

**COMMUNITY BOARD 17
REZONING COMMITTEE
VIRTUAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2022**

Attendance:

Present

Vanessa Quashie
Theresa Brereton
Sandy Miller
Lori Hurley
Richard Walkes
Lorenzo Donvito
Rona Taylor
Marsha
Alexandra Schmidbauer
Lilleth Heron Robinson
JL James
Natalie Ferguson
Tashina Buffaloe
Jodi Ferreira
Crystal
Alex Sommer DCP
Brie D.
Allyson Martines
Jahmall Lewis

Present

Edwine Joseph
Ajadah S.
Anthony Beckford
CK Price
Leslie
Kwame Afreh
Kathy Alicea
Dele Bennett
Patricia Gabriel
Marguerite Vigliante
Rhonda F. Joseph
Marjorie Silcott
Erik
Marjorie Meade
Antoinette Smart
Asar John
T Gairy
Marsha
Melody To

Presenters:

Alex Sommer
Kerena Woods
Richard Bearak

The meeting of the Re-zoning committee was called to order by Ms. JL James, Chair of the committee.

Ms. James welcomed everyone in attendance and thanked them for their participation and collaboration to address the issues that impacts the residents of the community.

Ms. James also informed those in attendance of the NYU students who will be working with the Board on the re-zoning.

Presentation:

Department of City Planning (DCP) – Overview of Re-zoning process – Mr. Alex Sommer, Deputy Director of Brooklyn, office at City Planning gave an overview of what a neighborhood planning process looks like and spoke of neighborhood studies undertaken by DCP and its general planning principles.

- (1) What is planning – First, the historical context of the neighborhood has to be reviewed, the existing conditions to predict trends and future study. What will happened if planning is not undertaken and the importance of data analysis.
- Historical facts has to be combined with local expertise/knowledge
 - Must have comprehensive and meaningful planning and community input is needed to undertake those processes.
 - Must create a shared vision with a combined set of goals
 - Understand the local needs
 - Number of Citywide issues that needs to be addressed, understanding where the city lies within the region and the different opportunities available and combining all 3 local citywide and regional issue needs, opportunities into the planning framework.
 - Planning is ultimately forward looking and allows for the shaping of the future together, taking into consideration the limitations that exist and be realistic , what's possible and what's not possible in shaping those trends and background facts.
 - Planning will involve multiple agencies transportation, housing, economic development etc., so as to create an holistic approach towards the neighborhood.

The Department of City Planning bridges the gap and bring folks together to think across different agency including the private sector, such as non-profit organizations and institutions who are undertaking planning activities (long tern sustainability or organizational plan) and even developers, owners and architects who think through their specific site plan to fit into the larger needs and issues in the community.

The Department has six (6) kinds of strategic objectives that they look at and some of the different tools available to share with the community.

- (1) The highest level, undertake neighborhood improvement and DCP does the neighborhood holistic planning. Information such as the long term neighborhood, working together to create integrated planning approach across different agencies and goals.
- (2) Attention to private and public applications for land use changes. DCP ensures there's a clear concise, coherent set of information as part of those kind of specific applications for example, zoning changes and respond to the city charter and maintain a timeline for that. .
- (3) There's a robust set of data experts and research analysts, withing the central divisions representing the Brooklyn office. The Central division also undertake research and data and those services are offered to community boards.
- (4) Questions regarding historic trends, future trends, existing conditions will be reviewed and offer up as helping assistance, specifically resiliency and sustainability such as urban heat, island effects, the aging population that has limited mobility, how cooling centers are becoming more important, elevator access is more important for the seniors, etc. Those are long term resiliency and sustainability. Thinking through the different needs and conditions and highlighting the extreme housing shortage which is a city wide and regional issue should also be address.
- (5) Then there are jobs, what types of jobs are often talked about, what is a good job, where does the community board want people to be employed and in what sector? The community board can also think on how to shorten commute times through a variety of different opportunities.
- (6) DCP offers a planning tool along with some information and research. They specifically look at population and job trends, land use and development patterns and can undertake either in house or with a sister agency, real estate and market analysis. Also assist with public outreach and community engagement by coordinating with stakeholders and community organizations to figure out best practices and share with the community board. DCP also offer tours and site visits to other neighborhoods as well as provide input on that

They also undertake the technical aspects of zoning changes in land use regulations and helps the Board advocate on their behalf.

