities against residential displacement.
- ▶ **Inform citywide efforts** including agency plans, rezonings and the City's 10-year Capital Strategy.

2. Increase resources and support for neighborhoods to engage in community planning by creating an Office of Community Planning.

The 1975 Charter revision sought to give communities a central role in the planning process and introduced community planning as a broad practice that was subsequently narrowed to Section 197A of the Charter, enabling community boards, the City Planning Commission, and borough presidents to submit local plans for the development, growth, and improvement of the city and boroughs. Since 1975, fewer than a dozen 197A plans have been approved due to a combination of factors, including how onerous 197A plans are to prepare. Despite this low number, as of 2009, over 100 community based plans had been completed, indicating local appetite for community planning.¹⁵ Community plans are valuable and if well-resourced and given standing, can result in a more equitable system, where even less-resourced communities with technical assistance can engage effectively in planning processes.

The working group recommends the City create and fund an Office of Community Planning that would:

- ▶ **Be driven by community priorities, have technical expertise, and be independent.** The Office would

¹⁵ The Municipal Arts Society of New York. 2009. "Resources." Retrieved from: <https://communitybasedplanning.wordpress.com/>

enable bottom-up planning efforts, and serve as a resource to communities, instead of driving planning efforts. The Office should have the technical expertise and resources to support community planning, including 197A efforts, but should also be independent enough to allow work to be driven by communities. As such, there are several options as to where to house the Office, including within the Department of City Planning, directly within the Office of the Mayor, with a citywide elected official, or as a standalone entity, similar to New York City's Independent Budget Office. Other cities, including Seattle, WA,¹⁶ Arlington VA¹⁷ and Denver CO,¹⁸ have offices of community planning housed in different areas. New York City could consult with them regarding the best location and structure for this Office.

- ▶ **Provide technical assistance** for community groups and community boards that engage in planning initiatives.
- ▶ **Assist with development and implementation of community-based plans both within and outside the 197A framework** in partnership with borough president's offices. Criteria for community plan acceptance by the Office could be established following the Philadelphia model,¹⁹ which validates community plans led by non-governmental entities according to objective criteria. Funding could be made available to borough presidents and City Council members pursuing and implementing community plans with local community boards and/or community-based organizations.
- ▶ **Approve consultants to produce formal environmental review documents**, with the Office of Environmental Coordination, including for Environmental Assessment Statements (EASs) and Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) for both public and private projects. Regarding environmental review, the Office could incentivize the compilation of data from multiple EISs to reduce duplication of such efforts. In the long

¹⁶ City of Seattle. 2018. "Office of Planning and Community Development." Retrieved from: <http://www.seattle.gov/opcd/>

¹⁷ City of Arlington. 2018. "Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development." Retrieved from: <https://departments.arlingtonva.us/planning-housing-development/>

¹⁸ City of Denver. 2018.. "Community Planning and Development." Retrieved from: <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/community-planning-and-development.html>

¹⁹ Philadelphia City Planning Commission. 2010. "Community Planning Guidelines." Retrieved from: <http://www.phila.gov/CityPlanning/plans/PDF/Community%20Plan%20Acceptance%20Guidelines.pdf>

term, the Office could consider shifting all environmental review studies to DCP.

- ▶ **Review land use proposals and plans for cross acceptance with other plans and/or the comprehensive planning framework.** The office could review land use proposals for consistency with community based plans, and with the citywide comprehensive planning framework. Given the track record of participatory budgeting - arrived at through an inclusive process with broad community participation for the purposes of empowering residents and strengthening communities²⁰ — the Office would ensure a direct tie between community planning and participatory budgeting ballot items by maintaining information about participatory budgeting ideas and priorities to inform community planning efforts, and vice versa.
- ▶ **Waive fees for community-based plans that lead to ULURP** (Uniform Land Use Review Procedure) on a case-by-case basis.
- ▶ **Ensure NYC OpenData, PLUTO and other community district data is consistent and readily available to the public.** To further strengthen the ability of communities to engage in community planning, the Office should ensure data and project information necessary for meaningful analysis is publicly available in a consistent and accessible manner (e.g. consistent geographies), for use by ordinary residents. Information available to the public should be standardized, comprehensive, and available for all community districts. User friendly scenario planning tools, such as those that measure jobs access or evaluate health impacts, should also be included. DCP's community profiles are an excellent place to start. In addition, the City should make preset queries within the NYC Open Data portal and/or elsewhere available to aid in evaluating land use proposals.

3. Reform community boards by standardizing the application and selection process, professionalizing and resourcing boards, and increasing visibility to the general public.

In 1975, Mayor Lindsay codified community planning boards as the most local unit of government into the City Charter. The codification followed the establishment of 12 community planning councils under Mayor Wagner in

1950,²¹ which became 62 planning districts with boards to advise the development of the 1969 master plan that were subsequently consolidated to 59 community planning boards. Today's 59 community boards remain a model for local governance across the country, and yet, they represent a promise made and broken.

There is a general lack of public awareness about community boards. They do not always reflect the demographics — including the racial/ethnic composition, age distribution, educational attainment levels, and housing tenure — of the communities they serve. Lack of planning expertise on boards can lead to challenges proactively engaging in planning processes, and with planning proposals. Lack of transparency requirements can lead to undisclosed real and apparent conflicts-of-interest. This is particularly unacceptable given the available technology that could address these issues.

