

Open Space Dialogues:

A New Perspective



Letter from Executive Director

At New Yorkers for Parks (NY4P), we believe that parks and open space are critical city infrastructure.

In fact, we've centered our work around this. Our data-driven research, our community organizing, and our advocacy all support our conviction that parks and open space are a necessary component of a vital and equitable city, just as essential as schools, streets, and sewers. Today, our work focuses on ensuring that open space is protected, improved, and expanded as our city grows and evolves.

Simply put, parks are the soul of our city.

Neighborhood by neighborhood, parks are where we go to relax, exercise, celebrate birthdays, hold family reunions, observe religious holidays, and so much more. Throughout the city, open space plays important environmental and ecological roles, helping us mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. But as our city rapidly transforms and is shaped to respond to the need for more jobs, more transit, and more housing, parks aren't always treated with the same weight as other critical city infrastructure.

When the City rezones a piece of land, big or small, it changes the existing zoning which dictates how that land can be used. Often, the intended purpose of rezoning is to increase density to serve the needs of our growing population, and to adapt or change how land is used to create a more livable and resilient city. When a rezoning project is reviewed for its environmental impacts, it's entirely possible that it could have significant negative impacts on neighborhood open spaces. Yet many times neither the City nor the developers are required to do anything to offset this impact.

It's not just small areas that are being rezoned, but entire neighborhoods. These projects, however, create a unique opportunity to consider not just the neighborhood's zoning, but all the pieces of infrastructure that contribute to livable and equitable neighborhoods – including parks and open space.

At NY4P, we act as technical assistance providers for community-based organizations, advocates, and local elected officials. We provide in-depth data on open space across the city and offer advocacy support for communities undergoing rezonings. But we understand that our data is limited. We need to know what aspects of parks and open space we aren't capturing. What will encourage other professionals, decision-makers, and advocates – from environmental justice workers to developers to public health professionals – to join us in demanding that parks are planned for, funded, and maintained as essential urban infrastructure?

With the support of The Rockefeller Foundation, we joined forces with WXY architecture + urban design to find answers to these questions. We identified four areas of focus for our research on open spaces: value; development and design; policy and financing; and rezonings at the neighborhood level.



We interviewed experts who gave us a greater understanding of the issues we set out to tackle, and who helped us craft the questions we raised at our four Open Space Dialogues in 2017 and 2018. The Dialogues featured our Green Ribbon panel of the city's leading parks researchers, practitioners, and decision-makers; professionals in real estate, economic development, and health; and community and environmental justice advocates. Together, we publicly raised the collective voice on the importance of open space, questioned and challenged the way our city approaches development, and sought new and innovative ways of planning for open space. Most importantly, we uncovered ways in which NY4P can be a better technical assistance provider to communities undergoing a rezoning, so they can make stronger, more effective cases for their local parks and open spaces.

This report, *Open Space Dialogues: A New Perspective*, summarizes the work of the last year, and identifies what we learned and where we go from here. We provide excerpts of our research interviews, and present the most essential takeaways from the Open Space Dialogues. We consider the status of neighborhood-scale rezonings and NY4P's role in them, focusing on our work in Southern Boulevard, an area in the Bronx that the City is considering rezoning, and where it has already made significant investments. Lastly, we identify new lenses and metrics for analyzing open space and measuring its importance to New York City neighborhoods.

But this is only the beginning.

In the summer of 2018, we will begin our next phase of work researching three other neighborhoods that the City is considering rezoning: the Bay Street Corridor in Staten Island, Long Island City in Queens, and Bushwick in Brooklyn. As we get to know these communities our research will be guided by the new viewpoints and measurements proposed in this report and we'll use new data points in our research tool for assessing neighborhood open space, the Open Space Index. We'll use this report to deepen the relationships we're building with the professionals and advocates who contributed to this work, and who will be our allies and partners as we seek to convince the City and other decision-makers to account for and provide quality open space in any rezoning.

We're grateful for the support of all our funders, but specifically The Rockefeller Foundation for this work. We thank our research interviewees, our esteemed Green Ribbon panelists, our event hosts, and everyone who attended the Open Space Dialogues events. We're proud of our partnership with WXY, and are thankful to the many participants who helped shape this exciting and powerful new framework through which we will approach our work. It's our open space, and it's up to us to defend it. We hope you will join us in this next phase.

Great parks make a great city, but it's great people that make great parks.

Best,



Lynn B. Kelly
Executive Director

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Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn



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LeFrak Center at Lakeside, Prospect Park, Brooklyn



A New Perspective in Value

How do we reconceive of a public open space's value?

What are our tools for measuring these definitions of value?

Sarah Williams

Sarah directs the Civic Data Design Lab at MIT's School of Architecture & Planning. Her work combines geographic analysis and design, working with data to understand it for public good. Sarah is recognized as a pioneering planner/technologist who uses innovative datasets to describe and interrogate public places, policies, and processes. We sought Sarah's input on measuring, evaluating, and analyzing public open spaces.

Kei Hayashi

Kei is a partner at BJH Advisors, where she leads the firm's work in advising clients on innovative financing and development strategies for real estate projects. Her background at the NYCEDC contributed to her expertise in economic development financing and real estate development. We talked to Kei for an economic development perspective on open space valuation.

What do we need to understand about open space before we talk about ways to measure valuation?

Sarah: Open space means different things to different constituents. Businesses, residents, the day and nighttime populations: they all seek different experiences and outcomes from open space. You can collect data from these populations effectively if you give them an interesting, fun way to engage with a physical public space. Could the information contribute to a tactile, interactive project, like a data visualization or website? Structuring site-specific research so that it creates a tangible, immediate product will improve the level of interaction you'll get.

Kei: Aln considering the value of open space, it can be helpful to try to quantify its benefit as a “public good.” And because the public policy goals supported by parks – well being, health and wellness, and socialization – are hard to measure, the entire benefit-cost analysis framework for a park is much harder to construct than it is for other types of projects. The costs can be extremely well-documented, those such as the cost to build and maintain the park. However, the benefits are more difficult to document. Common benefits that are easier to value include the real estate, or strictly financial value associated with development proximity to a park. The more difficult to measure benefits would include the health, or social value, as well as the environmental value.

What are the “carrots” (open space incentives) we should consider in confronting New York City’s record construction and development?

Kei: Savvy developers of buildings and spaces understand the value of open space and parks to their prospects for maximizing income. Tenants, especially commercial tenants that are competing for top talent in their workforce, often seek public and private open space to stay competitive.

Sarah: If developers can see some kind of value-add, they’ll do it. There’s a good example of open space being used as a stick, not a carrot – and not in an effective way. The Privately Owned Public Space program, which allowed bonus buildable area in return for providing open space, was a strictly monetary relationship.

Are there metrics or indicators to communicate park value New Yorkers for Parks should consider studying?

Kei: Measuring the health impact of open space may be derived from metrics such as length of walking trails, the amount of playground equipment or playing fields, and some measure of park users. Public parties can improve dialogue around public funding for open space by discussing these benefits, which can be translated to public fiscal impact in the form of lower usage of healthcare infrastructure (e.g. emergency rooms), as well as improved efficiency of local workforce.

Sarah: You could measure social cohesion in public open spaces. You could determine the “coolness” of the space, measuring its impact on the urban heat island effect. At a neighborhood or larger level, look at the composition of the land: how much of the space is a local park vs. a regional park?

Opening Remarks



Lynn Kelly
Executive Director
New Yorkers for Parks

Lynn directs the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers. She previously led the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, a Smithsonian Affiliate park in Staten Island.

Moderator



Claire Weisz
Founding Principal
WXY architecture + urban design

Claire is a founding partner of WXY, which was named Firm of the Year by the NY AIA Chapter in 2016. For more than 25 years, Claire has developed WXY into a multidisciplinary practice focused on re-imagining the interface between architecture, urban design and infrastructure.

Presenters



Kate Collignon
Partner
HR&A Advisors

Kate crafts economic growth strategies that strengthen cities and sustain communities. Her open space work focuses on enabling communities to create value and public benefits through strategic connections with real estate and civic assets.

Respondents



Madelyn Wils
President & CEO
Hudson River Park Trust

Madelyn leads the development, management, and operation of Hudson River Park, a 4-mile, 550-acre waterfront park. She previously oversaw dozens of waterfront, transportation, streetscape and park improvements at the NYCEDC.



Kei Hayashi
Principal
BJH Advisors

Kei advises private and public sector clients on innovative financing and development strategies for real estate projects. She previously had a leadership position at the NYCEDC, where she was the executive director of the NYCIDA.



Amy Freitag
Executive Director
The J.M. Kaplan Fund

Amy directs the work of the J.M. Kaplan Fund, a charitable foundation. Previously, Amy led a diverse staff to improve green spaces in New York City's highest need communities at the New York Restoration Project.



Mark Levine
Council Member
Manhattan District 7

Mark represents Upper Manhattan's 7th District. As the former Chair of the Committee on Parks and Recreation and a member of the Progressive Caucus, he is a leader on housing, education, economic justice, transportation, and environmentalism.



Joshua Laird
Commissioner
National Parks of
New York Harbor

Joshua oversees the 11 national park sites that surround the Port of New York: nearly 27,000 acres with over 16 million annual visitors. He previously led NYC Parks' Planning Division, advancing plans for a vibrant and resilient city park system.

A New Perspective in Value

5 Oct 2017

The J.M. Kaplan Fund

What is it about open spaces that make them so valuable? For many New Yorkers, parks have become a most cherished ingredient in the development of their city's infrastructure and identity. From economic growth to neighborhood safety, to measures of happiness and health, parks have continued to prove their worth in the betterment of our communities. Yet, far too often are they regarded as amenities or luxuries and left by the wayside in large-scale commercial and residential development processes. In the inaugural Green Ribbon Panel of the Open Space Dialogues series, our group of experts, ranging from economic advisors to open space advocates, examined the inherent benefit of open spaces, the intricate network of stakeholders and environmental factors involved in their genesis, and why we must seriously consider open space in the rezoning conversation.

Claire Weisz, Founding Principal of WXY, presided over the discussion, and was joined by presenters Kei Hayashi, Kate Collignon, and Mark Levine who discussed the various metrics that can be used to quantify the value of open space. Joshua Laird, Madelyn Wils, and Amy Freitag were the panel respondents for the evening.



“Simply put, we feel that parks and open space are critical city infrastructure. And right now, as many of you know as professionals in this room, they are not necessarily being viewed as such. We don’t think open space should be a teeny unmitigated chapter in an EIS. We don’t think it should be a negotiated amenity for communities. It should be considered critical infrastructure.”

Lynn Kelly

Lynn Kelly: Are there better ways of valuing open spaces that we haven't thought of? What are the new metrics that we should be using? How do other cities handle this? And how do we better enumerate or describe the varying and diverse benefits that open space provides to communities?

Presenters

Kei Hayashi: Why are we talking about the value of parks? Part of the reason is because parks have been and are considered to be a key part of our nation's, our states', our cities' infrastructure. This is about putting the idea of open space value in a context for public policy-makers and stakeholders, and that context is one of investment decision-making. One tool for this decision-making is the benefit-cost analysis. An easy-to-quantify value of a park is its impact on property values, especially properties that are adjacent to the park.

Kate Collignon: These economic benefits, as Kei was describing, are increasingly well-recognized by communities around the country. For example, the construction of Millennium Park in Chicago created 14,000 jobs. These are the sorts of metrics that are traditionally measured and there are opportunities for measuring return on investment. Other valuations that HR&A has done include the High Line, which attracted an estimated \$31 million in net new tourist spending in New York City in 2011 alone. Brooklyn Bridge Park supported the creation of over 1,000 residential units. And the Rose Kennedy Greenway in Boston will result in a 78% increase in property values over a 20-year period.

