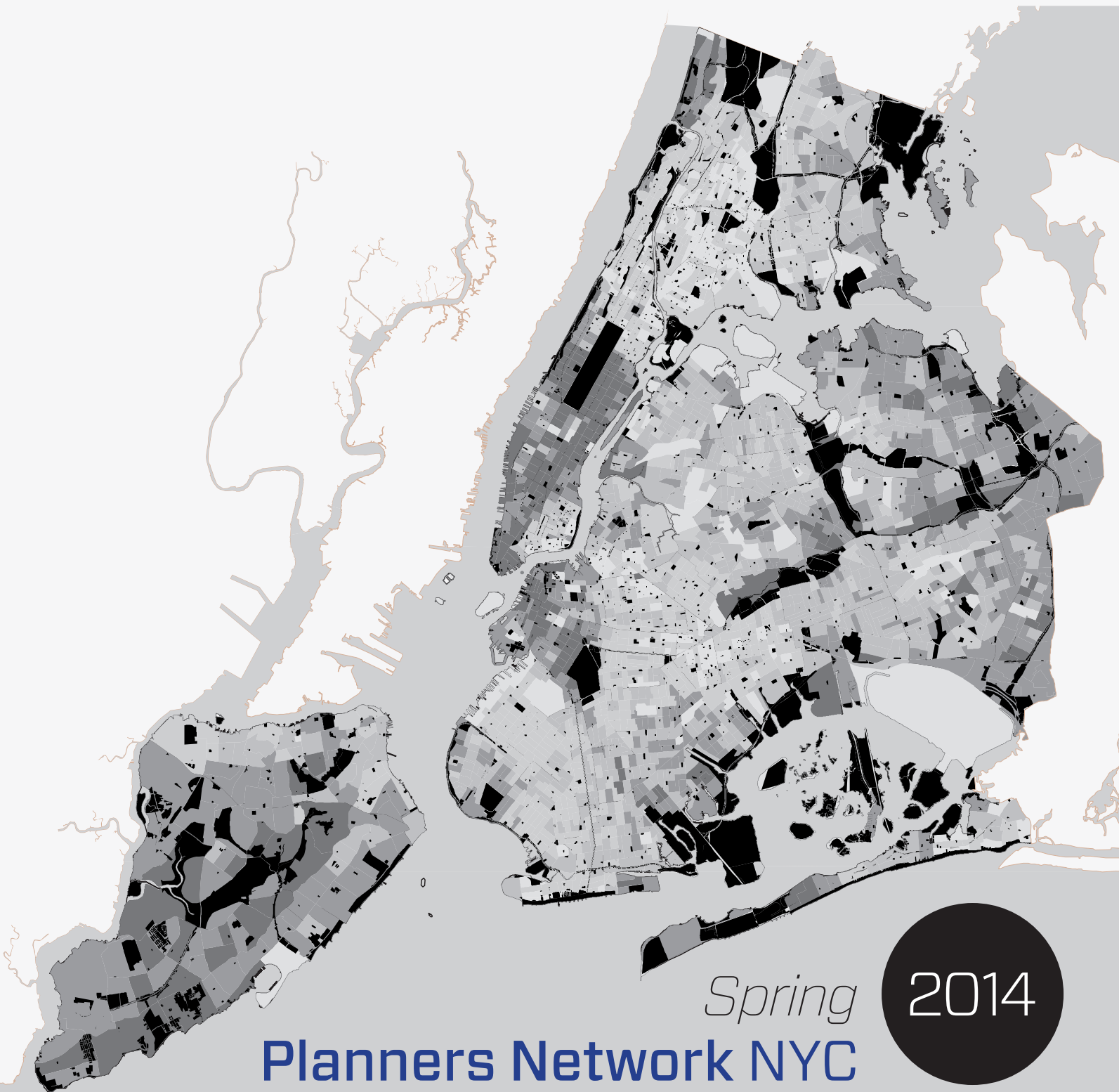


Opportunities for a **NEW** New York



Spring

Planners Network NYC

2014

Planners Network NYC

CREDITS

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Sara Margolis

Michael Mintz

Oksana Mironova

Jessica Nepomiachi

Samuel Stein

DESIGNED BY: @Leeza_D (www.elisabetta.me)

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Introduction

The start of 2014 marked the end of the Bloomberg era and the start of something new. It's an opportunity to gather thoughts about what happened in our city over the last 12 years, and stake a claim on its future. Ultimately, we know this city will change; it's only a matter of how.

Bill de Blasio won the 2013 mayoral election as a progressive, and the new City Council Speaker, Melissa Mark-Viverito, is a leader of the council's Progressive Caucus. But what does being progressive actually mean? Now is the time to open up a discussion about what we expect from a progressive administration.

In that spirit, the New York City chapter of the Planners Network — an association of professionals, activists, academics and students and the publisher of Progressive Planning Magazine — has brought together a group of planners, activists, theorists, journalists, writers, and other everyday New Yorkers to share their thoughts about what ought to be done. The resulting document is neither a platform nor manifesto, but rather a set of visions for a better New York.

We aim to look beyond the easy answers and the conventional wisdom, and try to re-imagine what is possible for our city. The proposals presented here are big and small, transformative and pragmatic. Some of them could happen at any moment; others would require some significant structural changes. But all of the proposals represent specific actions that these authors believe would make our city a better place.

At this crucial moment for the future of our city, the New York City Chapter of the Planners Network invites you to read, to share, to challenge and to respond.

Leverage the wealth created by upzoning to retain independent small businesses and preserve/create affordable housing BY KELLY ANDERSON

My Brooklyn, a film I made with Allison Lirish Dean, documents the impact of a massive rezoning implemented by the Bloomberg Administration in 2004. The rezoning spurred the development of 19 luxury housing towers and the displacement of more than 100 small businesses in a mostly African American and Caribbean shopping district. It turned a neighborhood with a unique character, and the third most profitable shopping district in New York City, into a chain-store dominated, generic commercial strip.

themselves evicted with 30-day notices because their landlord was assembling a large real estate package for a developer.

On the residential side, upzonings fueled the demolition of existing affordable housing. Along Fourth Avenue in Park Slope, rental tenants were neglected and abused until they abandoned their apartments, and high-rise luxury housing was build on those sites.

Going forward, City Planning and the Economic Development Corporation should apply a filter of equity to any proposed land use change. The new mayor should give these agencies a mandate to share the wealth created when value is unlocked through rezoning. When an upzoning displaces businesses, mandate the inclusion of affordable small business space within the proposed project, or nearby. When an upzoning incentivizes the construction of market rate housing, make it a requirement that the developers include a good amount of truly affordable housing in the new project. At a minimum, any affordable housing destroyed by the new project should be replaced within the new construction.

Let's use the power of zoning to maintain diverse, affordable neighborhoods that meet the retail and housing needs of the existing residents that make our city vibrant and great.

“City Planning and the Economic Development Corporation should apply a filter of equity to any proposed land use change”

The Downtown Brooklyn rezoning was just one of 124 rezonings implemented during the Bloomberg years. NYU's Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy found that these

rezonings increased inequality by preserving wealthier, whiter neighborhoods like Brooklyn's Park Slope while loosening restrictions on poorer areas with more black and Latino residents.

Downtown Brooklyn is a prime illustration of how increasing density and allowing residential use — even though the plan was sold as predominantly commercial — can destroy a diverse, vibrant neighborhood. Some businesses had their rents triple from one lease to the next. Others found

A Policy Agenda for Promoting Equitable Growth

BY DAN STEINBERG

If Mayor de Blasio is going to fulfill his promise to close the gulf between “the two New Yorks,” he will have to redirect the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to prioritize equitable growth. Since their inception during the Koch years, EDC and the Industrial Development Agency have awarded massive subsidies to large corporations and developers of commercial office buildings, sports facilities, hotels, and shopping centers, subsidizing the creation of tens of thousands of poverty wage jobs while displacing small businesses and traditionally blue-collar industries.

The time is ripe to consider what a policy agenda for equitable growth would look like:

- Harness NYC’s \$10+ billion of purchasing power to support local businesses and generate jobs. Local bidders should receive an advantage over outsiders given the spin-off benefits for the local economy.
- Target economic sectors where the city has a competitive advantage and nurture clusters of interrelated economic activity. Create industry task forces that include businesses, unions, and affected community members.
- Expand the living-wage and prevailing-wage laws. Reform wasteful and inefficient as-of-right tax incentive programs.
- Create a comprehensive workforce development system that better connects the unemployed to jobs generated by economic development subsidies. Work with labor market intermediaries to design “career ladder” programs for low-income workers, especially in the growing health-care industry.

- Create a more robust plan for “green collar jobs” that interfaces with the city’s ambitious environmental agenda.
- Introduce a system of innovative/small-scale financing to complement SBSS technical assistance for local entrepreneurs. Use more city-operated facilities to provide low-cost space and shared resources for startups.
- Protect existing manufacturing lands from real-estate speculation and competing uses. Explore opportunities for the local production of goods currently imported. Promote “buy local” campaigns. Leverage subsidies to connect local purchasers with potential local suppliers.
- Support cooperative ownership of community resources, including community land trusts, community development financial institutions, community-owned corporations, and consumer cooperatives.
- Offer communities a more collaborative role in economic development planning beyond the formal hearings held after plans have been formulated. Local knowledge should be tapped to improve data collection and identify business opportunities and resources.
- The IDA should grant public access to project materials at least 30 days before public hearings. Hold more hearings in affected communities. Cease the practice of using the New York State Empire Development Corporation to bypass the democratic process for planning and evaluating large-scale projects.
- Diversify the EDC board. Eliminate the by-law requiring that its chairperson be appointed only after consultation with the Partnership for New York City.
- Reform the IDA’s cost-benefit methodology to account for the quality and distribution of new jobs and other variables currently ignored.
- Work with state officials to enforce minimum wage laws and laws proscribing discrimination in hiring.

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Towards Planning in the Department of City Planning BY TOM ANGOTTI

Neighborhood activists often say that that nobody in city government does real planning, and the Department of City Planning (DCP) should be renamed the Department of Real Estate Development. They're right. Rather than planning, the Department's professional cadre is too busy doing zoning, crunching numbers and staying away from the issues that people care about most.

Under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the City Planning Commission (CPC) and DCP became single-minded engines of rezoning. The pattern has been to upzone areas with real estate development potential, including gentrifying communities of color, while downzoning to protect white, middle-class areas. The effect has been to stimulate displacement and widen inequalities. We need city planning that does not profess that planning and zoning are "color-blind", but which directly confronts the gross inequalities in the city.

We need a City Planning Department that:

- Embraces and supports community-initiated planning at various scales, from neighborhood to borough and city-wide levels;
- Guarantees that every community board has the resources to hire a full-time professional planner (as required in the City Charter);

- Actively leads comprehensive long-term planning for the city's land, infrastructure, schools, parks, transportation, and other areas;
- Aggressively leads efforts for regional planning and coordination, especially in areas vital to the quality of life of all New Yorkers.