In order to maximize the potential of community boards, the working group recommends that the City:

- ▶ **Create a standardized application form for all boards/boroughs.** Supplemental forms may be added on a borough or community district basis, but general consistency around a base-form across boroughs is necessary.
- ▶ **Institute independent screening committees** within the offices of the borough president as part of the selection process. Members should be publicly announced and charged with instructions and selection criteria. The screening committee will be comprised of representatives from good government groups, civic organizations, a member of the Public Advocate's office, and staff members of the borough president's office. Screening committee responsibilities would include: reviewing all new applications, and recommending applicants to advance to the selection process. Decisions regarding board appointments should be made after review of all assessment materials, which should include applications, attendance records for renewals, committee participation, board member performance, Council Members and community board chairs consultations, unique and needed skill sets, interviews, and observations from participation in borough-specific activities.
- ▶ **Require each borough president to annually document and report upon the composition of each**

²⁰ Participatory Budgeting in New York City. 2016. "About the NYC Process" Retrieved from: <http://pbny.org/content/about-new-york-city-process>

²¹ New York City Office of the Mayor. 2010. Handbook for Community Board Members. Retrieved from: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/downloads/pdf/handbook.pdf>

community board in the borough, using the Community District Profile for each district.

- ▶ **Require each borough president to address inconsistencies** between community demographics and community board membership, as documented in the composition report by creating targeted outreach plans for each community district.
- ▶ **Fund a full-time planner for each board** to be hired and employed directly by the board, and work closely with the Department of City Planning on their district's behalf, as recommended in the New York City Charter.
- ▶ **Require annual, standardized training** for board members and staff, especially in land use, zoning, housing, transportation, budget, service delivery, and conflict-of-interest.
- ▶ **Implement consistent attendance requirements and appointment timelines.** Make attendance and voting records available to the public online.
- ▶ **Reduce real, potential and apparent conflicts of interest.** Require members to annually submit conflict-of-interest documentation, monitored by the borough president's office or the City.
- ▶ **Provide support for more meeting outreach.** Provide boards with funding for community outreach and engagement, including but not limited to website management, social media, advertising in local press, events, direct resident engagement, and translation services.
- ▶ **Enable broader participation** by providing boards with funding for childcare, interpretation and refreshments at meetings.
- ▶ **Publicize community boards.** Create an ongoing, citywide outreach and public service announcement campaign to inform New Yorkers about what community boards do, and membership opportunities.

4. Ensure citywide and community goals are transparently met through mandated cross acceptance.

- ▶ **Require cross acceptance.** With a comprehensive planning framework, well-resourced community planning, and professionalized community boards in place, cross acceptance would be the requirement that ensures community and citywide goals achieve



Community Planning in Bushwick

Source: www.bushwickcommunityplan.org

and remain in alignment. Cross acceptance is a negotiation process to compare and achieve alignment between plans for overlapping places produced by different entities, in this case, community plans and the comprehensive planning framework. The City could model its process after New Jersey's,²² with DCP conducting the comparison process on the City's behalf, and community boards, neighborhood organizations and city council members responding and negotiating with the City at specified intervals. The process would result in a cross acceptance report comparing community plans with the comprehensive planning framework and outlining compromises reached, which could be approved through a process similar to ULURP. The report would contain written consistency findings between the citywide comprehensive planning framework and any community plans registered with the Office of Community Planning.

5. Explore new revenue streams to increase resources and support for communities to engage in planning.

Because the aforementioned strategies require funding, the City could consider instituting additional fees to cover some portion of implementation:

- ▶ **Impose a fee for processing applications** for private development to support community planning initiatives, with oversight by the Office of Community Planning.

²² New Jersey State Department of State. 2004. "2004 Cross-Acceptance Manual." Retrieved from: <http://www.sussex.nj.us/documents/planning/crossacceptance/camanual.pdf>

Objective 2

Increase communication, participation, and transparency in development decisions before and during formal procedures

At first glance, there may seem to be an inherent tension between expanding stakeholder engagement and making the planning process faster and more predictable. Experience has shown, however, that not taking stakeholder input into account — and especially early in the process — can slow down projects, or even stall them indefinitely. Early and inclusive participation in project planning can reduce opposition and litigation — especially when combined with clear timelines and evaluation criteria — and thereby provide greater predictability overall.