Parks also provide a variety of other benefits—health, safety, workforce opportunities, and opportunities for building inclusive communities. This is in addition to other elements and values that can be counted and potentially monetized like real estate value, jobs, and tourist spending.

Now I would argue we're facing a new frontier. There's a much greater focus on equity, inclusion and, in particular, on avoiding displacement as we're investing in new open space. And that needs to become a part of the conversation in addition to the economic metrics that we've been developing and evolving over the years. What does that start to mean? Where once we would have looked at jobs and spending as a key measure of economic impact, now we *also* need to look at the distribution of those jobs and that spending. Where once we looked at real estate premiums and new development that was generated by new open space and/or improved open space, now we *also* need to look at who is participating in that development.

“Where once we looked at user enjoyment, we now also want to ask who those users are and if they actually represent the diverse communities that we’re developing.”

Kate Collignon

New Frontier: Open Space Equity | As values change, so too must our methods for measuring benefits.

| | BASIC | ROI | ADVOCACY | EQUITY |
|----------------------------------|-------|-----|----------|--------|
| Spending & Multiplier | | | | |
| Total Jobs & Spending | █ | █ | █ | |
| Distribution | | | | █ |
| Real Estate | | | | █ |
| Premiums | | █ | █ | █ |
| New Development | | █ | | █ |
| Inclusive Development | | | | █ |
| Use Value | | | | █ |
| User Enjoyment & Health | | | █ | █ |
| User Diversity | | | | █ |
| Environmental | | | | █ |
| Stormwater Management | | | █ | █ |
| Community Resilience | | | | █ |
| Others? | | | | |

Illustrative Metrics | Community, Environment, Economic, Health

| Community | Environment | Economic | Health |
|---|---|---|---|
| User value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> User count, visit duration & visitor activities User participation in operations | Stormwater/flood management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delay, absorption & filtration of water through landscape Reductions in impervious area | Employment/workforce development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce demographics Local unemployment rates Number of people receiving benefits | Physical health value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calories burned Obesity rates Asthma rates |
| User diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> User demographics | Mobility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrian/bike counts and reduced car travel | New development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident demographics Changes in average housing costs/household incomes Rates of residential ownership Housing tenure Number of affordable units | Youth health value <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing children counts Playground use volumes |
| Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management structure % of management staff living in the neighborhood | Air quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pollutants sequestered by vegetation | Small business development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of small businesses owned by local residents Number of small businesses in adjacent business corridor Number of unused spaces in business corridor | Alternative transportation (i.e. cycling and walking) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrian/bike counts |
| Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crime rates Perceptions of safety | Tree canopy coverage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New trees planted | | |
| Accessibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking distances Adjacent traffic volumes | Wildlife health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Species population counts | | |

Open Space Dialogues: A New Perspective

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 Kate Collignon presented the evolution of methods for measuring open space benefits as user values change over time. She followed with an overview of various metrics for measuring the value of open space.

Participants (left to right) Madelyn Wils, Kei Hayashi, Mark Levine, Kate Collignon, Lynn Kelly, Amy Freitag, Joshua Laird, Claire Weisz





Kate Collignon: There are a variety of new efforts underway to develop metrics that help communicate questions of equity and distribution. These range from equitable development scorecards like the one we are developing for Imagine Boston 2030, to more academic analyses like the one Gehl Institute and the J. Max Bond Center undertook in New York, to the 11th Street Bridge Park Project in Washington D.C., which has developed a fairly elaborate measurement system to document long-term impacts.

Ultimately, this variety of metrics should help position park planners and advocates like everybody in this room to produce designs for open space that connect to neighborhoods and programming that reflects the interests and needs of diverse constituencies, as well as promote neighborhood development that serves a broad spectrum of the population.

Mark Levine: I tell you, I'm so frustrated by how often I get the impression when I talk to policy-makers that they consider parks a luxury item. They consider it an afterthought for the landscape of infrastructure for our city. And nothing could be further from the truth.

We need to find ways to expand our park systems in those recently upzoned neighborhoods, as well as other parts of the city. Today, up to 40% of the city's residents don't live within an easy walk to a park. Even in historic neighborhoods where no upzoning is occurring, we have work to do.

The good news is there are inspirational, transformational parks ideas on the table already. One is the QueensWay. There's no acquisition cost. It's publicly-owned land that connects diverse neighborhoods.

Another one of my favorites is the BQGreen, a plan to deck over part

of the BQE in Bushwick, a park-starved, low-income community of color with environmental concerns, asthma rates being one of them. I'm confident that the kind of economic benefits you described here would be reaped in huge numbers with BQGreen.

Respondents

Claire Weisz: *You each represent a different player in the open space development process. Out of what you've heard, and what you know from your own experiences, which metrics or measures of value do you feel ultimately stand the test of time?*

Joshua Laird: That is a difficult question, and actually, the presentations tonight were so good, my thinking has changed a little bit on the fly. Our own data is showing that we are losing the hearts and minds of Americans because the history we preserve and the stories we tell are becoming increasingly dated. And so while we may not talk much about equity, we increasingly talk about relevancy. That has led us to think more about the communities we're serving and the stories we're telling. This makes sites like the Stonewall National Monument here in New York City, layered on top of an existing City park and the first national monument dedicated to LGBTQ individuals, increasingly important to us.

Amy Freitag: Some of the work The Kaplan Fund is very focused on right now has to do with looking at specific neighborhoods in New York City and trying to understand the intersection of social justice work and open space work.

I think there is something much more powerful, and much more at the root of open space value that we're not giving ourselves credit for. And if we start monetizing that, imagine, right? It costs us \$365,000 a year to put a kid in the secure juvenile system. Just think about that number. What does it mean when we create places where kids are safe and they feel it's equitable and accessible? This place doesn't just need to be the park, but, for example, my trip to and from the park.

“My point is to push us out of the conventional park boundary and to think of all of those places where people live their lives every day.”

Amy Freitag

Amy Freitag: The walk to school, the walk to the grocery store, the walk to the park. This is really about the safety and health of New Yorkers. And now, I add on to that the power of these spaces to really abate some violent behavior and some really hard lines for people.

Madelyn Wils: Perhaps you could take those values and create a fund that could feed not only our park, but other parks in other areas, or you could create that kind of system in which we could stop and say, all property values are frozen, and everything from here on in where parks create value can now go back to those communities, to those parks that need the love. We have to be more creative, and we have to press some buttons here.

I know from my perspective, I went to the legislature and got the right to sell air rights in 2013. And as you know, last year, we finally sold air rights to save the piles of Pier 40, to save 50 acres of waterfront. This is the kind of effort that it takes just to save these systems.

Do you know how difficult that is? There is something really wrong with this. We shouldn't have to work this hard for parks. It should be in the same vein as schools, as infrastructure, as transportation.

Kate Collignon: Amy, to your point about the impacts that neighborhood parks can have on reducing costs, whether it is for criminal recidivism or other things: the fundamental challenge is how do you quantify that, and how does it impact those who would otherwise be covering those costs? Can those be sources of funding that go beyond the sources that we usually look at today? Are there other funding streams for open space maintenance and creation that can emerge by quantifying those benefits?

Amy Freitag: There's an insane amount of human infrastructure that cares about parks and open space. We have this kind of sleeping giant of a voice that could really push this out. I think that there are other cities we could look to where they've been able to harness this kind of unified voice around their environment. Portland to some degree, Chicago to some. There must be a way that we can harness this unbelievable resource. I always like to think New York City built the playbook for urban parks in the 20th century. Robert Moses built out a system that was envied and replicated in other places. We now have to figure out that next quantum leap. We figured out the conservancy, now the leap is how you build this kind of public voice and demand for parks.



Brooklyn Bridge Park, Brooklyn



A New Perspective in Development + Design

Open space and development are not mutually exclusive. What is the role of design in motivating developers to do better by open space?

How do you make open space design practical and attractive to developers?

Andrea Parker

Andrea is the Executive Director of the Gowanus Canal Conservancy, the organization dedicated to facilitating the development of a resilient, vibrant, open space network centered on the Gowanus Canal. Her work is accomplished through activating and empowering community stewardship of the Gowanus Watershed. Andrea is a landscape architect who started working with the Gowanus Canal Conservancy as a volunteer. We spoke to Andrea to learn about how open space design and development come together in one New York City neighborhood.

How can design and development intertwine for open space projects?

In Gowanus, the majority of the waterfront is privately owned, so creating public waterfront space is reliant on private development. Because of this, it's been important that we understand landowners as key stakeholders and decision makers to achieve a larger community-based vision. We've been gathering feedback from throughout the community about open space priorities, and hired SCAPE, a landscape architecture firm, to create a waterfront master plan for the Gowanus Canal. With SCAPE, we created a design process that helps developers see opportunity and the myriad of benefits of a vibrant and resilient public realm.

What design metrics should we be using to deliver new open spaces?

On a polluted waterbody like the Gowanus Canal, we can measure how open space can reduce combined sewer outfall events (CSOs) to improve water quality. We are also looking at how new open space contributes to environmental justice, particularly the local public housing community. There's an educational value to access and stewardship, which can be measured quantitatively and qualitatively. Finally, property value is a metric that is effective for an audience of developers.

What audiences can we reach when thinking about design & development?

Watershed residents are an important audience to improve water quality. In our watershed, Park Slope is home to many city officials and environmental professionals, so it's a great place to get the word out about the impact residents can have on CSO reduction in New York City. Our education program empowers middle school students as ambassadors for the Gowanus Canal to reach parents, teachers, and professionals throughout the Gowanus Watershed.

Opening Remarks



Ryan Whalen
 Director, President’s Office
 The Rockefeller Foundation

Ryan focuses on developing the Foundation’s cross-sectoral partnerships with the public and private sectors, as well as managing its global program team. Previously, Ryan worked in senior capacities in New York City Hall, the United States Senate, and on political campaigns at local and national levels.

Presenters



Wendy Feuer
 Assistant Commissioner
 Urban Design + Art + Wayfinding
 New York City Department of
 Transportation

Wendy manages a team charged with creating streets that are re-balanced for all users. Her office develops and reviews streetscape designs and public art submissions, and publishes the DOT Street Design Manual, a comprehensive guidance document for City agencies, design consultants, and community groups.



Susan Chin
 Executive Director
 Design Trust for Public Space

Susan directs the Design Trust for Public Space, a nationally-recognized incubator shaping the urban environment. Projects include: Laying the Groundwork, Under the Elevated/EI-Space, Future Culture, and Opening the Edge. Previously, she led capital projects at the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs for 20 years.



Bonnie Campbell
 Managing Director
 Two Trees Management

Bonnie leads a team of planners, architects, and development professionals on behalf of Two Trees Management Company. She is involved in site acquisition, financing, construction, design, leasing, and property management of Two Trees’ portfolio.

Moderator



Claire Weisz
 Founding Principal
 WXY architecture + urban design

Claire is a founding partner of WXY, which was named Firm of the Year by the NY AIA Chapter in 2016. For more than 25 years, Claire has developed WXY into a multidisciplinary practice focused on re-imagining the interface between architecture, urban design and infrastructure.

Respondents



Purnima Kapur
 Executive Director
 New York City Department of
 City Planning

Purnima oversees DCP’s borough offices and Central Planning divisions. She advises the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development on planning, housing, and economic development issues, and leads the Department in promoting transit-oriented growth, housing production and affordability, and resilient and sustainable communities across the five boroughs.



Brad Lander
 Council Member
 District 39

Brad represents Brooklyn’s 39th District. He is the Council’s Deputy Leader for Policy and a founding co-chair of the Progressive Caucus. Previously, Brad directed the Pratt Center for Community Development and the Fifth Avenue Committee.



Dave Barry
 President / CEO
 Urby

Dave leads Hoboken-based Ironstate Development Company. Ironstate owns and manages 10,000 residential and hotel units and has over \$1 billion in its current development pipeline. He is responsible for developing the concept of Urby, a series of unique residential buildings in the tri-state area.