Ms. Kerensa Wood shared information on how the City plans:

They plan at various scales for neighborhoods and puts for differently types of strategic plans that sets the vision for how the city should grow.

A vision for sustainability and a wide range of planning areas are looked at

There is also a more specific city-wide planning documents like housing which sets forth the strategy to create and preserve affordable housing throughout the city. Most recently, the Rebuild and Reinvest plan by Mayor Adams economic development planning vision.

Under the last administration, DCP undertook several neighborhood plans working closely with local stakeholders in Brooklyn. It was a comprehensive neighborhood plan to introduce new affordable housing, waterfront, public access transportation, infrastructure, improvements areas for new job opportunities as well.

To obtain the neighborhood plans, a number of different planning topics are looked at, land use and zoning as well as urban design to identify opportunities where it's appropriate for new housing, new job opportunities, maybe new open space and how to strengthen the commercial corridors, determining the appropriate height and density for areas and through those changes support a mixed, informed housing by requiring the mandatory inclusionary housing program which brings required affordable housing to neighborhoods.

DCP also look at where the economic development can be strengthened in the commercial corridors and industrial business zones and work with communities on the ground to understand what public realm improvements are needed, such as parks, community centers/facilities, school capacity is looked at to ensure they can handle any new growth in the area, as well as a host of other issues and topics that are more specific to the exact neighborhood needs.

The timing and length of each step can vary depending on how large the geography is, what the goals and project are, how the community wants to undergo public engagement, but typically DCP start with an outreach and visioning section in phase and that's essentially where they work with the council members, community board and other stakeholder groups to engage in a really robust process by talking to many people on the ground about what they'd like to see in their neighborhood.

All information gathered will be placed into a zoning proposal translating the vision and goals into the technical zoning map where the drawing of the boundaries and designating different districts reflecting the varied goals and vision. Once that's done, the City undergoes an environmental review process to analyze the impact if any zoning changes may have and also identify if there are any impact that would come up in that change. Any negative impact found will be mitigated. The information goes to the community board for review and then to the City council which can adopt the zoning proposal .

Mr. Sommer said some re-zoning can take up to ten years while others take approximately 2-3 years.

There were questions regarding the mayor's new zoning initiative in terms of discussing with the City Council and whether there was going to be any community engagement, around economic development opportunity, zoning up initiative before presenting to the city council.

In answer to that question, Ms. Kerensa Wood from DCP, stated the city is advancing a package of text amendments. Zoning Change and Zoning for Economic opportunity as posed in the question and zoning for housing opportunity. DCP is presently in the process of scoping what the extent of those proposals may be and doing some initial outreach with local organizations and the council members as well. DCP would also like to engage the community board. The Frameworks is in place for those proposals but not yet detailed. There's an opportunity for council members, community board and other groups to help inform these proposals.

Ms. Allyson Martinez said she believes the community board would like to be involved from the beginning and asked DCP to reach out to the Board.

Question: How meaningful is the environmental review?

Answer: the environmental review is a significant body of work that looks at a variety of potentials called impacts everything, schools, transit, access, traffic and transportation all the way to greenhouse, gas emission and sustainability. All chapter set by both city and state are looked at to determine what the potential impacts will be the difference between no action and with action meaning, what happens in a community if rezoning is not undertaken. DCP must mitigate those impacts.

There were questions regarding major development in the district, the community is not notified, and proper posting is not identifiable.

Ms. Julia James said the community is not held with the same respect. She asked how the community can convey to City Planning the urgency of the issue. Based on the information presented, the community do not have the luxury of time, the luxury of 5 or 10 years. Within that time the community would have been destroyed.

She asked if there is a way to create and transmit the sense of urgency to what the community has been trying to do for 17years., and is now at an urgent critical point.

Mr. Sommer said DCP knows there are some outstanding issues. He said a hierarchy of goals needs to be created, it's not going to address the long-term zoning and land issues that

the community face, but it can work towards the idea of near-term objectives and goals that the community needs.

Ms. James said there are two aspects, the problem is unplanned development, its causing major issues. It has affected residents of the community who are tenants and those who are homeowners as well. She said families are losing the ability to create intergenerational wealth and it's a fundamental problem that must be resolved sooner rather than later.