New York City leads in the area of predictability. Most actions in the city take place as-of-right, meaning they require no public approvals process so long as they conform to existing zoning regulations. However, non-conforming actions, also called discretionary actions, require environmental and public review or ULURP. As summarized in the Office of Council Member Antonio Reynoso's 2016 *"Proposal to Increase Community Engagement in Private Development Plans,"*²³ the City recently implemented a new system called BluePrint²⁴ to further streamline projects into public review, which includes the following steps:

- 1. Initial meeting:** The applicant sets up an informational meeting with their corresponding DCP borough office, presents basic information to DCP staff, and submits a Pre-Application Statement (PAS).²⁵ DCP then works with the applicant to refine the proposal and to determine what level of environmental review will be required.
- 2. Environmental Impact Statement:** The applicant submits a draft Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS) and a Land Use Application. The EAS provides

²³ Tauber, Lacey. 2016. "Proposal to Increase Community Engagement in Private Development Plans." Retrieved from: <https://www.scribd.com/document/331964133/Proposal-from-Council-Member-Antonio-Reynoso>

²⁴ Chaban, Matt. 2012. "A New BluePrint: City to Speed Up Land use Reviews." Retrieved from: <http://observer.com/2012/06/a-new-blueprint-city-to-speed-up-land-use-reviews/>

²⁵ New York City Department of City Planning. 2016. "Pre-Application Statement." Retrieved from: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/applicants/applicant-portal/preappstatement.pdf>



Jerome Avenue

Source: RPA

an initial analysis of the environmental impact that the development may have on the surrounding area. If the EAS results in a "negative declaration" of adverse impact, no public input is required at this phase.

- 3. Environmental Impact Statement:** If the EAS finds that the proposal will potentially have an adverse environmental impact, the applicant must prepare a more detailed environmental review, known as an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The preparation of an EIS requires a public hearing to introduce the scope of work to all parties that may be affected and allow public comment. The period of time in which the scope of work is determined is called "scoping." After the scope of work is determined, a Draft EIS is completed.
- 4. Certification:** Once the EAS and if necessary the Draft EIS are complete, DCP may certify the application for the ULURP.²⁶
- 5. ULURP begins:** The City's ULURP formally starts at the time of certification of the application, and mandates that the proposal be reviewed within no more than 215 days. ULURP is the public's opportunity to weigh in, since the affected community boards and borough presidents hold non-mandatory public hearings on the proposal before arriving at non-binding recommendations. Then, the City Planning Commission and City Council hold public hearings on the proposal, and ultimately either disapprove it or approve it, often with minor, mostly technical, changes.

ULURP is a model around the country of a clear and predictable approvals timeline, but only once a proposal is certified as ready for review. Prior to certification, there is not a clear process or timeline for public input. And after certification, it is difficult to substantively change a project in response to community feedback.

²⁶ New York City Department of City Planning. 2016. "Application Process Overview." Retrieved from: <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/applicants/applicant-portal/application-process.page>

In fact, the land use reform working group originally convened to address precisely the issue of a lack of opportunity for public participation early on in tions that trigger ULURP. Specifically, working group members were concerned that communities do not have adequate opportunity to engage with private development proposals. By the time a project gets to ULURP or even scoping, many of the substantive decisions have already been made. This is disempowering to communities, which has been expressed through community protests over the last few years. Members expressed concerns about outreach, engagement, participation, and transparency in both public and private proposals.

Even in recent cases where the City has attempted to engage in community planning prior to certification, such as in East Harlem and East New York, there is room for improvement with respect to level of community participation, or predictability around what happens with community recommendations even after a very effective planning process. The strategies below would democratize available information across all proposals, privately initiated proposals, City-sponsored proposals (including rezonings,) and also to improve other types of proposals that do not trigger ULURP. They would increase low public participation, and importantly, aid the City in doing more to ensure outcomes have not been predetermined before community stakeholders are able to engage. The implementation of an Office of Community Planning, described in the previous section, would also aid these goals.

Strategies

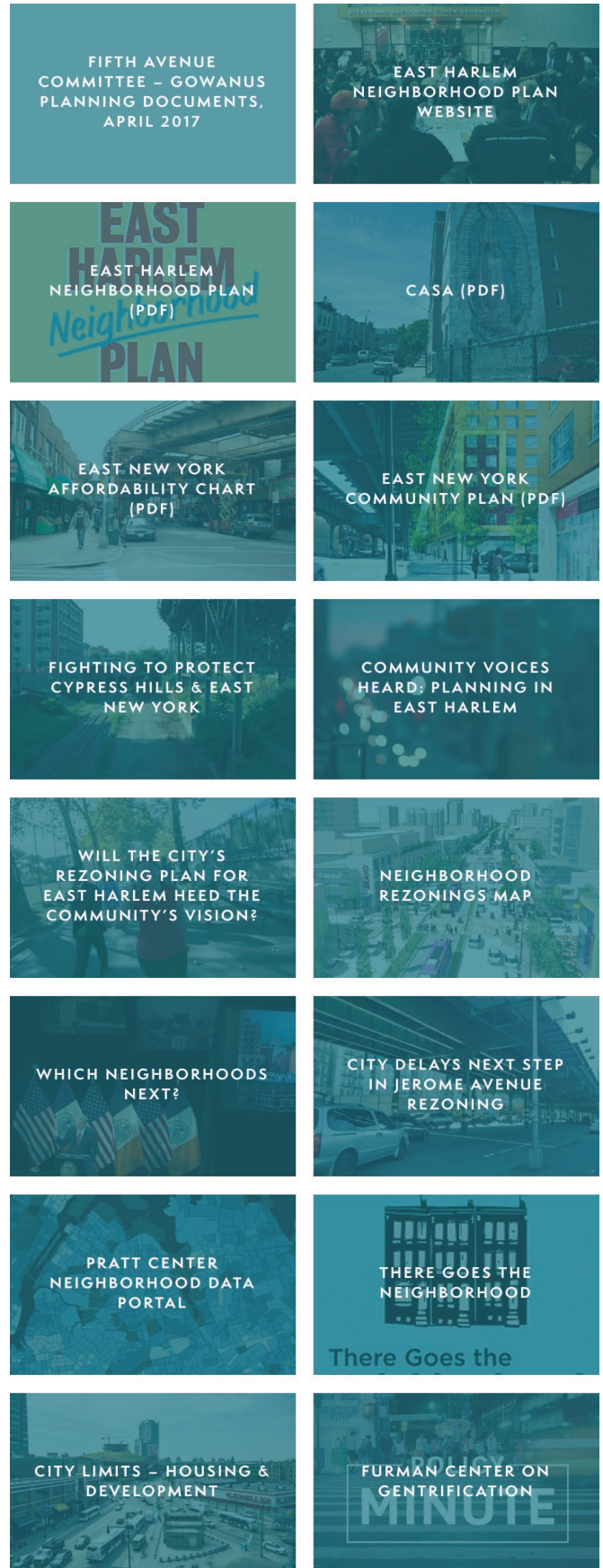
1. All Proposals.