A New Perspective in Development + Design

11 Dec 2017

WeWork Bryant Park

How can design catalyze the creation of more open spaces? We tend to overlook the powerful and broad-reaching impacts of good design, specifically in the development of open spaces. Aesthetics aside, the considered design choices of open spaces can function as a force of change on both a local and global scale, having the ability to influence agency behavior or alter zoning and building codes. Successful open space models, consequently, become precedents that can be replicated and applied to future developments. In the second discussion of the series, our panel of esteemed thought leaders in real estate, planning and transportation discuss: the intricacies of open space development; the importance of identity, inclusivity and diversity in open spaces; and how the relationship between urban development and design can spur the creation of more and better open space.

Moderated by Claire Weisz, presenters Wendy Feuer, Susan Chin, and Bonnie Campbell expounded upon their projects around the city, from the High Line to the Domino Sugar Factory redevelopment, while respondents Purnima Kapur, Brad Lander, and Dave Barry delved into the current and forthcoming potential of open space development in New York City.

Presenters

Susan Chin: Today people think about public space as various things—a plaza, a streetscape, a park. In the last 20 years, we’ve seen every global city thinking about public space as its lifeblood. A recent UN Habitat study found that vibrant, dynamic, and prosperous cities are about 50% public space. New York City is competing with Toronto, London and Barcelona. Currently New York City’s public space is 14% parks and 26% streetscape.

Reclaiming the High Line is a key example of this evolution in thinking. Who would have imagined in the late 90s that the High Line, a 1.5-long derelict elevated railway covering 6.7 acres, would be the amazing park it is today? The High Line inspired the Design Trust to look at the spaces underneath as well. We looked at the ground plane as more important than the deck itself. It drove our Under the Elevated study with the Department of Transportation, to reclaim millions of square feet, two times the size of Central Park, beneath elevated bridges, highways, and subways. Looking at design is also about producing a replicable model, or tool, designed to create open space strategies that can be applied elsewhere.

“Design can also change a system. Design can change the way an agency operates, creates a new law, or changes building and zoning codes.”

Susan Chin

Wendy Feuer: I’d like to say that we’re reforming the form of the city. It had to be reformed. A hundred years ago it was formed for cars, and now we’re reforming it for people using other modes of transportation.

One of the things that we’ve done, and this represents a large paradigm shift, is to start a DOT median maintenance program. DOT is maintaining medians, green space, in the city of New York. And so we can go from DOT developing median design guidelines through the Public Design Commission all the way to maintaining those same medians, all in one agency. Unheard of. But it’s a responsibility.

Bonnie Campbell: Tonight I’m going to talk about a project that we’ve been working on since about 2012 at the site of the former Domino Sugar refinery on the Williamsburg waterfront. We decided early on that if we were going to spend ten years of our lives creating a neighborhood here, we wanted to learn from our experience in DUMBO about what makes a neighborhood have an identity and a sense of place. We decided we had to do something that would differentiate it, make it a destination, and make it iconic. And we realized that open space is really one of the best ways to do that.

I would like to say that this line of thinking was purely altruistic, or because we have an urban planning background. But the truth is that when you create a place that people want to come to, it’s accretive to a developer’s bottom line. So it was a no-brainer.



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The Design Trust for Public Spaces developed design and policy recommendations, in partnership with the NYC Department of Transportation, to transform the neglected public space under the city's elevated bridges, highways, subway and rail lines, into valuable community assets and open spaces.

We reimagined the Domino Sugar site in three ways. One, we wanted to rethink how the buildings get masked adjacent to open spaces and how that dynamic works in a way that might make it feel more public. Two, we did a series of workshops and outreach into the community that lives nearby and asked, 'What is a public park to you? What kind of programming is important to this community? What would make it feel like your space?' And three, we spent a lot of time on the design and the programing. We worked very closely with the Department of City Planning, NYC Parks, and the great design team at James Corner Field Operations, and came up with a park that we think has an identity and nurtures a sense of place.

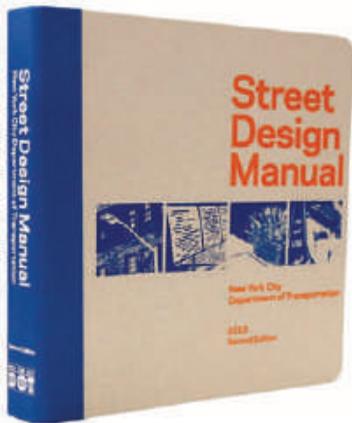
Respondents

Claire Weisz: *For the respondents, do you have any reflections on the huge growth New York City has experienced and will continue to experience, and this tension of creating more open space for more people in a context of dwindling space and resources?*

Purnima Kapur: In a city like New York, that is one of the densest in the United States and that is growing at a pace that has been unprecedented for a long time, the demands on every piece of space that we have are enormous. I think we, at the City, have been thinking very creatively about manufacturing open space out of what we have available.

One way we do this is to really work with the community, our development partners, and organizations like New Yorkers for Parks. The Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning is a good example of how we involved the private sector, the community, organizations and other City agencies to jointly envision that neighborhood in a way that would provide open space as the area evolves. We set into place a framework of waterfront access that created almost fifty acres of public parks, and another ten acres of private open space.

The Domino Sugar project followed the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning, and that experience brought newer concepts, newer ways of re-envisioning open space for a densifying community. I think what is key is for us not to be set in our ways, and instead, to constantly rethink how we can do the most with what we have.



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 The NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) developed the Street Design Manual as a comprehensive resource for street design standards, guidelines and policies. It is an ambitious tool to make public spaces within the purview of DOT's control more accessible, better designed and more resilient.

Organization

The Street Design Manual is structured with six chapters and two appendices. Chapters 2 through 6 contain the bulk of the Manual's design guidance.

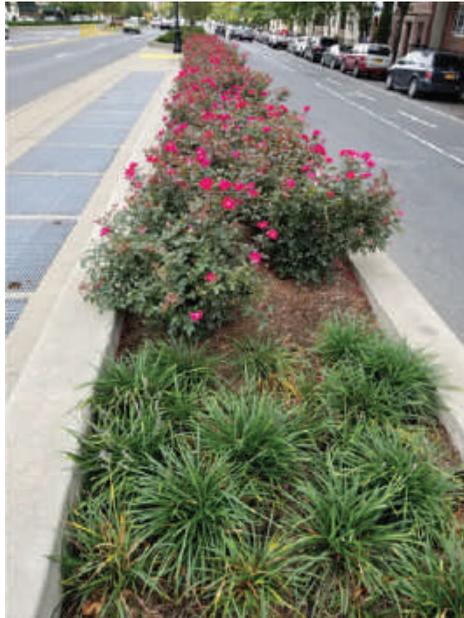
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| <p>Fourth Avenue community workshop, Brooklyn</p> | <p>Operational safety enhancements, East Nine Boulevard, Grove</p> | <p>Concrete pavement to match adjacent Duane Street, Brooklyn</p> |
| <p>Chapter 1: Process How DOT projects are conceived, planned, designed, and implemented.</p> | <p>Chapter 2: Geometry A "toolbox" of geometric street treatments to enhance safety, mobility, and sustainability.</p> | <p>Chapter 3: Materials Specific materials with recommendations for use and references to appropriate specifications.</p> |

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 Wendy Feuer reflected on DOT's role in not only designing but maintaining open spaces in New York City, part of which can be seen in the agency's median maintenance program.

Before

After

A New Perspective in Development + Design

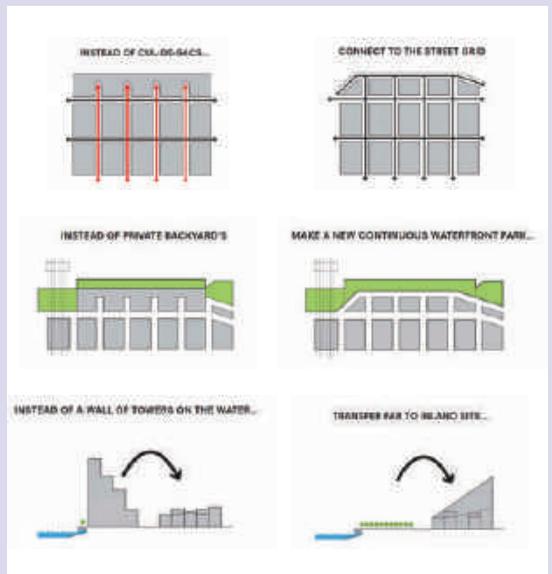


Brad Lander: One critical move is thinking long and hard about how we do public engagement so that these really are public spaces. We are very creative people, and developers are good at hiring creative people. It's easy to have a dialogue between developers and designers. And we might design great spaces as a result. However, thinking about if these spaces belong to the people, and are equitable, is a tougher question.

Public plazas are perhaps my favorite example when thinking about equity. It is hard to design plazas to be active and vibrant and well-maintained in low-income communities. You have to think about it very hard. It's easier to design great, active plazas in your urban cores and wealthier neighborhoods where they send folks to maintain them. Thankfully, DOT has a program that supports programming and maintenance of plazas in low-income neighborhoods. So I think that's one great example of thinking long and hard about equitable public spaces during the design and development process.

Claire Weisz: *When developing more affordable housing, office space or commercial buildings, it can still be very hard to create open space to go along with it. What do you see as some of the best tools or incentives to encourage open space creation in these contexts?*

Purnima Kapur: We take every opportunity we can to get the private sector to fund public open space. This includes asking developers to pay for streetscape improvements and publicly-accessible open spaces on private parcels. What this does in the broad scheme of things is allows the City to invest its dollars in areas where that kind of partnership is not possible.



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Bonnie Campbell presented *Two Trees'* design and development approach to the open space component of the *Domino Sugar* project.

Purnima Kapur: We are focused on trying to find any opportunity that we can, whether that is with an organization like the Friends of the High Line, or Hudson Yards where the private sector is going to pay towards incremental development off of a park. On the Greenpoint-Williamsburg waterfront, the city has invested \$300 million to acquire the parcels that will create a 28-acre park. So it's all of the above, and if there are new tools that people have ideas about, please come talk to us. I'm all ears.

Dave Barry: There's 'open space' and then there's open space. The terminology is sometimes a little problematic because open space by itself doesn't have some sort of inherent aesthetic or programmatic allure. If you want to talk about maximizing the value of open space, you have to go beyond just 'open.'

Open spaces aren't enough. Things like how adjacent retail is programmed, if that retailer is from the community, if he is being supported with affordable rent, are just as important to adding value in a new development. There's a much bigger equation that goes into this.

Brad Lander: I'll end with Gowanus. You're right, there's obviously a tension. If you lack the public dollars to do all the things you want, you may be relying on eking it out of how much FAR you're willing to give, and what you get in return is limited. But, I'll be honest, I feel so much better about exploring upzoning in Gowanus in the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing environment. I didn't want us to rezone Gowanus ten years ago because I thought the opportunity to make it a genuinely integrated and equitable neighborhood did not exist.



“If our question is ‘Are we pushing hard enough to make sure that those benefits are broadly shared?’ — there has to be some standard, some metrics to measure this.”

Brad Lander

Audience Member: *I think the last 12-14 months have been a watershed, and have opened my eyes to the possible detriments of open space. Robert Hammond [a High Line co-founder] famously said this year, “Instead of asking what the design should look like, I wish we’d ask what the design can do for you.” Ryan Grabble, the founder of the Atlanta Beltline, famously resigned. The Barcelona Lab for Environmental Justice and Sustainability did a study that found that greening park squares where social inequities already exist is really just acting as a vehicle for displacement. I’m wondering how events and data like this are changing your thinking about open space.*

Purnima Kapur: We really need to start designing for people. And I think we have developed new sensitivities and new tools to start to think about our city and our neighborhoods in a much more comprehensive and equitable manner. Some of the tools we’ve developed, for example, start to address issues of housing integration in a way that we had not been able to do before. And I think new tools for equitable open space development are just emerging.

