

The Role + Power of Community Boards in Proactive Planning



Outline

- Introduction
- How the City plans (and its limitations)
- What we're working towards and why now
- Approaches for proactive planning
- Resources for proactive planning
- Conclusion - The role Community Boards can play

Introduction

Presenter



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[Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development](https://anhd.org)

Group Poll – Introductions!

Go to pollev.com/chriswalters684 to participate in polls throughout this training!

Head to this link now for our first few questions.

Respond at PollEv.com/chriswalters684
Text **CHRISWALTERS684** to **22333** once to join, then text your message

What community board and district are you representing?

When poll is active, respond at PollEv.com/chriswalters684
Text **CHRISWALTERS684** to **22333** once to join

When you hear the word "planning," what do you think of?

When poll is active, respond at PollEv.com/chriswalters684
Text **CHRISWALTERS684** to **22333** once to join

When you hear the word "zoning," what do you think of?

How the City Plans

Planning vs. Zoning

What is Planning?

- **Planning is community building**
- A process that provides a **vision for a community**:
 - Spatial layout (what types of things go where)
 - What development looks like (height and density)
 - How people move around (streets, open space)
 - Institutions (schools, libraries, healthcare) & businesses
 - Resources
 - **Based on needs & historical perspective**

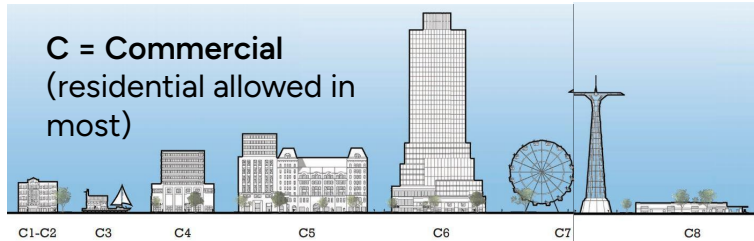
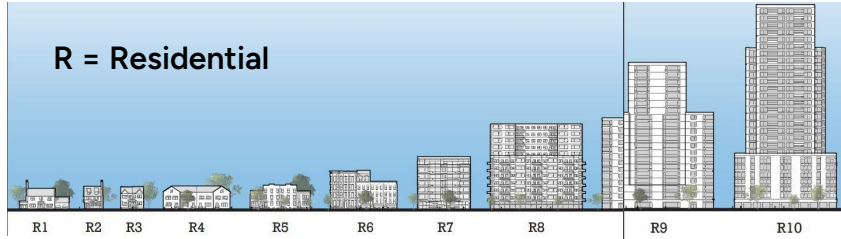
What is the goal of planning?

Ideally, the goal of planning is to **further the welfare of community members** by creating accessible, equitable, healthful environments.

In this way, **planning is community building.**

- Planning determines many of the conditions that structure our lives
- Planning determines the future
- Planning can be a process of community building, but it can also be a process of community destruction

What is Zoning?



Uses and densities

- Where they go
- What the buildings look like

Planning vs. Zoning

Planning is about more than physical space:

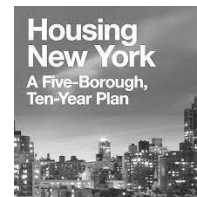
- Resources (capital money; programs)
- Institutions
- How people move around
- Demographics & needs

Zoning is about physical space and what future development looks like:

- Zoning should be tied to a clear picture of a desirable future developed through good, inclusive planning

How does planning work in NYC?

- No rigorous or regular planning cycle
- Lots of plans but no guiding framework or timeline for how they connect to land use decisions
- Focus on rezonings instead



Ideal

Zoning should be tied to a clear picture of a desirable future developed through good, inclusive planning