Outreach requirements:

- **Make a set of potential development scenarios available for review online.** The preparation of an EIS requires analysis of possible alternatives to the proposed development. Currently, the alternatives analysis generally only covers the “no-build” scenario and the proposed project “with-action” scenario. If a community-based plan, vision or principles exists for the associated area, a development scenario that fits into the parameters of such plan should be considered as a third alternative. The third alternative should also take public input into account, and be finalized and available for public review before scoping begins — including but not limited to what is required in the City Environmental Quality Review technical manual. Ultimately, through

Community Planning Work Supported by the Neighborhood First Fund, with related analysis and coverage

Source: <https://neighborhoodsfirstfund.nyc/the-work/>



this process, for applicable actions, a “Community Input Alternative Scenario” would be reached and evaluated in an EIS in addition to the No-Build and With-Action development scenarios.

- ▶ **Ensure public materials are accessible.** Materials distributed before and during scoping must comply with the City’s language access laws,²⁷ use plain-language, and include visuals, including zoning maps and accurate renderings and photo-simulations.
- ▶ **Acknowledge and mitigate for the digital divide.** In addition to publication online, ensure that information about proposals (including visuals, and public input opportunities) are distributed in local and/or ethnic press; on signage in the affected area; as well as through community-based organizations, churches, television, radio, subway and bus advertisements.
- ▶ **Require community boards to maintain a list of neighborhood groups.** This list should be used to notify about participation opportunity, and should include (but not be limited to) community-based organizations, faith-based groups, block associations, parent associations, as recommended in the NYC Charter.

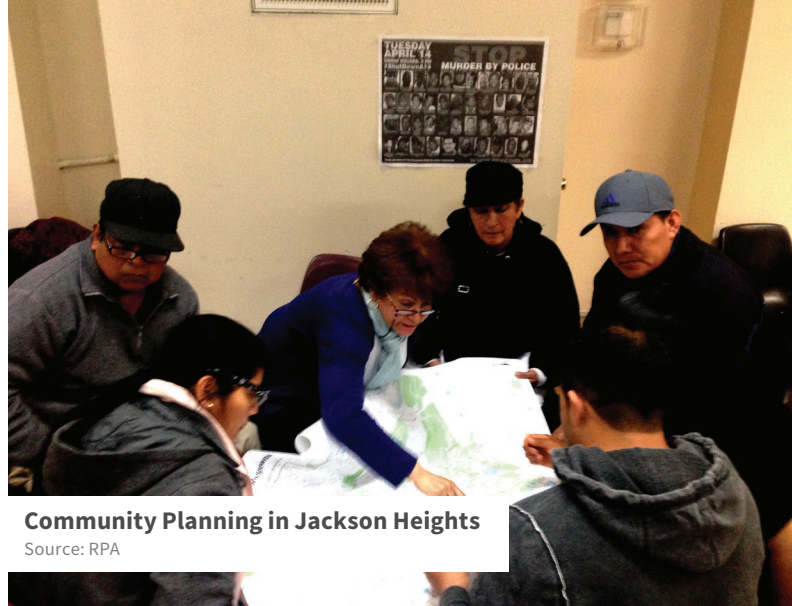
Public participation requirements

- ▶ **Require documentation of outreach efforts and participation,** including number of attendees at meetings and hearings, as well as constituencies represented. Ensure that this documentation is included in public materials at each phase of the approval process.
- ▶ **Ensure that the Office of Community Planning and borough presidents’ offices provide technical assistance** for community boards and community based organizations that are engaging with proposals.

2. Private Development Proposals.

- ▶ **Publish Department of City Planning accepted complete Pre-Application Statements (PAS)** within a set timeframe with the associated community board, borough president, Council member(s), and the public online.
- ▶ **Enable community boards, borough presidents or City Council members to require a public meeting before submission of an EAS.** These three entities

²⁷ New York City Law Department. 2008. “Law Department Language Access Implementation Plan.” Retrieved from: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/law/downloads/pdf/language-access-plan-law-department.pdf>



Community Planning in Jackson Heights

Source: RPA

should require a private applicant proposing substantial development to hold a public meeting to share their proposal and solicit input about community priorities. The threshold for substantial developments should be set for projects that do not require an EIS; one option would be to base on gross square footage or size of project area. Community members should have the opportunity to provide comments at this event and in writing for a period of 30 days, which the developer should use to inform the EAS. The developer should then present a revised plan to the entities.