Brad Lander: We also have the Community Parks Initiative. And to strengthen it, we are going to try to invest in and strengthen all kinds of neighborhoods, not just the ones where we have development plans. And we are going to try to involve people in these plans. That’s why I tout participatory budgeting. It’s a way of getting people involved, getting them to be creative, and getting them to be true stewards of their communities. If this is how neighborhoods evolved, I think you could approach those conversations with a little bit more trust and goodwill.

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Participants (left to right) Claire Weisz, Bonnie Campbell, Wendy Feuer, Susan Chin, Brad Lander, Purnima Kapur, Dave Barry



Walker Park, Staten Island



A New Perspective in Delivery

Opening Remarks



Lynn Kelly
Executive Director
New Yorkers for Parks

Lynn directs the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers. She previously led the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, a Smithsonian Affiliate park in Staten Island.

Presenters



Nathan Bliss
Senior Vice President
New York City Economic
Development Corporation

Nate oversees neighborhood development and district planning efforts throughout Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. He led the City's revitalization efforts in Coney Island and now works on Sunnyside Yard, Long Island City, Downtown Far Rockaway, Staten Island's North Shore, and elsewhere across the boroughs.



Linh Do
Senior Vice President
AKRF

Linh has managed comprehensive environmental assessments for many of New York City's most important public and private development projects. She has successfully overseen complex land use and zoning projects through public review. Linh is an expert in the environmental review process at all levels.



Steven Barshov
Principal
Sive, Paget & Riesel

Steven specializes in land use law, environmental law, local government law, and commercial real estate practice. He has been retained to obtain land use approvals, including rezonings, subdivision approvals, and variances. Steven is regularly lead counsel in complex land use and related cases.

Moderator



Adam Lubinsky
Managing Principal
WXY architecture + urban design

Adam joined WXY as a Managing Principal in 2011. He has a background in urban design and planning with a decade of experience leading large-scale strategic and master plans.

Respondents



Signe Nielsen
Founding Principal
Mathews Nielsen
Landscape Architecture

Signe practices as a landscape architect and urban designer. She works to create new open spaces within challenged communities and to improve access to recreational resources.



Warrie Price
Founder & President
The Battery

Warrie led the redesign and rebuilding of The Battery, a 25-acre park at the tip of Manhattan. She forges partnerships with city, state, and federal agencies, private organizations and individuals, having raised more than \$158 million for her work.



Tim Tompkins
President
Times Square Alliance

Tim leads the Times Square business improvement district, working to improve, promote and cultivate the area's iconic creativity, energy, and edge.



Brittney Sessions
Principal
B. Sessions Law

Brittney practices as a commercial real estate attorney, advising on real estate development and public finance. She focuses on public-private transactions, primarily in underdeveloped communities.

A New Perspective in Delivery

*12 Feb 2018
WeWork Bryant Park*

In the third Green Ribbon panel, we ask an important question with regards to delivery: “What are the various mechanisms that allow open space to be created, and how do we continue to maintain it?” Despite the hoops and hurdles that encumber the development process in New York, open space advocates have devised creative and clever methods that have encouraged better provision of parks and open space. As the economic and social value of open spaces continues to be recognized, regulatory and legal frameworks, financing, and policy-making have evolved to encourage more open space development. But with the advent of increased open space opportunities comes the need to consider maintenance and what is required to keep our parks thriving.

Nate Bliss, Linh Do, and Steven Barshov shared their experiences with the financing and policy aspects of open spaces in the city. Respondents Signe Nielsen, Tim Tompkins, Warrie Price, and Brittiny Sessions discussed how open spaces are funded and explored the potential avenues for supporting the next generation of open spaces. Adam Lubinsky, Managing Principal of WXY, acted as this panel’s moderator.

Lynn Kelly: Tonight, we confront a really important question about the delivery of open space. Specifically, financing and policy. What kinds of creative mechanisms are there to create open space in our city, and just as importantly, how do we then maintain them?

Presenters

Nate Bliss: It is worth pausing and reflecting on why the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) does parks in the first place. Partially, it reflects how our city has evolved. We have moved away from what some call ‘race to the bottom incentives’ that were used to attract or retain businesses in the city.

“There’s now a realization around the country that the best way to attract talent and companies is not to write them a check, but to invest in open spaces and amenities that make the city livable and a place you want to be.”

Nate Bliss

One of the bread and butter ways that EDC helps facilitate the creation of new open space is by including it into the economic rationale of the project. One project with this rationale was announced recently on the Long Island City waterfront. Here, we’ve designated a developer to construct a new office, residential and mixed-use industrial project. We’ve also put the obligation to create the open space on that developer.

For the development of the LeFrak Center Ice Rink in Prospect Park, the EDC partnered with the Prospect Park Alliance. This shows a different approach to project delivery. EDC served as the fiscal conduit as opposed to the actual builder. Prospect Park Alliance was the recipient of the funds and built this gorgeous project, which reclaimed not just this site, but an additional 20 or so acres within the park.

Then there is a category of projects in which our agency interfaces with open space through a comprehensive rethinking, usually in the form of a rezoning. In downtown Far Rockaway, we recently concluded a rezoning process with a nearly unanimous vote at City Council. The rezoning reflects a plan for an entire downtown, and it includes several million dollars of open space improvements, most of which will be carried out by NYC Parks and some of which will be carried out by a future developer. These agreements have all been baked into the rezoning commitments that came out of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure.

Nate Bliss presented these projects in order to reflect on the range of delivery mechanisms and models that EDC uses to produce and improve open space.

*Top to bottom:
LeFrak Center Ice Rink, Prospect Park
Long Island City Waterfront, Queens
Coney Island Revitalization, Brooklyn
Downtown Far Rockaway Rezoning, Queens*

And finally, just a word on Coney Island. Sometimes, our area-wide rezonings include more complicated actions. In this case, our 11-block rezoning also included alienation legislation that went to the State, to take two parking lots that were technically parkland and turn them into active, vibrant parks. As a City, we should not be afraid to tackle some of these more thorny planning issues if, at the end of the day, the public space benefit is one we can all be proud of.

Linh Do: Parks are now being designed and delivered for other purposes, including balancing the need for public recreation with ensuring that it is built for resiliency and climate change. An example of this is the East Side Coastal Resiliency project, a Department of Design and Construction (DDC) endeavor to expand a roughly 2.2-mile area along the tip of Manhattan. The planned open space incorporates multifunctional landscaping and a new pedestrian bridge over Delancey Street.

Delivering open space does not have to mean brand new space nor does it have to be all outdoors. Given limited space in our city, how do we think creatively about building new recreational amenities? An example of this is within the Hudson Square rezoning in Lower Manhattan. In order to conduct a rezoning that would bring up to 3,000 new dwelling units to the area, there was a need to accommodate new open space. Expansion and improvements to Hudson River Park were insufficient options. This resulted in a monetary contribution to help improve the Tony Dapolito Recreational Center. This investment helped fund a new pool, an improved HVAC system, and additional enhancements to the facility. This was a successful, alternative way of improving the quality and the programming associated with this public amenity.





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Linh Do referenced the East Side Coastal Resiliency project to describe trade-offs involved in building both recreational and resiliency functions in the delivery of improved open space on the waterfront.



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Linh Do offered the example of the Tony Dapolito Recreational Center as an open space delivery mechanism in an area where opportunities to improve outdoor park facilities were limited in the context of a rezoning.

*Left: Hudson Square Rezoning Center
 Right: Tony Dapolito Recreation Center*

Steven Barshov: Tonight I'd like to speak about three innovative ways in which legal and transactional techniques can be used to facilitate the creation and maintenance of open space.

Woodstock, NY has a 76-acre property called the Comeau Property that acts as their Central Park. The town board did not want future town boards to be able to change how that property would be utilized. In local government law, a village board or city council cannot bind future boards. But, by establishing a conservation easement on the property, and donating that conservation easement to the Woodstock Land Conservancy, that easement became a permanent limitation on the use of that property, binding town boards in perpetuity. Through this legal mechanism, we established a principle that can be used throughout the state, including in New York City. The point of this is to think about conservation easements in unique ways in order to drive the type of open space development a constituency wishes to create.

Another example I'd like to offer is in Staten Island. I represented the Boy Scouts in their efforts to raise money for a piece of open space property that they did not want to sell. At the same time, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) wanted that same asset for managing stormwater runoff and contributing to flood protection. The DEC was prepared to pay for a conservation easement that would go on the property, which would enable those funds to be available to the Boy Scouts. However, the parties faced issues in timing the delivery of funds.

Enter the Trust for Public Land. The Trust acted as a financing bridge. They acquired the conservation easement on the property for a limited period of time and enabled the Boy Scouts to tap into those funds much more quickly.

The lesson here is not to be daunted if you come across a situation where the funding mechanisms don't seem to match. By partnering with bridging organizations like the Trust for Public Land, organizations can monetize and invest in their open space properties in unique and creative ways.

A third delivery mechanism for open space that I want to highlight is waterfront zoning. Waterfront zoning in New York City mandates that private landowners developing property along the waterfront must build a public esplanade as well as ensure open view corridors to enable you to see the waterfront from various upland locations.

Waterfront zoning is designed to provide 'access to the waterfront,' but it's also designed intentionally to create a waterfront open space. It is a bona-fide program that can be tailored in numerous ways, in addition to being paired with a density bonus for the property owner.

Respondents

Adam Lubinsky: *I wanted to open up with a difficult question related to delivery. How do we deal with maintenance challenges?*

Signe Nielsen: The problem is that there are limited sources of revenue for maintenance of open space. You are either taxing, getting user fees, harnessing developer fees and incentives, or relying on philanthropy. This will continue to create tension related to who gets the value of that asset and how value is leveraged to maintain it. Harnessing value for maintenance is especially difficult for small parks in outer-lying neighborhoods where a revenue stream is less likely

Warrie Price: In order to successfully maintain an open space, we need to ask why the open space is being built in the first place. What I mean by this is to question the programming of that space and ensure that its design and delivery matches that long-term program. Good programming ideas attract funding from various sectors. It's very hard to raise money for things that are not inspiring to people, or that they do not identify with. Whether driven by transportation linkages, demographics, or the purpose of that development, program is number one. Program tells you what it is going to cost to maintain it. You need to establish this even before you engage your designer or your architect. Program will help defend the asset's need for maintenance.

Brittany Sessions: I don't think one size fits all when it comes to funding strategies for maintenance. For example, the idea of raising philanthropic funds or capturing property values in underserved communities to maintain their open spaces is ludicrous. You can't do that in a neighborhood that has no homeownership and almost half of the population on some kind of federal assistance program.

Our office did the finance and maintenance plan for Brooklyn Bridge Park. Sixty percent of those required dollars were due to the park being on a series of waterfront structures. One potential way to mitigate the very difficult compromises made in every annual expense budget is to set aside a certain amount of funds for maritime infrastructure. This money would not be affiliated with NYC Parks or DOT but would be used independently to fund major infrastructure that supports our city. We have 520 miles of shoreline – why should that be the responsibility of any one agency?

“Why does government still not understand that economic development, social capital and a thriving community can start with parks? We need government’s underlying philosophy about public spaces and parks to reflect this.”

Tim Tompkins

Tim Tompkins: Parallel to a philosophy about public spaces, we also need a public space czar who has a strong philosophy about power and partnerships. In order to get to functioning partnerships, government has to give power not just to people with money, but to communities. By properly forming partnerships, we're developing a political constituency for open space delivery and maintenance.