The CPC and DCP are responsible for long-term planning under the NYC Charter. Yet this is the only planning department in a major U.S. city that has never produced a comprehensive long-term plan. PlaNYC2030 was produced by McKinsey and Co. under contract with the Economic Development Corporation and was never submitted to or approved by the City Planning Commission. Long-term planning must be an on-going process at all levels and ultimately result in a formally approved plan under Section 197-a of the Charter.

The CPC and DCP have turned away from and undermined community-based planning. In the 24 years since a Charter change made it easier to develop and approve plans, under Section 197-a of the City Charter, only 12 have been approved. Several of them, most notably Williamsburg's approved plan, were undermined by DCP's rezonings. It is time to revisit the DCP's Guidelines for 197-a Plans and to devise ways that they can "have teeth" – for example by coordinating planning with the budget process, expanding the mandate beyond narrow land use concerns, and setting in place mechanisms to implement community plans.

"This is the only planning department in a major U.S. city

that has never produced a comprehensive long-term plan"

“We must work

to move beyond resiliency”

Financing an Equitable & Resilient Future: The Financial Transaction Tax

BY CHRISTOPHER RICE

We must work to move beyond resiliency. We must not return our most vulnerable communities back to their cyclical status quos. Post Hurricane Sandy, many of the conversations and interventions have been centered on physical adaptations to the built environment, however; moving forward, these physical adaptations will not be enough. We must also recognize the equally important need to adapt our social environments and increase social resiliency. Financing these adaptations will be one our greatest challenges. Thus, it is imperative that both New York City and New York State government advocate for the Financial Transaction Tax.

The Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) is a tax of 0.5% to 1% on Wall Street financial sector transactions. This is essentially a tax on trades in derivatives, stocks, bonds, and foreign currency exchange. Each time a financial product is traded, between 0.0005% and 0.5% of the value of the trade is collected in tax. These taxes also reduce the amount of risky transactions, which contributed to the global financial crisis. The revenue generated from this tax would make it possible for New York City to make significant investments in resiliency – both physical and social – creating a more equitable future.

Creating Affordable Housing, Opportunity for Local Entrepreneurs, and Turning a Profit are NOT Mutually Exclusive BY MATT D. VIGGIANO

Our next mayor must create meaningful, well-designed housing opportunities for middle- to low-income families that incorporate spaces for local businesses, non-profit organizations and retail. An affordable, mixed-use neighborhood is more than just a neighborhood – it is a community. We need to move away from the Bloomberg philosophy that the City can only have “affordable housing” if it has large amounts of market rate housing to subsidize it. Developers will say that is the only way to create long-term affordability, and subsequently, only rent their retail or residential spaces to businesses that can afford their astronomical prices: Starbucks, Duane Reade (now Walgreens), banks, chain stores, and the super rich. But this is not the case. First, New York does not need more chains; we have had enough already. Second, developers can turn profits for their investors and still create a great project that houses everyone from rich to poor, and feeds, clothes, and entertains that same mix of people.

Our next mayor needs to take the guessing game out of development. A checklist should be presented to developers that want to build in this city so that negotiations are more about ensuring projects help enhance communities than about making projects as profitable as possible and squeezing something out of a developer.

For example, if new housing stock is being created, perhaps space for educational uses should also be provided. Creating new office space? Mandate that a certain amount of retail space is set aside for small businesses, so space does not exclusively go to large chain stores like Chipotle, Pret a Manger, and Au Bon Pain. Retail should be as diverse as the people living and working in an area.

Finally, the new mayor needs to look at new ways to engage our communities. A new building or a conversion of an old space is good for everyone. However, the mayor must bring agencies, communities, and developers together to talk about how projects can positively contribute to a neighborhood. This type of engagement can help build trust and create partnerships rather than economic and social divides. Community members tend to be invested in both short term and long term successes of a project if they feel they are being heard.

“The mayor must bring agencies, communities, and developers together to talk about how projects can positively contribute to a neighborhood.”

Make Immigrant Investment Program Benefit the Public, Not Developers

BY NORMAN ODER

For progressives, immigration policy understandably focuses on citizenship for undocumented residents. However, by ignoring the once-obscure intersection of immigration policy and economic development, progressives have given a pass to a dubious policy.

The federal government's EB-5 program grants immigrant investors (and their families) green cards if they invest \$500,000 in a project that's estimated to create ten jobs for U.S. workers. EB-5, a white-hot topic in local development finance, has been used to support the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Manhattan hotels, and even a condo project for diamond dealers.

Many people balk at "selling" green cards; Harvard philosopher Michael Walzer calls it part of the "corrosive tendency of markets." But the US is not alone in this tendency; countries like Canada and Australia also have programs to lure the world's wealthy.

The Association to Invest in the USA, a trade group, calls EB-5 "a common sense job creator... with no cost to U.S. taxpayers." This claim avoids opportunity costs, failing to ask if real public benefits could be achieved with reforms. It also evades the central question: who really gains?

EB-5 brings big bucks to the middlemen: the deal packagers,

immigration lawyers, and overseas immigration agents. Investors - who value green cards more than investment returns - earn negligible interest, while entrepreneurs and developers get spectacularly below-market financing. The "regional centers"- federally authorized private investment pools that package investments for potential immigrants- keep a slice.

The desire for cheap financing has fueled a boom in these "regional centers." While in 2007, there were just 11 regional centers, today some 400 compete for investors, mainly from China.

Is this an effective job creation strategy? It doesn't look that way. No head count of new employees is required; an economist's report, which includes "indirect" and "induced" jobs, suffices. Worse, investors get credit for jobs created not just by their cash, but the entire project package. With Atlantic Yards in Brooklyn, for example, foreign millionaires got credit for jobs fueled by public subsidies.

Nationally, EB-5 has provoked lawsuits and accusations of fraud. Industry observer Ann Lee, of the think tank Demos, likens EB-5 to the subprime mortgage crisis.

While Lee proposed more regulation and transparency, we might scrap the Rube Goldberg process and emulate Canada, which cuts out the middlemen.

Indeed, the investigative arm of U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, in a memo made public in December, proposed that the regional center program be eliminated or, alternatively, that the minimum investment amount doubled and the program be opened only to active investors, not passive ones, with no "induced" jobs counted.

Until federal policy changes, progressives here should push for more scrutiny of EB-5 and ask the city to back only those projects with clear public benefits.

"Progressives should

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A Gender Violence Free NYC

BY MARLY PIERRE-LOUIS

A better New York means a safer city for women and LGBTQ people. New York City must engage in a collaborative project with planners, community organizers, and women throughout the city that addresses street harassment and gender violence. In order for this to be an inclusive process that prioritizes the safety of the most marginalized women, the power of organizers on the ground should be increased and their access and role in forming policies and initiatives should be expanded. This requires a real commitment from city officials to support, collaborate with, and fund community work that not only organizes women but also critically engages men around issues of patriarchy and gender violence. The political power of those most impacted by gender violence, most often women, transgender, and queer persons of color must be increased and their work leveraged by the city.

Comprehensive and long-term citywide policies must be created that are driven and informed by on the ground knowledge and experiences. The city should mandate and fund age and culturally appropriate curriculum development for children K-12 that address patriarchy and gender violence, so that from a young age, kids learn positive ways to interact with each other.

“This requires a real commitment from city officials to support, collaborate with, and fund community work that not only organizes women but also critically engages men around issues of patriarchy and gender violence.”

NYPD training should include education of the spectrum of gender violence. New policies must be implemented that develop a reporting system for local government, emergency dispatchers and NYPD to receive, document and track reports of street harassment. City funds should create a community based accountability process that exists outside of the criminal justice system where those accused of harassment would hear from community members why street harassment is inappropriate and counter to a safe and whole community. Additionally, NYC needs to fund bystander trainings that train average New Yorkers on how to safely intervene when they see someone being harassed or violated.

There must be a city wide, gender inclusive planning process that utilizes safety audits and mapping exercises to identify “hot spots” of street harassment and gender violence around the city. With this information, mixed-use zoning and multi-use spaces can be created that produce what Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris refers to as a “critical mass of people in public spaces” and opportunities for “natural surveillance by neighbors”. Developing more sidewalk facing storefronts and buildings with street facing windows would also put more of what Jane Jacobs called “eyes on the street”. The elimination of empty alleys, fences and heavy landscaping that block sight lines would make the city feel safer. Subway stations and bus shelters should be placed in well-lit and open areas near businesses and heavy pedestrian activity. Underground pedestrian tunnels should be replaced with safe, ground-level crossings to reduce fear and feelings of unsafety.

The Right to Community Justice! BY IAN GRAY

Our country is overdue for prison-industrial complex reform. For nearly two decades, community courts have offered real alternatives to mass incarceration. It is time to take a serious look at their successes.

In 2010, the first comprehensive analysis of the Red Hook Community Justice Center (RHCJC) was released. This report shows that since the experimental court — one of the few to handle felonies — began operating in 2000, felony and misdemeanor arrests have greatly decreased. Among the cases handled by the RHCJC, 78% of offenders received alternative sanctions, such as community service, compared to merely 22% among similar cases downtown. Additionally, adult offenders were 10% less likely (20% for juvenile offenders) to recidivate than those processed in downtown Brooklyn courts. This amounts to over \$15 million saved by taxpayers and the city in violent/property victimization costs.

To use the somewhat understated words of the report's conclusion, "These are impressive findings." The lynchpin of the RHCJC's success lies in its housing court. While initially focusing on the provision of legal aid, the RHCJC's Housing Resource Center has evolved to work with tenant organizations, thus becoming a needed liaison between the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and public housing residents (who compose two-thirds of Red Hook's population). This increasingly equitable relationship between the RHCJC, NYCHA, and residents has yielded myriad benefits amounting to significant wins for not only the local judicial system, but also a community that is largely over-policed.

With a platform that orbits issues of criminal justice, social equity, and the question of housing, Mayor-elect Bill de Blasio should seize this opportunity to make holistic, cost-efficient, and progressive change.

- *First*, appoint NYCHA leadership that will use the nearly \$1 billion sitting in NYCHA bank accounts since 2009 to assist the RHCJC and other community courts in the city.
- *Second*, push for alternatives to incarceration by fighting for community courts to take on felonies and include robust housing courts integrating services for women, children, and the near-homeless.
- *Third*, facilitate the acquisition of increased federal and state money for citywide research into the benefits of community courts more generally. These are plausible demands. It's time for a restructuring of judicial power in our communities and a renovated commitment to the right to the city.

"With a platform that orbits issues of criminal justice,

social equity, and the question of housing,

Mayor-elect Bill de Blasio should seize this opportunity

to make holistic, cost-efficient, and progressive change."