- ▶ **Require on-site signage during pre-certification and ULURP** that includes visuals, notice of public input opportunities, contact information including phone number and email, and web links to more detailed information about the proposal.

3. Public (City-Sponsored) Development Proposals.

- ▶ **Provide consistent baseline data.** City agencies and the newly established Office of Community Planning should provide consistent baseline data to inform participation (e.g. consistent geographies).
- ▶ **Conduct community needs assessment before initiating disposition of public sites.** For public site dispositions that require ULURP, the City should not initiate ULURP until a significant community needs assessment is completed that accompanies the RFP, to inform applicants on City selection criteria.
- ▶ **Require community input for disposition of public sites prior to approval before ULURP.** Include information about community priorities in any request for proposal (RFP) documents, and make good faith efforts to get the word out to the public about planned dispositions.

4. Other Types of Proposals.

► **Create a public database of active Board of Standards and Appeals²⁸ (BSA) variance applications and notify community boards and Council members.**

BSA variances grant relief from zoning to unduly restricted parcels. The working group recommends that the City make applications public and notify community boards and local elected officials about any applications. Relief granted should be limited to the minimum needed to alleviate the hardship.

► **Support implementation of New York City Council Intro 1533-2017,²⁹** which would create reporting and notice requirements for summary actions regarding Urban Renewal Plans.

► **Democratize decision making in the public realm.** Work with additional City agencies with purview over elements of the public realm, including streets and parks, to democratize decision making around these public assets.

²⁸ New York City Board of Standards and Appeals. 2012. "Rules of Practice and Procedure." Retrieved from: http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/bsa/forms/rules_of_practice_procedure.pdf

²⁹ New York City Council. 2017. "Reporting requirements for summary actions involving urban renewal plans." Retrieved from: <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3013575&GUID=8EC960FE-04B8-4E56-A978-E1FF212AAFB8&FullText=1>



East Harlem, NY

Source: RPA

Objective 3:

Improve accountability, oversight, and enforcement in the City Environmental Quality Review process

Proposals that may potentially have adverse environmental impacts require applicants to prepare an environmental review study, known as an EIS. Yet, there are several troubling aspects built into preparation and follow-through. First, project applicants - whether a private developer or a City agency - choose and hire their own EIS preparation consultants, or prepare the EIS in-house in the case of a city agency. This can create a conflict-of-interest, where consultants are incentivized to please the applicant and find no adverse impacts even where they may exist. Oversight, as proposed below, would ensure consultants or agency staff preparers have not made errors in the EIS preparation.

Finally, even when environmental review analyses do find that adverse impacts are likely to occur, there is no formal mechanism, either through agency rules or within the *CEQR Technical Manual*, to compel applicants to fix the problem. This should be remedied. In some cases, agency or private applicants do commit to mitigation measures, yet until recently, those have not been systematically tracked. Passage of Local Law 175 of 2016³⁰ created a Citywide Commitment Tracker that enabled tracking for City-initiated rezoning applications, but for private applications, this information is still difficult to access, and accountability for developers to implement mitigation measures is lacking.

Strategies

1. Address inaccuracies environmental review report preparation.

- **Ensure lead City Agency staff review all externally produced DEIS' for accuracy** and proactively address any issues before the approval of a DEIS and ULURP certification. The Office of Community Planning may also identify neighborhood stakeholders to aid in review of draft materials. Create consequences for the preparer for use of irrelevant, false, misleading, and/or

³⁰ New York City Council. 2016. "Establishing a public list of commitments made by the city in connection with city planning commission decisions subject to council review." Retrieved from: <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2637116&GUID=AB629863-4E14-4F88-8AEC-D03AED71CD90>

incomplete information, including claw back provisions for decisions made using improperly prepared EIS'. Deny certification or invalidate ULURP decisions made with false, misleading, or incomplete information.

2. Ensure funding and implementation of mitigation measures identified in an EIS.

- **Allow community stakeholders to weigh in** on mitigation measures during EIS preparation.
- **Track all mitigation measures in the Citywide Commitment Tracker.** For all EIS' prepared, including publicly and privately initiated projects.
- **Ensure funding exists** to cover mitigation costs. An escrow account can be created to hold mitigation funds before proposed mitigation measures are deemed acceptable by a lead agency. The Office of Community Planning and borough president offices should monitor the funds to ensure sufficient funding is available throughout implementation. Any mitigation funding would be held in this account. Alternatively, the model pursued in the approvals for 1 Vanderbilt in East Midtown, where all improvements and mitigations had to be completed prior to issuance of the certificate of occupancy.³¹
- **Contract with independent organizations to monitor implementation.** Where a proposed project requires mitigation, encourage identification of an independent organization or organizations willing to monitor implementation of mitigation measures via a contract with the applicant by the time the DEIS is released. The independent organization(s) should have no conflict of interest, and be equipped to monitor the implementation of the mitigation measures.
- **Aid smaller non-profit applicants** to ensure the community receives mitigation measures where adverse impacts are predicted.