Reality

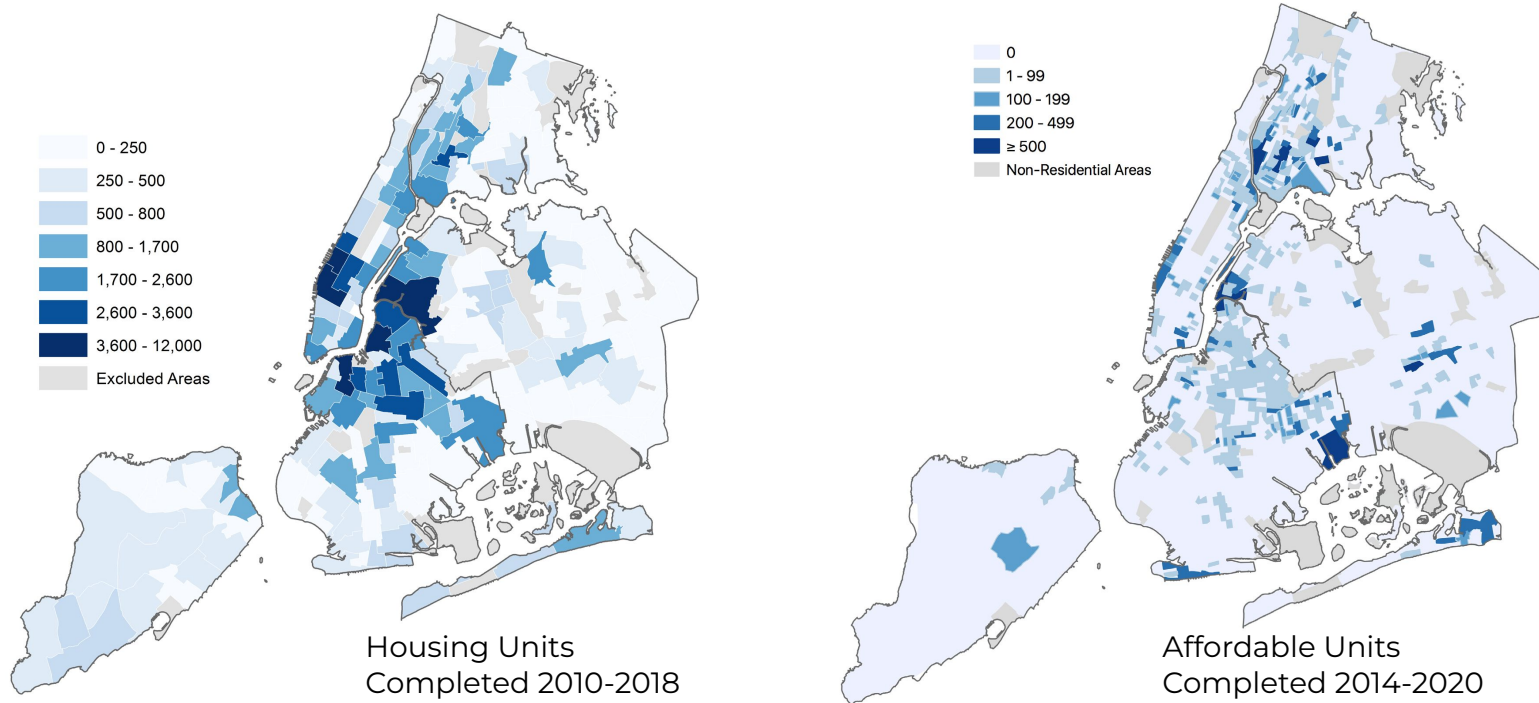
Zoning resolution and zoning map guides future development, changed at times through ad hoc neighborhood or site rezonings

Why does this matter?

Zoning is mostly about **regulating private development**

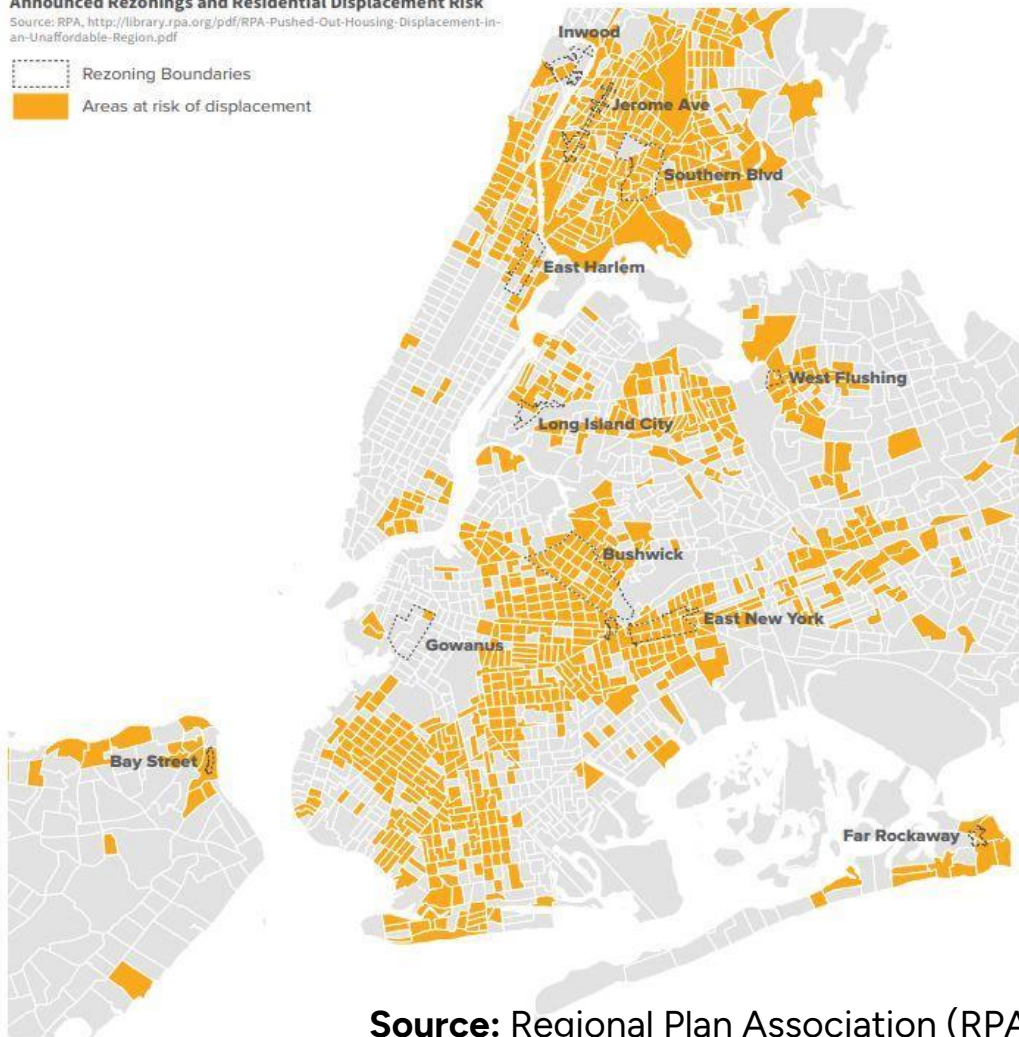
- Rooted in police power (power to regulate private behavior and property) - not in eminent domain
- Forward looking – mostly about what can happen next, not what's there already
- Pressure to simply facilitate an existing or growing market
- A lot tends to get left out (or addressed in the wrong order)
 - Capital commitments
 - Equitable economic development (jobs, etc)