Street Hassle

BY BEN NADLER

Galway Kinnell's 1960 epic poem about life on the Lower East Side, "The Avenue Bearing the Initial of Christ into the New World," prominently features various street vendors. In the very first stanza, he mentions "Valerio's pushcart," which "Moves Clack / Clack / Clack / On a broken wheelrim." Later in the poem, Kinnell pays homage to the ancient woman, "Who sells the *News* and the *Mirror*," describing her as, "The Oldest living thing on Avenue C, / Outdating much of its brick and mortar."

Indeed, street vendors have long been a definitive part of the New York City streetscape. Living embodiments of the New York hustle, street vendors provide consumers with any product they want or need, without any hassles, wait, or upcharge. What would New York be if you couldn't buy a beef hotdog, an "I ♥ New York" t-shirt, or a book of poems on the street?

Just as importantly, street vending allows hardworking small business owners—particularly immigrants—to build their own businesses, without relying on loans or subsidies. This is particularly important in today's real estate market, where it is almost impossible for an entry-level entrepreneur with no connections, credit, or substantial savings to lease a storefront. Many great brick and mortar businesses in New York — like the Souvlaki GR restaurant on the Lower East Side or Human Relations bookstore in Bushwick—began as street vending operations.

"What would New York be if you

couldn't buy a beef hotdog, an

"I ♥ New York" t-shirt, or a book of

poems on the street?"

It is insane that the city stifles such a vital—and self-sustaining—part of its culture and economy. Vendors should of course be expected to adhere to appropriate codes, but during the past two decades, vendors have been forced to deal with increasingly unreasonable restrictions, over-fining, and outright police harassment.

While the persecution of street vendors began during Giuliani's "quality of life" campaign, it continues to this day. The removal of street vendors, and the eradication of street life, is an important step in the forced gentrification of neighborhoods. Recently, for example, the Parks Department allowed a private, elite group known as the Washington Square Park Conservancy to kick most of the vendors out of Washington Square Park. This news broke my heart; Washington Square Park was my stomping ground when I was a young street vendor.

At the same time, there have been some victories. Last year, responding to advocacy from the Street Vendor Project, the City Council passed a bill which lowered maximum fines for street vendors from \$1,000 to \$500. Hopefully, this is the first step in the city's adoption of a more reasonable and more supportive approach to street vending. If we want to maintain New York City as a place known for both vibrant street life, and the realization of immigrant dreams, we need to protect the rights of street vendors.

IF YOU BUILD IT, WILL THEY COME?

A Belonging-Driven Approach to Public Space

BY EMILY PINKOWITZ & GONZALO CASALS

Over the last twelve years, the Bloomberg Administration invested in numerous capital projects for public space, including \$5 billion to expand the city's parks. However, the use and ownership of these public spaces often reflects the inequities of the city at large. The choices we make in the coming years will determine how this infrastructure is used, and who ultimately feels ownership of it.

In the past two decades, the city has increasingly shared responsibility for the care of public spaces with private organizations, including cultural institutions, conservancies, and Business Improvement Districts. These public-private partnerships are formed primarily to support the general operations of these spaces. However, what excites us as practitioners is their potential to also deliberately address issues of equity. With this year's Mayoral transition, we have an opportunity to reflect on the role these organizations have played and re-envision their future as advocates for inclusiveness and belonging.

What does a belonging-driven approach look like and how can we get there? First, we must form meaningful relationships with diverse constituencies to understand what they need and want from public space. Next, we must actively engage constituents in decision-making, remaining open to demands that stretch the boundaries of our expectations. What is more, we must leverage resources for users to activate the space as they see fit, creating opportunities and experiences that enrich their lives beyond their relationship with the space.

When public spaces are owned and utilized by all, important things happen. *They add to quality of life.* People have places to learn, experiment, get away, and get together. *They are vehicles for exchange.* People of different ages, backgrounds, and experiences share knowledge, gain skills and grow opportunities through interaction.

“When public spaces are owned and utilized by all, important things happen.”

They are platforms for democracy. When people organize and mobilize in public, movements are more inclusive and more powerful. *They signal belonging.* How we experience public space, how we are made to feel and the power we have within these spaces, shapes and reshapes how we understand ourselves and how we understand our place in the city.

In the coming years, we call on these public-private organizations and the city at large to explore more ambitious strategies to ensure that public spaces become not only welcoming and engaging, but fully, democratically utilized. We are excited by the potential of public spaces, activated and owned by all, to ignite and reinforce narratives of belonging and agency for all New Yorkers.

Expanding Land Access BY PAULA Z. SEGAL

596 Acres is New York City's community land access advocacy organization. We help residents all over the city see possibilities behind the fences on their blocks and get permission to access new spaces in their neighborhoods. These become gardens, pocket parks, farms, and playgrounds. Often, we help community members realize the potential of a previously existing resource that has become disconnected from the city agency mechanism that maintained it for past generations. We are looking forward to partnering with the incoming administration to decrease the information gap, amplify community power, and create common neighborhood spaces for all New Yorkers. The following four changes would greatly improve the vitality of our city.

1. Transparency and access to public information about public land. Make information about public land transparent and available through signage on publicly owned lots. Signs should announce that the land is publicly owned and suggest ways that neighbors can get access to it. Announce programs like Gardens for Healthy Communities and the DOT Plaza program directly on the affected locations and to people who walk by those places. If the city administration makes information about publicly owned land more accessible, 596 Acres can focus on helping local communities organize and build sustainable local governance for managing projects going forward.

2. Support greening. GreenThumb gets no funding from New York City - it's time to change that. GreenThumb provides materials and support for gardens on public and private land. They provide a long-established process for community groups to open fences in their neighborhoods and put public land to use. One of the things that I find myself doing often at 596 Acres is telling community members not to give up on their communication with GreenThumb—they are swamped. City funding would increase capacity of this crucial program that serves the needs of all New Yorkers who want to create community controlled spaces..

3. Reward cooperation. Incentivize community access to privately-owned vacant land through a new tax abatement program, based on the not-for-profit property tax abatement. This program will reward owners who work with their lots' community and neighbors to convert an underutilized, fenced off lot into a resource, like a temporary park, farm, or open space! A tax incentive will encourage more private owners of the holes in our city to opt into cooperation with their neighbors.

4. Include neighborhood voices. Enable greater public participation by requiring developers to put up signs on sites where development is *proposed* or where land use review is imminent, in advance of the public participation period. Signs should clearly indicate that input from local communities is invited and indicate how it will be accepted. Signs should be placed every 15 feet and include before and after photos.

"We are looking forward

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Anti-Hoarding Measures Could Increase Equity for All

BY HANNAH DOBBZ

In the nineteenth century, a radical American land reformist named Joshua Ingalls wanted to put an end to land monopolies. He posited that every family should be able to own enough land to reasonably work, and no more. Ingalls's proposal would have not only put an end to the much-maligned quasi-feudal relationships between landlords and tenants of the day, but it would have simultaneously rendered slavery an impossibility, since slave plantations couldn't exist without monopolies of land. In this way, Ingalls's movement to end land hoarding was a sort of civil rights measure.

In the same spirit, if there were a limit to the amount of property that an individual or corporation could own today in New York City, perhaps everyone could finally afford a home—dissolving the link between property and profit!

This link is dangerous, since the whims of speculation directly influence the state of housing. Ordinary people are then left in precarious positions that can lead to foreclosure, rental eviction, or homelessness. Their limited access to capital and the limited control they have over their own lives go hand in hand and perpetuate each other.

This is a big conundrum in the world of capitalism: how can a person with little money accumulate enough to make the big purchase that will allow them to save more money, when each month they pay incrementally on the value of a rental that belongs to someone else? The cycle tends to put real property in the hands of those who already own real property. As more money gets pumped into real estate—inflating the upfront costs—property becomes even less accessible to those who don't have any. Consequently, ordinary people operate in a world based on the impulses of property owners who continually grant permission for them to exist. Owning property that they don't use is a way to get rich at the expense of those who use property that they'll never own.

If all future sales were made to people who didn't yet own their housing, perhaps the price of property eventually level out, allowing residents of all income levels to gradually become homeowners.

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Homes For All

BY PICTURE THE HOMELESS HOUSING COMMITTEE

During Bloomberg's tenure as Mayor, the homeless population in New York City has skyrocketed 61%. The number of homeless families has risen 73%. In total, there are over 52,000 people currently in the shelter system, including 22,000 children. The Housing Committee at Picture the Homeless organizes homeless and formerly homeless people to fight for decent, truly affordable permanent housing – not shelters. It costs anywhere from \$3,000-\$4,000 per month to put one person through the shelter system. Using existing funding from the current budget for the Department of Homeless Services - upwards of \$900 million – we propose replacing temporary shelters with permanent, subsidized housing for low- and extremely low-income individuals and families. This money could be better utilized – and even save the taxpayer money – by subsidizing permanent, decent housing for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness. In *Banking on Vacancy: Homelessness and Real Estate Speculation*, Picture the Homeless illustrated that there are enough vacant buildings and lots to house nearly 200,000 people in only 1/3 of the city's community boards. In particular, diverted DHS funding should be reserved for organizations that fight for permanently affordable and resident-controlled housing, like Community Land Trusts and Mutual Housing Associations.

The federal benchmark governing income eligibility for affordable housing should be reformulated. New York City's Area Median Income formula encompasses New York City and some surrounding counties. This calculation has failed to facilitate housing development for those on fixed-income and other low-income people. Housing should be built according to a Neighborhood Median Income calculation, based on local incomes, ensuring that neighborhood residents can afford the newly constructed housing. This calculation would take into account the local needs of each community, stemming displacement and unfettered luxury development. This change would have to occur on the federal level, but we're confident it would help low and extremely low-income people in New York and other cities across the country.

The federal government also needs to unfreeze and expand funding for Section 8 Vouchers or provide funding for another type of New York City-based rental subsidy. This year's budget cuts led to a \$35 million cutback to the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's budget. These cuts hurt those who are in most need federal, state, and city aid. They are antithetical to the goal of reducing homelessness and scaling down the shelter system. In addition, if we are to prevent homelessness, we propose the overhaul of the Rent Guidelines Board so that it is democratically and majority run by rent-stabilized tenants to ensure their housing security.

"We propose replacing

temporary shelters with

permanent, subsidized

housing for low- and

extremely low-income

individuals and families."

Expand Rent Regulation!

BY KATIE GOLDSTEIN

New York City is in an affordable housing crisis. Rents are skyrocketing citywide, as gentrification changes the city's class, race and cultural composition. One of the main factors behind this crisis is the rapid deregulation of our rent stabilized housing stock, and the privatization of our subsidized housing complexes.

Rent regulation, which includes both rent stabilization and rent control, encompasses approximately 1.1 million apartments, translating to about 2.5 million tenants. With some exceptions, the system covers all apartments renting for less than \$2,500 in buildings built before 1974 with more than 5 apartments. Rent stabilized tenants have the following key protections: rents go up by a percentage increase every year; there are guaranteed lease renewal options; and tenants are able to receive rent reductions for lack of services. These are important protections that protect tenants from rent gauging.