In the past, it took 5-10 years, however the community is asking DCP to recognize the pain this community is going through. The quality of life has been impacted. Residents feel they are not being respected and wants to communicate the luxury of time is not at the community's disposal. She said the Board would like to formulate a plan that works best for the community and then ultimately develop a proposal to present to DCP.

Mr. Richard Bearak, Executive Director for Land Use, Mayor's office, introduced himself, he said he has been assisting the community board from around 2006 and back then, there were some occasional small homes being knocked down and story buildings built over time. The height got higher but slowly the gap between what's allowed by zoning and what's seen on the block has become an opportunity for certain people to make money by buying the properties for what they saw as an opportunity to build.

Over the past 6-7 years there were approximately 15-20 buildings mostly on the western side of the neighborhood and those that took advantage of recently expired state role, when they were doing rent regulated housing. . The income was close to market income, so it wasn't seen as a benefit based on the City's new tools of mandatory, inclusionary housing.

The tools aren't in place for affordable housing opportunities for more height or density, People are living in smaller homes, detach row houses and many of the blocks are not protected. Affordable housing is both a local need and a city-wide need, however the tools were not in place to leverage, and the tools are not in much of the district that provides preservation opportunities. A collective process is to determine preservations in terms of growth.

Ms. James said as the community go through the process, growth is important and its important to provide for the community residents who need affordable housing and that will be the rea of growth also the need to preserve for the next generation. The community must focus on two things, (1) growth (2) preservation.

Property Deeds

Mr. Richard Wilkes said people can review property deeds to determine if there are any restrictions. He asked about reviewing land use through the deed preservation. Many Deeds have restrictions from development in certain areas and he believes it can be a solution for re-zoning. He asked if historic districts, whether it's a national register and landmark district receive different considerations for re-zoning

Ms. James said, based on her knowledge, deed restrictions, as long as its on a deed, it runs in perpetuity, it stays with the land forever, it does not matter the zoning. She asked members to be more observant. Information can always be checked to determine Deed restrictions. She said Deed restriction is a tool that can be used.

Mr. Bearak said Deed restrictions may be a deterrent, however, in other cases, people may try to proceed with lawfully issued permits, even though it contradicts a deed restrictions.

Question: If for example, there is a building and a developer has violated the deed restriction, what can be done?

Answer: The developer can say the deed restriction has lapsed and it should no longer be acknowledged. Deed restrictions are only good if defended and if the developer can be sued and stopped them from developing on the property that has a deed restriction,. However, if there are deed restrictions on 6 blocks and all the buildings are demolished and apartment buildings erected on all the blocks, one cannot go to court to have them tear the buildings down.

Mr. Trevor Gairy a resident of the community for over forty years, concerns of what seems to be over development in the community, disrupting the entire community. Additionally, the rents are so high, the residents of the community cannot afford to pay the rent. He also expressed concerns of the amount of storage facilities in the community.

He said the community needs to know what tools can be used other than zoning restrictions to stop the development of so many buildings in the community.

Mr. Walkes said the key to actually stopping development in any community is to have a strong community board and have involvement by the people in the community. He said he has seen development stopped in Long Island

Question: Does Homeless shelter fall into City Planning or does your department deals with homeless shelters and their placement?

Answer: Mr. Sommer (DCP) said, the Department of Homeless Services estimates the need for shelter beds, and it will be considered as part of a larger planning process.

Mr. Alex Sommer said DCP will lay out the different tools available, the shared ideas, and agree on set goals and priorities together and that will be a first step. He also talked about identifying homeowners who are experiencing problems staying in their homes. He said DCP can work with HPD to identify either existing programs that can help those homeowners stay in their homes or create new programs together that target folks in need of that support.

Ms. James thanked the DCP representatives, Mr. Alex Sommer, and Ms. Kerensa Wood, also Mr. Richard Bearak and Mr. Richard Walkes for attending the meeting and sharing their insight.

Ms. James informed the members the Rezoning Committee is a progressive committee and the committee will be voting on issues and proposals. She said having a quorum is important, therefore, committee residents are asked to sign up to become official members of the Rezoning Committee.

Residents were encouraged to send an email to the office if they are interested in becoming a member of the re-zoning committee.

With no further questions, the meeting adjourned.