3. Track neighborhood outcomes after land use actions are approved for lessons learned.

After an EIS is prepared and approved and ULURP is complete, communities do not have the opportunity to revisit whether what was predicted in EIS came to fruition. Furthermore, specific future as-of-right actions should be

³¹ Hawkins, Andrew. 2014. "\$210M upgrade for Grand Central's subway unveiled" Retrieved from: <http://www.crainsnewyork.com/article/20140908/BLOGS04/140909874/-210m-upgrade-for-grand-centrals-subway-unveiled>

evaluated against the land use applications that enabled them. The working group recommends that the City:

- ▶ **Assist community stakeholders.** The Office of Community Planning should assist community stakeholders who seek information about what a prior EIS predicted.
- ▶ **Analyze post-EIS as-of-right actions** Actions that increase density, such as zoning lot mergers, transfer of development rights, and assemblages that were not evaluated in an EIS should be evaluated in a technical memorandum, which could be prepared by the Office of Community Planning.



Land Use, Zoning & Public Policy		Socioeconomic Conditions	Community Facilities & Services	Open Space
Shadows	Historic & Cultural Resources	Urban Design & Visual Resources	Natural Resources	
	Hazardous Materials		Water & Sewer Infrastructure	Solid Waste & Sanitation Services
Energy	Transportation	Air Quality		Greenhouse Gas Emissions
Noise		Public Health	Neighborhood Character	Construction

**CEQR Technical Manual
Analysis Areas**
Source: http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/downloads/pdf/2014_ceqr_tm/2014_ceqr_technical_manual.pdf

Objective 4:

Update the City Environmental Quality Review Technical Manual Guidelines to Ensure Accuracy

While public review and participation for discretionary land use applications is governed by ULURP, environmental review analyses are outlined in the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*.³² Environmental review analyses and chapters are long and winding, often leaving community board members and residents alike daunted by their length and technical language.

Length and complexity aside, to many, environmental reviews often seem to apply arbitrary criteria that downplay residents' concerns, such as displacement fears. For instance, the 2005 proposal to rezone industrial areas in Williamsburg to residential was determined to have no significant impact on business displacement in the area, though the area saw a dramatic shift in the ensuing years. In 2007, 5,000 new apartments in Jamaica were deemed to represent no significant adverse impact for subway crowding.³³ And a 2006 plan led to a new Yankee Stadium being constructed on a former large city park, which was to be replaced at public expense over a number of years by a collection of smaller parks, was said to have no significant adverse impact on open space. In 2017, some of the land slated to replace the old park was being considered by the de Blasio administration for housing development.³⁴ In recent neighborhood rezonings including East New York,³⁵ East Harlem,³⁶ and Jerome Avenue,³⁷ environmental review documents have predicted no adverse impact on residential

displacement, despite the deep economic vulnerability of residents³⁸ and reports of increased tenant harassment.³⁹

Thus, critical CEQR methodologies are not keeping up with the dramatic changes to New York City's ecological, social, and built environments. In *Housing New York*, the administration indicated that it would review the CEQR process to improve efficiency and make EIS more comprehensible to the general public and affected communities. The City said it would examine how environmental review is undertaken in other jurisdictions in order to incorporate best practices. The City should prioritize this recommendation and involve the public in this update.

Strategies

1. Convene an expert panel to review and propose updates to metrics methodologies in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, subject updates to public review and comment, and update regularly.

All chapters of the *CEQR Technical Manual* should be thoroughly reviewed. Suggestions are included below regarding chapters and issues that require particular attention. The expert panel should include representatives from community-based organizations that engage in environmental review in their advocacy work, especially those that have brought into question prior CEQR actions to engage them on improvements. Newer firms with proposals to innovate arcane procedures should be invited to comment as well. In revising the technical manual, the expert panel should consider how to highlight positive benefits, instead of just negative impacts, of proposed projects. And, a broader range of topics, including the social determinants of health, should be evaluated. The panel's recommendations should be reviewed by the public. Possible updates to existing chapters are offered below.

Chapter 4: Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy

Regulations and Coordination

- **Require consideration of existing community-based plans in the public policy section of EIS' and in EAS**

³² New York City Department of Environmental Coordination. "CEQR: City Environmental Quality Review Technical Manual." Retrieved from: http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/downloads/pdf/2014_ceqr_tm/2014_ceqr_technical_manual.pdf

³³ Murphy, Jarret. 2010. "Five Boroughs. One City. No Plan." Retrieved from: <https://citylimits.org/2010/12/21/five-boroughs-one-city-no-plan/>

³⁴ Arden, Patrick. 2017. "De Blasio Housing Plan Seeks Land Promised as Yankees Replacement Park." Retrieved from: <https://www.villagevoice.com/2017/09/05/de-blasio-housing-plan-seeks-land-promised-as-yankees-replacement-park/>

³⁵ New York City Department of City Planning. 2015. "East New York Rezoning Proposal: Final Environmental Impact Statement." Retrieved from: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/applicants/env-review/east-new-york.page>