Impacts



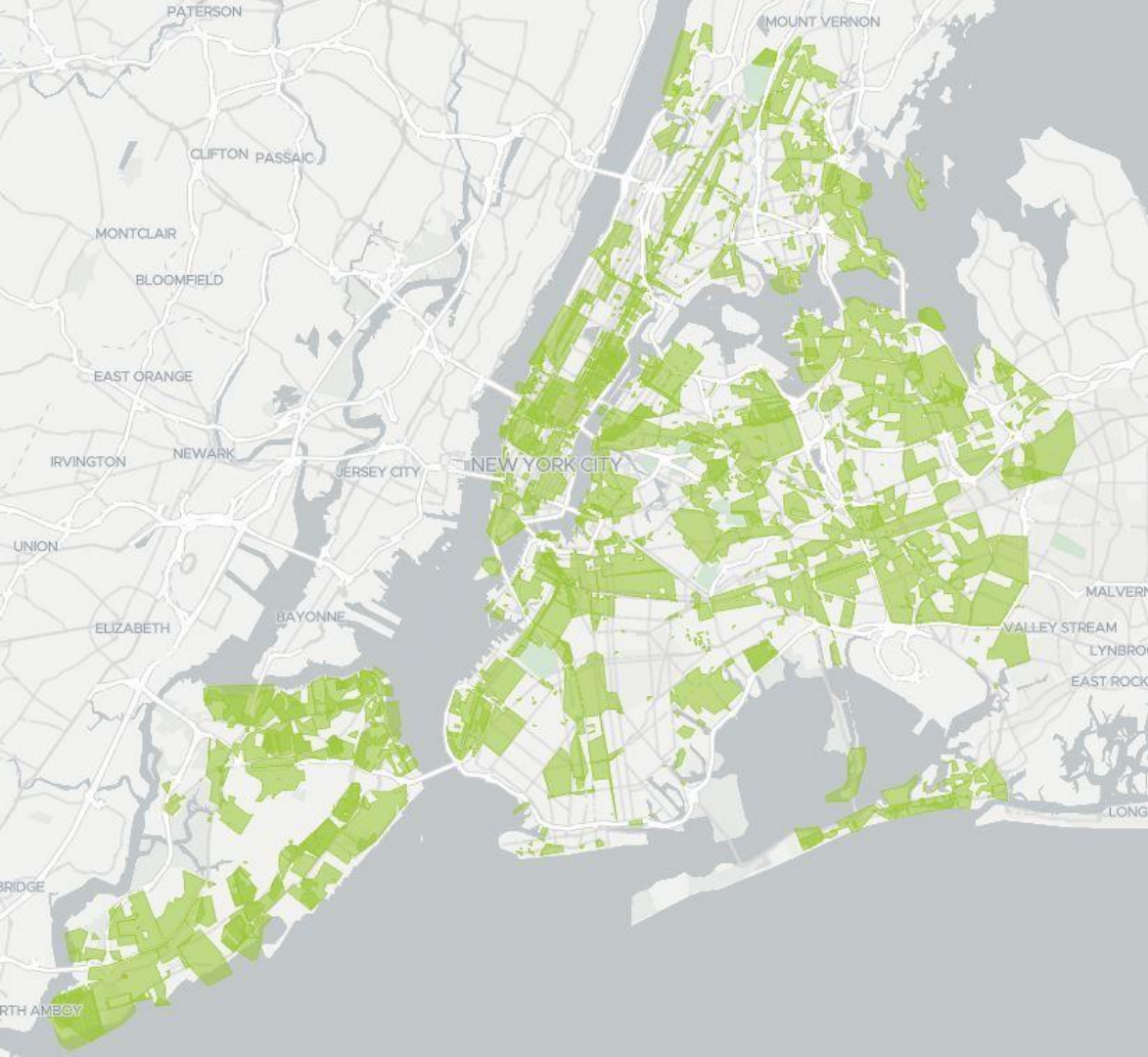
Source: NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD)

