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Charter Revision Commission

Moderated by Richard Buery
Tuesday, February 11, 2025
5:11 p.m.

Fire Department of New York Headquarters
9 MetroTech Center
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Reported by: Arkady Sandoval
JOB NO: 7127322

A P P E A R A N C E S

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- List of Attendees:
- Richard Buery, Chair
 - Sharon Greenberger, Vice Chair
 - Leila Bozorg, Secretary
 - Anita Laremont, Board Member
 - Carl Weisbrod, Board Member
 - Lisette Nieves, Board Member
 - Julie Samuels, Board Member
 - Grace Bonilla, Board Member
 - Shams DaBaron, Board Member
 - Anthony Richardson, Board Member
 - Valerie White, Board Member
 - Kathryn S. Wylde, Board Member
 - Diane Savino, Board Member
 - Clava Brodsky, General Counsel
 - Jacob Anbinder, Speaker
 - Vicki Been, Speaker
 - Barika Williams, Speaker
 - Howard Slatkin, Speaker
 - Vishaan Chakrabarti, Speaker
 - Antonio Reynoso, Speaker
 - Casey Test, Attendee
 - Annemarie Gray, Attendee
 - Robert Brunotte, Attendee

1 A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont'd)

2 List of Attendees:

3 Robert Tiburzi, Attendee

4 Moses Gates, Attendee

5 Alicia Boyd, Attendee

6 Rod Herbert, Attendee

7 Larry Nickens, Attendee

8 Denis Ibric, Attendee

9 Catherine Vaughan, Attendee

10 Yvonne Roman, Attendee

11 Vishnu Reddy, Attendee

12 John Woelfling, Attendee

13 Hector Robertson, Attendee

14 Ben Weinberg, Attendee

15 Suwen Cheong, Attendee

16 David Gordon, Attendee

17 Cormac Slade Byrd, Attendee

18 Michael Abrahams, Attendee

19 Daniel Golliher, Attendee

20 Michelle de la Uz, Attendee

21 Julio Pena, Attendee

22 Frank Morano, Attendee

23 Gillian Morris, Attendee

24 Sara Penenberg, Attendee

25 Stephen Crim, Attendee

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A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont'd)

List of Attendees:

Jay Sorid, Attendee

Olivia Gonzales Killingsworth, Attendee

Vadim Grayboys, Attendee

Chloe PHitoussi, Attendee

Theresa Westerdahl, Attendee

Nichola Cox, Attendee

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. BUERY: Good evening. Welcome to
3 the public hearing of the Charter Revision Commission.
4 My name is Richard Buery. I have the honor of chair
5 of the commission. And since it's our first real
6 hearing taking testimony, I'd like to take a minute
7 and introduce myself quickly.

8 I am a Brooklyn native, so it's good to
9 be in my home borough. I was raised in East New York,
10 Brooklyn. My parents were immigrants from Panama, the
11 son of a public schoolteacher. My mom taught public
12 school in East New York High School of Transit
13 Technology for almost 40 years before retiring,
14 teaching Spanish and ESL.

15 And I've been really lucky to spend my
16 entire career here in New York, working on behalf of
17 children and families. Started a mentoring program
18 with -- honored to lead the Children's Aid Society for
19 several years. Served as deputy mayor under Bill de
20 Blasio, where I was able to lead initiatives such as
21 the expansion pre-K and currently serve as CEO of the
22 Robin Hood Foundation, which is a -- the foundation
23 mission is to fight poverty in New York.

24 And so I'm really excited to have the
25 opportunity to chair this commission because in so

1 many ways, I think our task is so much aligned with my
2 life's work of trying to make New York a better place
3 for all. And of course, our timing couldn't be better
4 given the significant challenges our city faces. But
5 despite those challenges, I remain bullish in our
6 capacity to be better and to do more. And even the
7 energy in this room is a great reminder that, you
8 know, we can accomplish big things together when we
9 come together.

10 And so I'm excited to have the
11 opportunity to lead our work, think about how we can
12 make sure that New York remains a center of
13 opportunity that it was for my parents when they came
14 here about 60 years ago. What did it mean to have a
15 charter that promises a more inclusive city.

16 Obviously, we're a city of multitudes.
17 We have every political persuasion; eight million
18 people, double that many opinions; and that diversity
19 can make things hard. It can make it hard to govern,
20 hard to come together and find the path forward. And
21 I think one of the challenges of this commission is to
22 make sure that we review the charter, that we are
23 creating an opportunity to hear everyone's voices.

24 Our charter work, of course, is
25 ultimately what's making a series of recommendations.

1 Any recommendations that we make have to come to the
2 voters for election. And I know that the commission
3 are really excited about making sure that we hear the
4 broad spectrum of voices so that when we make any
5 recommendations, they're recommendations that really
6 reflect the best judgment, the best idea that we've
7 heard over the next few months.

8 This is, of course, the first of many
9 public hearings, and we're looking forward to hearing
10 from experts, residents, community leaders, elected
11 officials, and truly anyone who wishes to testify.

12 And the last thing I will note is that
13 although we were appointed by the mayor, this is very
14 much an independent commission, which means that we
15 are free to make our own judgment. In fact, we are
16 required to. We have been bound to make our own
17 judgments and to pursue ideas regardless of where they
18 came from or who supports them or who votes for them.

19 Joining me in this path are 12 other
20 commissioners: Vice Chair of Sharon Greenberger,
21 Secretary Leila Bozorg, Grace Bonilla, Shams
22 DaBaron -- I'm not sure he's here today -- Anita
23 Laremont, Dr. Lisette Nieves, Anthony Richardson,
24 Julie Samuels who I believe is joining us online,
25 Diane Savino, Carl Weisbrod, Valerie White, and

1 Kathryn Wylde.

2 As I said, one of the tasks with the
3 Charter Commission is to review the entire charter.
4 But one of the things that we are planning to do is
5 take a particularly close look at the charter's
6 approach to housing and planning. Of course, there
7 can be no more urgent challenge for us to take up.

8 As we all know in this room, our city
9 is in the midst of a profound affordability crisis.
10 For millions of low-income New Yorkers, housing costs
11 are a central struggle in their lives. And for
12 millions more, especially low-income New Yorkers, our
13 housing crisis severely limits where New Yorkers can
14 live, what school they can attend, how they can get to
15 work, and whether their families can stay together.

16 So I don't think it's hyperbolic to
17 stay that the future of housing and the future of New
18 York City and really determines what kind of city we
19 will be and for whom. I think our city has made
20 recent strides -- have made significant strides
21 recently under leadership of our mayor and the city
22 council and the tireless advocacy of countless
23 advocates reforms to -- the city of -- housing
24 opportunity. Really do I think set the stage for good
25 work. But all acknowledge there was far more work

1 will be done.

2 Today's hearing will focus on that
3 topic in particular. And so let me take a minute to
4 sort of describe how we're going to spend our time
5 together.

6 First, we've invited several panelists,
7 each of whom has to testify for no longer than five
8 minutes, followed by questions from the commissioners.
9 Most are in the room, but some of them will testify
10 virtually. We have the honor of starting the hearing
11 with this testimony from a truly distinguished group
12 of housing and land use experts: Vicki Been, Barika
13 Williams, Howard Slatkin, Vishaan Chakrabarti, and
14 Jacob Anbinder. And all of whom have served, many of
15 them have served in state government and outside the
16 government of this issue. And will bring a really
17 impressive array of expertise about how our government
18 works and how we make land use decisions.

19 After that, we'll open the hearing to
20 members of the public. I'll ask members of the public
21 to testify for no longer than three minutes. And then
22 members of the panel will have an opportunity to
23 question any member of the public who testifies.

24 When we do the public testimony, we'll
25 start from folks who are in the room/in person, and

1 then we'll go to those who are attending the meeting
2 virtually. And for anyone who wishes is to testify
3 virtually, there is a form online. There is a page
4 for the hearing. So if you can navigate the
5 nyc.gov/charter, click on the meetings tab, and then
6 select the Brooklyn hearing. We'll also drop a link
7 in the chat and the Zoom meeting.

8 We're going to do our best to hear from
9 everyone. The meeting is scheduled to run until 8
10 p.m. So it's another reason to ask everyone to please
11 be judicious if they're testifying and make sure that
12 everyone has a chance to participate. I'll ask both
13 those testifying and commissioners to be mindful of
14 the clock and for questions. And if their
15 testimony -- just so people try to make sure that
16 everyone has a chance to speak.

17 And for some reason if we don't get to
18 everybody because we go too far past the time, I
19 remind everyone that it is possible to submit written
20 testimony. Again -- nyc.gov/charter. And you can
21 also attend one of our other public hearings if for
22 some reason we're not able to get through them today.
23 And again, you can find information about all those
24 hearings at that website. And then you can also
25 submit testimony in writing at any time to the email

1 address chartertestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov. That is
2 chartertestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov. All the
3 commissions are public, they're all livestreamed, and
4 they're all recorded if you want to review -- hearing
5 at another time.

6 So before we begin, I'd like to ask for
7 a motion from the Commission to approve the minutes
8 from January 7th hearing. Can I have a motion?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 1: Motion.

10 MR. BUERY: Can I have a second?

11 MS. BOZORG: Second.

12 MR. BUERY: Any questions or discussion
13 about the minutes?

14 All in favor, please say aye.

15 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

16 MR. BUERY: Any opposed or abstentions?
17 All right. The minutes are adopted.

18 So with that, we'll go to our
19 testimony. First, looking forward to hearing from
20 Professor Vicki Been of NYU Law School.

21 MS. BEEN: Thank you very much -- thank
22 you very much to -- to all the members of the
23 commission for convening this hearing and very much
24 for your public service. To have a group of people
25 with so much expertise and creativity and -- and raw

1 smarts working on this is -- is really a benefit to
2 the city's health. And we are very grateful.

3 Over many decades, as you know and as
4 Chair Buery alluded to, New York City has invested
5 enormous amounts of resources, both money, federal,
6 state, local money and time and talent of city
7 officials. Today, the city's housing stock both more
8 affordable and high quality. Yet, the housing
9 affordability problem has really reached crisis
10 proportions. And -- and there are a number of red
11 flags. More people are leaving the city than are
12 coming in.

13 Okay. This is a slide that shows that
14 we have between April 2020 and July of 2023, the
15 city's population declined by more than 550,000
16 residents or more than 6 percent of the city's
17 population. That is one of the largest sustained
18 population declines in recent history, and it's
19 largely due to declines in net domestic migration.
20 More people are giving the city for other parts of the
21 country that are coming here from other parts of the
22 country. The pandemic exacerbated that trend to be
23 sure, but as you can see there, it was well on the way
24 by 2011.

25 One of the major reasons that people

1 say that they are leaving is the cost of living. The
2 share of the city's renters who are paying more than
3 30 percent of their income for housing expenses,
4 has -- who were stubbornly at around 50 percent for
5 decades. And more than 27 percent of our families,
6 mostly the low income -- lowest-income households in
7 the city pay more than half of their income for
8 housing.

9 One of the primary reasons for the high
10 cost of housing is the low rate of residential
11 construction in the city. A great deal of research
12 shows that with more supply, you get lower prices,
13 lower rents, or lower rent growth. Nevertheless, the
14 city built less than what -- what it needed in the
15 1980s and 1990s, and has never really recovered from
16 that deficit.

17 The city's land use system is one
18 reason for the inadequate production. While we have
19 the best and the brightest at our different agencies,
20 we also have a land use system that makes building
21 housing extraordinarily risky, costly, and time
22 consuming. It is -- we say that a great deal is as of
23 right, but the truth is that a great -- that we -- we
24 are permitting at way lower rates than our competitor
25 cities around the United States. And about a third of

1 all movements that were permitted in -- between 2010
2 and 2023 were actually on land that had been rezoned
3 recently.

4 The very uncomfortable fact now on this
5 is that some neighborhoods really shirk their
6 obligation to provide housing growth. Just 10 of the
7 city's 59 community districts with only 13 percent of
8 the population housed 48 percent of the new housing
9 growth over the last -- from 2010 to 2023. And half
10 of the community districts in the city with 57 percent
11 of the population added only 21 percent of the housing
12 stock broker. So the disparity in which neighborhoods
13 contribute to alleviating the housing shortage and
14 which do not is unfair, and it makes every
15 neighborhood less willing to allow for necessary
16 burden.

17 I think that one of the key things that
18 the -- that the commission really has to focus on is
19 every step in the development process and the risks
20 that are posed and the delay and the costs that come
21 with that risk. I've outlined in a written testimony
22 the phases of development, the key milestones of each,
23 and the risks that each cause.

24 But I want to draw some bigger picture
25 lessons. First of all, the process is just too long.

1 A recent study by the Federal Reserve Board indicated
2 that across the nation, it takes about 15 months from
3 the announcement of a project to being -- shovels in
4 the ground. The time in New York is two and a half to
5 four times that. The time required imposes enormous
6 cost: caring -- the land, the auction or the adoption
7 of the land, hiring all the staff can add millions of
8 dollars. It's too risky.

9 People have to put too much money on
10 the table before the elected officials ever have to
11 commit or give input. And those elected officials are
12 not giving sufficient attention to citywide needs.
13 They pay too little attention in the process to the
14 needs of the city as a whole. And that results in
15 individual council members being able to veto or deter
16 housing even though that would be in the interest of
17 the city as a whole.

18 As I said, some neighborhoods shirk,
19 and some of the tools along the way are misused.
20 Environmental review and other kinds of reviews can
21 add enormous litigation risk, enormous time and delay
22 to the process, and don't really address the kinds of
23 environmental concerns that we're talking about.

24 So I want to end there by saying I
25 think it's really important for the commission to

1 think about all of these different risks to evaluate
2 the efficiency of those risks and the time and the
3 delay that they impose. And I wish you good luck. We
4 are -- stand ready to help in whatever way we can.
5 And -- and thank you again for your service.

6 MR. BUERY: Thank you, Professor. Have
7 any questions?

8 MS. BOZORG: I'm curious if you could
9 talk a little bit about some of your experiences when
10 you were overseeing HPD and as deputy mayor in the
11 effort to try to build more housing across the city.
12 I mean, you named some of those barriers, but
13 specifically, you know, and -- and given that New York
14 City put so many resources toward the affordable
15 housing production, this balance between how we do
16 affordable, how we unlock the market rate housing,
17 just some of the -- not just what -- what the research
18 shows, but what you experienced firsthand too in
19 trying to build in more neighborhoods.

20 MS. BEEN: Okay. We are fortunate to
21 be able to devote the kinds of resources that we've
22 devoted over the last few decades. I don't doubt that
23 will continue in the -- in the new era. But the thing
24 is that we add so much cost through so many delays;
25 right? And it's delayed not just the ones that I've

1 talked about and sort of the -- and the -- process.

2 But once you get through that process
3 and you still haven't gotten a commitment from the
4 council member or from the council, as you know, you
5 then have to deal with the fact that your proposal,
6 which was three years ago, manual on the pencil,
7 you've got to get -- got to update the financing.
8 You've got new term sheets and the agencies. All of
9 those things make you almost have to start all over
10 again. And that's delay and risk and -- and
11 litigation risk; right?

12 And -- and I do want to say, I mean, we
13 have so many incredible elected officials who are
14 serving the city in -- in such amazing ways.
15 Nevertheless, sometimes you get a situation where a
16 council member just stays in, and you end up spending
17 months, if not years, negotiating over, you know, can
18 there be any homeless set asides in the -- in the
19 housing? Can there -- you know, what is the -- what
20 are the AMI levels? And those -- those are legitimate
21 conversations to have, but not when it's adding a
22 year, thousands -- tens of thousands of dollars per
23 unit to the house.

24 MS. SAVINO: Thank you. Good to see
25 you again.

1 MS. BEEN: Good to see you.

2 MS. SAVINO: It's been a while.

3 I'm -- so I want to take you back to an
4 experience that we shared together when -- when we
5 rezoned in the Coney Islands. So we not only had 30
6 blocks of the area that had not seen development in
7 decades, but we had a willing council, councilmember.
8 So knowing then we had a willing council -- we didn't
9 have to worry about member difference -- denying
10 changes. It still took forever. And in fact, some of
11 the projects that we cited back then -- going back to
12 2009, are still not yet in the ground.

13 MS. BEEN: Yeah.

14 MS. SAVINO: So it's not simply just
15 the council process. What can we do differently to
16 speed up that type of activity? I think you -- in
17 your comments, you said on average, in most states, it
18 takes 15 months from conception to shovels in the
19 ground, and we're looking at more like 4500 [sic].
20 What could we do before it ever gets to the council
21 members, you know, oversight, to speed up that
22 process?

23 MS. BEEN: So I think that if we're
24 recalling the same set of facts -- and thank you for
25 your service -- one of the issues there was

1 coordination between the agencies; right? We had a
2 park issue; we had a building issue that needed to be
3 changed. All of that took an enormous amount of time.
4 It would be great if we could -- if we had,
5 essentially, limits on those kinds of conversations.
6 Even when some of those buildings that had been
7 developed there, then face months and months and
8 months of delay with you know, building inspections,
9 fire department inspections, with all kinds of
10 inspections, they're sitting -- that's housing sitting
11 empty while we have families in shelter that could be
12 put to use.

13 And there's no -- every agency faces
14 issues about priorities, issues about standing, but
15 there really needs to be a push to set deadlines on
16 those kinds of -- mission problems.

17 MS. SAVINO: Almost as if we need a
18 progressive design build for development housing.

19 MS. BEEN: I mean, that -- that is what
20 we're seeing a lot of success in public housing in
21 those ways. And -- and it is -- we do need deadlines,
22 and we do need upfront decision making and
23 coordination.

24 MS. SAVINO: Thank you.

25 MS. GREENBERGER: Thank you again. I

1 just have quick question. You mentioned that
2 one-third of housing production is done through
3 rezoning. Does that imply that two-thirds is done
4 through as a right? Is that instead --

5 MS. BEEN: Well, not exactly. Sharon,
6 I appreciate the question because what we looked at is
7 a particular slice of time, but many of the things
8 that are milled, even in the 2000s were -- might have
9 been rezoned in 1980 -- or the Coney Island example.

10 MS. GREENBERGER: Right.

11 MS. BEEN: Fifteen years may go by
12 before you see something actually happen. It's
13 attributable to that rezoning, but we only looked at
14 it -- that slice in time.