³⁶ New York City Department of City Planning. 2017. "East Harlem Rezoning Proposal: Final Environmental Impact Statement." Retrieved from: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/applicants/env-review/east-harlem.page>

³⁷ New York City Department of City Planning. 2017. "Jerome Avenue Rezoning: Final Environmental Impact Statement." Retrieved from: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/applicants/env-review/jerome-avenue.page>

³⁸ Sanchez, Pierina, Gates, Moses & Sarah Serpas. "Pushed Out: Housing Displacement in an Unaffordable Region." Retrieved from: <http://library.rpa.org/pdf/RPA-Pushed-Out-Housing-Displacement-in-an-Unaffordable-Region.pdf>

³⁹ 2015. Bussanich, Marc. "Development Spurs Tenant Harassment in Bronx, Groups Say" Retrieved from: <https://citylimits.org/2015/10/19/development-spurs-tenant-harassment-in-bronx-protesters-say/>

form. Community-based plans — 197A or otherwise — should be used to develop a third alternative.

- ▶ **Require assessment of cumulative impacts and citywide equity.** How a proposed project may interact or worsen existing environmental conditions should be considered.

Sustainability

- ▶ **Enforce NYC Sustainability goals.** All projects should be evaluated for reduction of GHG, water use, sewer system impacts, energy use, and sustainable construction methods in relation to citywide sustainability goals. Actions found to negatively affect the City's progress in meeting sustainability goals should be considered to have a potential significant adverse impact, and be required to identify mitigation measures and alternatives.
- ▶ **Require the evaluation of an Optimal Sustainable Alternative.** This alternative would show a project utilizing the highest feasible level of sustainable practices for construction, energy, daylighting, urban heat island reduction, air quality, noise, water use, solid waste generation, shadow impacts, GHG reduction, and protection of view corridors.
- ▶ **Add Social Resiliency as area of analysis.** A social resiliency analysis would measure a proposed project's effect on the ability of residents, infrastructure and social networks to adapt and recover after an emergency. The analysis could include social network mapping in partnership with residents and community-based organizations with deep collective knowledge of the area. This could be evaluated in tandem with impacts on climate change readiness.

Fair Share & Cumulative Impact

- ▶ **Require Fair Share analysis in Environmental Justice communities.**⁴⁰ Depending upon existing socioeconomic conditions of the neighborhood (e.g. low-income status per U.S. Census and DCP definitions), fair share analysis should be required. The evaluation should address if a project encourages an equitable distribution of city facilities and the *CEQR Technical Manual* should be updated to include methodologies for conducting the assessment.
- ▶ **Strengthen cumulative impact analyses.** EISs should be required to include a list of all projects included in

⁴⁰ New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. 2000. "County Maps Showing Potential Environmental Justice Areas." Retrieved from: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/899.html>



Jamaica, Queens

Source: RPA

the No-Action development scenario that would occur within the project area or would affect the project area by the build year of the proposed project. The cumulative impacts, including but not limited to greenhouse gas emissions, shadows, traffic, and construction should be evaluated and mitigation identified, if applicable.

Chapter 5: Socioeconomic Conditions

Indirect residential displacement

- ▶ **Expand indirect displacement evaluation to include all housing units.** The *CEQR Technical Manual* allows EIS preparers to presume that tenants living in rent regulated or stabilized housing (buildings with 6 units or more built before 1974) are safe from indirect displacement risk, disregarding the overwhelming number of such units that have been removed from stabilization either lawfully or through deceptive practices. Yet, tenants in many regulated or stabilized units are under threat, especially those in units that may soon be aging out of protections. In addition to including these units in indirect displacement risk analyses, the City should make accurate information and mapping on the number and location of citywide rent-regulated and rent-stabilized units publicly available.
- ▶ **Remove assumption that new housing units directly reduce potential for displacement.** The *CEQR Technical Manual* should not assume that new market rate or luxury development at the neighborhood level mitigates against income- or race-based displacement; there is no evidence for this assumption. The addition of units affordable to existing residents are the best tool for mitigating displacement.
- ▶ **Evaluate how new development may accelerate ongoing trends of neighborhood change that contribute to displacement.** Methodology should be developed to project how new development may accelerate trends of socioeconomic change, for instance,

by considering increased speculation or harassment incentives given citywide housing market trends.

- ▶ **Require qualitative evaluation of neighborhood housing trends, including interviews.** To better understand local dynamics and economics of neighborhood change, quantitative analysis of neighborhood change should be supported with qualitative research. The *CEQR Technical Manual* should require that people familiar with housing trends and pressures in the neighborhood be interviewed to more fully understand the role that the proposed project may play in neighborhood change, including neighborhood associations or organizations, real estate professionals, and landlords.

Fair Housing

- ▶ **Require analysis of fair housing impact.** Evaluate new development's impact upon issues of fair housing and segregation. As a recipient of federal housing funds, New York City is under an obligation to "affirmatively further" the purposes of the Federal Fair Housing Act.⁴¹ The *CEQR Technical Manual* should be modified to require the evaluation of direct and indirect residential displacement, and whether a project would result in disproportionate impacts on protected classes of residents or would perpetuate or exacerbate an area's historical patterns of segregation. The City should also complete its required Assessment of Fair Housing according to the timetable set out by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2015⁴² in order to provide the foundation for much-needed modifications to the *CEQR Technical Manual*.