The fact that New York City has been able to be a racially and economically diverse city is due in large part to the regulated and subsidized housing that has protected low-income and working class tenants from being priced out of their homes and communities.

“Ultimately, New York’s

affordability crises are

political in nature.”

At Tenants & Neighbors, we are building a strong tenant movement to preserve, as many units as we can to make sure that our members who make up the diverse neighborhoods of New York City are able to stay in their homes and communities. But only focusing on preservation doesn't solve the crisis. There needs to be increased regulations on rent, increased tenant protections, and increased government investment.

All tenants should have the opportunity to decide when they leave their apartment. All tenants should be able to withhold their rent if they aren't getting the conditions and services that they deserve. And all tenants should be able to get rent increases that are based truly on the needs of the building, not on landlord's profit.

Ultimately, New York's affordability crises are political in nature. To solve it, we need major changes in public policy. For a new New York, rent regulation should be expanded to all apartments in the city. Expanding rent regulation won't cost the city a dime, and would most effectively preserve what makes New York City great: its liveable and diverse neighborhoods.

Relief Needed for Rent Controlled Tenants

BY LUCY LEVY

Recently there has been much discussion of a rent freeze for rent-stabilized tenants. There are over a million stabilized tenants who could benefit from this program. This would be an important step towards the preservation of existing affordable housing, but would not affect me, as I am a rent-controlled tenant.

In the early 1950's, when rent control was the only form of rent regulation in existence, there were over two million rent controlled apartments.¹ By June, 1971 when rent control ended and vacancy decontrol passed, there were about 1.2 million rent-controlled apartments. By 1996, there were estimated to be only 70,572 rent controlled units and as of 2011, only about 38,000 remained in New York City.²

Our rents increase by a complicated process. Factors such as costs, income and broader economic trends are processed through a formula developed in the 1970s. The common perception is that we pay a minimal rent is far from the truth. Our rents generally rise much faster than the rents of rent-stabilized tenants - from 1974 through 2013, our rents have increased by 580.1%³. During the same period of time, rent stabilized rents have risen 250%⁴.

Unlike rent stabilized tenants, rent controlled tenants also pay a year round per room fuel charge, amounting to hundreds of dollars per year, and we can also be subject to increases of up to 15% for increases based on building-wide renovations.

Rent controlled tenants are long-standing members of our communities, with most having moved into their apartments before 1971 and living there continuously since. We raised our children, shopped in the stores, worked and supported our communities and neighborhoods in all ways imaginable. We maintained a stable continual presence, helping our neighborhoods grow and thrive.

We are now being driven from our homes by the continual steep rent increases and other charges that have made our homes increasingly unaffordable.

The rent control system needs to be reformed. The method for calculating our rent increases needs to be brought into line with those affecting stabilized tenants- our increases should not be so drastically high. The special increases that only impact rent controlled tenants, like the "fuel pass-along", should be rescinded. Rent controlled tenants have been singled out for successive exorbitant increases for far too long, and the time for reform is now.

"We are now being driven

from our homes by the

continual steep rent

increases and other charges

that have made our homes

increasingly unaffordable."

Allow Safe Basement Apartments To Be Brought Up To Code

BY DREW GOLDSMAN

As New York City’s affordable housing crisis continues to escalate, many renters rely on the informal housing market, frequently renting out basement apartments in lower density neighborhoods. This practice has been going on since World War II, but the city’s zoning and building codes have not kept up. Today, many new immigrants call these units their home. An estimated 114,000 units exist without a proper certificate of occupancy and are therefore illegal. This status creates an array of problems for everyone involved, from the homeowner to the renter and the community and the city at large.

Basement apartment tenants frequently face abuse, harassment and risk of displacement; they may live in substandard and unsafe conditions; and they have little recourse in housing court. Homeowners, who rely on the income from their basement unit, run the risk of being found out by the city, leading to costly fines – up to \$15,000 – in addition to the cost of dismantling the unit and the loss of rental income. Many homeowners need this income to support their mortgages and are at risk of default without it, leading to neighborhood destabilization just as the housing market begins to recover.

Finally, unregistered alterations can lead to unsafe conditions, which pose a major risk to people in or near the building as well as to firefighters and other first responders.

It is critical that the city, led by Mayor de Blasio and the City Council, make the necessary changes to ensure that basement apartments are safe and secure while protecting and creating tens of thousands of affordable units, as well as stabilizing neighborhoods and preventing further foreclosures in already distressed neighborhoods.

Chhaya Community Development Corporation and the Basement Apartments Safe for Everyone (BASE) campaign proposes that NYC add a new category of residence to building, housing, and zoning codes known as an “Accessory Dwelling Unit” (ADU) code. Along with establishing the ADU code, the city would:

- Allow safe units to exist legally, even in areas that are currently zoned to limit housing to single-family residences.
- Keep the unit affordable by creating a conditional incentive for owners.
- Pilot a project in targeted areas and launch in phases. Select pilot communities with high rates of foreclosures and overcrowded schools for an accessory dwelling unit conversion program.
- Provide technical and financial assistance to homeowners who participate in the pilot program.

Sharing the Truth about the Shared Economy

BY AHMED TIGANI

Emerging as one of the pioneering sectors in the age of peer-to-peer business, companies like AirBnB, 9flat, and Smart Apartments offer tourists the opportunity to search for inexpensive rentals in some of the world's most expensive cities. Operators open their spaces to strangers, for a price, and both "operators" and "users" benefit from this shared economy.

"On a larger scale, illegal hotels remove residential units from the already shrinking supply of housing..."

However, as the market for prohibited short-term rentals has grown, many operators have acted in defiance of local and state ordinances. New York City and State laws restrict both tenants and owners from renting residential units for less than 30 days a month in buildings

with three or more units. By engaging in commercial activity within residential areas, illegal hotels violate zoning and fire-code regulations. Tenants engaging in prohibited short-term rentals run the risk of violating their lease and putting their primary shelter in jeopardy. Illegal hotels undermine housing stability and pose a risk to the security and safety of communities in which they are located.

The quality of life and public safety of residents neighboring illegal hotels are also negatively affected. Collected reports⁵ describe around-the-clock noise and commotion from overcrowded apartments, and anxiety with a rotating cast of unfamiliar faces who occupy the unlawful rentals. In cases where the landlord is involved, permanent residents have experienced

a decline in building maintenance and accommodations, while transient guests have received greater service. More serious complaints from residents included both burglaries and physical assaults committed by illegal hotel guests.⁶

On a larger scale, illegal hotels remove residential units from the already shrinking supply of housing affordable to low, moderate, and middle-class families. New York City is experiencing a housing shortage of dangerous proportions. Skyrocketing rents and record levels of homelessness illustrate that the battle to preserve and build housing that is within the means of our most vulnerable populations has proven to be an enormous task. There is a substantial financial incentive for landlords to convert permanent residential units into illegal hotels. Some landlords and management companies harass and coax rent-stabilized tenants out of their homes. Once on the market as illegal hotels, these units may become deregistered with the state and illegally deregulated.

Initially, there was little oversight over the peer-to-peer rental industry. However, things are beginning to change. Since 2010, New York State adapted legislation protecting the status of permanent housing. New York City officials have cracked down on the flagrant disregard for fire safety codes by bad actors. Recently, the city won a \$1 million settlement for violations from SmartApartments. More stringent regulation, enforcement, and education are necessary to mitigate the negative side effects of the shared economy.

New York Needs a Landlord Licensing Law

BY CELIA WEAVER & ELISE GOLDIN

Quality of housing affects basic quality of life for residents. For example, children who live in substandard housing often do worse in school. Stable housing is a crucial component of HIV/AIDS treatment plans. Though New York City has a housing maintenance code and a host of building inspectors in the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, it is currently easy for slumlords to slip through the cracks, ignore code violations on their properties, and subject thousands of tenants to life threatening conditions.

There are mechanisms for tenants to hold their landlords accountable for bad living conditions, but they are woefully inadequate. Housing Court is notoriously clogged and difficult for tenants to navigate. While tenants can bring their landlord to Housing Court, low income New Yorkers often cannot afford to take the time out of work to return to court, again and again, just to get a judge's order to correct violations. There is no promise that a landlord will comply.

For years, New York's housing agencies have tried to chase after bad landlords, using strategies that have proved ineffective again and again. Instead, the city should be proactive in guarding against bad actors. In New York, you need a license to operate a hot dog cart, because selling bad meat on the street could inflict real harm on consumers. New York can and should improve affordable housing by instituting a landlord licensing law, and stop negligent landlords from operating apartment buildings in the first place. In addition to improving quality of life for hundreds of thousands of New York City tenants, a landlord license would reduce the burden on New York City's Housing Court and on City programs that inspect properties and force costly emergency repairs.

Something like this could work in a number of ways. A city agency, like the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, could be given vetting power to determine whether an owner has a good enough record to acquire a certain pool of properties: i.e., buildings that meet a certain level of physical distress can only be sold to qualified developers. Alternatively, the City could strengthen the existing^{7A} program and automatically transfer management away from landlords to qualified operators when building conditions fall below a certain threshold.

As New York City continues to suffer from a foreclosure crisis, multifamily buildings are literally coming apart under the weight of bad debt. Many of the landlords currently at risk of foreclosure practiced "predatory equity" during the real estate boom, making speculative investments on rent regulated and subsidized housing. These landlords are much more likely to direct their rental income towards inflated mortgage payments than to make quality repairs on their buildings. A landlord license program would discourage the kind of speculation on affordable housing that got us into a housing crisis in the first place.

"...improve affordable

housing by instituting

a landlord licensing

law to stop negligent

landlords from operating

apartment buildings."

Equitable Re-Development of Land Acquired by New York City & New York State in Sandy-Affected Areas.

BY SANDY REDEVELOPMENT OVERSIGHT GROUP

Following Superstorm Sandy, the federal government set aside funds for the State and City of New York to acquire destroyed or damaged properties. Some funds will be used to buy homes for the creation of open space that will serve as a buffer against future storms. Other funds will be used for an acquisition program that earmarks lots for city redevelopment.

Electing for the city to acquire and redevelop your property -- with no guarantee that you and your family will be able to return to the neighborhood and benefit from redevelopment -- is a desperate choice, but a likely one for many New Yorkers in Sandy-affected areas. Once the Biggert-Waters Act goes into effect, roughly 34,500 properties in our coastal communities that were flooded by Sandy will be affected by rising insurance costs. Properties currently outside the high-risk flood insurance zones with annual premiums of \$429 could face new annual burdens of \$5,000 to \$10,000. No funding has been made available to elevate homes that were not completely destroyed in the storm. Those who cannot afford to pay for elevation will face rising insurance costs.