15 MS. GREENBERGER: Yeah. Is there a way
16 to determine if you looked on an annual basis, how
17 much would be at the right versus -- or that just
18 difficult?

19 MS. BEEN: You'd have to go back
20 decades and decades to see what had been rezoned
21 and -- and make sure that you're finished, you know,
22 with what's being produced from that rezoning. I
23 mean, if you think about still the amount of
24 development that we're seeing on the Green Point,
25 Williamsburg Waterfront resulting from, I don't know

1 what -- that was 2005/2007; right?

2 MS. GREENBERGER: Right.

3 MS. BEEN: So it -- it does take a long
4 time, but all of that is attributable back to that
5 rezoning.

6 MR. BUERY: You talked about the
7 differential burdens or respond -- different
8 neighborhoods -- on different parts of the city
9 housing burden. Can you elaborate more on that
10 dynamic and -- and if you could, what are some of the
11 driving factors that lead to different communities to
12 take on more or less responsibility for the 50,000 --

13 MS. BEEN: So the -- the neighborhoods
14 that have traditionally provided less housing growth
15 are often the low-density neighborhoods. Those
16 low-density neighborhoods complain that they don't
17 have the schools, the transportation infrastructure,
18 sometimes the sewage infrastructure to do that. So
19 again, it requires enormous coordination to bring that
20 all online and -- and get that in -- in place.

21 But in many cases, I mean, remember
22 that in the early 2000s, there was a lot of down zone
23 in those neighborhoods. And so they're just not zoned
24 to allow more development. And trying to get a
25 rezoning period to up that as the latest round on the

1 city -- is extraordinarily difficult. So all of that
2 comes into play.

3 And there's just -- you know, many of
4 those neighborhoods have higher rates of home
5 ownership than some of the other neighborhoods. And
6 the homeowners aren't particularly concerned about
7 their housing values, those kinds of issues. And so
8 it is a complex problem, but it is a major source
9 of -- varies.

10 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

11 One more question. Carl?

12 MR. WEISBROD: Yeah. I want to just
13 explore for a minute the correlation, if there is one,
14 between time and subsidy. And as you and others have
15 said, time is money. The more time it takes to get
16 projects approved, the more expensive it will be. But
17 how does that, if it does at all, affect the pot of
18 money potentially that the city has to support
19 affordable housing, especially given as noted the
20 likelihood that that pot may well shrink going
21 forward?

22 MS. BEEN: So the worry is that the
23 longer time goes by, the more risks like increased
24 interest rates, et cetera, can raise the price of --
25 of development; right? So that would require more

1 subsidy or -- you know, something has to build that
2 gap. And it's not just the sort of market changes
3 like for interest rate changes.

4 But you know, I -- I don't know what it
5 is now, but when I left city government, we had a
6 pipeline of about six years. And so you could get all
7 the way through ULURP and then wait for six years for
8 subsidy to be freed up of the available pot, right, to
9 fund that project. In those six years plus the time
10 it was taken for ULURP, interest rates may have gone
11 up, the term sheets may have changed, regulations may
12 have changed to make building more costly.

13 So the more time goes by, the higher
14 the cost per unit is going to be. So you're either
15 going to be able to -- to fund fewer units or -- or
16 you're going to need more money.

17 MR. WEISBROD: And just so clear --
18 just to be clear, that principally will affect
19 affordable housing, I would think?

20 MS. BEEN: It will principal -- the --
21 the housing subsidies will certainly be affecting
22 affordable housing -- some income restricted housing;
23 right? But it's driving up the cost of even the
24 market-rate housing as well.

25 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. I

1 appreciate it.

2 MS. BEEN: Thank you.

3 MR. BUERY: Next -- Barika Williams,
4 the executive director of the Association for
5 Neighborhood and Housing Development -- Neighborhood
6 and Housing Development.

7 Welcome.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: Good evening, everybody.
9 Thank you Chair Buery, and thank you Commissioners for
10 the opportunity to testify.

11 My name is Barika Williams. I'm the
12 executive director of the Association for Neighborhood
13 and Housing Development or ANHD, and we're a 50-year-
14 old non-profit here in New York City working with many
15 of the groups who are responsible for -- nonprofit
16 groups who are responsible for building and managing
17 these affordable housing units across the city, but
18 also supportive housing providers, community
19 organizers, economic development advocates, and direct
20 service providers as well.

21 Our mission is to build community
22 powers -- affordable housing and thriving equitable
23 neighborhoods for all New Yorkers. This is near and
24 dear to our heart. So we are also a member of the
25 thriving and convener of the Thriving Communities

1 Coalition, TCC, which is a citywide movement of
2 grassroots organizing, advocacy, and policy
3 organizations working specifically on something we
4 have called comprehensive planning for a certain -- a
5 long period of time.

6 We are -- what we're focused on is
7 changing the framework of how we think about planning,
8 development, and investment here in New York City
9 instead of an ad hoc approach to planning that we've
10 been using for years that we know doesn't effectively
11 deliver for many New Yorkers and most New Yorkers, but
12 also reinforces our long and equitable practices as
13 Vicki talked about, and I will speak a little bit more
14 about.

15 Specifically, what we're talking about
16 for comprehensive planning is something that aligns
17 and coordinates existing plans, has -- sets clear
18 goals across the city, centers racial, economic
19 health, and climate equity and it's intentional,
20 robust, and representative including with other
21 community engagement. Already has come up other
22 issues, so this isn't just a housing issue. It
23 intersects with education. It intersects with
24 transit. It intersects with healthcare. And so
25 recognizing that all of these things need to be

1 integrated when we are planning for a city and
2 planning for our neighbors.

3 So moving to a proactive approach, we
4 would love to talk with and for the Commission to
5 consider advancing comprehensive planning,
6 specifically amending the charter to mandate that New
7 York City create a comprehensive plan that uses equity
8 goals to establish clear equitable targets and
9 empowers communities to then create local plans that
10 feed into those targets.

11 So this is now starting with citywide
12 equity goals, which we already have in the city
13 council's Fair Housing Plan to a certain extent that
14 that's only housing. Then creating a comprehensive
15 planning steering committee that then oversees the
16 process of understanding how this then plays out
17 across neighborhoods that says, "Here's our various
18 different citywide targets for these" -- "a variety of
19 topics and issues."

20 And then from that, the community
21 district levels set targets that then have to feed
22 into the citywide targets. That way, we are not in a
23 situation where a community district is advancing its
24 goals that are not in line with what we need overall
25 as a city. It would commit all 59 community districts

1 to creating these plans, but then also ensure and
2 require that our budgets for land use, expense
3 budgets, and capital budgets also have to reinforce
4 what is being put forward in the plan. We are very
5 conscious, very aware that we can't just say,
6 "Communities have to plan this and magically do this,"
7 nor can we say, "Our agencies have to magically be
8 able to execute on this."

9 We know that that -- that one of the
10 challenges -- I don't want to re repeat too much of
11 what Vicki said -- but for example, 10 of New York
12 City's 59 community boards have built more than the
13 other 59 -- 49 combined; right? So for example, Bronx
14 CD 1 with almost 11,000 units in comparison to
15 Manhattan CD 8, which is less than a thousand; right?
16 So this is the delta that we're looking at.

17 And we see the same thing show up in
18 non-housing issues. So Manhattan Community District
19 2, West Village Soho, where 100 percent of the
20 residents are within walking distance of a park or
21 open space, in comparison to Queens Community District
22 13 out by the Nassau border where only 38 percent are
23 in walking distance. So across all of those.

24 As a part of some of the ways you
25 recognize this, we would talk about fast tracking 100

1 percent affordable housing projects to move through
2 some of these pipelines more quickly, hopefully reduce
3 some of their cost and expenditures. Making the
4 existing fair housing plan that is in Section 16-A for
5 the city council, enforceable and have teeth. Right
6 now it's a planning mechanism, but it doesn't have any
7 enforcement mechanism.

8 And then also exploring how we then
9 feed in this to our -- our capital dollars and to
10 dollars committed. We're very aware; we have been
11 doing this for a long time. But we don't want to lock
12 in agencies to -- into too much of a structure that
13 they're not able to respond to active projects,
14 changing priorities on the ground. But also, we don't
15 want to create a framework that then agencies or
16 administrations can ignore.

17 I want to conclude by encouraging --
18 thanking you all for your service and your time and
19 asking this commission to take bold systemic steps
20 that begin to move New York City away from our current
21 land use and planning and zoning frameworks and really
22 to something that benefits all New Yorkers.
23 Recognizing that the honest truth is our current
24 systems and what we've been using for a long time have
25 been -- some, but not all.

1 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

2 Questions, Anita?

3 MS. LAREMONT: Thank you very much for
4 your testimony. A question I have in terms of, you
5 know, developing your capital planning framework,
6 what -- what have you thought about in terms of the
7 enforceability of -- of such a plan and accountability
8 in terms of, you know, you'll have community districts
9 with a target, but to ensure that those targets are
10 met because otherwise, you know, I -- I think there's
11 a -- a challenge that we've always sort of considered
12 in this. How would you deal with that?

13 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. We've talked about
14 it in two different ways where, you know, there's the
15 way that the federal government prior to maybe more
16 recently was administering this in AFMH, which was
17 an -- Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, which
18 would be the loss of federal investments. So there's,
19 like, a penalty framework of this where you would say
20 you're potentially losing funds or investments.

21 And I -- I think in order for that to
22 be effective, it would have to probably be more -- it
23 would have to be broadly a penalty across, not just
24 specific to housing investments because to be honest,
25 some of these communities would be quite happy being

1 able to say, "We didn't take the housing investment,
2 and so therefore don't have to build the housing." So
3 the penalty has to be felt on something that actually
4 impacts those communities and -- and brings them in.
5 But then also could be an incentive opportunity to
6 say, "You know, when you do this, we're" -- "we're" --
7 I think there's an opportunity.

8 That's why balancing out with not just
9 housing creates the -- the circumstance where you can
10 say, "You're literally looking for new school seats in
11 your community. We're going to be able to support new
12 school seats, but we can only do that if we're also --
13 "if you're also funding affordable housing."

14 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

15 Lisette?

16 DR. NIEVES: Hi. Thanks for your
17 testimony.

18 I'm curious if there's an example that
19 you could refer to as a model that we've learned from
20 where we've really seen this kind of community
21 district, community board planning their budgets and
22 having it reinforced that -- that we could say, "Yeah,
23 a little bit more of that."

24 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. I can get back to
25 you on specific places. A number of other major

1 metropolitan areas across the country actually have
2 some form of comprehensive planning. In fact, it's
3 not apples to oranges, but for example, our neighbors
4 just on the other side of the river in New Jersey have
5 a version where you have to -- you are required to
6 fulfill your fair housing numbers in targets and is
7 mandated.

8 Likewise, there's a somewhat similar
9 framework in Maryland. So we -- we know that there
10 are examples. New York's complicated, so it's a
11 little different to take somebody's else's exact
12 example and drop it here; right? Not everybody has
13 our community district framework that's optional. So
14 yeah.

15 DR. NIEVES: Yeah. And -- and for me
16 it's even not so much the example. I mean, I do know
17 other states that are doing some interesting things.
18 The question is in process.

19 MS. WILLIAMS: In process --

20 DR. NIEVES: So much of your
21 recommendations about process; right?

22 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. Yep.

23 DR. NIEVES: Are there other processes
24 even outside of housing that you seek -- to this that
25 offer the accountability and other pieces that we

1 think are important. Particularly, like I said, the
2 reinforcing the planning and supporting of community
3 boards.

4 MS. WILLIAMS: Absolutely. We'll get
5 back to you.

6 DR. NIEVES: Okay.

7 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

8 MR. BUERY: Commissioner Savino?

9 MS. SAVINO: No. Valerie was first.

10 MR. BUERY: Oh. Sure.

11 MS. WHITE: Hello Barika.

12 MS. WILLIAMS: Hello.

13 MS. WHITE: Good to see you. Thank you
14 for your testimony.

15 Just to sort of piggyback with some of
16 these comments, when you think about a comprehensive
17 planning strategy, what are some of the other parts of
18 the ecosystem you mentioned of schooling that could
19 tie into a larger community plan that would support
20 additional housing units, but also building up the
21 community with the type of ancillary services that it
22 needs to be successful?

23 MS. WILLIAMS: So I think a great
24 example of where we maybe couldn't quite figure this
25 out successfully is what transpired in the Flushing

1 neighborhood rezoning where there was a plan to
2 increase density in Flushing, increase affordable
3 housing, but to do that much housing unilaterally
4 without being able to address the fact that they were
5 at an already over-capacity transit system just was
6 not going to add up.

7 And ultimately, part of the reason --
8 it's not the only reason, but a significant reason
9 that that rezoning did not go forward was because
10 there was no real pathway to addressing the fact that
11 there was -- there wasn't a way to add capacity to the
12 7 Line and the buses out there; right? And -- and you
13 know, I -- I think we've got to be reasonable when
14 saying to folks, "Add all these new units," that they
15 add a lot of kids. They had a lot of people
16 commuting. They add more folks in beds at your local
17 hospitals. And -- and so we -- you can't just ask for
18 one; right?

19 MS. SAVINO: Yeah. Thank you -- thank
20 you for your testimony.

21 Both you and Vicki Been talked about
22 the challenges of developing housing in the City of
23 New York and bureaucracy and all of the issues that
24 get in the way from financing to the calendar, et
25 cetera.

1 But you said something specifically in
2 your testimony that you are requesting that we amend
3 the city charter to add a comprehensive plan. So can
4 you tell more about how that would change in the --
5 are we suggesting creating a new entity under the
6 charter that would be responsible to the comprehensive
7 plan or assigning specific duties to, like, city
8 planning or HPD? What did you mean by that?

9 MS. WILLIAMS: I think we would -- we
10 would talk with you all and -- and want to talk with
11 the agencies. There's a version of this that could be
12 vested in city planning, but it cannot be the purview
13 and responsibility of city planning alone. It's too
14 broad for it to just be -- just sit with them, which
15 is also why we propose a steering committee that then
16 would work across different issue areas to help set
17 those targets and goals.

18 But yes, it would be similar to saying,
19 "Right now we have other required plans and metrics
20 that the City has to look to in the charter and
21 fulfill every year." I think currently the new Fair
22 Housing Plan that was passed by the city council is
23 every five years I believe on a rolling basis. So the
24 framework for requiring the plan is there. But we're
25 talking about expanding and beyond a plan on paper to

1 something that is actionable in enforceable.

2 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

3 MS. SAVINO: Thank you.

4 MR. BUERY: I'll give you the last
5 question.

6 MS. BOZORG: I'm curious. You all have
7 been thinking about comprehensive planning for a long
8 time, and I'm -- I'm intrigued by this fast-track
9 idea, which seems to suggest you kind of have to do --
10 if -- if you were to do comprehensive planning, we
11 also have to consider other reforms so that we don't
12 end up at a state of, like, planning analysis.
13 Especially if we do comprehensive planning, there's an
14 assumption there that we can get every community board
15 to agree to targets and put that on paper and have the
16 plan voted on.

17 So how do you balance the need for
18 action? The fact that today we're in a worse position
19 than we were ten years ago on housing, with the length
20 of time that this type of comprehensive plan and the
21 types of coordination that's needed, how do you ensure
22 there's also action stemming from that?

23 MS. WILLIAMS: Yes. So we will say we
24 have -- we go through a lot of these ULURPs with city
25 agencies. We have done a number of these neighborhood

1 rezonings, and our members develop these housing
2 units. It takes a lot. It's so difficult to sit in
3 front of a community board and explain to folks that
4 the housing that they're talking about, they won't see
5 for ten years. And I think it's an incredibly big
6 challenge.

7 And -- but I -- I would challenge you
8 all and encourage you all to think about both sides of
9 what you're talking about of the action piece and the
10 -- and the long-term process and planning piece.
11 I think we've been doing -- leaning more on the
12 expediency side, not -- but not always getting to the
13 results that we -- right?

14 It's for any of us that are working on
15 the affordable housing and ULURP side, it's whack-a-
16 mole. It's one by one, project by project. We only
17 have and can only influence whatever projects are
18 coming before us; right? There's no way right now for
19 a community to say, "My priority is senior housing,
20 affordable home ownership, and large family size
21 units, and this is what we need to focus on in this
22 neighborhood." They can't -- structurally they can't
23 do it.

24 So yes, we want to -- we don't --
25 the -- the fast-track piece is to make sure that we're

1 not halting, that what we're not doing in the process
2 of this is saying, "We're going to stop everything and
3 not develop anything." And so products continue to
4 move through the pipeline.

5 But the other piece, which I think our
6 affordable housing community would welcome, but -- and
7 the supportive housing community welcome, but I would
8 also say I think the broader including market rate
9 development community would welcome is some clarity
10 and predictability around what people are looking to
11 be developed and created in communities.

12 It is hard for any and all of us to
13 start a project at Year 1, and Year 5 when it's
14 finally -- or Year 3 when it's finally going through
15 ULURP, find out that the political priorities, the
16 community priorities have changed. And so
17 potentially, your project is now being turned down.

18 And then -- and that is exacerbated by
19 the fact that -- Vicki talked about this, but we
20 didn't specifically say this -- in the course of all
21 of that time, your AMIs are going up; right? So the
22 project gets green-lighted in Year 1, but by the time
23 we're actually opening these units, electives are
24 saying, "We were" -- "we thought this was an \$1,800,
25 two-bedroom apartment and now it's 25 26"; right? So

1 how do we both trim that, give some clarity and
2 predictability, and not -- and recognize that we've
3 got to invest in time in, like, the long-scale process
4 of this while also continuing to move forward day to
5 day.

6 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much for your
7 testimony. I really appreciate it.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

9 MR. BUERY: Next we'll hear from Howard
10 Slatkin of the Citizens Housing and Planning Council.
11 Welcome.

12 MR. SLATKIN: Thank you. Good evening,
13 Chair Buery and Commissioners. I will associate
14 myself with Professor Been's gratitude for your
15 service.

16 My name is Howard Slatkin. I'm the
17 executive director of the Citizens Housing and
18 Planning Council, an 87-year-old policy research
19 organization.

20 I'm pleased to be with you to share
21 lessons from CHPC's recent research on the ULURP
22 process as well as from my own experience in more than
23 two decades with the Department of City planning.
24 With my testimony, I'll be submitting a report that
25 CHPC released today on the subject of ULURP, housing,

1 and charter reform. I'm going to focus tonight on
2 three topics, the political incentives that are
3 embedded in ULURP process as it's currently
4 structured; how the 1989 charter revisions got us
5 here, some of the history behind it; and finally, some
6 principles that I suggest to guide reform.