- Rezoning Boundaries
- Areas at risk of displacement



Rezoning under de Blasio

Source: Regional Plan Association (RPA)



Types of Rezonings

Neighborhood (Public)

- Covers a wide area (more than just one development site and adjacent lots)
- Almost always led by a City agency
 - Typically DCP or EDC

Site specific (Private)

- Typically a development site/sites and adjacent lots
- Typically led by a private developer (for profit/non-profit)
- Can be led by a City agency, usually for City-owned land

Types of Rezoning

Upzonings = increasing FAR

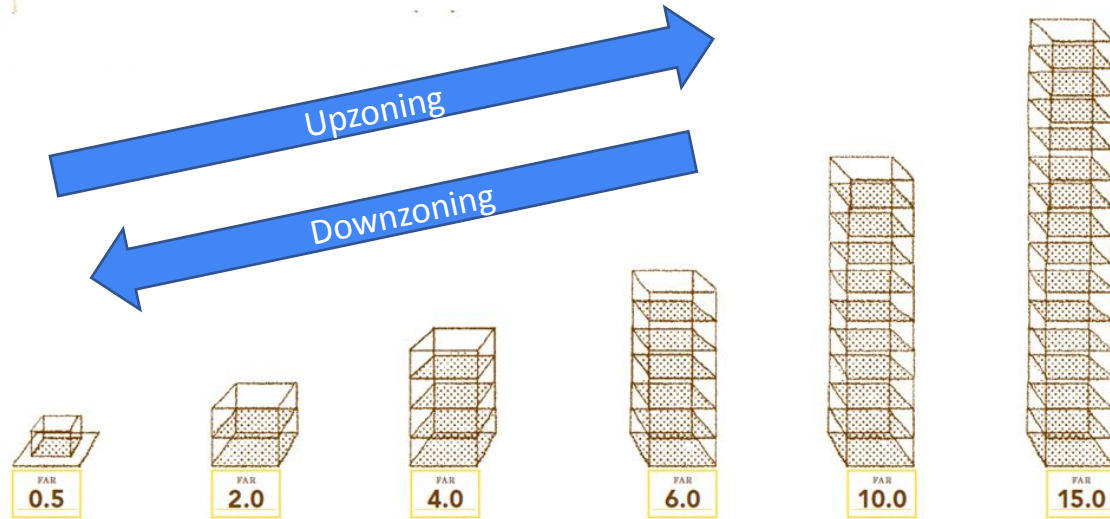
Downzonings = decreasing FAR

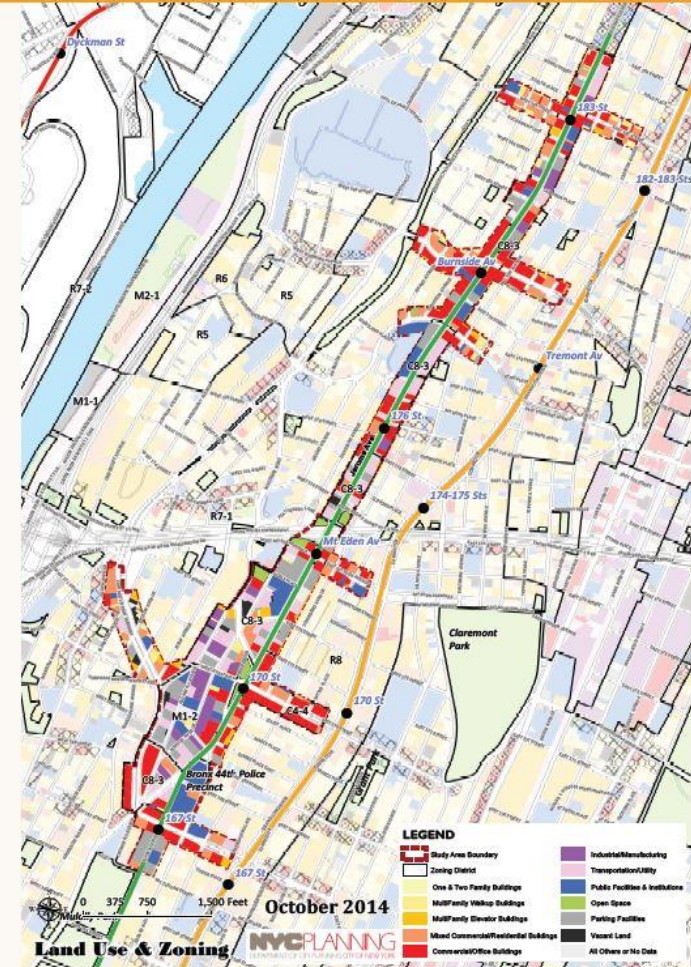
Contextual rezonings = no real change in FAR