Over 30% of households in areas with looming insurance price hikes earn less than 60% of the Area Median Income. Moreover, New York City is in the midst of a severe affordable housing shortage, with a homeless population of over 50,000 people. New development in Sandy-affected areas should be mixed-income and reflect pre-Sandy income levels. Preference should be given to displaced residents.

Long-term affordability mechanisms should be put in place. Through the funding allocated for acquisition and redevelopment of properties in Sandy-affected communities, the city has a unique opportunity to support local development capacity that puts communities in control of their housing. We urge that the block grant funding be used to support new community land trusts and non-profit, neighborhood-based development corporations. These trusts and developers must be under a mandate to create and permanently maintain housing that is affordable to neighborhood residents who have been displaced by the disaster or by the unworkable economics of the storm recovery process.

With the opportunity to redevelop large swaths of land, the incoming administration has an incredible opportunity to stabilize New York City's low- and moderate-income coastal neighborhoods. Site design and community engagement in the design process will shape New York City's future social and ecological resiliency. It will determine whether the storm leaves in its wake safer communities for those who experienced it first hand or an opportunity for speculation and developer-driven change along our coastlines.

"The city has a unique opportunity to support local development capacity that puts communities in control of their housing."

Sustainable Stormwater Management Must Be a Part of Brownfield Redevelopment Projects

BY SARA B. MARGOLIS

New York City's population is growing, and the need for space is increasing along with it. Brownfield properties in NYC present an opportunity to resourcefully use the space that is already available, while simultaneously cleaning up contaminated sites and revitalizing communities. Brownfields, as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), are properties where redevelopment may be complicated by the presence or assumed presence of contamination.⁹ However, brownfield redevelopment is often looked at in isolation of stormwater management needs. Brownfield redevelopment often results in hardscape surfacing in order to contain contamination and prevent exposure, but this only increases the amount of impervious surfaces, thereby increasing stormwater runoff and combined sewer overflows. Two-thirds of NYC's sewer system is a combined sewer, which means it collects both sanitary sewage and stormwater runoff during a wet weather event. NYC wastewater treatment plants have the ability to treat sewage during dry weather events; however, during wet weather events wastewater treatment plants cannot handle all of the flow created. Consequently, excess wastewater and stormwater flow from the system into surrounding water bodies.

This is especially significant in areas with multiple brownfields and where area-wide redevelopment is being pursued (i.e. *Brownfield Opportunity Areas*).

Stormwater runoff, however, does not have to be an inevitable result of development. Many cities are utilizing sustainable stormwater management (the capturing of rainwater from impervious surfaces such as rooftops, streets, and sidewalks in order to prevent it from entering the sewer system) on former brownfield sites through the implementation of green infrastructure strategies that prevent recontamination. NYC should promote techniques that appropriately manage stormwater on redeveloped brownfields, such as vegetation with an underdrain, or remediation techniques such as composted biosolids. The city should implement policies that help facilitate these approaches, such as mandating retention rather than detention-based systems, or area-wide stormwater management. Such actions will not only assist in stormwater management across the city, but will gain the multiple benefits of sustainable stormwater management at these sites, including energy conservation, aesthetic improvements, and

the reduction in air pollution, the heat island effect, and the risk of sewage backups.

Promoting sustainable stormwater management on brownfield sites can contribute to the City's overall sustainability goals. As estimated in PlaNYC 2030, in 2007 there were over 7,000 acres of brownfields, vacant or underutilized sites throughout the city, which is equivalent to over eight Central Parks. Literature has shown that it is possible to utilize green infrastructure techniques to manage stormwater on redeveloped brownfield sites. The Mayor should form a joint task force with members from various city agencies to address this issue; it will reap benefits all the way from the block, neighborhood, borough, and City levels.

[For more information on this topic: Margolis, Sara (2012). Sustainable Stormwater Management on Redeveloped Brownfield Sites in New York City (Master's Thesis).]

BENEFITS OF AN OPEN CREEK

- +ECOLOGICAL HABITAT
- +COMMUNITY AMENITY
- +ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

by Yelena Zolotorevskaya



EPIFAUNA
SEA GRAPE
BLUE MUSSELS
BARNACLES
CRABS
POLYCHATES
BRYOZOANS
CNIDARIANS

WETLAND HABITAT

BIRDS

AMERICAN KESTREL
MOURNING DOVE
DOWNY WOODPECKER
AMERICAN CROW
BARN SWALLOW
LESSER SCAUP

AMERICAN ROBIN
GRAY CATBIRD
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD
EUROPEAN STARLING
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER

NORTHERN CARDINAL
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD
HOUSE FINCH
HOUSE SPARROW

ATLANTIC BRANT
YELLOW WARBLER
BUFFLEHEAD
MALLARD



Hurricane Sandy and the pending National Flood Insurance program changes have the potential to displace and impact many of the existing residents living in Coney Island. A combination of difficult to flood-proof housing stock, namely attached single family homes, and the historical legacy of urban renewal in large concentrations of NYCHA run public housing make the Coney Island community vulnerable to both redevelopment pressures as well as flood and climate change events.

FLOOD PROTECTION SCENARIOS CONEY IS. CREEK

EXISTING FLOOD CONDITIONS



SURGE!

During extreme surge events such as Hurricane Sandy, storm surge is pushed into the creek. Flooding occurs from both surge and CSO overflows.

Ocean side flooding pushes surge into the creek bay side, causing flooding from both directions across Coney Island.



CITY PROPOSAL



CLOSED CREEK

Creek becomes a detention basin for stormwater from Coney Island and Gravesend neighborhoods.



ALTERNATE PROPOSAL



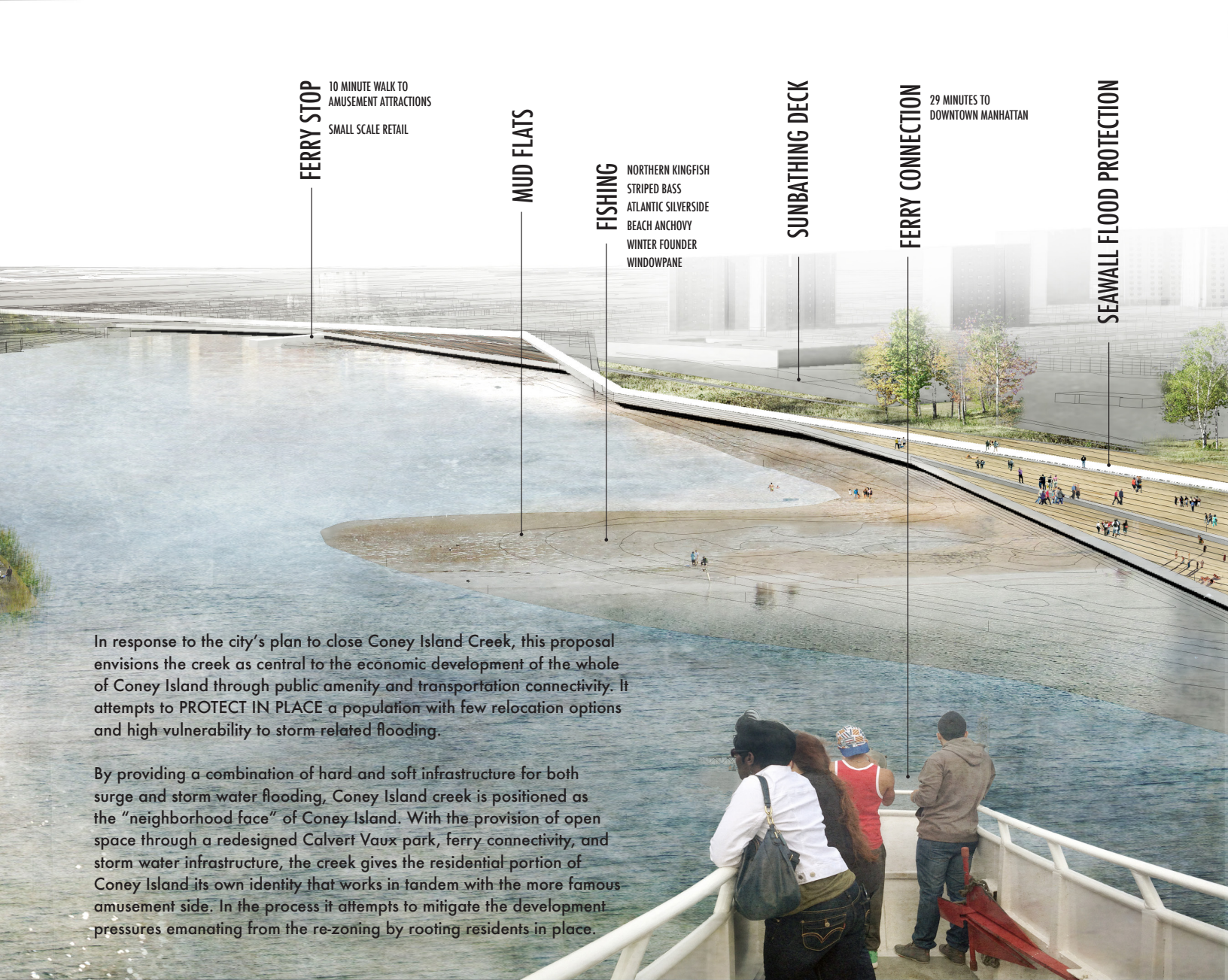
Built up earth edge

BUILT UP TOPOGRAPHIC EDGES

Topographic and structural moves contain flood waters while allowing navigational access to the creek.