7 There are many strengths to the ULURP
8 process. I won't detail them here in the interest of
9 time, but the process also contains built in political
10 incentives that are skewed ultimately against housing.
11 The problem is rooted in two intertwined factors,
12 NIMBYism and member deference. We need to understand
13 these, not as irrational behaviors or personal
14 failings that can be resolved through individual
15 effort, but rather as rational systemic phenomena that
16 we need to account for when we design our decision
17 processes.

18 I don't need to explain to people what
19 NIMBYism is. It is natural that NIMBYism is louder
20 than the voice of people who are in need of housing in
21 a local action. The future occupants of new apartment
22 buildings and the millions of people who benefit a
23 little bit from the addition of housing don't show up
24 to public hearings. This quiet majority is
25 represented in the process by officials who have a

1 broader geographic purview.

2 The practice of member deference is
3 essentially an unwritten agreement that enables each
4 council member to effectively wield the authority of
5 the full council regarding matters in their own
6 district. It -- there -- there is an internal logic
7 to it as a practice among legislators, but it
8 introduces systemic bias against new housing and the
9 equitable distribution of housing. Under this system,
10 local elected officials who oppose new housing have
11 the power to bar the door, and electeds who might
12 actually favor new housing are consigned to a
13 thunderdome-style battle with project opponents where
14 they face harsh political penalties if they dare
15 advocate for citywide needs.

16 Simply put, the system is skewed to
17 make it too difficult to say yes and too easy to say
18 no or often, "Not now." Proposals are cut back
19 delayed, or often not introduced at all because the
20 local members made it clear that this would be a
21 futile investment of time and resources.

22 The key question is not whether
23 residents or council members are behaving rationally,
24 but whether our decision process is designed
25 rationally. The ULURP process actually wasn't

1 designed with this in mind. It was created in 1975 to
2 replace the top-down master plan model of the 1936
3 charter. It had the idea of local voice citywide
4 responsibility. Locals get the first say in the
5 process, but the decision authority rests with
6 officials who have citywide or boroughwide purview.

7 In 1989, when the city council replaced
8 the Board of Estimate, effectively the introduction of
9 member deference broke this concept because the final
10 vote in the process is effectively delegated to the
11 only elected official who could potentially be fired
12 by local project components. Instead of
13 contextualizing local perspectives through a citywide
14 lens, the process elevates localism above citywide
15 interests. It's important to note that land use is
16 the only arena where the council votes on actions of a
17 strictly local nature.

18 CHPC analyzed data on ULURP actions
19 approved since the dawn of ULURP, and there have been
20 fewer rezonings since the 1989 charter revisions, and
21 the neighborhoods that have resisted rezoning through
22 this process have actually added less housing in
23 recent decades.

24 A couple of additional reasons that
25 it's apt for this commission to look and reexamine the

1 '89 changes: One, our housing shortage is much more
2 severe. I won't go into detail on that, but that is a
3 dramatic difference between now and the 1980s.

4 And second, demographic changes. The
5 1989 revisions were animated by the imperative of
6 improving representation for communities of color in a
7 majority white city. Today however, the demographics
8 of the city's population and elected representation
9 have changed dramatically. And the minority
10 communities protected by member deference today are
11 often whiter, more affluent homeowner communities.

12 I would offer a few principles for
13 charter revision recommendations. I'll just cite them
14 here. One, return to the original concept from 1975
15 of local voice citywide responsibility. Find ways to
16 build a check against member deference into the
17 process. Find ways to promote cooperation within the
18 ULURP process rather than a structure that stokes
19 conflict or rivalry. Find ways to make minor actions
20 faster and more -- and less resource intensive. And
21 accelerate urgent affordable housing investments with
22 procedural relief for things like the disposition of
23 city-owned land for affordable housing and NYCHA
24 campus investments made through the resident
25 partnership model.

1 I'll be happy to answer any questions
2 that Commission has.

3 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. I'd
4 like to start with a question.

5 Can you -- you ended by talking about
6 the need to balance local input from the citywide
7 perspective. Can you say a little bit more about how
8 you might operationalize that?

9 MR. SLATKIN: Yes. And I think that
10 one of -- I -- you know, I've refrained in this report
11 -- we've refrained from putting a lot of specific
12 detail into it. But you -- the -- the process that
13 was created in 1989 had a -- a potential check on this
14 process of member deference built into it. The idea
15 is that the mayor can veto a council action.

16 Ultimately, there are many things --
17 there are a number of things like the triple no and
18 other things that were built into the ULURP process in
19 1989 that ultimately didn't play out the way that --
20 that the -- the Charter Revision Commission thought.
21 For instance, optional call up of land use items. The
22 city council calls up everything that has optional --
23 the idea was that the council wasn't going to review
24 every low -- and they would only review the big
25 controversial ones. But in essence, they reviewed

1 every action.

2 The mayoral veto has proven ineffective
3 for a couple of reasons. One, the council can
4 override it just as easily. It -- as easily that they
5 can defer to the local member on the original
6 decision. And second, a kind of flat up or down veto
7 is a very blunt instrument for improving the project
8 at the last stage of the process. It's kind of like
9 an emergency estate patch or -- it's -- it's not a
10 really effective way of -- of fine tuning the approval
11 process.

12 So I think that the critical thing is
13 finding ways that officials with a broader purview,
14 whether it's the borough presidents, whether it's the
15 planning commission which has represented --
16 representatives of the mayor or presidents -- other
17 citywide officials, finding ways for them to -- to
18 enhance that role in the later stages of the process
19 and look for ways that the council and the commission
20 can make decisions that aren't necessarily in
21 competition with one another. Thank you.

22 MR. BUERY: Any questions from the
23 Commissioners? Please.

24 MS. SAVINO: Thank -- thank you for
25 your testimony.

1 I see we've been joined by the Brooklyn
2 Borough President, and that made me reflect on -- on
3 the fact that I may be on this panel the only person
4 who's ever served as an elected official in the state
5 senate, but he served in local government as well.

6 And I know there's a lot of discussion
7 around the equal member deference. And I think you
8 hit -- you said it perfectly. They are the one person
9 in this chain that have to worry about getting fired
10 for a decision that's made even when it may be the
11 right decision for that community or for the
12 development of housing for the future of the district.
13 But they live in short spurts; right? Four years at a
14 time. Sometimes it's two years at a time.

15 But they are also the person that --
16 that community, that district elected to protect the
17 neighborhood around. And whatever they -- however
18 they think that means, whether it's the development of
19 housing or the -- or stopping housing or -- and the
20 most important thing is people don't like change in
21 their neighborhood. They like to say, "This is the
22 store I" -- "I shopped in when I was six, and it's
23 still there on the corner." And of course, that's not
24 reality. You can't -- you can't develop a city that
25 way. You can't plan for housing that way either.

1 But that one person, that member has to
2 answer to the 160,000 people in their -- in their
3 council district or you know, congressional member --
4 and everyone is thrown into it. So you said something
5 interesting about maybe broadening the decision making
6 from just a single member for that council member to
7 maybe include the borough president and/or others.
8 But wouldn't they more likely reflect each other's
9 opinion and have the -- and come to the same
10 conclusion about that development? And I'm just
11 playing devil's advocate.

12 MR. SLATKIN: Understood. And -- and I
13 think, you know, I'd really like to come back in the
14 future to the Commission some more specific
15 recommendations about mechanisms that you could use to
16 achieve this.

17 But I think -- I think that an
18 important thing about looking at this process and the
19 way you're describing it too is that there are not,
20 like, good guys and bad guys in this process.
21 Everyone has a job. And they have the responsibility
22 to discharge their -- the job that they were elected
23 to -- you know, to do, or you know -- or you know --
24 it -- they have to discharge that responsibility. But
25 so does everyone else. And the problem that emerges

1 is that not only is that member responsible for
2 advocating for what they're hearing from their
3 constituents; they're also made responsible for
4 advocating for what's best for the entire city because
5 no one else steps into that process to do that.

6 The -- the idea is that the city
7 council is a body of citywide -- they act in all other
8 respects as a body that -- you know, deliberative body
9 where members come together, debate, and then they
10 vote on actions that are not strictly local. In this
11 case, everyone else leaves the room -- like,
12 literally, this is what happens in the hearings.
13 Everyone else leaves the room. The local member is
14 left there with all of this weight on their shoulders.

15 And whether they -- like, as you said,
16 whether they don't want to see new housing or whether
17 they do want to see new housing, they're being asked
18 to do a job that isn't really the job they were
19 elected to do. They're -- they're there to advocate
20 for the constituents, and there are 50 other members
21 who are there to advocate for the other things that
22 are in the interest of the city. But that part of the
23 process just doesn't work on local actions. And so
24 that's why we need to find these -- these fixes.

25 MS. SAVINO: We turn the clock back to

1 1970 --

2 MR. SLATKIN: I mean, I -- you know,
3 one of the things that I don't want to suggest is
4 restoring the Board of Estimate. That's not -- but
5 the concept which is that at the end of the day, the
6 decisions -- I mean, another thing about -- you know,
7 when I was talking about NIMBYism, I think everyone,
8 if you ask them their opinion about what should happen
9 right around their home, maybe there are some people
10 who are better than me or other people that -- you
11 know, we all have a -- that same perspective. It's
12 important to not give us that decision. That's not
13 our decision.

14 That's a decision that -- our -- our
15 views should be heard and integrated with an
16 understanding of what's best on the whole. And that
17 is a difficult process. That is what the process is
18 all about. It's about striking that balance and
19 reconciling those two things. So I'll -- I'll have
20 some more specific ideas.

21 MR. BUERY: Thank you. I want to know
22 before -- continue -- not only by President Reynoso
23 who will have join us in a few moments --
24 commissioner -- join us.

25 Any other questions?

1 MS. LAREMONT: Howard, you know, in
2 thinking about this, I think it would be helpful to
3 the commission if there were examples of jurisdictions
4 that have changed or deviated from the original
5 paradigm that is similar to ours for us to think about
6 because I know it's a really challenging thing to
7 think about how we would change this. So do you have
8 any examples or could you, you know, share some of
9 those --

10 MR. SLATKIN: I'll try to -- to share
11 some examples. I think there are a lot of examples
12 from the history of the city. And interestingly, many
13 of them have been discarded. Things like at-large
14 council members; right? This is something that
15 existed prior to the 1980s. So in '84, I think the
16 last at-large members were eliminated. But there -- I
17 think one of the ideas is that -- well, yes, we'll
18 come back with some more models. Thanks.

19 MS. BOZORG: One more.

20 Howard, your experience doing strategic
21 planning for DCP, I'm curious if you could reflect a
22 little bit on, like, some of the charter provisions
23 that already require fair share of certain public
24 facilities. What are -- are there lessons from that
25 that we can bring into housing or limitations?

1 And then similarly, I think it's
2 related. Just given your experience doing strategic
3 planning, how do you balance, you know, these -- these
4 calls for comprehensive planning with -- with some of
5 the needs to make reforms in the process to -- to move
6 towards action?

7 MR. SLATKIN: Right. I think there are
8 different versions of -- kind of plan consistency,
9 whether it's sort of a fair share kind of model or a
10 housing targets model or a comprehensive plan model.
11 The models that I'm familiar with usually rely on a
12 higher level of government that mandates compliance.

13 And there's someone external to the
14 city government who holds the city responsible for
15 consistency because consistency is in the eye of the
16 beholder often -- maybe not with a numerical target.
17 That might be a little bit easier. But that can be
18 difficult among coequal branches of government to sort
19 of spar over what is consistent with a -- a planner
20 policy.

21 That said, there are lots of ways to
22 provide the context for decision making, and I think
23 the -- the essence of ULURP is transparency and
24 disclosure and with context, right, that -- that there
25 are goals, there are targets, there are public

1 policies that are trying to be advanced. That gives
2 the public -- that gives all the participants in the
3 process something against which to hold any land use
4 proposal and to ask, "Does it meet these things?"

5 There -- it's really hard to arrive at
6 objective, clear, black-and-white answers as to
7 whether something is consistent. But the purpose of
8 ULURP is not to, you know, sort of check a box and
9 say, "This is good, this is" -- you know, "This
10 complies, this doesn't." It's debate. It's a
11 public -- it's a public deliberation. And that plan
12 and those -- those plans provide the backdrop for
13 making those decisions. I think that's an -- an
14 important part of the process.

15 MR. BUERY: Okay. Thank you. Thank
16 you so much. I'm sorry. One last question. Shams
17 DaBaron?

18 MR. DABARON: So I got here a little
19 late, so I might have missed a lot. So if I'm -- if
20 I'm asking something that's already been said -- part
21 of -- so I want to ask you just for my own
22 understanding, for you, what is an ideal ULURP
23 process, and what are some suggestions that you have
24 if this hasn't been said or you know, finding -- been
25 said, what are some of the suggestions that you would

1 have to make that ULURP process work better and more
2 efficient?

3 MR. SLATKIN: I'll try -- that's a --
4 that could be, like, a -- I could give a very long
5 answer, but I won't. And I'll try to come back with
6 some more specific recommendations. But I think I'll
7 try to answer it again on the level of principles.

8 I think the idea of the ULURP process
9 is that the first step in the process is to get the
10 local community's perspective. That is the first --
11 and the first voice in the process is what do they
12 think? And then the people who consider that
13 recommendation, next step, you know, the -- I should
14 say the borough presidents have a similar role but a
15 with a broader geographic basis for that.

16 And then their recommendations are
17 brought to the city planning commission, which has to
18 put together its idea of citywide policy, which people
19 should understand with those local perspectives. And
20 sometimes they fit together and sometimes they don't,
21 but they always have to explain why they don't if they
22 don't. I think that's an important part of the
23 process. So it's kind of a reconciliation of -- of
24 potentially opposing views.

25 And that the city council is another

1 sort of party to that step of the process. I think
2 that it would be good to see a process where both the
3 planning commission and the council are doing that
4 thing, which is taking the input that's been received
5 all the way through the process and finding ways to
6 reconcile the citywide and the local perspectives.
7 That's the -- I think to me that's the -- the core of
8 the process. How exactly to effectuate that is
9 something that we're going to be, I'm sure, discussing
10 more.

11 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. I
12 appreciate it. Thank you.

13 Next on the -- President Reynoso to
14 join us.

15 MR. REYNOSO: Thank you so much.

16 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much,
17 President.

18 MR. REYNOSO: Good evening.

19 MR. BUERY: Good evening.

20 MR. REYNOSO: Should I just start?

21 MR. BUERY: Please.

22 MR. REYNOSO: All right. First, I just
23 want to say the testimony about DCP here is a breath
24 of fresh air. It's the first time that I felt like
25 the Department of City Planning actually wants to

1 plan.

2 I just feel in its history -- and this
3 is -- it's going to seem like a slight, and it might
4 be. I'm perfectly fine with that. In its history,
5 the department of planning zones; it does not plan.
6 And we've fought -- this is the second time I'm
7 sitting in front of a charter revision commission
8 talking about comprehensive planning.

9 The number one opponent to
10 comprehensive planning my last go was the Department
11 of City Planning. They spent a lot of time and
12 resources advocating to not do comprehensive planning.
13 And just think about that. A planning division in the
14 largest, greatest city in all of the world was the
15 number one culprit to the demise of a charter revision
16 opportunity to do comprehensive planning.

17 So to hear what Howard was saying to me
18 was amazing and unbelievable, and I'm looking forward
19 to working with DCP to make it the place where
20 planners want to go because they have an opportunity
21 to do something amazing.

22 And I have to say that because I'm
23 deeply frustrated that we're here, what, five or six
24 years later, having the same conversation and not
25 having the courage to be leaders in that time and

1 hoping that we can be leaders now. And I want to say
2 this: The last commission of something that I didn't
3 think was of value to the city of New York. I didn't
4 think it had any real purpose. Not this one. This
5 is -- just looking at you all, my experience with you
6 all, this is real. You guys are real high -- highly
7 intelligent people that know more about this stuff
8 than most of the people that are going to speak to
9 you.

10 And I'm looking forward to you having
11 the courage to do something that is difficult, but
12 actually get something done because what we've lost in
13 New York is the courage to be great. Like, the fear
14 holds us back from doing amazing things. And that's
15 not who New York ever was. We built amazing bridges,
16 we set the trend. Now we're -- now we're scared to do
17 difficult things because of the backlash, I guess, on
18 social media or whatever it is. But we should have
19 the -- the courage to do it.

20 So I'm going to read my parts of my
21 statement that I think are valuable. I don't want to
22 go back to the Board of Estimates, even though that
23 would be greatly beneficial to me. But the fact that
24 we're even having these conversations, that's exactly
25 what we should be doing. So thank you so much for

1 having me here.

2 As you know, I'm the president of the
3 greatest borough in the City of New York, which is
4 Brooklyn, and I'm happy to have you all here at the
5 best borough talking about one of my favorite issues,
6 which is housing and land use.

7 You all know I was a big supporter of
8 the City of Yes for housing opportunity because I
9 believe deeply that every neighborhood in the city
10 needs to do its part to solve our housing -- our
11 housing crisis. And right now, even with the City of
12 Yes, that is not happening. My biggest criticism was
13 that the City of Yes didn't go far enough.

14 So now I'm here to ask you to take the
15 next step, which is citywide comprehensive planning.
16 I'm going to go to the bottom, and I hope we can get
17 into a bit of a conversation, but while housing growth
18 is the most critical part of this, the speaker's Fair
19 Housing framework is an example of a good start.

20 I want to be clear that comprehensive
21 planning goes beyond housing to take a comprehensive
22 look at how decisions influence quality of life. For
23 example, the comprehensive plan from Brooklyn examines
24 the relationships between land use and access to
25 housing, healthcare and transportation options, jobs,

1 community services, accessibility, and healthcare --
2 environment.

3 In each of these areas, we see stark
4 contrast neighborhood by neighborhood in metrics such
5 as life expectancy, school performance, access to
6 parks and open space, the reach of transportation
7 options, the safety of our streets, the air quality,
8 and the prevalence of health -- health challenges such
9 as diabetes, asthma, maternal mortality, and
10 morbidity.