- Changes other rules, like height limits, setbacks, etc

Hybrid rezonings = mix of upzoning and contextual/downzoning

- Common for neighborhood rezonings

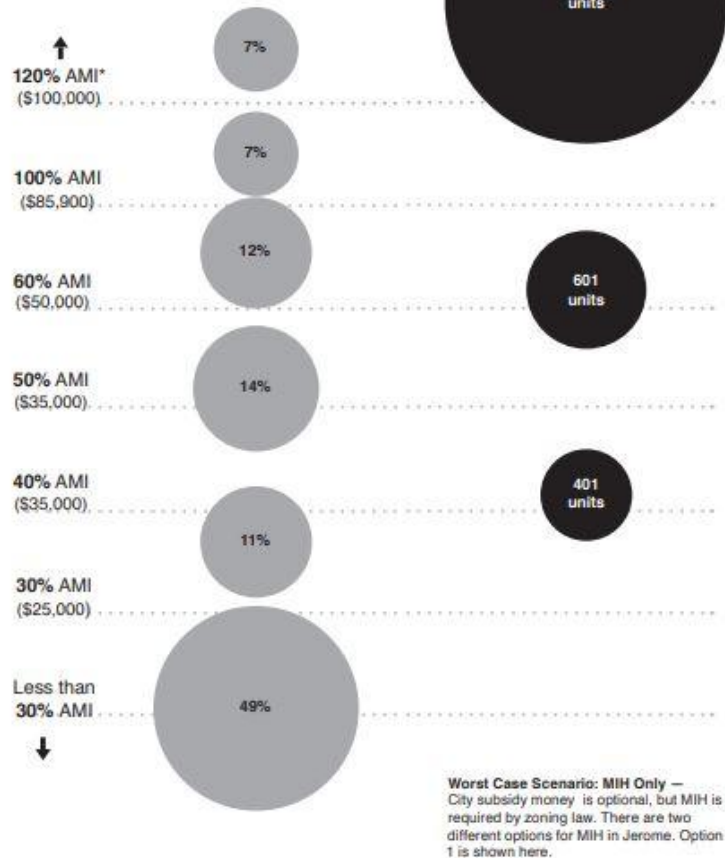




Case Study: Jerome Avenue Rezoning

- Example of the negatives of relying on zoning disconnected from a larger plan
- “Typical” BdB admin rezoning – low-income, BIPOC neighborhood with long history of redlining & disinvestment

Here's how annual incomes in the neighborhood break down:



* AMI: Area Median Income.
Numbers are for families of three.

Case Study: Jerome Avenue Rezoning

- Question is, why was this neighborhood chosen – **how is the proposed rezoning fitting an identified need?**
- Area that was already producing a high ratio of affordable to market-rate
- Forced to trade new, mostly market-rate density for long overdue investments
- MIH units out of reach for average resident
- Came at expense/displacement of autoshop businesses and workers – 75% workers of color; 64% Foreign born

What We're Working Towards + Why Now

Who changes zoning?

The community is almost always put in a **reactive** position.

**WHO GETS TO
PROPOSE A
REZONING?**

The City
(The Mayor,
DCP, EDC, HPD)

Private
Developers

The
Community

When a community
proposes a comprehensive
plan, It is often ignored or
co-opted.

When do they change zoning?

Whenever they want – no comprehensive or regular cycle when zoning changes are considered

Public Value vs. Private Value

- Rezoning is justified by serving a public purpose
- But no defined meaning of what that public purpose means
 - E.g.
 - More affordable housing through MIH
 - More housing period
 - Jobs
- Rezoning **typically** produce or protect private benefits for individual developers and wealthier communities
 - E.g.
 - market-rate housing
 - low-density housing that doesn't match local needs

What is *Proactive Planning*?

Putting forward a community vision that uses different tools, including but not limited to **zoning**, to advance equity and public benefit

Instead of:

- Lots of plans and reports with **no guidance** or action items
- Rezoning happening with **no relation** to each other or a broader plan
- Development that doesn't meet needs

We can move towards:

- Plans and principles that provide guidance and action items on what and where the city should invest and develop
- Pulling these action items directly from community voice and needs

Group Poll! – Proactive Planning

Go to pollev.com/chriswalters684 to answer our next poll question on how you evaluate zoning proposals.

Respond at **PollEv.com/chriswalters684**

Text **CHRISWALTERS684** to **22333** once to join, then text your message

How do you determine whether a rezoning proposal sounds good for your neighborhood or not?