Terraced seawall





FERRY STOP
10 MINUTE WALK TO
AMUSEMENT ATTRACTIONS
SMALL SCALE RETAIL

MUD FLATS

FISHING
NORTHERN KINGFISH
STRIPED BASS
ATLANTIC SILVERSIDE
BEACH ANCHOVY
WINTER FOUNDER
WINDOWPANE

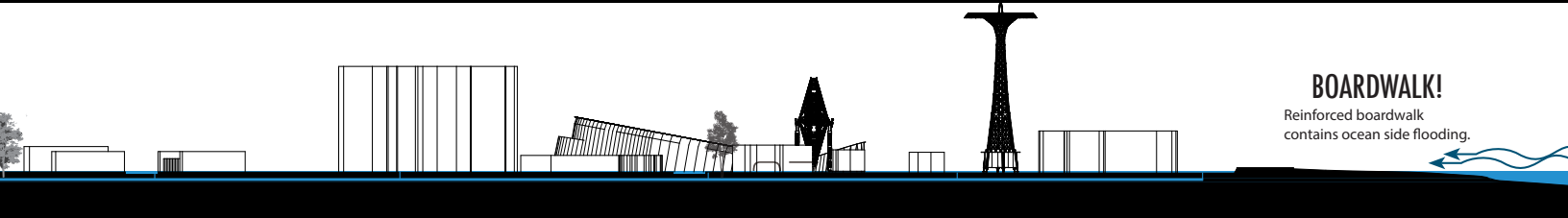
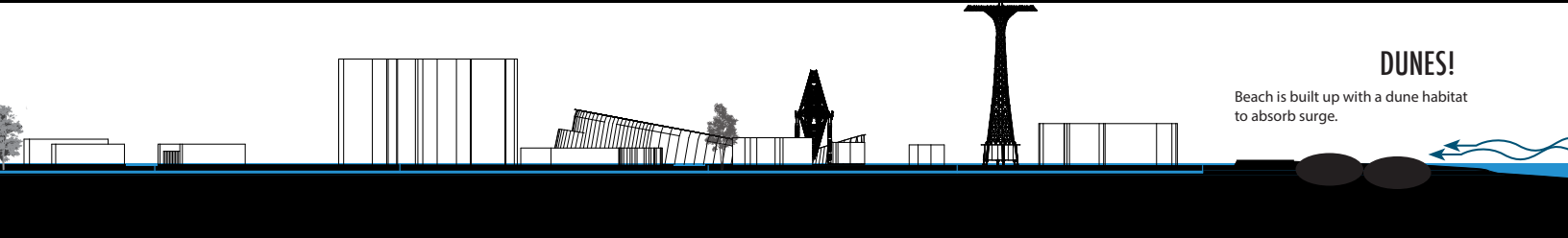
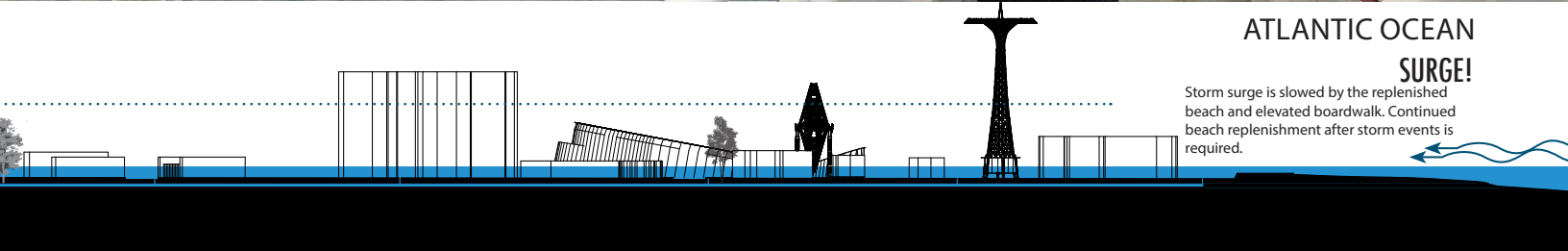
SUNBATHING DECK

FERRY CONNECTION
29 MINUTES TO
DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN

SEAWALL FLOOD PROTECTION

In response to the city's plan to close Coney Island Creek, this proposal envisions the creek as central to the economic development of the whole of Coney Island through public amenity and transportation connectivity. It attempts to **PROTECT IN PLACE** a population with few relocation options and high vulnerability to storm related flooding.

By providing a combination of hard and soft infrastructure for both surge and storm water flooding, Coney Island creek is positioned as the "neighborhood face" of Coney Island. With the provision of open space through a redesigned Calvert Vaux park, ferry connectivity, and storm water infrastructure, the creek gives the residential portion of Coney Island its own identity that works in tandem with the more famous amusement side. In the process it attempts to mitigate the development pressures emanating from the re-zoning by rooting residents in place.



Create a City Wide Afterschool Initiative that Prioritizes Diverse Learning Experiences Over Test Prep BY TAL BAR-ZEMER

During his campaign, Mayor Bill de Blasio called for an expansion of afterschool programs for all middle school students in New York City. This is a worthy goal: afterschool programs have a long history of providing engaging, safe, and constructive developmental supports for young people in this city. They are a place where students can access the kinds of experiences that other institutions no longer offer with any regularity, including quality arts education, regular physical activity, unstructured playtime, collaborative inquiry, and project based learning. They are a crucial educational and social bridge between school, home, and community.

Currently afterschool programs are facing deep constraints. They are being asked to do more with less, and are forced to work within increasingly inappropriate parameters. As standardized testing has become central to school reform platforms, afterschool programs for “at risk youth” have been treated as another chance to boost scores. This is not what afterschool should be about. Research consistently shows that afterschool programs are better suited to meet individual social/emotional needs than to raise achievement on narrow academic measures. So far, this evidence has not deterred funders and policymakers from holding afterschool programs progressively more responsible for achieving academic results, often to the detriment of programs that are successful in meeting more appropriate goals.

To ensure that an expanded afterschool program does not go down this path, stakeholders must articulate a purpose

that is distinct from- yet complementary to- the function of formal schooling. Without this step, afterschool runs the risk of being subsumed by test-heavy school reforms.

To do this well we must bring educators, youth, parents, community institutions, and funders into the same conversation. We must build a strongly linked and coordinated network of providers to develop and disseminate best practice for high engagement and retention of youth and staff, and to deepen opportunities for family and community engagement. Afterschool cannot in and of itself surmount the harmful effects of poverty, violence, failing schools, and a diminishing social safety net. However, if it is treated and funded as a crucial part of the effort to support youth and families, it can promote participation and engagement; it will support academic learning; it will provide meaningful learning experiences grounded in relationships among students in shared communities of learning; it will connect youth to adults who are committed to their holistic development; and it will significantly alter students’ learning trajectories.

After ten years of education policies that co-opt the language of opportunity and safety while disproportionately penalizing and alienating students who have the greatest unmet needs, we are ready for new solutions and approaches that work in and beyond the school day to support the development of engaged thinkers, learners, and citizens.

Free CUNY! We Want a University Run By and For the People

BY ZOLTÁN GLÜCK

“Public education

should be truly

public and available

to all, not limited

to the privileged

few and rendered

inaccessible due

to its ever-rising

price tag.”

Until 1976 the City University of New York (CUNY) was tuition free and provided quality education for the people of New York City. It should be made free again. The Open Admissions policy must be restored to the university so that any high school graduate in New York City can be admitted free of charge. That is, public education should be truly public and available to all, not limited to the privileged few and rendered inaccessible due to its ever-rising price tag. Professors must be paid a living wage and university governance should be in the hands of students and teachers, not corporate-style executives who think only of profit and know nothing of scholarship.

A first step toward making CUNY free would be to abolish the Board of Trustees and the Chancellery, and to cut back the bloated salaries of the highest paid administrators. In a university system where adjunct professors are paid a scant \$3,000 per course, it is sickening that the University Chancellor makes \$600,000. Millions of dollars can be recuperated once this parasitical class of executives is done away with. In response to decades of student protests against rising tuitions, creeping privatization and the neoliberalization of the university, administrators have spent millions on “security.” Such expenditures, which are

aimed to suppress dissent, are anathema to the ideals of higher education and run counter to the original mission of the university. Recuperating these funds that have been misallocated to the securitization and militarization of the university is an important step towards rebuilding free and socially just CUNY.

But ultimately such “smaller” reforms have to be taken in tandem with a broader restructuring of social priorities in New York. Public universities were once run entirely on tax-revenues; after years of gutting the state-level and city-level support for the University, now 40% of CUNY’s operating budget comes from student tuitions. This trend must be reversed. In a city of billionaires, in a city where tens of trillions of dollars are traded on every year in our stock market, in a city with one of the highest concentrations of fortune 500 companies in the world, it is sickening that public schools are underfunded and that spineless politicians stand up and tell us that there is no money for CUNY.

CUNY could easily be free and open to all. It’s simply a matter of social priorities and political will.

The Invisible Bicyclists (*Hint, you're not a white man.*) BY DOROTHY LE AND HELEN HO

“Only white people bike commute.”

“Bike lanes are going to gentrify my neighborhood.”

“Those people [delivery cyclists] need to learn the rules.”

These quotes represent common misperceptions about bicycling in New York City. As a city, we need to open our eyes and see that there is a large group of cyclists who have been ignored by planners and advocates. They are not white; they are not men; they are not economically privileged. These “invisible cyclists” must play a central role as we rewrite the rules of the road. Otherwise, the planning process will be skewed, and the benefits of safe bicycle infrastructure, education, programming, and advocacy will not extend to those who need them most.

That is why Biking Public Project (BPP) was formed in April 2012. BPP’s mission is to expand local cycling advocacy discussions by reaching out to underrepresented bicyclists, including women, people of color, and delivery cyclists.

Over the summer of 2013 BPP engaged with cyclists and community members in Jackson Heights and Corona, Queens, learning from a diverse group of cyclists and expanding their presence in the bicycle advocacy movement. We surveyed and photographed individuals in public plazas, bicycle infrastructure, parks, and community events, finding an enormous diversity among cyclists. For example, our outreach found a population of cyclists where more than 60% of people speak a language other than English at home. If you change the survey methods, these undercounted cyclists are not hard to find.

Moving forward on a neighborhood scale, BPP will be sharing best practices and developing advocacy and organizing trainings. As a volunteer organization, we will need institutional partners, support, funding, staff, and space to start and organize this leadership institute.

In order to address inequalities on a citywide level, we must develop more representative Community Boards, with voting power and suitable budgets. Community Boards are currently comprised of appointees by local Council Members and Borough Presidents. Giving the deciding vote to the people of the community and recruiting for proportional representation- including renters, young people, local businesses and new immigrants- would remedy the situation.

We will also need more diverse and multilingual community board staff, in order to create new methods to reach underrepresented populations.

Currently bike lanes are created for neighborhoods that show the most amount of support and the least amount of resistance. As a result, bike lanes are prioritized in well-organized, progressive, white neighborhoods. Rather than perpetuating this cycle and leaving many neighborhoods with poorly networked bike infrastructure, the public process at the Community Board level must be restructured, and city government must have uniform standards for how it engages with every neighborhood.

The NYPD Should Focus on Street Safety

BY MICHAEL MINTZ

Recent planning efforts have turned some of New York's car-centric streets into livable ones. Janette Sadik-Khan led the DOT in a program of new bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian plazas, and improved bus service. Despite New York's famously walk-able, dense neighborhoods and its robust public transit system, New York has an automobile problem. Every year over 250 people are killed by traffic. Thousands more are injured. Only a fraction of drivers are brought to justice.

Moreover, giving cars priority on the street is profoundly undemocratic. It prioritizes private transportation over public, the individual over the social good, and stymies the very essence of urban life: human-scale utilization and celebration of the streets through walking, biking, and socializing.

2013 and 2014 have the potential to become a watershed moment in the NYC livable streets movement. Bike lanes and pedestrian plazas are as popular as ever. Communities are demanding 20 mph speed zones. Bill de Blasio has endorsed Vision Zero, a plan for zero traffic deaths in NYC by 2024.