11 We're all frustrated by how fraught --
12 has become in New York City. We think -- we need to
13 think beyond ULURP as being one of the only mechanisms
14 for communities to engage in planning and development
15 conversations. That starts with a comprehensive
16 citywide needs assessment that captures the real needs
17 facing communities.

18 We need to understand that our vision
19 for well-planned city requires and then follow up --
20 follow that up with ten-year capital plans to
21 prioritize our investments and responsible communities
22 for our youth with a focus on addressing longstanding
23 needs in underserved neighborhoods and preparing for
24 climate change. This transparent, inclusive vision
25 for how land use decisions are made will actually make

1 it easier for development to happen.

2 This commission can start by adding a
3 mandate to the New York City Charter to create a
4 comprehensive plan every ten years. We can work out
5 the mechanisms in conversation with the next
6 administration and the city council, but for now, we
7 need to -- a mandate to move this idea forward.

8 We are one of the only major cities
9 that doesn't have a comprehensive plan to guide growth
10 and development. And when voters learn that, they
11 will be excited for us to catch up with the rest of
12 the world.

13 Finally, I want to be clear that I have
14 no intention of asking for development to stop while
15 did we create this plan. This is not a stalling
16 tactic. It is an opportunity for an improved process
17 that would help us end the -- NIMBY doom loop and
18 actually deliver for New Yorkers. Thank you so much.

19 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

20 Any questions for the board president?

21 MR. WEISBROD: President, I know that
22 you made clear you don't want us go back to the Board
23 of Estimate, but I -- I wonder if you think that the
24 role of the borough president should be enhanced in
25 the planning process and whether that would help in

1 terms of planning more generally, but also elevating
2 kinds of concerns that have slack and --

3 MR. REYNOSO: I do -- I do believe so.
4 It's -- it's an unfortunate thing that I am the
5 borough president, and it seems, like, a bit selfish.
6 But in the conversations that I'm currently having
7 with council members, I have a planning division that
8 is extremely aggressive and informs and educates
9 council members to the best of our ability. And my
10 comprehensive plan gives a borough-wide view of the
11 things we need to do.

12 And that in Bedford -- I'm sorry, in
13 Bay Ridge for example, they've created only 68 units
14 of housing over the last -- since 1968. Sixty-eight
15 units. So I think -- I think it's a little less than
16 that. But they created a small amount of units. When
17 we present to Bay Ridge, Bay Ridge doesn't have a
18 comprehensive vision of what's happening in Brooklyn.
19 They see a ten-story building and they think the whole
20 world is out of whack and that they've lost everything
21 and they're gone. In the Bronx, in one council MR.
22 managed district, they built over 20,000 units of
23 housing less than ten years.

24 When you give that perspective to a
25 comprehensive plan, it makes people feel like they are

1 part of a team and they're having a conversation about
2 how to help the city. No one's getting picked on.
3 They're not attacking you. Look at this entire city
4 and how it works, and you understand what development
5 looks like.

6 I have that perspective as a
7 boroughwide official. I can see what's -- one
8 councilmember's district, they shut down every single
9 project before it even starts. Should I have any
10 authority, I wouldn't allow that to happen. I would
11 allow the process that at least to take its course and
12 get to a place where a vote can happen at the city
13 council or the borough president's office, I would
14 extend it. But that council member has intrinsic --
15 like, they have local -- local values or local --
16 local vision. They're never going to go past that,
17 Carl.

18 MR. WEISBROD: Yeah.

19 MR. REYNOSO: And -- and there's some
20 that do it. We have a couple of council members that
21 do it, and they get killed for it, and they -- their
22 jobs are working for doing what's good for the city.

23 MR. WEISBROD: And -- and I know you've
24 seen it from both perspectives, both as a
25 councilmember and as a borough president.

1 MR. REYNOSO: Yes.

2 MR. WEISBROD: So I -- I would be very
3 interested, not necessarily right now, but if you
4 could suggest --

5 MR. REYNOSO: Yeah -- yeah.

6 MR. WEISBROD: -- to us very specific
7 ways that you think the charter could be amended to
8 strengthen the role of the borough president in this
9 process to -- to establish a -- a broader perspective.

10 MR. REYNOSO: Yeah. So I -- I do think
11 that we should consider flipping the timeline, the
12 line for the borough president to go after the council
13 member. I just really think that it's -- to go from a
14 borough-wide view on how development should happen and
15 then go back to a very local view as to what should
16 happen is a backwards system.

17 I'm trying to give a recommendation
18 that's good for the borough. The councilmember's
19 going to look out for the interest of the -- the city
20 council district. And I have a recommendation. So I
21 just really want to speak to what's good for the city
22 is more important than what's good for a local
23 community. And a lot of people do not have that
24 perspective. And -- and I think having a borough
25 president go after the council would be something we

1 could consider.

2 Or member deference is a big issue. I
3 was in the city council too. I benefited from all of
4 these things that I'm talking about now. My
5 perspective is -- I want to say evolved or changed
6 since I've become borough president. But I would say
7 that if I were to revert back to being a council
8 member, the interest of the community would be
9 something that would be more heightened at a local
10 level than it is at a borough-wide level.

11 So I wouldn't have changed what I've
12 done, but I do think maybe the borough president going
13 after or a better way to at large -- is something I've
14 heard of as well. Just a way to make it so that the
15 council members have a lot of authority, really set
16 the tone, but that we can get to a place where we're
17 all contributing to the greater good, which is not
18 happening right now.

19 MR. WEISBROD: Thank you.

20 MR. REYNOSO: Thank you.

21 MR. BUERY: Commissioner?

22 MR. RICHARDSON: Yes. Thank you,
23 Borough President, for your testimony.

24 I think for what I could gather, your
25 position is that the comprehensive planning model

1 gives us better planning. Just want to make sure I
2 understand. Are you also suggesting that it
3 facilitates or helps us get development faster?

4 MR. REYNOSO: Yes -- yes. That's the
5 goal. So the idea here is that we separate
6 infrastructure from housing. Right now, the only way
7 to get a new park in your community is to allow for
8 development to happen and negotiate with the city
9 through a community benefits agreement for perks that
10 should already be something that happens in the city.

11 I shouldn't have to be worried about
12 the City of Yes and the claim that our sewer system is
13 not sufficient enough to handle the new development
14 that's going to happen. The City should have a
15 rolling infrastructure budget that handles those
16 things regardless of development. That infrastructure
17 should never be something we talk about. It should be
18 a given. It is a necessity for the sustainability of
19 the city and the housing development then comes after.

20 In a comprehensive plan, what you would
21 do is say, "Hey, you're near a transit-rich area.
22 You're within a half a block of a train. You have
23 amenities. You have good schools. You have great
24 parks. This is an area where development can happen."
25 It's zoned that are R5. This is an area of interest.

1 If you are a developer, and you go into
2 an area of interest, that we would allow you to speed
3 through the process because you're abiding by the
4 principles of a comprehensive plan. Should you want
5 to exceed the comprehensive plan or do more than what
6 the comprehensive plan is asking, then it goes to
7 ULURP, and it goes through a process that's more
8 formal and it slows you down significantly.

9 If you abide by the principles, and
10 this is a R7/R8 area -- more or less. We won't name
11 it exactly by this text, but it's R7/R8, is
12 something -- that falls with the line of the
13 comprehensive plan, you don't even need to go through
14 the ULURP process. You abided by the the -- the
15 comprehensive plan.

16 Also everyone knows the comprehensive
17 plan. The whole city sees it at the exact same time.
18 There's nothing hidden. The community knows exactly
19 what to expect. Hopefully, in a comprehensive plan,
20 we could talk to a community and say, "Hey, this is a
21 small neighborhood. We're not asking for 20-story
22 towers in Mill Basin." It just doesn't make sense.
23 But we're going to go from one story to three, and
24 from three story to five, but we want you to tell us
25 where you want see a thousand units of growth. We're

1 going to ask you what you think your big streets are.
2 But everyone's contributing.

3 And then if the developer sees the
4 whole map and they know where the opportunity areas
5 are, they're throughout the entire borough, and they
6 cannot get stopped by ULURP -- by the ULURP process if
7 they abide by the principles of the copy of the plan.
8 It speeds -- it'll speed up development in the city
9 significantly.

10 And you ask any developer right now
11 what the biggest problem is, is they don't know what
12 the -- they have to negotiate with a council member,
13 and they don't know exactly what the council member's
14 going to be asking for. If you ask the council member
15 what the biggest issue is, is that we're in the dark
16 on exactly what development looks -- what -- what
17 profit margin these developers have.

18 There's no -- we're getting. The
19 council members are negotiating in the dark. We're
20 making this up. We truly are. We want 60 percent of
21 affordable housing. And they'll say, "We can't do
22 that. It's impossible. The finances don't work."
23 Say, "Show me the finances. Show me that you're not
24 going to get a 8 percent return on investment. Show
25 it to me so that I can feel bad for you and then maybe

1 I don't negotiate for 60 percent, and I'll come down
2 to 40 or 50." But we don't see that. So we're just
3 shooting darts in the dark and hoping that we get to a
4 number that the community is satisfied with that --
5 that allows for the project to happen.

6 A comprehensive plan solves almost all
7 of this. And in the end it, again, removes the
8 infrastructure development from -- from housing
9 development, and communities are not angry when we do
10 a City of Yes, which is a very modest thing that we
11 did.

12 It is -- it's -- the -- the value of
13 the City of Yes. That it was a citywide job, and
14 every councilmember had to vote on it. That was the
15 value of it. We got a council's work as a body on
16 a -- on an important issue. The actual work, it's
17 very insignificant to development that's going to
18 happen to the City of New York.

19 But there are one family homes
20 complaining about more people coming into their
21 neighborhood, and they have combined -- overflow and
22 they have issues with their sewers. That's real.
23 That should have been taken care of 20 years ago so
24 that it's not a part of the conversation. It's
25 completely independent of development. And that

1 doesn't happen right now. And a comprehensive plan
2 solve on all of that.

3 MR. RICHARDSON: Thank you.

4 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much, Borough
5 President.

6 MR. REYNOSO: Thank you.

7 MR. DABARON: So you know, I don't know
8 everything, so --

9 MR. BUERY: Nobody does.

10 MR. DABARON: -- but I appreciate all
11 the information that you granted. I do want to say --
12 I -- I want to ask you the thing about infrastructure.
13 How do you see that being funded? You know, I see
14 sometimes, like, if there's a development, especially
15 a significant development coming to a community and
16 you have a lot of monies that's going towards the
17 development.

18 How do you see -- or do you think that
19 it is the -- the developers that are coming and
20 redeveloping in a particular area, do you see that
21 they should contribute to infrastructure development?
22 Like, because of the massive amount of money that is
23 funding the development? Or do you think it -- I --
24 because I heard you that it should be separate, and it
25 should be automatic or whatever the case is -- be

1 doing or if they're balanced that could happen in
2 those discussions. I don't know.

3 MR. REYNOSO: Yeah, no. So yeah. This
4 is a conversation we should have when we're developing
5 comprehensive planning. I don't have all -- all the
6 answers. I have a lot of them. And I would love for
7 you to go to the Brooklyn Borough president's website
8 and look at our comprehensive plan on 2.0. The second
9 part of our comprehensive plan is coming out.

10 And I did that with five very dedicated
11 staff members in -- I would say this for that is that
12 right now because it's only zoning that we do, is that
13 if one building comes up and it's ten stories and it's
14 going to add 50 people to the neighborhood, EIS and
15 the -- say that that one building is not going to
16 require the need for a new school, for example. Then
17 the next two months, another building goes up, and
18 then another building goes up.

19 And individually, each building does
20 not have enough of a contribution of -- of residents
21 to build a school. But now we have 20 of these and we
22 need a new school. And now the city's on the -- in
23 the -- on the hook for that work. What we should be
24 doing is that there should be -- the comprehensive
25 plan is going to say with this plan, we expect about

1 20,000 people coming into this neighborhood. We can
2 start planning for new schools now.

3 And when the city plans long term,
4 they're building seven schools in -- in Bay Ridge
5 right now. They're looking for any property.
6 They're -- they're overpaying the -- the value of the
7 property because it's a necessity, and the -- the
8 schools are busting out at the seams. They're putting
9 them in a location that don't make any sense because
10 they just need to fill the seats -- the seats need to
11 be there. The comprehensive plan would work more
12 efficiently and more affordably in all this work.

13 And I -- look, as the developers, we
14 should be talking about more affordable housing and
15 doing all this work. But they shouldn't be on the --
16 they shouldn't be putting the bill for infrastructure.
17 That's the city's responsibility.

18 But what they shouldn't be footing the
19 bill for is that we are giving them access to
20 increased value of their property and they should be
21 returned. They should be doing a public good as well.
22 And market-rate housing is a public good, but so is
23 affordable housing. So we can -- you won't have to
24 pay for the school, but 25 percent of -- is just too
25 small. We're going to increase that number.

1 But we have to look at many other
2 things. Union -- union-built housing; right? Like
3 we -- we got people building these apartments that
4 can't live in the apartments that they're building.
5 And that is just nonsensical in the city of New York;
6 all right? If you're a chef, you should be able to
7 buy the food you cooking. But we can talk about that
8 too. Those are other things that they should be
9 valuing that we should ask developers to do.

10 But the infrastructure should always
11 be -- responsibility. We shouldn't have to wait for a
12 developer to fix our problems. The City should be
13 responsible for that.

14 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

15 Last question, Lisette?

16 MS. BOZORG: How you doing?

17 MR. REYNOSO: I'm good.

18 MS. BOZORG: Good to see you.

19 My question is about the role of
20 community boards in this; right? I mean there's this
21 piece about member deference; right? But the truth is
22 you're thinking about these 59. What actually
23 reinforces member deference.

24 MR. REYNOSO: Yeah.

25 MS. BOZORG: How would you see that

1 kind of relationship shifting or changing in a
2 proposed, as you say, comprehensive plan?

3 MR. REYNOSO: Yeah. I think the role
4 of the community -- the -- the City gives them a goal,
5 and they are obligated to fulfill that goal. If they
6 don't fulfill that goal, then the City takes over. So
7 one example is what we've noticed in our comprehensive
8 plan of the framework that we're building -- we not
9 there yet -- is that in this area over the next ten
10 years, we think it can take on 10,000 units -- we're
11 going to give you two years to tell us where you want
12 to see that happen. If you can't get there, then
13 we're going to do it for you.

14 So we gave a community, like, an
15 ultimatum for all intents and purposes. It's like,
16 "We want you to decide. We're not going to tell you
17 how to do it. I'm not going to tell you where to do
18 it, but you have to do it." So you find the big
19 streets that you're comfortable with. You find the --
20 the streets next to maybe subway stations that you
21 think it's appropriate and -- but you're going to find
22 it. And if the community board can't come to a
23 conclusion and can't come to a plan where they get --
24 they show us where the 10,000 units are going to
25 happen, then -- then we have to -- and do it for them.

1 But we gave them an opportunity to go there -- to go
2 first. That's an example of a role from a community
3 board that I think -- that.

4 MR. BUERY: Thank you so, so much.

5 MS. BOZORG: Thank you.

6 MR. REYNOSO: Thank you. You guys take
7 care.

8 MR. BUERY: All right. Next up, I'd
9 like to invite Vishaan Chakrabarti of the practice --
10 the founder of the Practice for Architecture and
11 Urbanism.

12 MR. CHAKRABARTI: Commissioners, thank
13 you -- thank you for your service. Thank you for
14 inviting me. Unlike any of your other panelists, I
15 don't represent a nonprofit. But as a practicing
16 architect, I'm familiar with the term.

17 So I want to talk to you tonight about
18 a project we we're working on in our office, a kind of
19 research project. But I firmly believe that this
20 should be a city of 10 million people or more. We
21 have the capacity to be a city of 10 million people or
22 more. We would be a much more vibrant place. We'd
23 have much more innovation.

24 But the thing that we really keep in
25 mind as we think about some of the discussion we just

1 had -- the question about infrastructure that was just
2 raised is that if we were a city of 10 million people,
3 we would be a much wealthier city that could afford to
4 solve the problems that we have in front of us because
5 every new resident pays more in taxes than they draw
6 on services. And if you need the evidence for that,
7 all you have to do is look at when we went from 7
8 million people to 8 million people and how the budget
9 expanded. So we need to make the room and have an
10 affordable city that's at least 10 million or more.

11 And so I have some slides. This was
12 actually for a project we did with the New York
13 Times -- some of you might have seen it last year --
14 where we just took on -- we didn't look at zoning at
15 all. We just said, "Where are the sites that can
16 handle development across the city?" Using the City's
17 database and using metrics that we ourselves
18 established within a half a mile of transit outside of
19 the flood zones, we found over 10,000 sites, enough
20 for over 520,000 housing units, which should easily
21 get us to 10 million New Yorkers.

22 So one of the major things that we
23 wanted to address was this question of neighborhood
24 character. We hear this a lot, and you just heard a
25 lot of that in the borough president's testimony. How

1 do you have buildings that aren't out of scale? So
2 instead of looking at the zoning, we -- as I said --
3 we said, "Let's look at places near transit out of the
4 flood zone," and then find all of these infill sites
5 through the city zoning. And we found enough acreage
6 that was twice the size of Central Park.

7 And this is very important in terms of
8 construction and affordability. We tend to talk about
9 affordability as programs and subsidies. We need to
10 understand more about construction to understand
11 affordability because it's depth function. There're
12 single family houses; there's three-story housing
13 units. They're built with light gauge steel, don't
14 require elevators because the American Disabilities
15 Act says you don't need an elevator for a three-story
16 building, a lot less concrete, block and plank
17 construction out to about 15 stories, and then larger
18 forms of high rises. Each of those are significantly
19 higher in construction costs per square foot as you go
20 up the scale.

21 So we focus on the three in the middle.
22 Kind of that -- that -- low-scale apartment, that 5 to
23 15 story, and that 30 to 50 story. And we said -- in
24 terms of neighborhood character, basically we said we
25 wouldn't allow a building that was taller than the

1 tallest building within the radius of a given site.

2 And so we -- there was some before and afters.

3 And so this is a transit-rich
4 neighborhood in the Bronx, single-family neighborhood
5 for the most part, but not all family. And there, we
6 proposed a six-unit apartment building -- this is the
7 one I got most hate mail on -- a six-unit apartment
8 building in the Bronx, in -- in Brooklyn. A one-story
9 building, right, that goes to, basically, the same
10 height as the neighboring apartment building over to
11 the left about, a 58-story building -- excuse me --
12 58-unit building -- not 58 stories -- that's block and
13 plank construction.