Workforce and Small Business

- ▶ **Require analysis of workforce/quality jobs impact.** Development proposals touted as opportunities for local economic development should include requirements for targeted training and contracting, wage standards, benefit packages, and safety training, which would empower workers to support themselves and their families in New York City. Effects on small businesses should also specifically be evaluated.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. 2015. "Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing." Retrieved from: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/affht_pt.html

⁴² U.S. Housing and Urban Development. 2015. "HUD Rule on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing." Retrieved from: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/affht_pt.html#final-rule

Chapter 6: Community Facilities

School capacity

- ▶ **Update school capacity metrics.** The school capacity methodology should account for the space consumed by Charter schools within public school buildings. The EIS should not take into account school seat capacity for projects in the Department of Education's five-year capital plan unless expansions are underway.

Chapter 8: Shadows

Shadow Assessment

- ▶ **Evaluate shadow and light impacts more broadly.** EIS' should disclose shadow impacts on public assets, including streets, sidewalks, public buildings; non-park public lands, and publicly owned private areas. A daylighting evaluation should also accompany projects subject to CEQR.
- ▶ **Evaluate potential for solar.** The *CEQR Technical Manual* should evaluate how proposed projects could impact the development of solar energy systems for buildings in the study area. Use of solar energy systems should be included an optimal sustainable development alternative analysis.

Chapter 10: Urban Design and Visual Resources

Assessment

- ▶ **Require broader evaluation of urban design.** Require photo-simulations to depict the full height of proposed development, not just from the pedestrian perspective.
- ▶ **Add urban design metrics.** Add metrics for urban design impacts that are measureable, including: streetwall, active ground floor uses and transparency, curb-cuts, outdoor uses (sidewalk cafes / public plazas / arcades), sidewalk width and on-street parking at curb.

Chapter 20: Public Health

Public Health Assessment Framework

- ▶ **Update the definition of health to reflect current understanding of the broad determinants of health, and consideration for health equity.** Update the *CEQR Technical Manual's* definition of health to reflect current standards for health equity and to acknowledge the social determinants of health. Definitions should align with those used by the global public health community (e.g. World Health Organization; Robert Wood Johnson

Foundation; U.S. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion).

- ▶ **Include an analysis of the social determinants of health.** All EIS' should consider well-established social determinants of health and health equity in terms of impact on existing health disparities and environmental justice. Examples include housing adequacy and affordability; economic diversity; proximity of retail food sources; and residential segregation by race, ethnicity, or class.
- ▶ **Structure the chapter as a Health Impact Assessment.** A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a structured process to assess the potential health impacts of a policy, plan, or project, and make recommendations on how to mitigate negative health impacts and to maximize potential health benefits.
- ▶ **Transit accessibility.** Analyze ADA compliance in area transit.

Chapter 22: Construction

Appropriateness of evaluation

- ▶ **Revise the threshold for requiring detailed construction analysis.** A detailed construction analysis should be required for all major buildings as defined by New York City Department of Buildings — buildings that will have 10 or more stories, will be 125 feet or taller, or have a footprint of 100,000 square feet or more⁴³ — or plots of land up for review that are large enough to accommodate a major building. These criteria should apply regardless of the expected duration of the construction.

Assessment

- ▶ **Expanded construction analyses.** Construction analyses should include health and safety considerations of the immediate environment being developed, any abatement work that may be required to make the site safe for workers and the general public, the size of the workforce needed for the project, whether and which skilled trades are needed to safely develop the site based on the construction analysis, assessment of the percentage of these workers that can be hired from the local community, and the impact the construction

workforce would have on the local environment with respect to wages and benefits, career longevity, safety training and safety record of contractors.

Scoping

Study Area

- ▶ **Broaden the analysis area.** A project EIS should be required to analyze possible future developments adjacent but outside of specific EIS scoping areas, in order to more holistically account for impacts. While the working group recommends that the City should identify a framework for determining overall study boundaries, project should not be permitted to advance to ULURP until the impacts from proposed or possible nearby developments are taken into account in the DEIS.

⁴³ New York City Department of Buildings. 2017. "Obtain a: Site Safety Manager Certification." Retrieved from: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/buildings/industry/site-safety-manager-certification.page>

Acronyms

NYC: New York City

DCP: The New York City Department of City Planning

CB: Community Board

EAS: Environmental Assessment Statement

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement

DEIS: Draft Environmental Impact Statement

FEIS: Final Environmental Impact Statement

ULURP: Uniform Land Use Review Procedure

CEQR: City Environmental Quality Review

Scoping: The time period in which the public can provide input into the scope of work for an EIS

RFP: Request for Proposals

BSA: Board of Standards and Appeals

Variance: An exception to zoning law, that allows you to develop your property in a way that is at odds with the zoning laws in place because you were able to prove your unduly restricted parcel needs relief from the zoning code

NYC Open Data: A web portal that allows the public to access data about New York City, available here <https://opendata.cityofnewyork.us/>

PLUTO: Extensive land use and geographic data at the tax lot level made available by DCP, here <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/open-data/dwn-pluto-mappluto.page>