Why now?

Gov. Hochul's Housing Compact (January 2023)

What it includes:

- Minimum housing development targets that community districts must meet every 3 years
- Transit-oriented development near MTA rail stations
- Legalizing basement apartments and Accessory Dwelling Units
- Making commercial to residential conversion easier



Why now?

Mayor Adams' "Get Stuff Built" + "City of Yes"

What they include:

- Goal of rapid housing development – 500,000 new homes in NYC over the next decade
- Speeding up the environmental review, land use proposal, and building permit processes
- Update and ease zoning regulations citywide for a greater variety of housing types to be constructed and housing conversions to be made



Gov. Hochul's + Mayor Adams' Strategies for Housing

What They Are Missing:

- Equity framework or goal of proactive, comprehensive planning
- Acknowledgement of difference between community districts
- No targeted development of homes towards specific neighborhoods or needs
- Lack of minimum standards for community involvement in development review

Approaches to Proactive Planning

Goal: Better Balance of Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up

Top-Down – rezonings, state and city level strategies without community input

- speediness – housing quickly
- supply-side

Bottom-Up – CM and community org-led plans, principles, and engagement

- equity frame – housing everyone
- community-centered

Balance

- Citywide needs filtered and informed by local needs and priorities
 - Displacement risk
 - Opportunity areas
 - Addressing historic inequity
- Plans that address local needs while ensuring equitable distribution of development and investments

Value of Land Use Principles + Centering Community Needs

- Consistent principles and stance
 - Rooted in community priorities, backed up by neighborhood groups/residents
 - Shared upfront with City and private developers
- Sends message that we don't need back-room negotiations under pressure of ULURP clock
- Sets a proactive, positive framing that's translatable across projects - *these are what we need, these are the types of things we want to say yes to*

Case Study:

Speaker's Adams' Land Use Guidelines

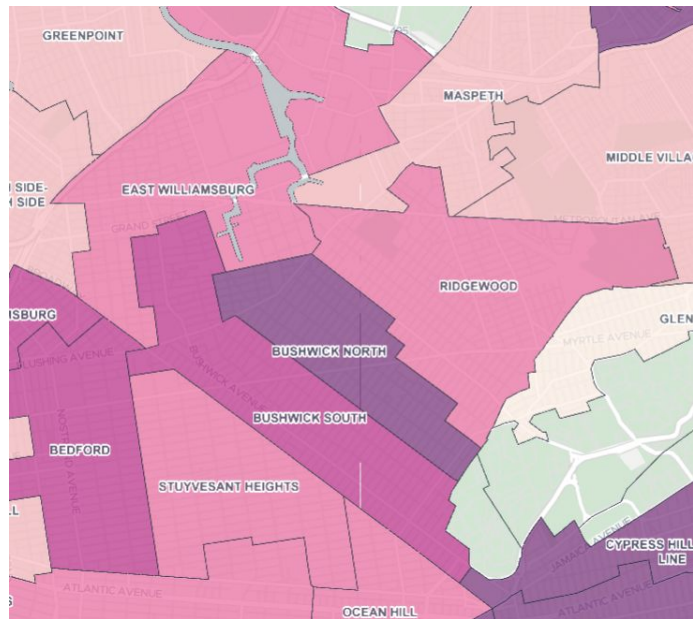
Key Principles:

- Elevate Community Engagement and Address Citywide Needs
- Advance Fair Housing and Increase Affordability
- Support Equitable Economic Development
- Adapt to Climate Change and Transition to Green Energy
- Improve Open Space and Streets for All New Yorkers
- Ensure Equitable Access to Healthcare, Education, and Essential Services



Case from Council District 34's (CM Gutiérrez)

Land Use Policy – Housing Affordability



Displacement Risk Map



Principle: Maximize deeply affordable housing at 50% AMI and below in order to create opportunities for those with the greatest need, who have been increasingly displaced in District 34

Major Issues in the District:

- Displacement of long-time residents
- Lack of deeply affordable housing

Overlapping Neighborhoods in Council District 34:

- East Williamsburg
- Ridgewood
- Bushwick North and South

Data Sources: NYC Equitable Development Data Explorer

Case from Council District 26's (CM Won) Land Use Principles – Community Investment

Queens 1

Access to Parks ⓘ

58.0%

of residents live within
walking distance of a park or
open space



Queens 1: 58.0%

Queens 2

Access to Parks ⓘ

59.0%

of residents live within
walking distance of a park or
open space



Queens 2: 59.0%

Principle: Investments in public infrastructure should match the scale of the project.

(New development must enhance public infrastructure, such as improved ADA accessibility, schools, parks, streets, transportation, sewage and plumbing, etc.)