14 And then in Queens, about a 250-unit
15 building, again, near a lot of mass transportation.
16 And then we did look at office-residential
17 conversions. Honestly, it delivered very little
18 housing.

19 So this is the interesting thing. Of
20 the 520,000 units, the lion's share came from the mid
21 rises, the 58-unit buildings in Queens and Brooklyn.
22 We do not believe most of those sites are as of right.

23 But here's the most interesting thing
24 in terms of the response to this article. We actually
25 have a lot of positive responses from civic

1 organizations, community organizations, and so forth.
2 We didn't get great -- response from the real estate
3 community. The real estate community said, "We really
4 don't have the wherewithal to build 58-unit housing
5 projects in Queens and Brooklyn." We were basically
6 built to build a bunch larger housing units.

7 And so you understand the dilemma.
8 We've got the sites. We can build to scale near
9 transportation, but we don't have the builders, and --
10 and if we're going to say these sites aren't as of
11 right, that means that small-scale builders have to go
12 through ULURP, which is almost an impossibility to
13 build where we have the most capacity for housing near
14 transit and out of the flood zones.

15 So I just have a couple of very
16 specific recommendations I want to go through in terms
17 of trying to achieve this. I think we need an omnibus
18 method either through ULURP, which would be tough
19 because a lot of these would be map amendments; or
20 state GPP to create as of right low-rise housing in
21 low-rise neighborhoods and mid-rise housing in
22 mid-rise neighborhoods when those neighborhoods are
23 near transit, out of flood zones.

24 In mid-rise areas near transit, we
25 should make 50- to 60-unit housing projects as of

1 right as long as they comply with MAH. Such projects
2 can be built out of less expensive block and plank
3 construction.

4 In low-rise areas, make multi-family
5 housing projects lower than 35 feet as of right.
6 These are really important and can provide a lot of
7 housing at that small scale because again, you don't
8 need elevators; you don't need concrete. The cost of
9 construction's dramatically lower.

10 In addition, the city has over a
11 billion square feet of trapped FAR; right? Meaning
12 the places -- they can't utilize the density they've
13 got on their sites. Not that they don't need more
14 density, but because of use and bulk restrictions.
15 And I believe it'd be difficult, but I believe we
16 should use the minor mod process, not the major mod
17 process, to avoid ULURP to change use of bulk
18 restrictions on any number of sites, and we can unlock
19 a lot of FAR without doing any up zonings. I'm going
20 to stop there.

21 I -- I just want to close with this
22 thing. We've heard a lot about comprehensive
23 planning. I -- I went to planning school with
24 Commissioner Greenberger. I'm all for comprehensive
25 planning. But at the same time, we have to -- you

1 know, we have to -- at the same time. We clearly have
2 a housing crisis. We are going to the opposite of
3 having 10 million people in the city, as Vicki has
4 already talked about. And so -- and we have to put
5 the folks in orange shirts behind us to work; right?

6 And so we have to do that by creating
7 more as of right housing as soon as possible while we
8 work on a comprehensive plan. Those two things are
9 not contradictory to each other.

10 And lastly, I really like the idea of
11 the borough president going last -- board council. So
12 I'll stop there. Thank you.

13 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

14 MS. GREENBERGER: I just want to follow
15 up on your one billion square feet of untapped -- or
16 trapped FAR.

17 MR. CHAKRABARTI: Yeah.

18 MS. GREENBERGER: Same thing. Untapped
19 or trapped. Where is that predominantly located?

20 MR. CHAKRABARTI: It's all over the
21 city here. It's all over the city -- we're working
22 with a client not -- not last week, where they have
23 the ability to deliver over 2,000 housing units on
24 their site. And they can do that with the density
25 that is mapped on their site, but they cannot get the

1 use and bulk restrictions lifted without a full scale
2 ULURP to achieve those 2,000 units.

3 MS. GREENBERGER: So it's use in bulk.
4 It's not that it's already been all used; right? In
5 other ways.

6 MR. CHAKRABARTI: It's use and bulk.
7 And the bulk restrictions are often -- like, the
8 most -- like ...

9 MS. BOZORG: Is part of what you're --
10 you're saying that -- like, the example you just gave,
11 they'd have to go through a full-scale ULURP. Are you
12 saying because of the size and scale that -- of who
13 they are and the type of builder, that that's -- going
14 through that is too costly, or what -- what becomes
15 the barrier?

16 MR. CHAKRABARTI: Yeah. Because -- so
17 again, I mean, I think the elephant in the room here
18 is the development community because when people talk
19 about more housing, everyone talks about, "Well, then
20 you're helping the real estate developers"; right?

21 The thing is, is that the more
22 regulations we throw into the land-use system, the
23 more you're helping big real estate because only big
24 real estate can afford the attorneys and the lobbyists
25 and everyone else you need to get around those

1 regulations. And what we are hurting are all the
2 small builders, the community-scale builders who can
3 build on the kind of sites that we just talked about;
4 right? And so that's -- so and when you say so why do
5 these need to go through ULURP? Sometimes they don't
6 have the density on site. Often it's because there's
7 some stupid rear-yard regulation or some other thing.
8 It's a technicality of the zoning code. That means
9 that they need to go through a full ULURP.

10 And that's -- I -- there is a minor mod
11 process where it's left up to the discretion of the
12 city planning chair. And I think we should be using
13 that much more for these kinds of small-scale sites
14 because small builders cannot afford the profit that
15 we would have to put them through otherwise.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 2: Yes. Well,
17 first of all, thank you for your testimony.

18 And we talked about reframing the
19 conversation around affordability. And so I want to
20 make sure that I'm understanding the position is that
21 the creation of more as of right housing is a direct
22 correlation to increasing affordability?

23 MR. CHAKRABARTI: No. That is not what
24 I was saying, sir. What I was actually trying to get
25 at is that we constantly talk about affordability as

1 how much subsidy we can throw at things. And we have
2 fine equity sources. We always will. And we have to
3 have, I believe, a land-use system that can build as
4 of right housing that is affordable to working people
5 without a subsidy. And I think the only way you can
6 get there is to get -- have much, much more
7 construction but also, fundamentally, to be able to
8 build -- especially where there's a lot of sensitivity
9 in these low-rise neighborhoods.

10 But if you can -- and this been done
11 all over the country. There's nothing particularly
12 unique about this where you can build six- or ten-unit
13 apartment buildings, again, out of light-gauge
14 construction, fairly low cost per square foot, right,
15 in transit-rich neighborhoods that are low rise that
16 aren't ten-story buildings but are three-story
17 buildings.

18 I mean, a lot of single-family houses
19 are 35 feet tall; right? So you can actually pack a
20 lot of density into that height with a low
21 construction cost. And yet what I would be called --
22 what I would call naturally occurring affordability so
23 that we can keep pressure subsidy dollars for where we
24 most need them.

25 MS. SAVINO: So -- thank you.

1 So I'm just -- I'm thinking out loud.
2 So you're suggesting is that for those low-density
3 projects, so the three to five, that we eliminate the
4 ULURP -- as of right. You don't think that would be
5 somewhat controversial though amongst locality?

6 MR. CHAKRABARTI: Controversial? We're
7 in the charter revision. Of course --

8 MS. SAVINO: I thought I was in the --
9 actually.

10 UNASSIGNED: Of course -- of course it
11 would be. But we need -- we need much more as of
12 right housing for -- for all the reasons that have
13 been discussed for the last hour, hour and a half;
14 right? City Planning, where I'm a former and proud
15 employee, is incredibly overstressed. The Manhattan
16 office that I used to run I believe had 32 people when
17 I ran it. I think it's 19 or 20 now, right, 'cause of
18 city budget cuts. You know, we don't have the
19 bandwidth in our system. And so we just need to
20 create much more as of right housing.

21 The question is how do we create as of
22 right housing that people don't outright reject in the
23 communities 'cause they feel like it's a scale that
24 makes sense; right? Can be built at a cost that makes
25 sense for small and midsize builders and not just the

1 ten millionaires in control of the real estate
2 industry. And how can that that housing then be
3 affordable for our workforce?

4 And I -- I think that's not going to
5 happen unless it's as of right because you cannot
6 build the smaller and midsize housing that was just in
7 those images if those -- if those builders have to go
8 through ULURP. It's impossible.

9 MS. SAVINO: How do you avoid the
10 extensive litigation? So again, you -- they're not
11 subject to ULURP. There's no such thing as, you know,
12 having to deal with borough president, the
13 councilmember, whoever the local electives are of the
14 community board. But the opposition may still remain.
15 So let's assume somebody immediately goes to court
16 and, you know, file a lawsuit to prevent this
17 development. We don't foresee that as potential --

18 MR. CHAKRABARTI: Well, I think the
19 thing is there would have to be a process to get to
20 what I'm talking about; right? And again, I -- I
21 think it might be a state process. I'm not an
22 attorney, and I'm not sure. I don't know -- because
23 the problem here is that to look at those 10,000 sites
24 scattered across mainly four boroughs because Staten
25 Island doesn't have that much transit-rich zone sites

1 available; right?

2 But mainly across four boroughs. Those
3 are -- to use ULURP -- those are a series of map
4 amendments. City of Yes was very precisely built
5 around a set of text amendments; right? Because map
6 amendments trigger a lot of things -- ULURP. So I
7 think if this state GPP -- I'm not sure; I'm not a
8 lawyer.

9 But I think we need some kind of
10 omnibus measure that lets this smaller and midscale
11 stuff happen. And during that time, there will be a
12 process. There'll be -- opponents can oppose, they
13 can advocate, they can sue, they can do all of those
14 things. And when the dust settles, something will
15 hopefully come of it that's positive.

16 MS. SAVINO: Thank you.

17 MS. GREENBERGER: I just -- I have a
18 request for you and the others who have already
19 testified. We've talked a lot about sort of how would
20 you reduce barriers or change process and things like
21 that, which I think are important. But I think a
22 couple of us have asked for you to come up -- come
23 back with ideas. Would you also think about, for lack
24 of a better word, a shared incentivized process? And
25 it might not just be financial. It might be timing,

1 it might be process, it might be expediting things
2 because it's some combination of those things. So
3 when you come back to us, use that frame as well.

4 MR. DABARON: Can I --

5 MR. BUERY: Your last question. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. DABARON: So I want to ask you,
8 like, if you were doing it the way that you're
9 proposing, what is -- like, what do the numbers look
10 like, what -- not -- like, what do the unit numbers
11 look like with that short version?

12 MR. CHAKRABARTI: So that proposal --
13 and I can send you, I -- I -- your staff has it on
14 the -- on the Charter Review Commission. They can
15 send you the link to the article. It generated about
16 520,000 new units of housing across city. About 330
17 of those 330,000 of those came from mid-rise. So
18 about, you know, 50- to 60-unit housing projects. The
19 rest mainly came from those smaller scale ones. So
20 not a lot from high-rises. Very little from office to
21 residential conversion for a lot of reasons we can
22 talk about. And -- and so again, how we get that
23 midrise engine working means both sites that we need
24 to unlock and a smaller scale development community
25 that needs to be able to do these things at the

1 community level, not just at the kind of level of big
2 glassy powers in Manhattan.

3 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Really
4 appreciate it.

5 MR. CHAKRABARTI: Thank you.

6 MR. BUERY: So just for awareness, we
7 have one more -- testimony, then we're going to open
8 up the public testimony. Just so you can be prepared,
9 the first two speakers from the public will be
10 Annemarie Gray and Robert Tiburzi. So as soon as we
11 hear from Mr. Anbinder, we -- to come up. And so our
12 last testimony is from Jacob Anbinder of Cornell
13 University who is attending virtually.

14 Welcome.

15 MR. ANBINDER: Thank you. Thank you so
16 much. Can everyone hear me all right?

17 MR. BUERY: Yes.

18 MR. ANBINDER: Perfect.

19 I want to thank the members of the
20 Commission for having me here today. And I
21 particularly want to thank my fellow panelists. It's
22 really an honor to be in their company.

23 My name is Jacob Anbinder and I'm a
24 historian for urban politics and housing policy,
25 currently serving as a Klarman postdoctoral fellow at

1 Cornell University. I'm writing a book that's due out
2 the year after next called NIMBY Nation, the War on
3 Growth That Created Our Housing Crisis and Remade
4 American Politics. That gives you a sense of my
5 position on this question.

6 So really -- real to questions broadly.
7 The first is how did housing in places like New York
8 City -- New York City is one of the places I've looked
9 at, but also cities in California and so -- sort of
10 the northeast more broadly -- how did housing in these
11 places become so scarce over the last 40/50 years? So
12 I take sort of the long view compared to some of the
13 people who've spoken today.

14 And second, what does this shortage
15 have to do with places like New York simultaneously
16 becoming the most reliably democratic parts of the
17 country? And it's this apparent contradiction that
18 some of our most liberal communities, starting in the
19 '60s, '70s, and continuing through today are also the
20 most opposed to new housing. And that that's what
21 really peaked my interest as a political historian.

22 But I start by saying that my interest
23 in this topic was not purely academic. It started
24 because I experienced the New York City housing crunch
25 firsthand, not as someone who once ran away from being

1 on the street, but rather as one of the millions of
2 New Yorkers -- or former New Yorkers in my case -- for
3 whom a college degree at a white-collar job were
4 really barely enough to afford a home that was sturdy
5 and safe and spacious in the city.

6 And yet, when I would talk to my
7 neighbors in Park Slope or in Harvard Square when I
8 went to grad school or even hearing -- now, some of
9 the most extensively liberal people that you're
10 supposed to find anywhere in the country, I would find
11 that they were at best ignorant of the housing crisis
12 that was going on in their own backyards, or often
13 believed that opposing development was actually --
14 with their identities as liberals.

15 And so I want to start by thanking the
16 Commission, not just for the work of revising the City
17 Charter in its sort of technical aspects, but for
18 working to change the moral conversation around
19 housing in a way that's sorely needed not just in New
20 York but really in progressive cities from coast to
21 coast because even though it's tempting to believe
22 that housing in the city has always been expensive,
23 the data show -- and other people spoke about this
24 today as well -- that we are at a point now that is
25 really unprecedented in recent history.

1 The two-bedroom house that Jane Jacobs
2 owned in the village is worth nearly a thousand times
3 what she paid for it in 1947. The Atlantic called
4 housing recently the linchpin of the great
5 affordability crisis breaking America. And these
6 runaway housing markets in New York City and elsewhere
7 are having noticeable social effects.

8 In the '60s, about one in five
9 Americans moved in a given year. Now, the figure is
10 less than half that.

11 And through their inability to buy a
12 home in places like New York, many people are not only
13 excluded from what has become in this day and age the
14 dominant mode of wealth building in America, but are
15 increasingly unable to even live in the same parts of
16 the country as those who had the good fortune to
17 invest in real estate decades ago.

18 And the core premise of my work is
19 really quite simple. Housing is scarce and expensive
20 today because we made it illegal to build more of it
21 in the places where people want to live. In 1961, New
22 York City changed its zoning code to cut the number of
23 homes that could exist in the city by 80 percent. In
24 1975, voters approved several provisions put forward
25 by a charter commission similar to this one, which

1 created the modern system of community boards as well
2 as the ULURP procedure and removed authority over the
3 capital budget from the City Planning Commission. And
4 this is an episode that I address in my book and can
5 discuss more in Q and A.

6 So New York City, in other words,
7 wasn't always a City of No. It chose to become a City
8 of No. And in particular, New York liberals decided
9 to embrace an ideology of no, at a discreet moment in
10 time in a belief that it was ameliorate the harms that
11 the program's policies that remade the city in the
12 '30s, '40s, '50s, and '60s. And so if I want to leave
13 this commission with one idea, it's that we need
14 not -- dispersions on those community control ideas
15 that predominated the past in order to be given remedy
16 for unintended consequences.

17 I always tell my students that history
18 is not about using the present to -- judgement on the
19 past. That using the present to understand the
20 motivations of people in the past. And so we need
21 only remind ourselves the New York of today is a very
22 -- place from the one in which Jane Jacobs and Robert
23 Moses lived. A place that faces an entirely different
24 set of problems from the ones that they -- their
25 contemporaries grappled with. And I think today New

1 York City is a city that wants to grow and prosper,
2 but only if we will let it.

3 Thank you again, and I welcome your
4 comments and questions.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 3: Thank you so
6 much for your perspective.

7 I -- ask a question. I'm wondering if
8 you could talk a little bit about -- it's a very
9 helpful historical perspective. But talk about trust.
10 I think some of the practices that we described, as
11 you say -- doing the work they intended to do are
12 reactions to a well-earned distrust of picture --
13 developers, city planners of the past.

14 And so how do you -- how would you
15 think about a system that addresses the core problem,
16 which is that it's not -- on cost with the very, I
17 think, well-earned desire by communities to have a
18 voice and have a community developed?

19 MR. ANBINDER: Absolutely. I -- you
20 know, it's -- it's such a good question. And -- and
21 in fact, it gets to many of the themes that I talk
22 about when I talk about the '75 Charter Revision. The
23 core reason that reforming city government to devolve
24 city planning power to the level of the community
25 boards -- the core reason that that became so popular

1 in the '70s was that similar to today, it was an era
2 of low trust in government. Not just in city
3 government, you know, this was an era when crime was
4 much higher than it is today. The city budget
5 obviously was facing calamity. It was not clear if
6 your garbage was going to get picked up in a given
7 week. And then of course, low trust at the same time
8 in the federal government manifested in things like --
9 opposition of the Vietnam War.

10 I think a core issue -- and I -- I
11 realize that this -- this doesn't answer your question
12 so much as contextualize it -- a core issue for you
13 guys today is that we are in an era when, in some
14 ways, trust in government is not that much higher than
15 it was in the '70s, and in some aspects, you might
16 argue that it's lower.

17 The -- the one thing that I will say
18 that creates an opportunity here is that it's clear
19 from seeing how land use politics works in New York
20 City today that all the parties that were on board
21 with the system that was put in place in the '70s and
22 modified in the '90s, nearly all parties today agree
23 that that system no longer serves really the interests
24 of anyone except maybe the most NIMBY interest groups
25 in the city.

1 And as Professor Been pointed out, a
2 system that was supposed to give neighborhoods the
3 ability to sort of plan their own future has instead
4 resulted in one might even argue over-development in
5 places -- in neighborhoods that are more vulnerable
6 than communities than who have less political say and
7 underdevelopment in neighborhoods where it's the
8 opposite.