This constituency is one that can advocate for ideas like 'One Percent for Parks.' With adequate partnerships, you don't just get money, you get management, excellence in entrepreneurship and strong design. You need a neighborhood nut, a local person who is passionate, a 'civic spark plug.'

Adam Lubinsky: *We talked a little bit about maintaining open space. How do we begin to leverage the creation of new open space? We discussed Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS), resiliency funding, waterfront zoning. What are some other strategies?*

Signe Nielsen: We did an open space master plan for Hudson Square at the same time that it was going through a rezoning. The BID was able to raise bond money to fund five of our first-phase projects. The challenge became how to partner with the City in order to implement these improvements in the public right of way. It turned out that the only two agencies that could transfer and apply these funds were NYC Parks through their Tree Trust, and the EDC. That is a constraint that needs to change.

Brittany Sessions: When you look at all of these open space success stories, the challenge is that they're all on the waterfront. What about the inner city, the inner parks, the little courts? How do you leverage BID financing in lower-income neighborhoods? How do you capture money through those parks? Maybe it is a redistribution of wealth. Maybe it is a one percent tax on something else. Those are the types of discussions that we need to have.

Tim Tompkins: I think we need more academic research and legal creativity. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is relatively new but is finally being talked about in the context of transit and open space improvements. Can we create a TIF mechanism that captures parks value and puts it back into the neighborhood, while also addressing displacement and gentrification? Can mechanisms like TIF be paired with land trusts to create more successful open spaces? How do we capture private assets and value creation for public purposes?

Audience Member: *Green infrastructure funding has already gone a long way to improve and create new parks. How can we go further in connecting new parks and park improvements to environmental dollars? Additionally, at the Trust for Public Land, we are tapping into funds from public schools to create joint-use school yards that also function as public playgrounds. How can public spaces be created and partly funded by public schools, as well?*

Signe Nielsen: I know there are conversations going on within and across DEP, DOT, NYC Parks. They are trying to figure out how to better share the load here. But, as Tim suggested, I think somebody needs to look deeper at the financing mechanisms.

Tim Tompkins: I'd love to ask the bond lawyers about this. If we invest a certain amount in maintaining open space assets, it can in turn protect us from climate change, stormwater runoff and ecological risk. It makes for a rational economic justification because you're actually protecting an investment as well as a community over time. We have enabled capital investment in open space in this way through municipal bonds, but why can't we do that with expense dollars spent towards maintenance?

Adam Lubinsky: *I'm going to mention two quick examples from my experience. One of them is the Town of East Hampton. In the Town of East Hampton, when people sell a property, a 2% transfer tax goes into a Community Preservation Fund. The Fund is aimed at preserving open space and natural resources, including through the purchase of vulnerable wetlands and flood-prone coastal properties. Another example is London's Community Infrastructure Levy, which is a tax on new development that then goes into a general pool. There are some interesting examples out there.*

Audience Member: *Another example is Riverside South. When we rezoned Riverside South, we required the developer to pay to build a park, and we required the developer to maintain the park in perpetuity. The developer then figured out that the cost to maintain the park could be passed on to the individuals that purchased those apartments. This resulted in Riverside South having a steady stream of over \$1 million a year to operate the park.*

Tim Tompkins: I think what these conversations point to is a need for not only a public space czar, but an open space person within every major agency in the city. Every agency should contribute to and be a part of the public space agenda.

When Rocco Landesman became the head of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), he said he would no longer fight for more money for the NEA. Instead, his philosophy was to get arts planted into the budgets of major federal agencies, and have these agencies track metrics like health and transportation outcomes as a result of arts investments.

If we can take that thinking and apply it to open spaces, I think we can start shifting the conversation, developing data and building a constituency that's much broader than all of us tree huggers in the room.





Lyons Square Playground, Bronx



From New Perspectives to Action

How can open space be considered critical city infrastructure during a rezoning process?

What do community-based organizations and stakeholders need to do to advocate for open spaces?

Angela Tovar

Angela is the Director of Community Development at The Point CDC, a non-profit organization in the South Bronx. She oversees community partnerships, advocacy, and environmental justice efforts, including the development of a community-based climate resiliency plan. Angela has worked as a community planner, advocate, and non-profit manager for over 10 years. We spoke to Angela to learn about how the regimented process of a rezoning progresses in - and affects - New York City neighborhoods.

What should City agencies overseeing rezonings pay attention to?

City agencies need to be more aware of how planning processes have historically failed people, especially in the South Bronx. They need to start from a place of listening first, and be open to solutions that may not result in an actual rezoning. Also, they need to consider the context of climate change. This area of the Bronx, along the river, has some real low-lying communities. This may mean creating more open space, fixing existing open spaces, and making a trade off between more housing versus more open space with natural resource protection on certain lots.

Where has an open space plan been successful in the context of a rezoning?

The East Village and its community gardens comes up often as an example, but they weren't the result of a rezoning or a major land use action. In Hunts Point, there are so many small slivers of land that have the potential to be returned to the environment, and preserved with amenities for people. Restoration needs to incorporate places for people to convene, and those spaces need to express the identity of that community.

What kind of information or data can fuel public participation in rezonings?

Visioning sessions are not the only way to gather feedback. You can connect with people on the ground in so many different and meaningful ways. One example is using photography and videography to highlight narratives. Engaging people with art can be powerful in the context of open space advocacy, as can having a presence at a local community event. Think beyond map. Use artwork. Find interesting and engaging ways to solicit input.

Opening Remarks



Anthony W. Crowell

Dean and President
New York Law School

Anthony is New York Law School's 16th Dean and President. His area of expertise is state and local government law. He works closely with the faculty, trustees, administration, alumni, and students to initiate bold and innovative changes, all focused on driving student outcomes and leveraging New York City as the ultimate classroom.

Moderator



Adam Lubinsky

Managing Principal
WXY architecture + urban design

Respondents



Mychal Johnson

Co-Founding Member
South Bronx Unite

Mychal has a long-standing track record in community-based advocacy for environmental and economic justice. He is a co-founder of South Bronx Unite and a member of the Board of Directors of the Mott Haven-Port Morris Community Land Stewards, among others.



Tawkiyah Jordan

Senior Planner
NYC Department of City
Planning

Tawkiyah coordinates neighborhood studies across all five boroughs for the New York City Department of City Planning. Previously, she worked leading long-term community development projects for Bronx-based Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, including Starlight Park, the Bronx River, and the Sheridan Expressway.

Presenters



Joe Mayock

Executive Director
Open Space Alliance for
North Brooklyn

Joe leads the only park conservancy for a neighborhood in New York City. He has developed a strong and growing network of friends groups as part of the Alliance's vision that neighbors "own" their nearest park. Joe is also the co-founder of Abingdon Square Conservancy in Manhattan.



Deborah Marton

Executive Director
New York Restoration Project

Deborah works to empower communities of need by unlocking the potential of open space. She serves on the boards of the Public Policy Lab and the Landscape Architecture Foundation. Deborah received an MLA from Harvard and a J.D. from New York University.



Lucy Robson

Director of Research & Planning
New Yorkers for Parks

Lucy leads the data-gathering and analysis team at NY4P, supporting NY4P's policy and advocacy efforts. She previously worked at the Garment District Alliance, and holds an MS in Urban Planning from Columbia University.



Everette Hamlette

Bronx-Based Documentarian

Everette discovers that his local neighborhood park is being reconstructed. Curious, he decides to do his own research on NYC Parks. Finding more questions than answers, he interviews friends, neighborhood leaders and NYC Parks employees, seeking both the emotion and the truth of the reconstruction.

From New Perspectives to Action

*10 Apr 2018
New York Law School*

How do we continue this knowledge-building and make measurable impacts? Understanding the Value, Development and Design, and Delivery of our parks is absolutely vital in the conversation surrounding rezoning and open space procurement. Yet, there still remains one crucial element needed to ensure the realization of more open space: community participation. In the fourth and final Green Ribbon panel, our group of experts approached the open space discussion through the lens of neighborhood-scale rezoning, referencing the rezoning of the Greenpoint-Williamsburg waterfront, East Harlem, and Southern Boulevard neighborhoods as examples. In each circumstance, community-based organizations were involved from the beginning, spearheading grassroots campaigns and offering invaluable insight into the culture of each neighborhood and the needs and desires of its people, often informing the investments and plans made by the City. These voices need to be heard when dealing with rezoning processes, and we must listen and learn before taking any definitive action.

Presenters Joe Mayock, Deborah Marton, and Lucy Robson discussed their involvement in the neighborhood rezonings of Greenpoint-Williamsburg, East Harlem, and Southern Boulevard respectively, followed by a screening of Everette Hamlette's documentary about the Lyons Square Playground in the South Bronx. Mychal Johnson and Tawkiyah Jordan were the evening's respondents, emphasizing the need to balance the City's housing requirements with accessible and equitable green space.

Lynn Kelly: At New Yorkers for Parks, we see potential for real change to our environmental review process as well as how we advocate for more innovative funding strategies and models for open space. We acknowledge it is long-term work. Tonight, we are going to drill down a bit and look at some neighborhood scale rezonings and their impacts on parks and open space. We'll hear about two in particular that have offered positive examples and lessons learned.

Presenters

Joe Mayock: I'm here tonight to talk about the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning, which was passed in 2005. In the rezoning process, the City did not set aside funds to purchase what was to be the centerpiece of the open space commitment, a 28-acre park that is now referred to as Bushwick Inlet Park. Over time, it has had to find \$438 million to purchase this property. At the time, the City promised the space but did not set aside the money.

“One of the great stories about the rezoning is the level of citizen involvement and participation. The reason full funding was identified for Bushwick Inlet Park was due to the comprehensive advocacy efforts of Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park, which began in 2015.”

Joe Mayock



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Joe Mayock spoke about the various tactics Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park used in order to advocate for open space not only in their community but in communities undergoing rezonings across the city.

One tactic the Friends of Bushwick Inlet Park used was to host the Broken Promises Tour. They went to East New York, East Harlem and Jerome Avenue, and they said, “Hey, watch out, because this is what happened to us.” And they told the story of limited funding and the challenges of delivering park space.

Another successful tactic was their ability to get the attention of elected officials in a uniform way. Rally after rally, event after event, all of the elected officials showed up.

Deborah Marton: New York Restoration Project (NYRP) was selected as the open space and recreation representative to the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan Steering Committee.

What makes the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan so special? It was an extraordinary grassroots effort led by the former Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Borough President Gale Brewer, Community Board 11, Community Voices Heard, and WXY and Hester Street Collaborative as technical assistance partners. In my experience, it was an unmatched community engagement process that involved 150 community-based organizations who participated in dozens of workshops and visioning meetings.

Typically, when you have a planning study that leads into zoning, it is City agencies that guide the recommendations. To my knowledge, community-based organizations have a much smaller role in guiding recommendations, but the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan flipped this conversation. Ultimately, as a result, it is those community organizations that will implement the goals of the Neighborhood Plan that are not implementable through zoning alone.

The East Harlem Neighborhood Plan was completed and published in February 2016, and in November 2017 the rezoning was approved. NYRP is still involved, and there is continued conversation about how to implement all the goals of the rezoning. It is incredibly important to have community based-organizations involved from the beginning. Zoning is a blunt instrument. You need the community present to have those more granular goals that are intimately familiar with the culture of a neighborhood, the people who live there, what people want, and how they want to live.

Traditionally, zoning looks at building heights, density, and land use. Zoning is not necessarily good at integrating recommendations related to issues like urban design, conditions for pedestrians or infrastructure priorities. The East Harlem Neighborhood Plan had a total of 232 recommendations, and they included things like support for local artists, creating more diverse pathways to college, protecting the viability of small businesses and improving air quality.

“Zoning makes an impact on all of these elements but cannot act alone. Bringing community organizations in at the beginning, the way the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan did, allows the right entities to be identified that can actually move goals forward.”