Major Issues in the District:

- New developments do not add to public benefit
- Large need for accessible public spaces

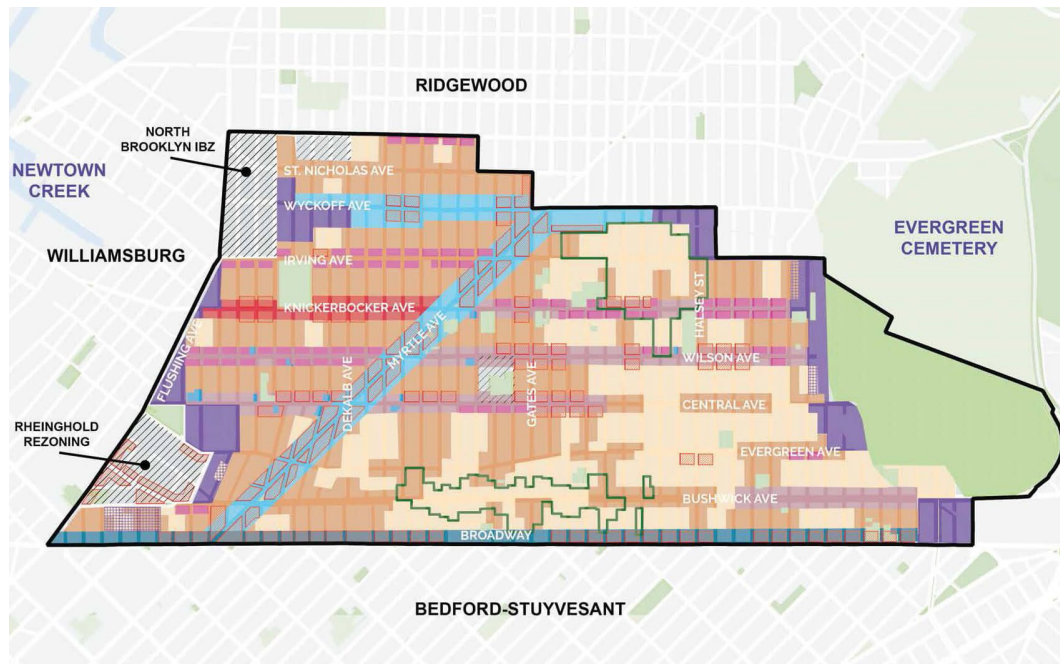
Overlapping Community Districts in Council District 34:

- QNS 1
- QNS 2

Data Sources: NYC Community District Profiles

Case from Council District 34's (CM Gutiérrez)

Land Use Policy – Zoning Framework



Principle: Within Bushwick, all proposals should follow the land use framework of the Bushwick Community Plan.

Major Issues in the District:

- Development proposals that do not align with long-stated community needs

Data Sources: Bushwick Community Plan

Think about the issue areas...

- Housing
- Jobs
- Open Space
- Transportation
- Schools
- Healthcare
- Climate and Sustainability

Ask questions about your community needs and strengths

- Connect quantitative data to issue areas
 - **demographics and demographic change** – who lives there now and who lived there before?
 - **housing availability** – who owns and who rents, who is rent burdened, what is the risk of displacement, etc.
 - **housing production** - how much new housing has the community already taken on?
 - **employment** – who works in my community and what are their jobs?
 - **climate risk** – how does climate change impact my community?
 - **quality of life** – what does my community have access to and how does it impact our wellbeing?

Answer those questions with data sources + reports

Some major data resources and reports created by the City + local organizations:

[Community District Profiles](#) + [Equitable Development Data Explorer \(EDDE\)](#)

- Demographics
- Displacement Risk
- Housing Availability

[Where We Live NYC](#)

- Housing challenges and proposed solutions across the City

[Community Health Profiles](#) + [Environment and Health Data Portal](#)

- Public Health
- Climate Risk

[Spatial Equity NYC](#) + [Park Equity and COVID-19 Data](#)

- Park Access
- Public Space Design
- Air Quality and Heat Risk

Ask questions about your community needs + strengths

- Use a **wide set** of community engagement methods
 - surveys
 - focus groups
 - public and community meetings
 - events in public spaces
 - discussions with specific identity and community groups

How to Use Community Principles – Improving land use proposals

- Community principles can serve as benchmarks, something to measure proposals by through all steps of the process
 - A public and consistent standard you will stick to in dealing with developers & local rezonings
- They can inform and strengthen the City Council's push to modify ULURP proposals

Case Study: CM Reynoso Manufacturing to Residential principle

- As CM, consistent stance that would not support M to R rezonings (outside the IBZ) without more public value than MIH
 - E.g. deeper/broader affordable housing
 - Mandated preservation of manufacturing space/uses
- Why M zones are important & unique
 - Industrial jobs pay higher wages and offer more career opportunities to a workforce that is 80% people of color and 50% immigrant
 - Constantly at threat - Subject to speculative land pressures
 - Lots of private profit to be made by public action of rezoning to residential

M = Manufacturing

(no residential, but commercial uses allowed in most)