9 And -- and so I would say that my
10 advice to you guys -- and it's difficult, but it needs
11 to be -- kind of find a way to -- to frame the changes
12 that need to be made to the City's land use polices in
13 sort of moral and ideological terms that take
14 advantage of and harness that distrust and -- and
15 attempt to present the people an answer as to why the
16 system that's going to be put into place more
17 adequately responds to the dissatisfaction that the
18 people have with the current system and how it's --
19 this housing shortage.

20 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

21 Commissioner, any questions? All
22 right. Go ahead.

23 MR. DABARON: I may be way off with
24 this one. But there was something that you said --
25 and it could be -- and I'm always humble with this, my

1 lack of understanding. Did -- is there a racial
2 dynamic when we look at the past coming up to the
3 present that we have to also factor in when we are
4 making these decisions? A lot of it -- my humble
5 understanding, there was always a racial dynamic here
6 in New York City when it came to the city planning and
7 all of these things that effect how we develop housing
8 in various communities. I don't know if you covered
9 that or -- or if you articulated that. But what are
10 your thoughts on that?

11 MR. ANBINDER: It's -- it's an
12 excellent question. The politics of race as they
13 relate to this history in New York City are -- are
14 complicated. And what I mean is it's hard to point
15 to -- you know, when you point to the era of the
16 master builder, Robert Moses, moving into the era of
17 community control, moving into maybe the next era of a
18 sort of more pro housing New York.

19 One of the constants is that there has
20 always been sort of political coalitions, agreements
21 where some sides have believed that the system -- the
22 new system that's being put in place will serve
23 communities of color better. And it's almost never
24 really been the case that that actually pans out.

25 So I'll be more specific. You know,

1 obviously, I did the -- the ways in which the era of
2 urban renewal disproportionately harms communities of
3 color. Those are well studied, well known, and have
4 been well documented in everything from history books
5 to fiction to movies. When you talk about moving into
6 the sort of community born era, the era of ULURP, you
7 had your sort of do gooders, people who genuinely in
8 their heart of hearts believed that devolving power to
9 the community boards was necessary to affect their
10 vision of social progress.

11 But we can't overlook that at the same
12 time -- considerable part of the political support in
13 favor of implementing that -- that framework that
14 exists today was also made up of reactionary racists.
15 So you think of the extremely controversial plan to
16 put public housing in Forest Hills in the early '70s.

17 I talk about this in my book. And
18 there were many politicians in New York City in the
19 '70s who directly attributed the growing interests in
20 -- among their constituents in serving on a community
21 board to wanting to oppose public housing in the same
22 way that people opposed it in Forest Hills. And that
23 was sort of a semi-successful opposition where they
24 cut the amount of public housing in half, and they
25 gave preference to people who already had -- in the

1 neighborhood. And so 70 percent of the public housing
2 in Forest Hills from that project ended up opening
3 were white.

4 And so, you know, it's hard for me
5 to -- I think we should avoid sweeping claims that one
6 system or another will necessarily create better
7 conditions when we talk about the effects of
8 development on vulnerable urban communities. I think
9 it's important to remember that people with the least
10 political power in the city, they're -- they're in --
11 of these changes whether they be in favor of
12 development or against development and -- constant
13 threats to this history. And it's important to keep
14 those in mind and think about ways to safeguard that
15 and remedy that as move into a sort of post-ULURP era
16 if that's what we are doing here.

17 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much for your
18 testimony. Incredibly helpful. Thank you.

19 So we're going to move to the public
20 part of our testimony. Our first speakers are
21 Annemarie Gray and Robert Tiburzi. One thing I'm
22 going to ask is they come to the table. We have loud
23 speakers -- I'm going to be pretty -- forgive me I'm
24 going to be pretty aggressive about cutting folks off
25 at three minutes. And I'm going to ask if people in

1 the audience just be respectful of the -- testifying
2 so that we can hear them. Thank you so much.

3 Annemarie?

4 MS. GRAY: Thank you.

5 My name is Annemarie Gray. I'm the
6 executive director of Open New York, an independent --
7 pro housing nonprofit with hundreds of volunteer
8 members across the state and city.

9 So there's been so much fantastic
10 expert testimony. We are really focused on how do we
11 build more homes. We really strongly believe
12 displacement, exclusion, tenant harassment,
13 homelessness are all exacerbated by this housing
14 shortage and that for far too long, many of the
15 most -- parts of the city have been essentially off-
16 limits to help solve the problem.

17 Jumping in that we went ahead and
18 released a -- yesterday called A Charter for Housing
19 Equity, Five Reforms for a Fair and More Affordable
20 NYC, which I encourage you to read in full. A really
21 quick summary of the five ideas that we put out there
22 and that we are very excited to discuss.

23 One, create a fast track for fair
24 housing. So we need a new approvals process for
25 proposals that would advance fair housing in our most

1 transit rich, climate resilient, and low-growth
2 neighbors in line with the implementation of
3 speaker -- fair housing framework to ensure that it
4 has real teeth. In these well researched neighbors,
5 often the whitest, wealthiest neighborhoods. We must
6 fast track approvals to remove the ability for a local
7 councilmember to -- homes. These reforms are actually
8 common in other states. They're often known as
9 builder's remedies, and -- imbalance.

10 Number two, streamline advisory reviews
11 ULURP, the section in line with a Citizen's Budget
12 Commission recommendation as well. Local input into
13 the City's land use review process -- those with the
14 most time, money, and connections. And actually, many
15 places around the country have adopted better
16 community engagement practices that are more
17 representative and less reactionary. So we should
18 combine to separate community board and board --
19 advisory -- ULURP, bring them together with additional
20 board president oversight, improve techniques in a
21 borough-wide lens.

22 Three, make public land work for
23 affordable housing. So the City is by far the largest
24 land owner in the five boroughs. But turning city-
25 owned land into affordable housing is bureaucratic and

1 slow. We should establish an expedited process to do
2 just that.

3 Four, factor housing needs into
4 landmark decision. The Landmarks Preservation
5 Commission is actually limited by the charter itself
6 in what factors it can consider in making critical
7 decisions. And this is especially severe in the
8 City's most low-resource neighborhoods. So we should
9 ensure that housing affordability and availability are
10 part of the discussion when LPC makes its decisions.

11 Five, strengthen city agencies for
12 better results. The charter's not actually updated
13 the roles and responsibility of agencies to face 21st
14 century challenges, so we should allow stronger
15 oversight and accountability to increase its
16 effectiveness with -- specific ideas in the report
17 itself.

18 So we have a rare chance to reform the
19 charter so every New Yorker has a fair shot living
20 where they choose -- can afford to continue -- thank
21 you.

22 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

23 Any questions for Annemarie?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 4: Annemarie, the
25 question about the landmarks issue. How do you

1 envision that actually working? So what would --
2 town?

3 MS. GRAY: A couple things that we put
4 into the report and are really excited to talk about
5 this more: One, for example, they could work with
6 other city agencies who already think and are required
7 to think about the housing crisis in evaluating the
8 impact on a new historic district on housing sites --
9 housing opportunity sites. Same with -- we've
10 actually lost 100,000 units of housing over the last
11 couple decades in consolidations of historic -- you
12 know, used to be 15 apartment buildings into one
13 massive mansion. They have not -- they're not
14 actually evaluating the intent of that loss of
15 apartments in their decisions, and they should be
16 required to do that.

17 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

18 And just an alert folks, the next two
19 speakers will be Alicia Boyd and Rod Herbert.

20 Now we'll hear from Robert Tiburzi.

21 MR. TIBURZI: Good evening. My name is
22 Robert Tiburzi. I am a Brooklyn resident and a proud
23 member of Construction and General Building Laborers
24 Local 79. Our union is the largest construction
25 laborers local in the United States with over 10,000

1 members, the majority of whom live in the five
2 boroughs.

3 Laborers Local 79 calls on the New York
4 City Charter Revision Commission to include strong
5 labor standards when proposing changes to our city's
6 housing and land use policies. Economic development
7 will always succeed if the best -- workers that build
8 our city. We must not forget that the housing crisis
9 we face is also a low wage crisis. We can fast track
10 the building of affordable housing but only if the
11 fast track is coupled with city subsidies, which
12 require \$40 per hour minimum compensation package for
13 construction workers with strong local hire
14 provisions.

15 A bill before the city council that
16 includes these standards could pair with an expedited
17 review process for affordable housing to make sure
18 that all New Yorkers are served by the charter reform
19 process. Over 40 New York City councilmembers have
20 already signed on as cosponsors of this bill called
21 the Construction Justice Act. This bill sets a just
22 \$40 wage and benefits standard on city-financed
23 affordable housing projects and also includes strong
24 local hiring provisions for communities most in need.

25 We have an opportunity to build more

1 housing and faster while ensuring that our communities
2 get family-sustaining jobs. As we consider charter
3 reform, let's make sure that a just wage and community
4 hiring is part of every proposal. Thank you.

5 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

6 Any questions for Robert? All right.
7 Thank you so much.

8 Our next will be Alicia Boyd and Rod
9 Herbert.

10 Ms. Boyd?

11 MS. BOYD: Hi. My name is Alicia Boyd,
12 and I'm a political activist in the Crown
13 Heights/Flatbush. I have been a strong advocate
14 against development and high-rise development and
15 gentrification in my neighborhood. All the experts
16 that you have in front of you have never once talked
17 about gentrification, and this makes my -- they talked
18 about, "Oh, the opportunity for developers to build
19 more and build faster; and oh my God, it's so
20 expensive for them; and oh, we got to do" -- but not
21 one person did you ask to talk about what are the
22 effects of all this gentrification, this development.

23 District 35, Crown Heights, Flatbush,
24 downtown has the highest rate of development in
25 Brooklyn. Oh, we have our share. But we also have

1 the highest rate of evictions. And who are the ones
2 who are evicted? Black people. Black people are a
3 part of this process that continues to focus on black
4 communities, communities of color.

5 When they talked about those ten
6 communities that produced all of this development, did
7 anybody talk about the fact that they were all
8 communities of color? Did anybody sit there and give
9 you documentation about how much -- how much
10 displacement has happened as a result of that? Did
11 anybody talk about affordability?

12 Okay. So -- neighborhood, which is all
13 -- we got all of the -- all of the key points. We
14 have -- next to transit, we're next to Prospect Park.
15 We are -- you know, that's about all that you require
16 for a low-rise community. Last time, we just got a
17 rezoning in our neighborhood. The target population
18 for the affordable housing was \$141,000 starting.
19 \$3500 for a studio. My neighborhood has \$55,000
20 annual income. So what is that development going to
21 do? That's going to provide us with a little bit of
22 affordable housing, and it's going to put so much
23 pressure on the existing residents in that community.

24 This board needs to start talking about
25 not the term "affordability." It needs to be talking

1 about what -- are you going to plan to ensure that
2 communities of color whose average median income is
3 55,000 is not getting affordable housing that's
4 141,000. There needs to be a concern for the
5 residents.

6 People are leaving this city because of
7 a lack of affordability, but they're also leaving the
8 city because they can't afford to live here. If
9 you're making \$30,000, you have a 6 percent change of
10 finding an apartment in New York City. And nothing
11 that has come -- nothing, senior guests, none of them
12 are addressing those people. None of you are
13 addressing the people who make \$30,000.

14 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much, Ms.
15 Boyd -- be enough time for anybody to -- any questions
16 for Ms. Boyd?

17 MS. SAVINO: I was -- I know we're
18 short on time.

19 But I just -- you know, you described a
20 problem that exists in neighborhoods that have become
21 desirable. You know, so the first hearing, I talked
22 about, I grew in Astoria. I went from Staten Island
23 because I got priced out Astoria, and now we're
24 running out of space on Staten Island.

25 So part of the problem is neighborhoods

1 like Crown Heights -- which 30 years ago no one wanted
2 to -- no one wanted move to, now everyone wants to
3 move there, and it's driving up the cost, and then
4 couple that into development. How do we deal with
5 that? How do we -- how do we keep the afford -- the
6 affordable rent and/or homeownership opportunities
7 that were always there and allow for development at
8 the same time because we know we need to grow in this
9 city.

10 We know we need to build more housing
11 because even if you're able to stay there, you have
12 kids and grandkids who aren't going to be able to stay
13 in the neighborhood that they grew up in or buy a
14 house there or rent an apartment because those
15 opportunities have disappeared. So how do we tackle
16 that? And you don't know -- I don't know the answer,
17 and I've been in this business a long time. I'm just,
18 like, how -- how do we get -- that problem?

19 MS. BOYD: Well, one of the things you
20 can do is when a community sits down and actually does
21 a community plan -- and there have been community
22 plans, enforce that community plan too often and even
23 the President Reynoso himself created a community
24 plan, and then the Department of City Planning refused
25 to pass it. And so he used his community deference,

1 and he said no to that plan.

2 So why aren't you allowing the
3 community to actually create these plans because we
4 know our neighborhood best. We know where we can
5 truly have housing. The heights, the affordability,
6 we know that. But every time we create a plan, we
7 give it to the Department of City Planning, they drop
8 it in garbage, and they replace it with their own
9 plan. And then you have the community outrage that
10 there is a plan now sitting in place that's being
11 passed that the community did not support.

12 So what the City Charter should start
13 to do is start to empower community boards to create
14 these plans and demand that they be put in place
15 because we know our community's best. And if we
16 actually had that power, more communities would engage
17 in that. But right now there's not a community in New
18 York City that would want to engage with the
19 districtwide rezoning plan with the Department of City
20 Planning because of its history. So I think that
21 should be what you should do. Empower the community
22 boards, not take our voices away.

23 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

24 Any other questions for Ms. Boyd? And
25 before -- I'm sorry. Go ahead.

1 MR. DABARON: So -- wow. This is a
2 hard one -- power. I love it.

3 So what I'm trying to learn is some
4 solutions and stuff like that. And you -- you're
5 speaking to -- to a lot of that. In my -- in my
6 limited awareness, I'm just trying to wonder how do
7 we -- like, how do we fund the type of developments
8 that allow for the affordability? I think some of the
9 developments that happen in the target communities of,
10 you know, with dominant populations, people of color
11 because, you know, it's easier to build there, more
12 cost effective, et cetera. And they'll find a way to
13 make the money; right?

14 So that's where we start to talk about
15 zoning and their share and stuff like that, being able
16 to spread it throughout the city and find other
17 opportunities. But if they're coming to our
18 community, like, how do we have the discussion --
19 where do we have that discussion, whether it's
20 community board, residents, et cetera, how do we have
21 that to where we can balance it out to actually bring
22 the development and make it make sense?

23 MS. BOYD: Well, I think you can look
24 at Charles Barron's East New York district. He did a
25 wonderful job using community -- city council

1 deference and ensuring that nothing that came into his
2 community was not benefiting his community. I saw the
3 six-story high-rise developments. I saw the \$500 for
4 studio apartments. I saw the three-bedroom apartments
5 for between 815 and \$1,000 with my own eyes. He was
6 strong. He advocated for his residents. And he got
7 the development.

8 So why aren't we demanding that in our
9 city charter? Why aren't we demanding that area
10 median income be the target for any development coming
11 into a community? So what -- you -- "If you want come
12 and build in here and if you're going to provide us
13 housing, then it has to be at the AMI of the local
14 community."

15 Why hasn't that been happening? Why
16 can't that happen? Well he did it. So why don't you
17 ask him how it is done? He's still around.

18 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

19 And before you testify Mr. Herbert, the
20 next two speakers will be Sara Penenberg and Ben
21 Weinberg.

22 I want to note that we have about 30
23 speakers, and about 45 minutes left in our time. So I
24 need everyone to be respectful -- Mr. Herbert.

25 MR. HERBERT: All right. I'll be

1 quick. I don't know if I can follow up a discussion
2 like Ms. Boyd. I'll be very brief.

3 All right. So with regards to the
4 ULURP process, many of my bosses have told me in the
5 past that if there is a problem with a certain
6 process, don't look to change it, but go to improve
7 on. So how do you improve on? What's known as an
8 operational self-assessment. Not just have five, six,
9 or four people in a room to discuss the ULURP process
10 and make a change. You have to have a broad scope of
11 individuals together in a room, having them tear apart
12 the process and then rebuilding.

13 It's a painful -- painful process to go
14 through. I've done about 12 operational self-
15 assessments and for large projects and small projects.
16 It does work.

17 And the concern that many junior boards
18 have that I speak to other community board members is
19 the term as of right because what happens is that many
20 of the homeowners and long-term -- longtime community
21 members, they feel that they're going to be pushed
22 out. And that's how they look at that term, "as of
23 right."

24 I also know a couple of people in
25 Queens that as of right scares them because they have

1 these solar panels on their homes, and they're afraid
2 that they will no longer have the use of it -- of the
3 sun to use their solar panels because of as of right
4 construction.

5 All right. So what happens? You have
6 a process, don't look to change it, look to improve.

7 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Any
8 questions? Thank you.

9 Next up, we have -- we have Sara
10 Penenberg and Ben Weinberg.

11 MS. PENENBERG: Good evening, Charter
12 Review Commission. My name is Sara Penenberg, and I
13 am here on behalf of SEIU Local 32BJ. 32BJ is the
14 largest union property service workers in the country
15 representing over 170,000 members in 13 states,
16 including tens of thousands of commercial property
17 service workers, security officers, airport workers,
18 and residential building staff in New York City.

19 32BJ believes that the city ULURP's
20 process is a vital democratic process through which
21 our community members and groups, including labor
22 unions, have the opportunity to engage with developers
23 and shape that project and help shape New York City.
24 Through decades of involvement in the city's ULURP
25 process, our union has been able to defend hard-won

1 industry standards and benefits and to educate the
2 real estate industry and legislators about the
3 importance of creating good jobs in the property
4 service sector.

5 At the same time, our union understands
6 the urgency of New York City's housing crisis, and we
7 recognize that confronting this huge crisis and the
8 importance of this for our leadership and policy
9 makers advancing solutions to -- to facilitate the
10 productions of hundreds of thousands of new homes of
11 housing as soon as possible.

12 We are hopeful to the Charter
13 Commission in considering amendments to the ULURP
14 process and the Commission's proposal to balance the
15 pressure needed to build more housing with the
16 importance of preserving and representing this
17 democracy in this reviewing process.