Deborah Marton

Lucy Robson: Rezoning is not just about producing more affordable housing. They're an opportunity to think about neighborhood infrastructure. We think that includes parks and open spaces. Before rolling out a neighborhood rezoning, the Department of City Planning (DCP) has been going through what they call the PLACES program. Through this comprehensive community planning framework, DCP listens and learns and sets a vision for the neighborhood. Sometimes that's all that happens. For some neighborhoods, though, a rezoning proposal is generated. NY4P has worked with many of the neighborhoods that are in the PLACES program. Our aim is to give community organizations and individuals tools and data in order to advocate for open space creation and improvements in the context of these comprehensive plans and rezonings.

Everette Hamlette: I am making this documentary about the New York City park named Lyons Square Playground. Growing up, my friends and I called it 75 Park. For as long as I can remember, this park was neglected by the New York City Parks Department. And by the end of this journey, I am going to find out why.

Respondents

Adam Lubinsky: *What have been the main drivers for the open space advocacy that we've seen in the Bronx? What has brought people out and together to look at open space?*

Mychal Johnson: I think the reason is out of necessity. We do what we can to make sure open spaces can be renovated and rejuvenated so we can have access to the same amenities others have. That's also why we created so many community

gardens in the Bronx. We're fighting for access to green space, because without it, it decreases your quality of life.

Studies like the NY4P Open Space Index have identified communities like Mott Haven as having some of the lowest amounts of quantity green space per capita in the city. What does a community that faces these shortages, coupled with increased infant mortality rates and lower life expectancies, do? What kind of hope does that leave for our children when they don't have anywhere to recreate but in the middle of the street or a playground that's only asphalt or concrete? We are going to create that access for our people. That's something we have to do out of necessity.

“From my perspective, although the end goal is having additional open space and greater opportunities for recreation, it has become the process of power building that matters just as much as the end result.”

Tawkiyah Jordan

> Deborah Marton spoke about the role of the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan in identifying recommendations that zoning alone cannot accomplish.

RECOMMENDATIONS (EHNP)

1.0 Ensure public open space meets the needs of existing residents and keeps pace with an increasing competition

5.4 Improve the structural conditions of the East River Esplanade

1.5 Build a comfort station at Harlem River Park

5.2 Make sidewalks, parks, and other open space resources ADA compliant and convenient for seniors and caregivers with young children. Prioritize Park Ave. viaduct, Harlem River Park, 96th Street and FDR, and Marcus Garvey Park

4.0 Remove cultural and psychological barriers to using parks

OUTCOMES (MAYORAL COMMITMENT)

22. Expand the Harlem River Greenway Link to connect 125th and 132nd St

23. Make improvements to the East River Esplanade

24. Build a comfort station in Harlem River Park

25. Build integration playgrounds to accommodate seniors in local parks

26. Improve way-finding to Randall's Island

Tawkiyah Jordan: For me, especially because I have worked at length in environmental justice communities, thinking about how people build networks and capacity to shepherd those new open spaces into the future is extremely important. Also important is how they are passing on that information, those networks, that power, to the young people who work and live in those places. For the South Bronx, which has seen some dark times, that is incredibly important.

Adam Lubinsky: *As we start to think about a rezoning in the Southern Boulevard area, what is the difference between acquiring or getting new open space through that effort of advocacy versus getting new open space through a rezoning? And related to that, what are some new models for delivering that open space?*

Mychal Johnson: Our coalition was born and bred out of the environmental injustice movement. This has forced us to look at how land use has been used to impose a lot of negative connotations onto our community. It has also led us to proposing something rather than just opposing.

And so we looked for green space opportunities. We looked to create a waterfront plan to bring residents to that space and asked how we could be the guardians of our own public trust. What is happening in communities like ours is that the guardians of our public trust have failed us. One mechanism we are interested in using is that of the community land trust. Through it, we are ensuring that the public can own and be the guardians our own public property, in perpetuity.

Mychal Johnson: We also want to make sure that it's something that we can identify as a community and then transform into a value or a commodity that's owned by the community. This will ensure that it won't be put into the speculative market of development. We seek to use real visioning sessions, instead of just checking off a box for participatory engagement, which often happens in processes like rezonings. When you work with partners like New York Restoration Project, and gather real input, and build real partnerships, you can actually activate these sites.

Adam Lubinsky: *What is the difference between the negotiations associated with typical rezoning processes, and some of the other advocacy efforts outside of the rezoning conversation?*

Tawkiyah Jordan: The thing that's challenging about the parks debate is not reaching agreement about the benefits of parks and open space. Everyone admits to their benefits. The challenge really comes down to the resource allocation decision that goes into making parks. I think it also comes down to political will. I think council members have quite a bit of weight on their shoulders.

Council members need to really understand the trade-offs they're being asked to make in their communities. Too often, they get all of the information all at once, in very heightened, tense moments in the rezoning process, instead of being brought along through a planning or other kind of local decision-making process that doesn't necessarily include City agencies. Often, council members are not connected to the partners that Mychal is describing, and instead are asked to be the experts on everything.

Our environmental review process is far from perfect. It asks us to try to quantify everything, and it's very difficult to quantify the quality and quantity of park space in a community in a way that's meaningful. In part, this is because not all parks are created, accessed, used or even maintained equally. And so, in addition to really thinking about how we work with council members, I also think about how much I would love more data on how people in neighborhoods use parks.

Adam Lubinsky: *How do you see that tension between using rezonings to create affordable housing and relying on them to provide more and better open space? Is there a real tension there, or is that tension exaggerated?*

Deborah Marton: This is often presented as an either-or question, but it's a false dichotomy. The Municipal Arts Society did a study recently called Public Assets that identified vacant spaces across New York City that are on city-owned land. All that land adds up to the size of Brooklyn. The whole borough. These spaces exist, and they exist across the city to accommodate both affordable housing and open space. To develop neighborhoods and densify without open space is just a flat out mistake, and I would offer the idea that this dichotomy that gets put out there is merely a tactic. It's not a fact.

PLACES

Planning for Livability, Affordability, Community, Economic Opportunity and Sustainability



Open Space Dialogues: A New Perspective

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Lucy Robson contextualized the recent rezonings by explaining the DCP PLACES program and its role in comprehensive planning for communities before they are rezoned. She then explained the role of NY4P in providing data and tools that local advocates can use to complement and clarify these agency-driven planning processes, one of which is the Open Space Index.



“But why was it neglected for so long? Why these neighborhoods? Why these parks? Why my neighborhood? Why my park?”

Everette Hamlette



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Everette Hamlette screened a trailer of his documentary for Lyons Square Playground, which tracks his childhood growing up near the park, and the recent NYC Parks process of its rehabilitation.



Open Space Dialogues: A New Perspective

Mychal Johnson: I want to reiterate how important the need is for deeply affordable housing. It shouldn't be either-or, it should be both. There is a whole movement of folks working in community land trusts focused strictly on creating that deeply affordable housing. But we should also be thinking about that infrastructure of green space. And we shouldn't be put up against each other because we have to manage our expectations. All of those elements add to quality of life enhancements, especially in those communities that are being priced out of their neighborhoods and have nowhere to recreate.

***Audience Member:** When we are investing in open spaces, how do we avoid gentrifying these neighborhoods? How do we create public space while also allowing the people that we're creating that space for to stay at a price that they can afford?*

Mychal Johnson: We've been asked this question numerous times. We're talking about a community that has faced decades of under-development and disinvestment, and they stayed. They deserve quality open spaces. And they also deserve to stay. And the way we ensure this is by coalition building, organizing, and making sure that we're managing expectations and are aware that new demographics are coming. We can't say no to people coming to our neighborhood, but we can tell developers to be socially responsible to the residents already there.

“All too often, development comes first and then green space. It is almost never the other way around. Can we change that? I think we can. And I think it doesn't have to displace, and it shouldn't.”

Mychal Johnson

Mychal Johnson: We're trying to learn from the neighborhoods that gentrified before ours. We're trying to divert gentrification by making sure we can work together and build strong coalitions. And that's why we've built a Bronx-wide coalition for development without displacement. Hopefully we can strengthen our overall borough, and our overall communities, to fight off displacement, but still create the development for our neighborhood that is desperately needed.

Tawkiyah Jordan: In addition to that, I think that community land trust models and other shared ownership models are very important. Thinking about how we retain ownership over land, or control over use of property, is important.

Personally, if you're not supporting wealth-building in communities where people are very low-income, you're selling them a false narrative. We live in a capitalist society where property ownership is one of the only ways to build

wealth, and yet we tell most of our low-income residents that they don't get to own property. I don't think that we can find our way out of a cycle of poverty without thinking about how we share the income generated by property with the people that live in properties where they rent, or how we can open up opportunities for ownership. I think that it would benefit New York City to think beyond just housing people, but actually helping them move beyond their circumstances of being at the behest of the property owner.

I just want to bring it back to Southern Boulevard and discuss not only trade-offs the community may have to make should a rezoning take place, but the trade-offs this community has already had to make historically. As we start thinking about new investments like parks, we also need to look back and work a little bit harder to heal some things that we helped destroy.

“People didn’t just end up in under-resourced communities. The resources went elsewhere. Purposeful decisions were made, and I think we have to be purposeful in how we make new investments.”

Tawkiyah Jordan

Tawkiyah Jordan: That has to include the understanding that we must reconcile with the past and that we must think about how we're going to help those communities do better as they move forward.

Part of that is capacity building. One of the things we can all learn from the communities along the Bronx River is that they knew they needed open space. They have advocated for at least two decades for open space. You now have a beautiful Bronx River Greenway with new parks, but you know what else they did? They built capacity. There is now an institution that oversees all of the Bronx River parks. It's called the Bronx River Alliance. It started out as a non-profit, and only 50% of the staff funding comes from the Parks Department. That community now has an institution that's not going anywhere, that takes care of parks from the Westchester border all the way to the mouth of the East River, on both sides of the Bronx River.

This is a community that has, by itself, without much support from City agencies, figured out how to get what it needs out of necessity. They have learned to institutionalize that energy and move forward with things like taking out the Sheridan Expressway and creating connections to the Bronx River. I would encourage everyone to look at this example and learn a little something from the Southern Boulevard neighborhood.