Case Study: CM Reynoso Manufacturing to Residential principle

- **Suydam Street Rezoning**
 - M to R, M & Mx rezoning
 - 100% affordable housing development
 - Expansion of existing industrial space
- **1601 Dekalb Avenue**
 - Proposal for M to R rezoning with MIH
 - After strong community engagement led to significant changes - 100% affordable development

How to Use Community Principles – Community Plans

- Community principles can set the groundwork for establishing more detailed community plans
- Builds power and consensus within the community



Two Bridges Community Plan

Case Study: Gowanus Rezoning

- **Lessons**
 - Built off community planning process (Bridging Gowanus)
 - Council members worked closely with local coalition throughout process
 - Coalition was intentional in trying to uplift voices typically excluded
 - Clear/consistent demands focused on racial/economic equity principles

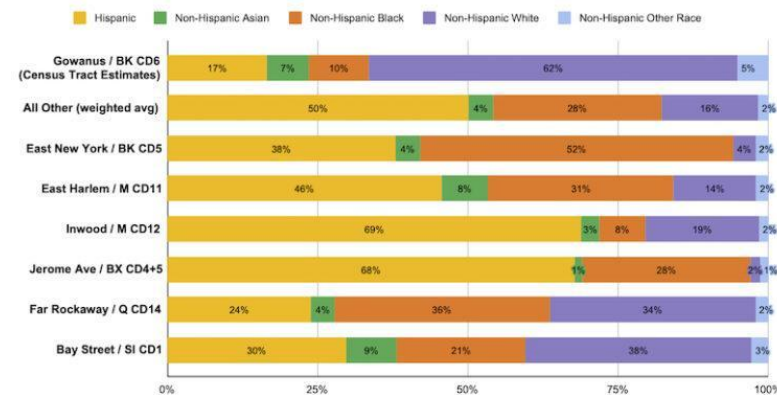


Case Study: Gowanus Rezoning

Some of strongest commitments won in neighborhood rezoning under de Blasio

- Over \$200m for capital needs at local NYCHA campuses
- Net-zero combined sewage overflow for new developments
- New zoning tools for incentivizing light industrial/arts space
- New staffed community taskforce for monitoring commitments
- One of only 2 MIH rezonings in a whiter/wealthier community district
- Higher ratio of affordable housing than exists today

Racial Demographics of de Blasio Rezoning (2018 ACS 5-year estimates)



Group Poll! – Approaches to Proactive Planning

Go to pollev.com/chriswalters684 to answer our next poll question on land use principles and proactive planning.

🌐 When poll is active, respond at **PollEv.com/chriswalters684**

📱 Text **CHRISWALTERS684** to **22333** once to join

Share one word for a major land use principle you think your community needs.

Resources for Communities to Plan Proactively + Collectively

Resources for Proactive Planning

Some major data resources and reports created by the City + local organizations:

[Community District Profiles](#) +
[Population Fact Finder](#) +
[Equitable Development Data Explorer](#)
[\(EDDE\)](#)

- Demographics
- Displacement Risk
- Housing Availability

[ANHD's Displacement Alert Project](#)
[\(DAP\)](#)

[Where We Live NYC](#)

- Housing challenges and proposed solutions across the City

[In depth ANHD training on how to use the EDDE](#)

Resources for Proactive Planning

Some major data resources and reports created by the City + local organizations:

[Community Health Profiles](#) + [Environment and Health Data Portal](#)

- Public Health
- Climate Risk

[Spatial Equity NYC](#) + [Park Equity and COVID-19 Data](#)

- Park Access
- Public Space Design
- Air Quality and Heat Risk

[NYC Flood Hazard Mapper](#)

[New York City Stormwater Flood Maps](#)

[Heat and Cooling Equity Maps](#)

Resources for Proactive Planning

Some major data resources and reports created by the City + local organizations:

[NYC Capital Planning Explorer](#)

- Existing facilities & program sites
- Capital projects

[MTA Projects](#)

[NYC Parks Capital Projects Dashboard](#)

[NYC Department of Transportation \(DOT\) Projects and Initiatives](#)

Group Poll! – Resources for Proactive Planning

Go to pollev.com/chriswalters684 to answer our next poll question and share some resources you'd suggest to your CB colleagues when figuring out community needs!

🌐 When poll is active, respond at **PollEv.com/chriswalters684**

📱 Text **CHRISWALTERS684** to **22333** once to join

Are there other resources you suggest community members use or look at when trying to figure out their community's needs?

The Role Community Boards Can Play

Group Poll! – Why Community Boards Matter

Go to pollev.com/chriswalters684 to answer our final poll on the roles you think CBs play in planning and zoning processes.

🌐 When poll is active, respond at **PollEv.com/chriswalters684**

📱 Text **CHRISWALTERS684** to **22333** once to join

What role do you think Community Boards can play in proactive planning after attending this training?

Thank you!
Questions?
Discussion