18 Thank you for your time.

19 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

20 Any questions? Thank you so much.

21 And after Mr. Weinberg, next will be
22 Larry Nickens and Denis Ibric.

23 MR. WEINBERG: Thank you. My name is
24 Ben Weinberg, and I'm the director of public policy at
25 Citizens Union. I want to thank you for giving us the

1 opportunity to speak before you today.

2 Citizens Union is a nonpartisan
3 government group committed to reforming city and state
4 government by fostering accountability, honesty in the
5 highest technical standards, advocating for political
6 reform, and fair and open elections.

7 New York City is facing a serious
8 housing crisis and has a severe housing shortage, a
9 shortage in housing unions overall and affordable
10 housing in particular. It needs to produce more
11 housing and provide better opportunities for New
12 Yorkers to obtain and remain in reasonable housing.
13 We very much appreciate the commission's goal to
14 review sections of the city charter addressing
15 planning, housing, and development and to recommend
16 changes that would improve the state of housing in our
17 city.

18 We heard a lot of views here today
19 about ULURP, timelines, and other sections of the
20 charter related to housing. We are not opining at
21 this time on individual changes you may be considering
22 to these sections.

23 However, we do wish to comment on a
24 recent proposal to substantially alter the powers of
25 city officials on land use matters. Specifically, you

1 will likely hear -- receive proposal and shifting
2 final decision-making power on land use matters from
3 the council to the executive branch or the planning
4 commission or other entities. This raises fundamental
5 questions about the structure of the government and
6 the system checks and balances. So we would like to
7 give our opinion on that matter.

8 As a general matter, Citizens Union
9 believes that the problem of New York City housing is
10 not a problem of the New York City Charter, but rather
11 of a lack of a more comprehensive vision -- between
12 the executive and legislative branches are causing our
13 housing shortage in other words, and not the result of
14 flaws in the structure of government, but how these
15 branches of government operated and the politics that
16 drove and still drive their decisions.

17 And we heard from other speakers that
18 in past decades, the city has taken a piecemeal
19 approach to dealing with housing and planning. And
20 the city council in approving or disapproving those
21 narrow proposals, it's also generally deferred to one
22 or two council members. It's therefore gratifying to
23 see some recent shifts in political wind including the
24 City of Yes.

25 I'll wrap up and say we believe that

1 the keys for such further successes like the City of
2 Yes are the willingness of their executive branch to
3 develop and present housing and other development
4 programs or broad scope wherever possible. And the
5 willing of the mayor and the council to coordinate
6 from an early stage in such programs. Continuing the
7 political jockeying between the City Planning Commission
8 and the council on their proposal is a steep price to
9 pay for the millions of city residents who cannot find
10 or afford a place to live.

11 We also know that as a general
12 principle, zoning is a law which determines how land
13 may be used. And therefore, changes to that law
14 should rest in the hands of the council as a
15 legislative body. They mayor has a strong role in
16 this process through the City Planning Commission,
17 which as the sole power -- control the land -- and
18 decide what --

19 MR. BUERY: We're at time,
20 Mr. Weinberg.

21 MR. WEINBERG: Thank you.

22 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Any
23 questions for Mr. Weinberg?

24 DR. NIEVES: I -- I do. Just briefly.
25 So first picture the -- 32BJ, I just

1 want to be clear. You're suggesting that in the ULURP
2 process, whatever reforms are made, we retain the
3 protection for labor standards and prevailing wage, et
4 cetera, those things. So I'm assuming the carpenters
5 and the laborers and everybody increased with that
6 concept?

7 MS. PENENBERG: Yes.

8 DR. NIEVES: Okay. Ben, I'm somewhat
9 confused.

10 MR. WEINBERG: Yes.

11 DR. NIEVES: So are you suggesting we
12 keep the ULURP process the way it is? We upend it?
13 I -- and maybe I didn't understand, but I could not
14 quite follow what you were recommending.

15 MR. WEINBERG: I'm sorry if my -- I was
16 unclear. We are not -- about the initial phases of
17 legal process. Only about the question of who has the
18 final say over -- over land use matters, whether it is
19 the city council as the legislative body, or any other
20 part of city government as this is maybe a -- kind of
21 like a preemptive opinion to some -- we have heard
22 around the discussion before this hearing and probably
23 you will hear later on about shifting the final
24 decision-making power on -- on land use matters from
25 the city council to the executive.

1 DR. NIEVES: So you are anticipating.

2 MR. WEINBERG: Exactly. Always good to
3 anticipate.

4 MR. NIEVES: Thank you.

5 MR. BUERY: Can I ask a question,
6 Mr. Weinberg?

7 MR. WEINBERG: Please.

8 MR. BUERY: What impact did that then
9 have on the challenges in -- you discussed around the
10 obstacles to development -- what then would be the
11 reform?

12 MR. WEINBERG: So -- so again, many of
13 the proposals that were heard today are not
14 necessarily -- do not necessarily involve the question
15 of who has that final decision-making power. And they
16 are -- reform, which I'm -- I'm sure we would support
17 many of them. The -- the one issue I think we all
18 agree on is member deference as -- as kind of an
19 inside issue of the legislative branch, which it seems
20 like most of the people around here, including us, are
21 not in favor of. And we are aware of the problems and
22 difficulties of actually legislating member deference
23 or regulating it through the city charter.

24 However, our point is kind of broader
25 about who has the final say over land use matters,

1 whether that should be the legislative volume or the
2 other -- or -- or the executive. And our concern is
3 really about shifting too much power to the executive
4 in -- and final say over where the --

5 MR. BUERY: Thank you. Thank you both
6 so much.

7 Next up, Larry Nickens and Denis Ibric.
8 And following Larry and Denis will be Catherine
9 Vaughan and Yvonne Roman.

10 MR. IBRIC: Thank you so much. Good
11 evening. My name is Denis Ibric. I'm speaking on
12 behalf of the 20,000 men and women of the New York
13 City District Council of Carpenters. Every day our
14 members are risking their lives to build New York
15 City.

16 Numerous press reports have suggested
17 that this commission is seeking to limit member
18 deference and weaken the ULURP process. What this
19 commission must understand is that while imperfect,
20 member deference and ULURP remains the only mechanism
21 that forces powerful real estate interests to make
22 concessions to the community and ensures construction
23 workers are paid enough to afford the very affordable
24 housing they build.

25 This job used to be a ticket to the

1 middle class. Now the amount of construction workers
2 on government assistance is above average when
3 compared to other industries. That is why we cannot
4 support and will aggressively oppose any efforts to
5 erode the power of elected officials to protect our
6 members on projects in their districts.

7 If the commission wants to pursue
8 targeted common-sense reforms to speed up the process,
9 that is a conversation worth having. But it cannot
10 come with the expense of responsible development and
11 working New Yorkers.

12 With as much humility as I can muster,
13 I'd like to remind everyone that whether in Albany or
14 City Hall, every time we have engaged in a land use
15 fight over the past four years, the Carpenters Union
16 has always won. We hope for a constructive dialogue.
17 But on behalf of the workers of New York City union
18 and non-union alike, we will be ready if it is not.
19 Thank you.

20 MR. BUERY: Start -- name earlier.
21 Mr. Ibric?

22 MR. IBRIC: Ibric.

23 MR. BUERY: Ibric. Sorry about that.

24 I have a question. So you talked
25 about -- reform. Is there a particular reform that

1 you would recommend or open to?

2 MR. IBRIC: I would -- if I would be
3 able to, I would like to at least send an email of a
4 full detail approach on it. If I could get your email
5 at the -- at the end of this please.

6 MR. BUERY: Thank you. And -- and the
7 email address, I believe, is chartertestimony@ -- oh
8 my gosh. I forgot. Can somebody remind me what the
9 email address? Citycharter.nyc.gov. So
10 chartertestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov. And that's true
11 for anyone who plans to testify and is not able to
12 stay, please do submit written testimony. It will all
13 be reviewed.

14 Thank you. Any other questions? Oh
15 yes. I'm sorry.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 5: I did. I -- I
17 want to say first, I'm a daughter of carpenter, so I
18 just wanted to say that.

19 MR. IBRIC: Awesome.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 5: From Brooklyn.
21 So I wanted -- I just wanted to ask -- push a little
22 bit further on that. When you send that email, I'm
23 curious to also hear not just what would be some of
24 the solutions or suggestions for an expedited process,
25 but also for a process that still includes community

1 board input as well too. So if you can add those,
2 that's my request.

3 MR. IBRIC: Absolutely.

4 MR. BUERY: Okay.

5 MS. SAVINO: Thank you guys for -- for
6 coming tonight and testifying. And you said something
7 interesting that every time you -- whether it's in
8 Albany or in City Hall, when you guys are opposed to
9 something or support something, you managed to deliver
10 it. Quite honestly, a lot of the changes to housing
11 law and financing and development that is needed for
12 the city would not have happened without the
13 partnership either in Albany or in City Hall with the
14 carpenters, with the laborers, with the entire
15 building trades. And in fact, the labor movement in
16 general because we know how hard it is for working
17 people to be able to find a place to live in the city.

18 But many of the projects that your guys
19 are going to have gone to work on, it's taken forever
20 to get them to shovels in the ground. So I think what
21 we are looking for is are there recommendations coming
22 from either the carpenters and the building trades at
23 large as to what we can do to speed up that process so
24 not only do you guys get to work sooner, which you
25 might even get an opportunity to live in some of these

1 buildings that you are building.

2 And if you don't know the answer to
3 that, you can share with us later. But I'm just
4 curious as to what the perspective of building trades
5 is on this.

6 MR. IBRIC: Right. So I can't -- I
7 can't speak for the building trades, but I can
8 definitely in that email speak for what the carpenters
9 have a plan as. Yeah, definitely.

10 MS. SAVINO: Thank you.

11 MR. BUERY: Thank you for your
12 testimony. I appreciate it. Thank you.

13 Next we have Catherine Vaughan and
14 Yvonne Roman. Ms. Vaughan?

15 MS. VAUGHAN: Hi. My name is Catherine
16 Vaughan. I'm the co-founder and co-executive director
17 of Abundance New York. We --

18 MR. BUERY: I'm sorry. What?

19 MS. VAUGHAN: Abundance New York.

20 We're a community of 2,000 New Yorkers
21 who believe that our city's superpower -- growth and
22 change -- want to see New York that can build enough
23 housing for -- demand, and build transit and climate
24 infrastructure as well -- 21st century. And we
25 represent what power -- refers to as a quiet majority

1 of people who hope to be a counterweight to what we
2 see as undue and -- and just too much NIMBY influence
3 in a lot of these processes. And in addition to
4 running Abundance New York, I'm a member of community
5 Ward 6, and I'm a mother of two young children and a
6 renter. So it's a personal issue for me as well.

7 Our housing crisis is undeniable.
8 Rents are rising at seven times -- seven times faster
9 than wages and hit a record high of \$3,500 on median
10 rent in Brooklyn last year. Fifty-five percent of
11 households are rent burdened, and we have the lowest
12 rental -- we had the lowest rental vacancy rate that
13 we've seen in 50 years.

14 And yet, as speaker after speaker has
15 described, the processes for approving new housing are
16 broken. From the ULURP process to member deference,
17 which gives individual members a veto over citywide
18 housing priorities to specific participants in the
19 ULURP process that are not representative of their
20 community -- community boards.

21 So as we think about some of these
22 process changes, I -- I have three Ps here. In the
23 purview of ULURP change, can the process change and
24 can the participants change? So in terms of the
25 purview, you know, we had speakers like -- President

1 Reynoso talked about comprehensive planning and --
2 processes. You know, can we set goals and targets by
3 district about how much housing should be built with
4 an eye toward discrepancies and inequities that have
5 happened in the past and think about what is
6 appropriate for each district. And then fast track
7 projects through the ULURP process. You know, can we
8 think about the disposition of public land differently
9 as -- as -- of New York mentioned, thinking about fast
10 tracking processes for building affordable housing on
11 public -- on city-owned land.

12 And then finally, not housing-related.
13 But all sorts of land-use projects are required and
14 subject to ULURP like -- shelters. And that doesn't
15 seem like a good use of time, so think about what can
16 we remove or -- from ULURP. Can the process change --
17 Reynoso suggested switching the order of borough
18 presidents and councilmembers.

19 And you know, Open New York has
20 recommended a streamlined process that combines the
21 community -- and borough president -- since borough
22 presidents have oversight of community boards already
23 that could be a consolidation processes where the BP
24 would ultimately oversee and coordinate community
25 input.

1 And finally, speaking of community
2 boards, thinking about the participants in this
3 process, community boards play an important advisory
4 role in ULURP, and yet they're not representative of
5 their community. They tend to be older, whiter,
6 wealthier, more likely to own homes and cars. The
7 charter could require more community boards to be more
8 representative of their communities or reimagine them
9 entirely through random selection, citizen assembly
10 processes or just other innovative ways of getting a
11 community.

12 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Can
13 we -- thank you.

14 Please continue.

15 MS. ROMAN: Hi. My name is Yvonne
16 Roman. I'm a homeowner, and I've been in my home over
17 60 years. As developers -- okay. As developers build
18 their properties, they are required to avoid damaging
19 neighboring buildings. Damaging neighboring
20 buildings, this has always been a challenge,
21 especially in New York City where construction often
22 causes serious harm to adjoining properties. To
23 prevent this, it's required that developers enter into
24 a license agreement with the neighboring property
25 owners granting access to protect those properties.

1 Yet, despite the extensive planning that goes into
2 real estate development, this crucial step is often
3 overlooked.

4 I did my due diligence. I researched.
5 I had a neighbor agreement. I notified my insurance
6 company that construction was starting on both sides
7 of my 100-year-old home at the same time. This
8 happened in 2016. Let that sink in. nine years. For
9 nine years, my family and I have been unable to fully
10 enjoy our home. Besides myself, my home is empty. No
11 rental income. My family had to move away up to White
12 Plains to find affordable housing. Developers arrived
13 -- promising to fix any damage that projects cause.
14 But when the damage happens, suddenly accountability
15 disappeared.

16 The 2024 Charter Revision Commission
17 introduced reform to improve the capital planning
18 process, prioritizing capital project efficiency. But
19 as we streamline these processes, we must include
20 clear, enforceable protection for homeowners. We
21 cannot sacrifice -- quality of life in the name of
22 development. Builders must hold accountability when
23 they fail to honor these agreements with their
24 neighbors. It should not be as easy as just forming
25 an LLC and then vanishing when it's time to take

1 responsibility. That's exactly what happened in my
2 case.

3 A recent city report stated "These
4 reforms are essential to making New York City more
5 resilient to extreme weather, and most importantly, to
6 ensure the wellbeing of our people." Well, where's my
7 resiliency? The buildings went up, and while my
8 basement continues to get flooding, creating a
9 hazardous mold infestation.

10 This cannot continue. We need real
11 collaboration between builders and homeowners, not
12 just empty promises. I've taken my case to every
13 politician I can find, and all I hear is, "Call my
14 office in the morning." Well, I did that. And guess
15 what? Lawyers are expensive. And after exhausting my
16 retirement, my 401k is still not enough. And when I
17 finally go to court, the judge issues adjournment
18 after adjournment. Nine years later, nothing has been
19 done.

20 So I ask what happened to getting stuff
21 done? I did my part. Now it's time for my city that
22 I love to do its part. Thank you.

23 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. And --
24 thank you so much.

25 I'd please ask everyone to please save

1 commentary for the testimony. Thank you so much.

2 Before I ask questions, I want to --
3 Vishnu Reddy and John Woelfling will be speaking next.

4 Do you have any questions for the
5 panelist? And I do want to express my -- just express
6 my -- my sorrow that you're going through --

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 6: We need
8 solutions, not just sympathy.

9 MR. DABARON: Yeah. I just wanted to
10 ask you -- if I heard you correct, you were talking
11 about community board appointment; correct? You,
12 ma'am. Sorry.

13 MS. VAUGHAN: Yes.

14 MS. DABARON: And thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 I wanted to know, like, what were your
17 ideas in terms of, like, how -- how do you see that,
18 you know, that that can be done in the way that, you
19 know, you feel?

20 MS. VAUGHAN: Sure. I mean, there
21 could be questions on the community board application.
22 I've seen some changes in some boroughs around
23 homeownership. So having a proportion of homeowners
24 versus renters. Be similar to that in the community.
25 You could do that with a number of different potential

1 dimensions.

2 But I think that could be one step
3 toward -- you know, obviously, it's hard for anyone to
4 show up at any, like, 6:30 p.m. meeting. So it often
5 selects for people who have more time and more
6 resources to be able to do that. But if it's possible
7 to rethink ways that community boards could truly be
8 more representative of their community and how
9 proportions of lower income folks or renters or people
10 who are -- affected by the housing crisis.

11 MR. BUERY: Just a follow up, and
12 then -- do you think that should be a charter change,
13 or do you think that's the responsibility of both --
14 certainly, very thoughtful suggestions. But the
15 responsibility of the appointing authorities, the
16 borough president, the city councilmember? And
17 shouldn't they be held accountable?

18 MS. VAUGHAN: Yeah. Well, what is the
19 accountability process --

20 MR. BUERY: The -- the voting booth.

21 MS. VAUGHAN: Yeah. I mean,
22 unfortunately, with, like, 7 percent turnout rates
23 and -- and very low kind of -- a high capacity of
24 information about things like board appointments, I
25 think that, like, that -- that process wouldn't work.

1 So I think that -- I -- I'm not an expert on charters.
2 But I do think that some sort of accountability
3 process or mandate could help, you know, folks appoint
4 more representative boards.

5 MR. BUERY: Any other questions?

6 MR. DABARON: If it's okay, just a
7 follow up. I'm sorry. Just a follow up. I know
8 we -- time.

9 But I was seeing in certain cases where
10 you have community board appointments that are not
11 necessarily representative of actual community members
12 and don't have real stakes in the community. So my --
13 my thought is on how, you know, the idea of how the
14 charter could better server to address that particular
15 thing.

16 MS. VAUGHAN: Yeah. I mean, I think
17 you could also just look to other models of what
18 democratic processes look like. Community boards --
19 if you've ever sat through a community board meeting,
20 you can feel -- it can feel very tedious, and not
21 necessarily really often -- community input and true
22 participation. So thinking of -- I mean, there are,
23 you know, I served on a grand jury here, and that
24 was -- that looked like a truly representative slice,
25 at least of citizens in Brooklyn whereas, you know,

1 the way community boards look, it looks like people
2 who have a lot of time and interest who sit there and
3 often say no to things. And -- and so, you know,
4 selecting people at random, having a citizen's
5 assembly model, I'm not -- again, I'm not an expert in
6 this either, but there's a wealth of literature on how
7 other countries and cities try to optimize for truly
8 representative participation and democratic processes.