But right now there is one major barrier for achieving safe streets: the NYPD. The NYPD, through neglect of driver enforcement, has contributed to traffic violence. New Yorkers should demand for a complete reform of how the NYPD approaches street safety and enforcement.

There are simple steps the NYPD can do immediately to stem the tide of traffic violence that has wreaked havoc on every neighborhood in this city:

Full investigation and prosecution of drivers who kill

☛ The under-investigation of traffic violence by the NYPD produces a dangerous, tacit message: if you want commit murder in NYC, do it with a car. NYPD needs to end its practice of declaring, "no criminality suspected" before conducting an investigation. Drivers have run over children on the sidewalk in New York and not been charged with a crime.

Ticket dangerous driving, not harmless bicycling

☛ We know what makes streets unsafe: speeding and failure to yield. Many NYPD precincts rarely ticket drivers for speeding and instead target the low hanging fruit: bicyclists. Bicyclists do not kill pedestrians. The goal of traffic enforcement should be to protect people from two-ton motorized machines instead of harassing those who peacefully bike around the city.

Data Transparency

☛ As public advocate, Bill de Blasio gave the NYPD the letter grade "F" on transparency for routinely ignoring and incompletely responding to legal Freedom of Information Act requests. The NYPD has refused to release detailed traffic data. This data would be an invaluable resource for transit activists and essential tool for public accountability.

"New Yorkers should demand for a complete reform of how the NYPD approaches street safety and enforcement."

Empowering Design/Empowering Communities

BY ASEEM INAM

In the realm of practice, urbanists are the only professionals trained explicitly to envision the four-dimensional future of cities, including the crucial dimension of time. The urbanists' approach—creative, integrative, interdisciplinary, and action-oriented—makes them among the most well-qualified problem-solvers in the world, especially when it comes to one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century:

“Formal obsessions and project-oriented thinking ensure that urbanists continue to be at the mercy of more powerful generators of urban form.”

the design of cities in ways that help people flourish. These unique skills and interdisciplinary thinking are extremely valuable, yet severely limited in their effectiveness.

The paradox of urbanism is that while urbanists possess the capabilities of deploying creative ways of addressing problems and shaping the material

city, their often-singular obsession with aesthetics, form and space reduces their effectiveness. Formal obsessions and project-oriented thinking ensure that urbanists continue to be at the mercy of more powerful generators of urban form. What it is missing in formal project-based thinking is critical engagement with a set of larger urban systems and templates. What gets built is dictated by the intertwining dynamics of economic and political power in society. How and where it gets built is subject to a host of laws, codes, standards and regulations that reflect the interests of political powers and pressure groups.

The demand that we should make of ourselves as urbanists in New York City is to apply our creative abilities not just to individual projects of neighborhoods and public spaces, but also—and more importantly—to the kinds of systemic approaches that can lead to fundamental change. For example, a conventional design approach to the lack of affordable housing is to create micro-units, which are tiny apartments with multipurpose furniture. The first micro-unit apartment building in New York will have apartments ranging from 250 to 370 square feet, with the Museum of the City of New York even offering a \$1,000 prize for the best design of transformable furniture (e.g. a book case becomes a bed).

Most designers in New York and other cities are excited by the creative opportunities of creating quasi-claustrophobic dwelling units containing inconvenient furniture. I personally find it appalling that we force singles, couples and families to be crammed into smaller and smaller places to live. A far more empowering approach to design would be to understand the systemic reasons for the lack of affordable housing (e.g. market conditions, public policy, resource allocation, prevalent poverty), and to design alternative systems and policies for the supply of housing. Such a creative approach to design would empower urbanism to be far more effective as a practice and would empower communities to access the resources and amenities they deserve.

A New Method of Public Engagement in Planning

BY JAMES ROJAS

Every New Yorker should have a say in reshaping their city, from bike lanes to new building construction. However, much of the planning in the past decade has been top down and often contentious. What I would like to see is an inclusive planning process that improves communication between planners and the public through visual, tactile and spatial tools, which reflect how people actually experience the city.

The public needs a safe space to articulate their ideas and reflect about the city on their own terms, in their own language, without confusing planning jargon. This could be done with a method that brings people together to build solutions to urban problems using found objects.

In the summer of 2012 hundreds of New Yorkers participated in my workshops in laundromats, parks, and indoor spaces, from Wall Street to the South Bronx. These workshops brought together artists, planners and urban enthusiasts. Starting with a simple question – “create your ideal city” -- participants have twenty minutes to reflect on their life experience and express themselves using hundreds of small everyday objects: hair rollers, buttons, plastic bottle caps, game pieces, and other objects that aren’t directly associated with the visual vocabulary of city planning.

This method makes it possible for the public to engage their spatial environment in rich and subtle ways. An interactive model allows people to physically engage urban space directly, with their bodies and hands, changing their viewpoint and posture, focusing and standing back, touching and changing things. Unlike an architectural model, it is a site that people are invited into, to interact with the city and each other. It is communal and provides a visual language that all kinds of people can participate in regardless of typical barriers such

as language, age, ethnicity and professional training. Through participation the model changes. New ideas and opportunities emerge that weren’t visible at the beginning. People are freed from the roles, biases and preconceptions they came with and are able to explore their ideas about the city together in a fluid way.

This approach saves time, builds consensus, and produces better results. Because people are creating, they are happy, and, thus, a feeling of goodwill develops between participants. This method uses these personal narratives in a simple, hands-on approach to ultimately re-shape city planning practices so that they are collaborative and community-responsive. Urban planning becomes fun and memorable, and therefore can help shape NYC’s future by giving people a platform to share their ideas and create a vision.

“The public needs a safe space to

articulate their ideas and reflect

about the city on their own terms,

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confusing planning jargon.”

HOSPITALS NOT CONDOS: A Call to Preserve Hospital & Health Services for All New Yorkers

BY ANTHONY FELICIANO

In New York City, our health care system is in the midst of an ongoing crisis. There are historical inequities in access to quality health care services, especially in low-income, immigrant and communities of color. Over the past ten years, nineteen hospitals have been closed in the five boroughs of our city. Currently, ten to twelve more hospitals are on the brink of closure, and many more vital health care programs have been reduced.

The closure of so many hospitals in a short time represents a terrible failure of City and State governments, which have an obligation to sustain critical, life-saving services in underserved communities, and protect the public's safety. These closures do not stem from planned efforts to improve health care for New Yorkers, but from financial and political choices made by hospital managers, who have often gained City approval for the transfer of their property to private developers.

Under our current health care system corporate boards and state bureaucrats have too much power over the closing of health facilities and the distribution and allocation of health care resources. The members of state commissions charged with weighing health care issues rarely look like the people affected by their policy decisions, nor do they pretend to understand the health care needs of the underserved communities involved. Moreover, some have obvious conflicts of interest.

The people of the City of New York currently have no direct say in the critical health care decisions that affect our lives. However, there is one process we can control: how the land on which a health facility (such as a hospital) sits may be used. This means it might be possible to approach the problem by amending the land-use planning process. In this case, it would not be necessary to invent a new system for health planning. Instead, we can ensure there is democratic local control over some of our health care resources by utilizing and broadening the city's current urban planning process. In this way, it should be possible to achieve significant gains in health status and health care access in neighborhoods throughout the city.

2014 will be a critical year for New York with the first change in City governance in twelve years. A new mayor, other citywide elected officials, and many new City Council members offer a unique opportunity for New York communities to play a bigger role in health planning.

PLANNERS NETWORK

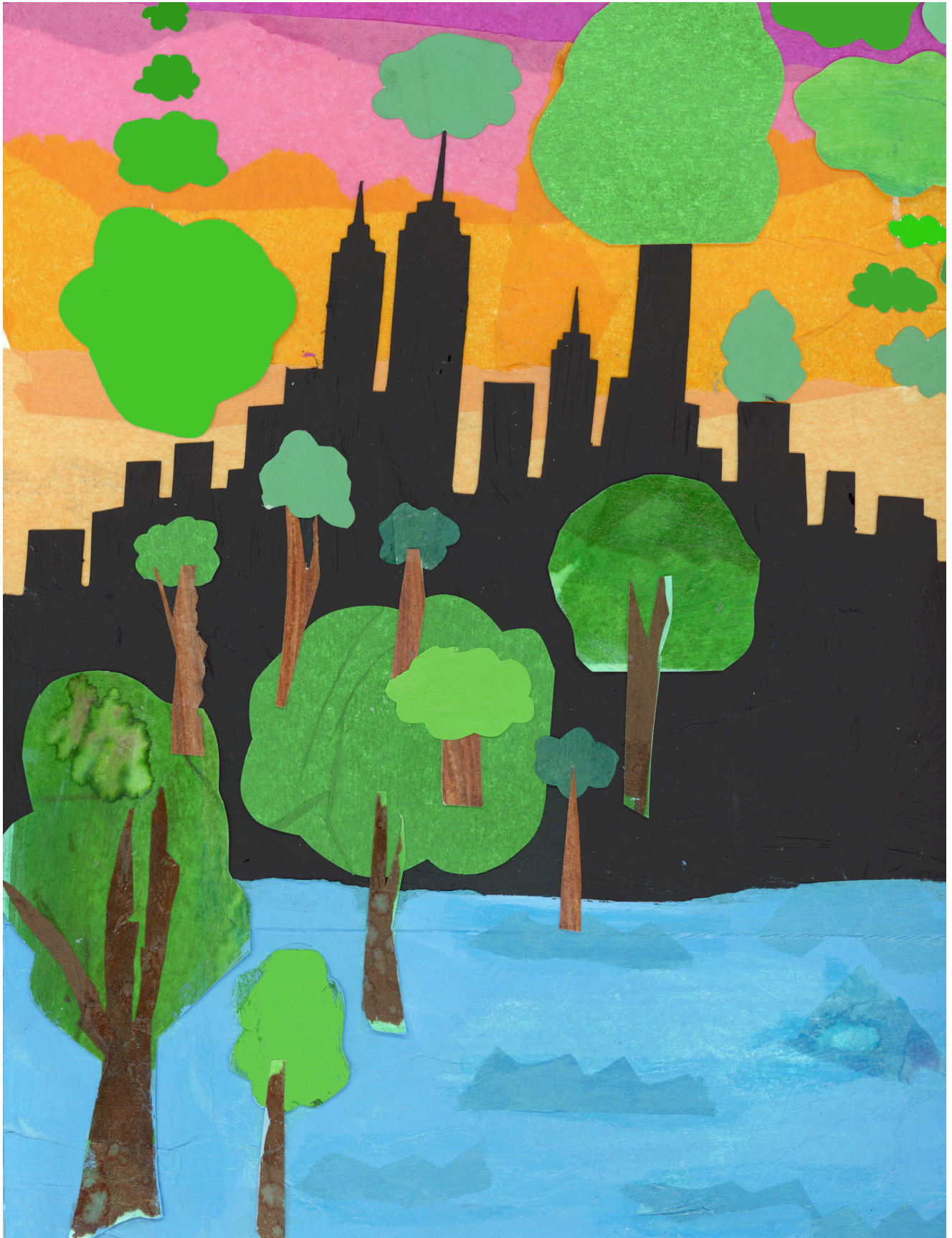
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The Planners Network is an association of professionals, activists, academics, and students involved in physical, social, economic, and environmental planning in urban and rural areas, who promote fundamental change in our political and economic systems.