Participants (left to right) Joe Mayock, Lucy Robson, Mychal Johnson, Deborah Marton, Tawkiyah Jordan, Everette Hamlette





NEW YORK
LAW SCHOOL



Astoria Park, Queens

Applied Metrics





Current Neighborhood Studies and Rezoning

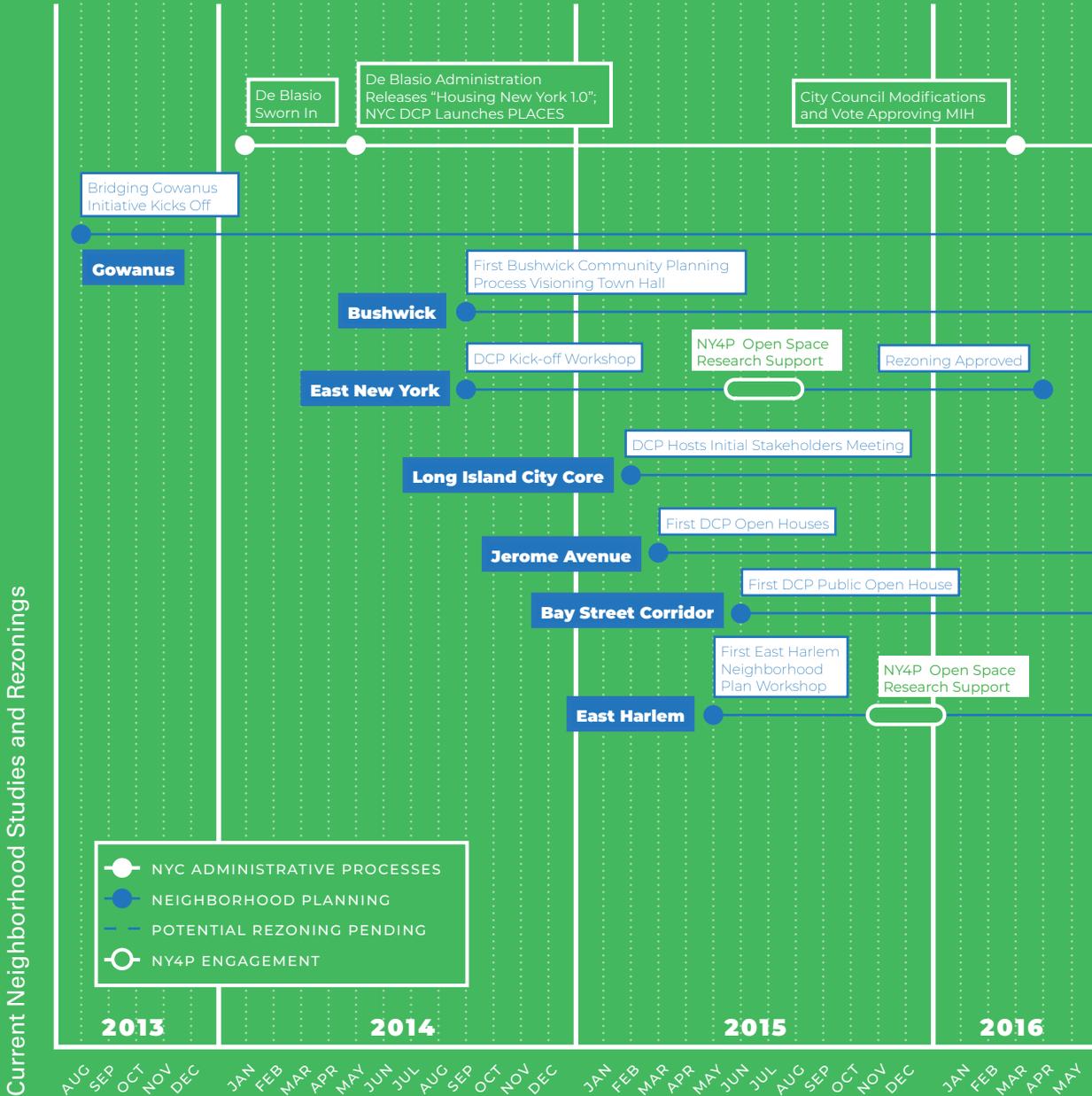
Thinking about open space in today's neighborhood rezoning context is critical. This section of the report synthesizes the findings from the Open Space Dialogues research interviews and panels, providing context to the recent rezonings, and highlighting the Southern Boulevard Neighborhood Study as a case study through which to tap into new parks and open space metrics and lenses.

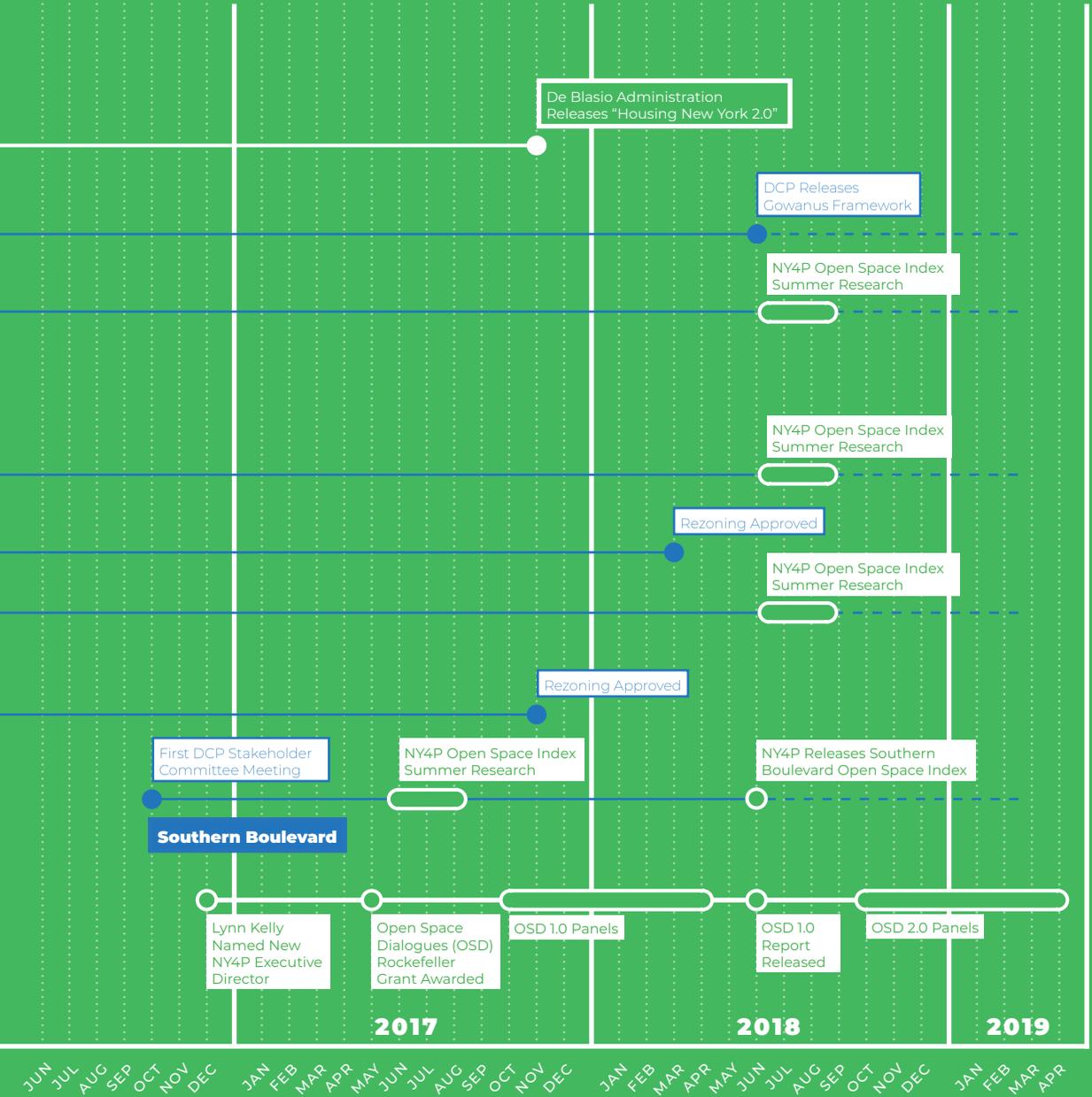
As part of Mayor Bill de Blasio's Housing New York plan, the Department of City Planning (DCP) has been organizing a series of place-based planning studies to foster diverse, livable neighborhoods with mixed-income housing and supporting services. PLACES is a people-centered planning approach in which DCP and other agencies work collaboratively with communities, stakeholders and elected officials to actively shape their neighborhoods. In some instances, these studies evolve into neighborhood-scale rezoning processes that pair with the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) program to increase residential capacity and set aside a percentage of floor area for permanently affordable housing.

The following timeline maps out the City's larger-scale neighborhood plans and rezonings since the release of Housing New York. It highlights neighborhoods where comprehensive thinking is happening, and where there has also been a significant level of community-based engagement and grassroots response in relation to a potential or actual zoning action. This timeline also traces NY4P's work to support neighborhoods being studied for rezonings, and to elevate the citywide conversations about rezonings and open spaces through the Open Space Dialogues.

NY4P Open Space Research & Advocacy in the Neighborhood Planning Context

The following timeline maps out the City's larger-scale neighborhood plans and rezonings since the release of *Housing New York*, and places the open space research and advocacy work of NY4P within that context.





NY4P Engagement in the Southern Boulevard Neighborhood Study

Neighborhoods across New York City are being considered for housing production-driven rezonings, to accommodate additional density, provide for the construction of affordable housing, and undergird the economic equity of a the city for the future. These processes have not followed a uniform pattern. This has proved a challenge for technical assistance providers, such as New Yorkers for Parks. However, it is clear that a one-size-fits-all approach to zoning studies and rezonings would be disastrous for New York City's communities.

The Department of City Planning is currently leading the Southern Boulevard Neighborhood Study, which covers the neighborhoods of Crotona Park East and Longwood in the South Bronx. This part of the Bronx was emblematic of Seventies-era "urban blight," home now to about 44,000 New Yorkers. The challenges of the past do not tell the full story of this area, which has been rebuilt in large part through major City, State and federal investments in new and renovated housing. The South Bronx has a long history of community organizing and grassroots advocacy, home to groups used to self-organizing in the face of adversity. In advance of a potential formal rezoning and environmental review activities, DCP is studying the area to determine how comprehensively plan for its evolution.

New Yorkers for Parks came to work in Southern Boulevard precisely because of the City's study. We have seen our research on neighborhoods and open spaces used by advocates from Jackson Heights in Queens to the Lower East Side in Manhattan, building a base for local movements and successes for local parks. In East Harlem, our Open Space Index, a neighborhood-scale study, was used to inform the vision created in the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan, which in turn informed the City's East Harlem Rezoning. Understanding how well – or poorly – parks, gardens, and open spaces are serving today's residents helps to underpin public participation in plans for the next era.

With this model of providing data and tools to inform a community-based response to (and participation in) a rezoning, we started a two-pronged engagement in Southern Boulevard in 2017. With our research arm, we collected data about open spaces – parks, gardens, NYCHA play areas – in the DCP's study area, as well as creating a usership profile of each open space. In our outreach capacity, we created or deepened relationships with community-based organizations. After we built an understanding of current conditions in Southern Boulevard open spaces over the summer and fall of 2017, we spent the winter and spring of 2018 contextualizing those observations through conversations with local experts, community advocates, and environmental justice practitioners.

We then created the Southern Boulevard Open Space Index, a tool that bundles our data, findings and planned next steps. Although there are over 30 open space properties and over 170 acres of open space in the study area, over 130 acres are concentrated solely in Crotona Park, which is not a neighborhood asset for the residents of Longwood. Crotona Park is one of the Bronx's green lungs, but less than two miles from that historic park are neighborhoods that have very little access to green space. We determined that the study area lacks active space, both in terms of outdoor space, but especially indoor, full-season recreation facilities. We also turned to NY4P's Public Realm Bill of Rights, a vision statement that lays out what New Yorkers should expect from open space: that it be accessible, publicly funded, contributing to positive health and environmental outcomes, and treated as essential neighborhood infrastructure. We used this as a framework to articulate our findings, particularly as they relate to parks access, infrastructure, and funding.

The Southern Boulevard Open Space Index forms the base of our next phase of work in the Southern Boulevard study area. We will continue working closely with our community organization partners to respond to the City's study of the area, as well as the New York State Department of Transportation's plans for the adjacent Sheridan Expressway, a project that has the potential to negatively affect waterfront open spaces in the area.

Our work in Southern Boulevard has confirmed for us that we must serve communities facing the speculation and uncertain outcomes often tied to a rezoning study. In summer 2018, we will be expanding our work to collect data on three additional neighborhoods that are being studied – or have already been rezoned – by New York City. From the work we have done with the Open Space Dialogues, we are in position to add to our open space analytical toolbox for these neighborhoods – Long Island City (Queens), Bay Street (Staten Island), and Bushwick (Brooklyn).



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Concrete Plant Park, Bronx

The Open Space Index

NY4P developed the Open Space Index as a tool to guide neighborhood open space planning and help park advocates ensure that future generations will enjoy adequate parkland, greenery, and recreation. By measuring 14 open space features, the Index provides a picture of a neighborhood's open space resources. What follows is an explanation of the broad categories of the Index, followed by details on the 14 standards.