We believe that planning should be a tool for allocating resources and developing the environment to eliminate the great inequalities of wealth and power in our society, rather than to maintain and justify the status quo. We are committed to opposing racial, economic, and environmental injustice and discrimination by gender and sexual orientation. We believe that planning should be used to assure adequate food, clothing, housing, medical care, jobs, safe working conditions, and a healthful environment. We advocate public responsibility for meeting these needs, because the private market has proven incapable of doing so.

We seek to be an effective political and social force, working with other progressive organizations to inform public opinion and public policy and to provide assistance to those seeking to understand, control, and change the forces, which affect their lives.

Join the Planners Network WWW.PLANNERSNETWORK.ORG



ENDNOTES

¹ NY Times, Q AND A; Rent-Controlled Units, By Dee Wedemeyer, Published: April 28, 1985

² <<http://www.housingnyc.com/html/resources/faq/rentcontrol.html#last>>

³ Preliminary Standard Adjustment Factor Report for the 2014/15 Maximum Base Rent Cycle for Rent Control Housing Units in NYC.

⁴ Rent Guidelines Board Apartment Orders.

⁵ <<http://www.nysenate.gov/report/answers-new-yorkers-concerned-or-confused-about-illegal-hotel-law>>

⁶ <http://www.hcc-nyc.org/tenorg/documents/IHWG_Report_2008.pdf>

⁷ Cunningham, Mary and Graham MacDonald. 2012 May. "Housing as a Platform for Improving Education Outcomes Among low Income Children." Retrieved from <<http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412554HousingasaPlatformforImprovingEducationOutcomesamongLowIncomeChildren.pdf>>

⁸ Vocal New York . 2013 May. "More Than a Home." Retrieved from: <<http://www.vocalny.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/05/MoreThanHome4.pdf>>

⁹ <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

LEVERAGE THE WEALTH
CREATED BY UPZONING TO
RETAIN INDEPENDENT SMALL
BUSINESSES AND PRESERVE/
CREATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Kelly Anderson is a documentary filmmaker who lives in Brooklyn, and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Film and Media Studies at Hunter College (CUNY). She is the Director of the film, My Brooklyn.

A POLICY AGENDA FOR
PROMOTING EQUITABLE GROWTH

Dan Steinberg is a doctoral student in Urban Planning at Columbia University. He teaches "The History and Theory of Planning" at New York University's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and "Community Economic Development" at Pratt Institute's City and Regional Planning Program.

TOWARDS PLANNING IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

Tom Angotti is Professor of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, and Director of the Hunter College Center for Community Planning and Development. His recent books include The New Century of the Metropolis, New York For Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate, which won the Davidoff Book Award, and Accidental Warriors and Battlefield Myths. He is co-editor of Progressive Planning Magazine, and Participating Editor for Latin American Perspectives and Local Environment. He is actively engaged in community and environmental justice issues in New York City.

FINANCING AN EQUITABLE &
RESILIENT FUTURE: THE
FINANCIAL TRANSACTION TAX

Christopher Rice is a graduate planning student interested in climate resiliency and the relationship between public space and social movements.

CREATING AFFORDABLE
HOUSING, OPPORTUNITY FOR
LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS, AND
TURNING A PROFIT ARE NOT
MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

Matt D. Viggiano is director of Land Use and Planning in the Office of Council Member Margaret S. Chin. He is an urban planner working in the public sector interested in innovative ideas that enhance New York, creates safe, enjoyable, and affordable places to live, work and play.

MAKE IMMIGRANT INVESTMENT
PROGRAM BENEFIT THE PUBLIC,
NOT DEVELOPERS

Brooklyn journalist Norman Oder writes Atlantic Yards Report, a watchdog blog about the controversial development project, and is working on a book about Atlantic Yards.

A GENDER VIOLENCE FREE NYC

Marly Pierre-Louis is a writer, activist and community cultivator currently cycling through the rain in Amsterdam. She is interested in the intersections of race, gender and urban spaces.

THE RIGHT TO COMMUNITY
JUSTICE!

Having graduated from Purchase College with a dual degree in Philosophy and Literature, Ian Gray is now continuing his education at Hunter's Master of Urban Planning Program while working and living in the Bronx.

STREET HASSLE

Ben Nadler is a writer whose most recent project, "Punk in NYC's Lower East Side 1981-1991," is forthcoming from Microcosm Publishing. He lives in Brooklyn, and teaches writing in Harlem and the South Bronx. He began his professional life as a street vendor in lower Manhattan, selling used books.

IF YOU BUILD IT, WILL THEY
COME? A BELONGING-DRIVEN
APPROACH TO PUBLIC SPACE

Emily Pinkowitz has worked as an educator and researcher at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, the Oakland Museum of California, the Exploratorium and the Wildlife Conservation Society; she is currently the Deputy Director of Programs & Education at Friends of the High Line, where she has spearheaded educational programming since the park's opening in 2009.

For the last decade, Gonzalo Casals, an aspiring neighborhoodist, has been exploring cultural production as a vehicle to foster empowerment, social capital, civic participation and community development; through his work at Friends of The High Line and The Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts New York (NOCD-NY), he joins the leadership of a generation of cultural workers that are redefining the role of cultural organizations and their relationship with communities, neighborhoods and cities.

EXPANDING LAND ACCESS

Paula Segal is the Legal Director of the 596 Acres NYC Community Land Access Project. I started 596 Acres to get information about what's possible on our vacant urban acres to as broad a public as possible; it's working.

ANTI-HOARDING MEASURES COULD INCREASE EQUITY FOR ALL

Hannah Dobbz is a writer, editor, and lecturer, as well as director of the documentary film Shelter: A Squatumentary (Kill Normal: 2008). Her book, Nine-Tenths of the Law: Property and Resistance in the United States was published on AK Press.

HOMES FOR ALL

Picture the Homeless Housing Committee organizes homeless and formerly homeless people to build grassroots power and challenge existing housing policy.

EXPAND RENT REGULATION!

Katie Goldstein is the Director of Organizing at Tenants and Neighbors, and lives in Kensington, Brooklyn. She is involved with participatory budgeting in her neighborhood, is an active member of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, and loves New York City. Tenants & Neighbors is a grassroots organization that helps tenants build and effectively wield their power to preserve at-risk affordable housing and strengthen tenants' rights in New York.

RELIEF NEEDED FOR RENT CONTROLLED TENANTS

Lucy Levy, a Greenwich Village native, works full time in a small office in midtown and is a member of Tenants & Neighbors' Rent Controlled Tenants Leadership Committee. She will be paying almost 60% of her current take home salary towards rent in 2014.

ALLOW SAFE BASEMENT APARTMENTS TO BE BROUGHT UP TO CODE

A planner by training, Drew Goldsman has a background in transportation and housing policy and currently manages Chhaya CDC's land-use and real-estate related projects.

SHARING THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SHARED ECONOMY

Ahmed Tigani is an urban planner and community organizer based in New York.

NEW YORK NEEDS A LANDLORD LICENSING LAW

Elise Goldin is a Lead Organizer at the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB). Cea Weaver is the Assistant Director of Organizing and Policy at UHAB and an MUP Candidate at NYU's Wagner School of Public Service. They often write together about affordable housing and organizing in New York City at <http://thesurrealestate.org>.

EQUITABLE RE-DEVELOPMENT OF LAND ACQUIRED BY NEW YORK CITY AND NEW YORK STATE IN SANDY-AFFECTED AREAS

This coalition of organizations and individuals has come together as a watchdog group for redevelopment in Sandy-affected areas of New York City.

Tom Cunsolo, Staten Island Alliance | Meghan Faux & Margaret Becker, Legal Services NYC | Zoe Hamstead, Doctoral Student, The New School | Peleg Kremer, Post Doctoral Fellow, Tishman Environment and Design Center, The New School | Elizabeth Malone, Neighborhood Housing Services of NY C, Program Director, Resiliency & Insurance Services | Paula Z. Segal, Director, 596 Acres

SUSTAINABLE STORMWATER
MANAGEMENT MUST BE
A PART OF BROWNFIELD
REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Sara Margolis has a master's in City and Regional Planning from Pratt Institute and has lived in Brooklyn for 5 ½ years. She is an environmental planner advocating for resilient and environmentally responsible development.

BENEFITS OF AN OPEN CREEK

Yelena Zolotorevskaya is a graduate student studying landscape architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. You can contact her and see more of her work at www.yelenaz.com.

CREATE A CITY WIDE AFTER-
SCHOOL INITIATIVE THAT
PRIORITIZES DIVERSE LEARNING
EXPERIENCES OVER TEST PREP.

Tal Bar-Zemer is an educator and collaborator. She is the Director of Out of School Time Programs at City Lore.

FREE CUNY! WE WANT A
UNIVERSITY RUN BY AND FOR
THE PEOPLE

Zoltán Glück has worked as a student activist and adjunct labor activist at the City University of New York.

THE INVISIBLE BICYCLISTS (HINT,
YOU'RE NOT A WHITE MAN.)

Dorothy Le and Helen Ho are a rare breed of Asian-American Urban Planners working on making bike advocacy diverse and equitable for all with their highly awesome and thoughtful team at the Biking Public Project. To reach us email info@bikingpublicproject.org.

THE NYPD SHOULD FOCUS ON
STREET SAFETY

Michael Mintz has a MSc. in International Planning from University College London. He is a livable streets activist and organizes the Planners Network NYC chapter.

EMPOWERING DESIGN /
EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

*Aseem Inam is the Director of Graduate Program in Urban Practice at Parsons The New School for Design, New York. Dr. Inam is the author of the new book, *Designing Urban Transformation*, and has practiced as an architect, urban design, and city planner with communities in Canada, France, Greece, Haiti, India, Morocco, and the United States.*

A NEW METHOD OF PUBLIC
ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING

James Rojas is an urban planner, community activist, and artist. He is national leader in using art as an urban planning community engagement tool for underrepresented communities. He has facilitated over 300 interactive workshops and created over 43 interactive urban dioramas across the US, Mexico, and Canada.

HOSPITALS NOT CONDOS: A CALL
TO PRESERVE HOSPITAL AND
HEALTH SERVICES FOR ALL NEW
YORKERS

Anthony Feliciano is Director of The Commission on the Public's Health System (CPHS), founded in 1991 on the belief that decisions about health care must include public input and address the diverse needs of New York City communities.

Opportunities for a **NEW** New York



Spring 2014

Planners Network NYC