Active Open Space

Playgrounds

Places for play, containing equipment such as swings, structures for climbing, water features, sand boxes, or other play features



Citywide Goal

1
playground per

1,250
children

Athletic Fields

Soccer, football, cricket, baseball, and hockey fields, as well as ice rinks



Citywide Goal

1.5
athletic fields per

10,000
residents

Courts

Basketball, handball, volleyball, tennis, and bocce courts



Citywide Goal

5
courts per

10,000
residents

Recreation Centers

Indoor recreation facilities operated by the Parks Department, and other indoor facilities with comparable fees and public access



Citywide Goal

1
recreation center per

20,000
residents

Active Open Space

Total acreage of playgrounds, fields, courts and recreation centers, plus unprogrammed active open space



Citywide Goal

1
acre of active open space per

1,000
residents

Applied Metrics

Passive Open Space

Community Gardens

All GreenThumb gardens and other gardens that provide a clear mechanism for public involvement and access



Citywide Goal

1

community garden per

10,000

residents

Passive Open Space

Total acreage of lawns, esplanades, plazas, beaches, natural areas, and planted areas, plus community gardens



Citywide Goal

1.5

acres of passive open space

10,000

residents

Total

Total Open Space

The aggregate acreage of all neighborhood open space including all active and passive open spaces that provide opportunities for play, relaxation, and contact with nature



Citywide Goal

2.5

acres of total open space per

1,000

residents

The Open Space Index

Access & Distance to Parks

Pocket Parks

Parks less than one acre

Neighborhood Parks

Parks between one and 20 acres

Large Parks

Parks larger than 20 acres



Citywide Goal

Citywide Goal

Citywide Goal

100%

of residents live within a five-minute walk

100%

of residents live within a five-minute walk

100%

of residents live within a 10-minute walk

1/4 mile

1/4 mile

1/2 mile

Applied Metrics

Environmental Sustainability

Urban Tree Canopy

The layer of trees, leaves, branches, and stems that cover the ground when viewed from above



Citywide Goal

30%

potential tree canopy coverage

Park Maintenance

Cleanliness

Park Inspection Program rating based on the presence of litter, glass, graffiti, weeds, and ice

Overall Maintenance

Park Inspection Program rating for overall park maintenance



Citywide Goal

90%

of park inspections should be rated "acceptable"



Citywide Goal

85%

of park inspections should be rated "acceptable"

New Open Space Lenses & Metrics

Through the Open Space Dialogues process, NY4P and WXY have identified and assembled several additional “lenses” through which open space creation and improvements can be prioritized and leveraged. Our call to action is to use these additional lenses to produce robust standards and metrics for open space analysis and advocacy. Once developed, these metrics can be used to supplement or improve standard CEQR review parameters and be used as a tool for advocacy for parks in a rezoning process.



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Lyons Square Playground, Bronx

Environment & Resiliency

Green space in urban areas provides substantial environmental benefits, including helping prepare communities for climate change and sea level rise. Trees reduce air pollution and water pollution, they help keep cities cooler, and they are a more effective and less expensive way to manage stormwater runoff than building systems of concrete sewers and drainage ditches. The conversion of underutilized brownfield sites to open space also contributes to the mitigation of negative environmental impacts.

- Stormwater/Flood Management
 - Delay, absorption & filtration of water through landscape
 - Reductions in impervious area
- Mobility
 - Pedestrian/bike/alternative mobility counts reflecting reduced car travel
- Air Quality
 - Pollutants sequestered by vegetation
 - Greenhouse gas emissions reductions
- Wildlife Health
 - Species population counts
- Urban Heat Island Effect
- Rehabilitation of brownfield sites

Health

Parks and open spaces help keep Americans and their communities fit and healthy. Physical activity increases strength, flexibility, and endurance; relieves symptoms of depression and anxiety; improves mood; and enhances psychological well-being. As one solution to the increased incidence of obesity, the Centers for Disease Control has called for more parks and playgrounds. Studies have shown that when people have access to parks, they exercise more.

- Physical Health Value
 - Calories burned
 - Obesity rates
 - Asthma rates
- Youth Health Value
 - Playing children counts
 - Playground use volumes
- Alternative Transportation
 - Pedestrian/bike counts

Economics

Economic impact studies document the many and substantial economic benefits generated by parks. “The real estate market consistently demonstrates that many people are willing to pay a larger amount for a property located close to parks and open space areas than for a home that does not offer this amenity,” writes John L. Crompton, a professor at Texas A&M University who has published extensive research on parks and recreation.

- Real Estate Value
 - Return on investment of adjacent development
 - Assessed values of park impact area
 - Increase in tax revenue associated with properties in park impact area
 - Total jobs and spending
- Employment/Workforce Development Value
 - Workforce demographics
 - Local unemployment rates
 - Number of people receiving benefits
- New Development
 - Resident demographics
 - Changes in average housing costs/ household incomes
 - Rates of residential ownership
 - Housing tenure
 - Number of affordable units
- Small Business Development
 - Number of small businesses owned by local residents
 - Number of small businesses in adjacent business corridor/district
 - Number of unused spaces in adjacent business corridor/district

Utilization

NY4P advocates that every New Yorker should have access to quality open space in their own neighborhood. A significant part of that is equity in maintenance and improvements—parks should be kept in equally good condition no matter where they are located in the city. To compare parks in this way, we need three kinds of information: each park’s condition and quality, resources spent on each park, and the level of park usage. Without all three of these variables accounted for, the picture is incomplete.

- Apparent age group and gender
- User count & visit duration
- Activity type and level/vigorousness
- Frequency of use
- Design facilitating active engagement & social cohesion
- Rate of visitors that stay – “stickiness”
- Match between park design and park use
- User participation in operations

New Open Space Lenses & Metrics

Asset Assessment

NY4P's Report Card on Parks is the only independent, citywide evaluation of the maintenance and conditions of New York City's public parks. The Report Card on Parks examines 12 categories of park features for performance in four categories: maintenance, cleanliness, safety, and structural integrity.

- Athletic Fields
- Bathrooms
- Courts
- Drinking Fountains
- Immediate Environment
- Lawns
- Natural Areas
- Pathways
- Playgrounds
- Sitting Areas
- Trees
- Water Bodies

Programming

An active and programmed park plays a vital role in a connected community. Activities are the basic building blocks of a place. Having something to do gives people a reason to come to a place and return. When there is nothing to do, a space will be empty and that generally means that something is wrong. Enhanced programming serving high-need communities, including games and sports for kids, fitness classes for adults, and mobile libraries are especially important.

- Frequency of programs
- Range and diversity of programs
- Investment in programming
- Equitable access to programming
- Relevancy of the park program to the communities being served
- Program choice: informal and formal activities

Horseshoe Playground, Bronx >



Equity, Inclusion & Avoiding Displacement

Throughout the Open Space Dialogues, equity, inclusion and avoiding displacement emerged as critical lenses through which to consider open space. There are a range of potential indicators to measure for these outcomes, from the spatial distribution of the open space itself, to the management structure, to the distribution of open space benefits accruing to the user base. The list below represents only the beginning of a set of standards or metrics that could be used to measure the level of equity, inclusion and belonging with respect to open spaces.

- Distribution of open space
- Access and use of human and funding capital
- User diversity & demographics
- Neighborhood ownership
- Formal and informal open space ownership
- Open space management structure
- % of management staff living in the neighborhood
- Distribution of jobs generated, representation of local population
- Distribution of spending generated, representation of local population
- Participation in development process, representation of local population
- Perceived public safety
- Equitable community engagement practices / outreach
- Extent of community decision making authority
- Opportunities for community ownership
- Policies and programs to prevent unwanted displacement of residents/businesses

Partnerships & Power

Another major theme throughout the Open Space Dialogues was the importance of community partnerships and power-building in relation to open space. When open space is examined through this lens, it can further fortify its perceived value and role in the land use redevelopment process. The following is both a list of essential elements needed to strengthen community partnerships, as well as elements needed for the community to advocate for open space.

- Concentration of parks advocacy platforms, initiatives and organizations
- Concentration of cross-cultural, cross-sectoral community coalitions and potential for coalition building
- Replicability of community partnership models
- Sustainability of community partnership models
- Comprehensiveness of the advocacy tools and networks surrounding park development
- Moment (how early) during which grassroots organizations began to set framework and dialogue around the open space
- Capacity building – how networks of power are passing information on to the youth who work and live in that neighborhood

About New Yorkers for Parks

New Yorkers for Parks is the citywide independent organization championing quality parks and open spaces for all New Yorkers in all neighborhoods. Parks are essential to the health of residents, the livability of neighborhoods, and the economic development of the city. Through our integrated approach of research, advocacy, and strategic partnerships, we drive immediate actions and long-term policies that protect and enhance the city's vast network of parks, ensure equitable access to quality open spaces for all neighborhoods, and inform and empower communities throughout New York City.

Information on New Yorkers for Parks' research and projects is available at www.ny4p.org.

This study was made possible in part by funds granted by The Rockefeller Foundation, the Altman Foundation, and the New York Community Trust. New Yorkers for Parks' research is also supported by The J.M. Kaplan Fund, The Charina Endowment Fund, Inc., The Cowles Charitable Trust, and other generous funders.

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Special Thanks

New York Law School
The J.M. Kaplan Fund
WeWork
WXY architecture + urban design
Claire Weisz
Adam Lubinsky
Cristina Ungureanu
Ruth Claire Cagara

Glossary of Terms & Acronyms

BID: Business Improvement District. A defined area within which property owners are required to pay an assessment fee in order to fund projects or services within the area's boundaries.

CEQR: City Environmental Quality Review. A process New York City agencies must undergo to determine if any action they have approved may have negative impacts on the environment.

CPI: Community Parks Initiative. A program of NYC Parks that invests in under-resourced parks in New York City's densely populated and growing neighborhoods with higher-than-average concentrations of poverty.

CSOs: Combined Sewer Outfalls. Discharge of rainwater and untreated human and industrial waste resulting from rain events in combined sewer system areas.

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement. A technical document that analyses how a planned development will affect local environmental and infrastructure systems.

FAR: Floor Area Ratio. In zoning regulations, the figure that describes the density allowed for a building. A building on a 1-acre zoning lot with a FAR of 1 could be a single 1-acre story. Or a 2-story building that covered 50% of the lot. Or a 4-story building that covered 25% of the lot.

MIH: Mandatory Inclusionary Housing, a City policy requiring developers make some units permanently affordable at specified income levels, expected to create over 10,000 affordable units by 2026.

NYC DDC: New York City Department of Design and Construction. The City's primary capital construction manager.

NYS DEC: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The State-level agency that guides and regulates New York's natural resources, and enforces the state's environmental laws and regulations.

NYC DEP: New York City Department of Environmental Protection. The City-level agency that manages New York City's water supply.

NYC DOT: New York City Department of Transportation. The City agency responsible for the management of much of New York City's transportation infrastructure.

NYC EDC: New York City Environmental Development Corporation. The Citywide nonprofit corporation promotes economic growth across New York City's five boroughs.

NYCHA: New York City Housing Authority. The New York State-run public housing agency for New York City, which provides homes for more than 400,000 New Yorkers in more than 300 public housing developments.

NYC Parks: New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. The City agency responsible for maintaining, preserving, constructing, and programming New York City's parks system.

POPS: Privately Owned Public Space. An amenity constructed, maintained, and provided by a property owner for public use in exchange for additional floor area.

TIF: Tax Increment Financing. An economic development policy that earmarks property tax revenue from increases in property value within a designated district.

ULURP: Uniform Land Use Review Procedure. New York City's standardized procedure whereby applications affecting the land use of the city are publicly reviewed, involving consultations at the community and borough level followed by binding decisions by the Mayor and City Council.



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