9 MS. SAVINO: I just wanted to add it
10 may be worth looking at the Manhattan process of
11 the -- there. They reimagined all the community
12 boards and really looked at these -- I'm just saying
13 that because I think there are ways of thinking about
14 that. And I would say too, not one community board's
15 the same as the next community board too. So you
16 could have some boards in Brooklyn that may -- more
17 representative than others. But I think that's -- I
18 just wanted to add that.

19 MS. VAUGHAN: I will check that out.

20 MR. BUERY: Thank you both for your
21 testimony. Thank you.

22 Mr. Reddy?

23 MR. REDDY: Hi. My name is Vishnu
24 Reddy, and I live in Sunny Side. I'm here to ask to
25 the Commission to push for -- reform to the charter

1 that meet the moment in the face of an intense housing
2 crisis that is decades in the making. I'm so grateful
3 that we've passed an important milestone with City of
4 Yes, but we need to keep the momentum going if we want
5 to have any relief for New Yorkers who struggle to
6 live here.

7 We need government to act to get us the
8 housing we need, but it's clear now more than ever
9 that the processes set forth decades ago are holding
10 us back from solving the crisis. The clear example of
11 how current processes keep shooting ourselves in the
12 foot is the -- project in the Bronx.

13 It's very clear that the city has a
14 dire need for supportive housing, and the Just Home
15 project is a slam dunk in that regard. The process to
16 get Just Home across the finish line has taken years,
17 and we still have no idea if and when it's going to
18 get approved. More than two years ago, Bronx CB 11
19 had a hearing about Just Home where my friends were
20 harassed and faced threats of violence for simply
21 being in favor of the project.

22 More than one year ago, Just Home
23 finally made it to the council. But the council that
24 stalled on it because they are not bound to any time
25 constraint. The fact that we still have no clue

1 what's happening with the project after so long is
2 ridiculous.

3 I'd like the Charter Revision
4 Commission to pursue reforms that'll help us do better
5 to deliver homes for New Yorkers, and there are some
6 key reforms I think would help. We should consolidate
7 advisory review phase on any housing project into a
8 single process slip by the borough president. The way
9 we currently do advising -- advisory reviews is not
10 working, and I'm sick of attending screaming matches
11 in church basements run by unelected people to get an
12 apartment building built. Borough presidents are much
13 more well-resourced and have more experienced staff
14 that can help run these community -- processes better.
15 And by consolidating the process, we can avoid
16 needless slowdowns to progress.

17 We should look at consolidating city
18 agencies like DCP and HPD that do a lot of related
19 work so they can more effectively tackle the housing
20 crisis by having a clear -- direction.

21 I'm so grateful to the amazing public
22 servants that are working hard to solve this
23 existential problem for the City, and I believe that
24 consolidating efforts around housing under a single
25 agency would help them serve us better, especially

1 with the staffing shortages in the city right now.

2 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

3 MR. REDDY: I'd also want to see
4 affordable housing on public land get a more
5 streamlined process so it can deliver the housing New
6 Yorkers need to stay and thrive in the city. Whenever
7 I go to community board meetings on housing, I hear my
8 neighbors mention the clear need for more affordable
9 housing, and they are completely right. Lastly, I'd
10 like to see reforms that make exclusionary low-growth
11 neighborhoods contribute their fair share when it
12 comes to housing supply. Thank you for tackling such
13 an important issue for our city, and I'm looking
14 forward to voting "yes" on much needed reforms on my
15 ballot.

16 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much,
17 Mr. Reddy.

18 Can I have Mr. Woelfling -- before
19 questions. And before you speak, Mr. Woelfling, just
20 so you know, the next speakers will be Hector
21 Robertson and David Gordon.

22 MR. WOELFLING: Thank you. So my name
23 is John Woelfling. Thank you all for your service on
24 this important commission.

25 I'm here to tell you that the ULURP

1 process is broken. And -- and I can tell you this
2 with confidence because I am an architect, practiced
3 in the city for three years. I've also served on my
4 community board -- my local community board, Brooklyn.
5 So I've seen this from both sides. I've seen how the
6 process works for both sides.

7 Much of what I've worked on as an
8 architect is affordable housing. And really truly
9 affordable housing. Affordable housing is sponsored
10 by the city, HPD. And many of those projects have
11 gone through the ULURP process, sometimes for
12 disposition of city-owned property, sometimes for
13 rezoning, and sometimes both.

14 So in my experience, this process is
15 broken in two ways. And the first one which has been
16 spoken to as length today is about nonstrategic
17 planning. So I'm not going to go into that.

18 But what I will talk about, which is
19 where I have a great degree of frustration, the ULURP
20 process, as many or maybe all of you know, is
21 comprised of two components. There's the
22 precertification phase, and then there's the
23 post-certification phase -- phase. The
24 post-certification phase takes six to seven
25 statutory -- it's limited to that. The

1 precertification phase can take three years or more.
2 That is crazy. And what we -- what often takes up
3 that time is urban planning comments. It's talking
4 about where the curb cut is located. It's talking
5 about, you know, the environmental assessment.

6 And I -- I truly believe that we need
7 to build more affordable housing. I have two projects
8 that have taken over three years for just a simple map
9 change. Three years of that precertification process.
10 So one of my proposals -- and I know this is
11 controversial. It's been spoken about tonight how
12 controversial it might be -- would be to -- if you've
13 got an affordable housing project that targets
14 neighborhood AMIs and has a significant percentage
15 that has targeted that neighborhood's AMIs, and maybe
16 leave some other environmental factors, just change
17 the map. Change the map and move on. Focus on the
18 bigger, more complicated things.

19 These things that my fellow architect,
20 Vishaan, talked about, it made so much sense. Limit
21 it to what's in the neighborhood. But make that
22 project affordable. So that's gentrification,
23 displacement, those things are all addressed. I've
24 heard many times in the community board that these
25 are, like, the -- concerns of my neighbors. And I get

1 it. I understand it. They're right. But we can
2 build more housing. We can do it -- thank you.

3 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

4 Any questions for Mr. Reddy or Mr.
5 Woelfling?

6 MR. DABARON: I have a question.

7 So first, if -- if you do it the way
8 you say, right, if there are -- are you sacrificing
9 quality for speed? I agree with you, by the way, in
10 terms of the ULURP process and the amount of time and
11 stuff like that, so we agree. But I'm just wondering
12 that is there a way that we can do this to speed it up
13 but without sacrificing even addressing things like
14 infrastructure throughout the local community,
15 community engagement, all different things. Is there
16 a way to do that without sacrificing those things?

17 MR. WOELFLING: I think this does go
18 back to the comprehensive plan that's been mentioned
19 by many others. You just -- you need to look at what
20 that -- those implications are, whether it's school,
21 sewage, transits. The -- the thing was so ingenious
22 about the -- the study that Vishaan spoke about was
23 limiting it to areas that could really handle some of
24 these things. Don't go and flood -- areas. Build
25 where near -- where transit is. That infill with that

1 midrise housing, the fact that we can get so much out
2 of that makes so much sense.

3 MR. BUERY: Thank you very much.

4 I have a follow up question. So how
5 would environmental review play -- what role would
6 environmental review play in the --

7 MR. WOELFLING: So it may be something
8 as simple as looking at shadows. Maybe it is, you
9 know, making sure that the density of this is not
10 going to outweigh something that is also in the
11 neighborhood. One of the things that I often do in my
12 rezoning proposals is I look at the contents -- I'll
13 look at what the adjacent zoning districts are. I'll
14 look at whether there's a big building right next door
15 or within a block radius or -- or within a relatively
16 close area. I think in Miami, there is something very
17 similar. If you are matching the density of something
18 that's in the -- a mile radius, you get a much faster
19 process to get that project approved. So that would
20 be one way to do it.

21 DR. NIEVES: As someone who's built
22 affordable housing, I have -- housing that you've
23 built that's been affordable, has it been to the AMI
24 of that local community?

25 MR. WOELFLING: It has been. We

1 often -- like, every unit is affordable. And it's not
2 just, like, the -- affordable. It's 20, 40 -- there's
3 some 60 and some 80, maybe some hundred. But -- lower
4 rates.

5 And one of the -- I think one of the
6 controversial things about doing these all-affordable
7 housing projects is that it takes a lot of city
8 subsidy to do those. If you do have a more mixed
9 income like an 80/20 -- 45 W or 45 X program, those
10 two populations cross subsidize each other.

11 I think that actually is better housing
12 policy to have a mix of incomes within buildings and
13 within communities. It allows people to stay in
14 place. It allowed for more resiliency in the
15 building's -- if there is some sort of problem where,
16 you know, people can't pay rent for whatever reason,
17 there's more ability for those buildings to survive
18 those type of situations.

19 MR. BUERY: Okay. Thank you so much --
20 thank you so much.

21 Next we have Hector Robinson and David
22 Gordon.

23 And just so you know, up next would be
24 Cormac Slade Byrd and Michael Abrahams. Thank you so
25 much.

1 Mr. Robinson?

2 MR. ROBINSON: Thank you.

3 Good evening. I think there's been a
4 lot of talk about comprehensive planning in this
5 meeting tonight. But I think a lot of people need to
6 realize that comprehensive planning is more than just
7 land use. We have to start focusing on education,
8 transportation, public health, and safety,
9 sustainability.

10 Most of the buildings that are built,
11 for example, in my community in Crown Heights, are not
12 taking these aspects into account. There's a lot of
13 luxury buildings where the population of Crown Heights
14 is probably less than \$65,000 a year. And so when we
15 take this discomfort and planning and not take into
16 account all these different aspects that goes into
17 building a community. I think that would be
18 absolutely shortsighted.

19 We do not want to stifle the
20 development of New York City. That's not the goal.
21 And if I sit on a community board and see exactly
22 what's happening in the community and how the -- into
23 our community and don't take into account the
24 community residents' will and desire what exactly they
25 need for the communities.

1 And so when the city council and the
2 borough president actually think that having a
3 comprehensive plan is going to solve all the problems
4 and cutting out the community, I just think -- I
5 simply think that this is just not the way we should
6 go. I don't necessarily think that the commission
7 really has a lot of say in -- in exactly how we should
8 actually handle development in different communities.

9 But I think the ULURP process should
10 remain. It gives communities a voice in exactly what
11 they need to build in their communities, and it
12 actually tells the developers exactly how we need to
13 build in their communities. And so -- of this is
14 absolutely necessary for us to continue doing in our
15 communities. Thank you.

16 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

17 Mr. Gordon?

18 MR. GORDON: Thank you. Thank you for
19 holding this hearing. I'm here today to testify as an
20 advocate for more housing, more homes in New York.
21 I'm a -- side renter, and I frequently find myself at
22 CB-3 meetings and other public meetings much like
23 tonight's.

24 Frankly, tonight's meeting feels much
25 more productive than the average CB -- meeting. I

1 want to emphasize my support for two specific points
2 proposed tonight by our experts. First, a fast track
3 for ULURP as proposed by Vicki Been as well as
4 Annemarie Gray of Open New York.

5 And secondly, strengthening the
6 interagency organization, I think as being testified,
7 and this was one of the largest contributors of added
8 time. And I don't think it is the type of time that
9 people would object to taking out of the process, and
10 the type of time that if we can get our agencies more
11 coordinated, it can seem -- be a seamless win-win for
12 everybody.

13 But I won't go on too much longer
14 because I'm proud to be testifying in favor of these
15 reforms as I wrote my senior thesis on this exact
16 topic, much of it based on the research and work of
17 experts who testified today, including Vicky Been and
18 Vishaan Chakrabarti. So I'm here to ask this
19 commission to lean on their expertise and lean on the
20 experts we've heard here tonight. You invited these
21 experts for a reason, and they have done the work and
22 know what is needed to be done in order to reform the
23 commission -- in order to reform ULURP.

24 I also just would like to remind
25 everybody that the Commission's work product at the

1 end of the day will be a referendum that everyday
2 voters will get to vote on. Those voters include
3 myself and the other everyday public New Yorkers who
4 have come here to testify. And so in that vein, I
5 really hope that you use the expertise to its greatest
6 advantage and put forward what they think is best for
7 the workers and we'll have the opportunity to accept
8 or reject that.

9 So I'll end my testimony by saying that
10 I look forward to voting in favor of some of the
11 reforms that I've heard here tonight, and I hope the
12 commission includes them in their final proposal. And
13 I look forward to voting for these because I think
14 that they'll bring about lower rents, and it'll mean
15 less time for me spending less time in lengthy
16 meetings begging for more housing -- all the time. I
17 think that we can save a lot of all of our times with
18 this process. So thank you again and I'll cut it off
19 there.

20 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Any
21 questions for our panelist?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 7: Thank you for
23 your testimony.

24 I wanted to know, are you -- for
25 Greenlining -- are you okay with greenlining the ULURP

1 process, or do you think that the process is good as
2 it is? And if you had any particular recommendation,
3 what would that be whether to make it better or keep
4 it the same, or whatever the case.

5 MR. GORDON: Well, I think -- I
6 think -- sorry. I think the processes should be
7 streamlined. I think that we -- we spend a lot of
8 time on the community board trying to ensure that the
9 community is protected from, you know, unnecessary
10 tall buildings and developments that don't really help
11 the community. So I -- I don't necessarily think that
12 the process needs to be revamped or taken offline yet.
13 You need to have a fair track to make sure that
14 whatever's built in the community, number one, is
15 useful for the community. And number two, that the
16 community continues to have a voice as to whether or
17 not that usefulness is what is good for the people of
18 the community, not necessarily the developer.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 7: Thank you.

20 MR. BUERY: All right. Thank you so
21 much. I appreciate it.

22 I just want to note our ASL
23 interpreters are only here -- to stay here until
24 8 p.m. And I want to -- I want to know of anyone here
25 requires ASL service. Not -- who's still in the room

1 because we can ask them to stay later, but we'll only
2 do if someone needs interpretation. There's subtitles
3 online for people who need it. Okay. All right.
4 Thank you so much.

5 So our next speakers are Cormac
6 Slack -- sorry, Cormac Slade Byrd and Michael
7 Abrahams. I'm sure I butchered both those names, so I
8 apologize.

9 Afterwards it'll be Daniel Golliher and
10 Julio Pena.

11 Thank you so much. Mister -- sorry.
12 Can you -- how do you pronounce your last name?

13 MR. SLADE BYRD: Slade Byrd.

14 MR. BUERY: Slade Byrd. Okay. Thank
15 you so much.

16 MR. SLADE BYRD: Good afternoon. My
17 name is Cormac Slade Byrd. I urge this commission to
18 take bold action -- a more prosperous New York City.
19 For decades, our city has been mired in a housing
20 emergency. A crisis declared year to year, with
21 little to no real change. For over 50 years, we have
22 simply hoped the emergency would fix itself, but
23 housing remains as unaffordable as ever. This failure
24 exposes our inability to address the root cause:
25 insufficient new housing supply.

1 There are two proposals that can help
2 break this cycle. To help contextualize -- proposals
3 a little bit, they're working on the member deference
4 problem that Howard Slatkin eloquently brought up
5 earlier today. First, we must reform City Council's
6 role in -- decisions during a housing emergency.
7 Today the council can block or dilute new housing
8 proposals with a simple majority vote, repeatedly
9 stifling projects essential to increasing our housing
10 stock.

11 What has been said during a declared
12 emergency, the council -- to disprove -- decisions to
13 be raised to a supermajority -- this change in Section
14 197-d would force the council to take its own
15 emergency declaration seriously concerning the only
16 proposals would near -- unanimous opposition can be
17 blocked.

18 Second, we need to reshape the
19 council's composition so the -- represents the entire
20 city rather than narrow local interests. With 51
21 district-based members, our current council is often
22 paralyzed by parochial pressures. Let's add ten
23 citywide at large seats to Chapter 2 of the charter.
24 This would inject a broader perspective into the
25 legislative process. These representatives

1 accountable to all New Yorkers would focus on the
2 metropolitan-wide issues and help counterbalance
3 localized, resistant to progress.

4 Consider the transformative potential
5 of these reforms. In the early 1900s, New York built
6 over 700,000 new housing units in less than a decade.
7 A construction boom that stabilized rent, created --
8 and created vibrant, diverse neighborhoods. This
9 historical example shows that -- different policies
10 can reshape a city's housing market.

11 As a great New York City politician
12 once declared, "Far better is it to dare mighty things
13 to win gloriant triumphs" -- "to win glorious triumphs
14 or" -- "even though checkered by failure." The spirit
15 of daring innovation has been lacking here in New York
16 City.

17 While the recently passed City of Yes
18 was a step in the right direction, it was
19 significantly -- down and pales in comparison to what
20 we could be doing. Just this week, Cambridge,
21 Massachusetts passed zoning reforms, which eliminated
22 outdated single-family restrictions, and now allowed
23 six-story buildings to be built citywide. It is now
24 more restrictive to build in Brooklyn than it is in
25 Cambridge, a disparity that must change.

1 In summary, these two reforms work in
2 tandem to break the cycle of inaction that defined New
3 York City's housing policy for far too long by
4 imposing a supermajority requirement for blocking new
5 housing during an emergency and by expanding the
6 council -- voices inside of New York -- real, rapid
7 change.

8 Thank you Chair Buery and the Charter
9 Revision Commission.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Build in the
11 rich men kind of neighborhoods. Bull.

12 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. And
13 please -- please allow folks to testify so we can --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: He finished,
15 sir. Sorry.

16 MR. BUERY: Mr. Abrahams?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Gentrifier.

18 MR. ABRAHAMS: So I don't have quite as
19 much -- talk. I wanted to voice my support for --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Another
21 gentrifier.

22 MR. ABRAHAMS: -- the Open New York site
23 revision recommendations. Particularly, one would
24 create, like, a fast track for fair housing. Like --
25 framework. Like, basically, you know, there's been a

1 lot said about how, you know, our housing shortage
2 lacks -- increased -- like, causing this -- but like,
3 you know, I think one thing that a lot of people who
4 have been, like, suggesting things have been, like,
5 "Oh. Let's add a confrontation to the process.
6 Let's, like, add this city, like, you know,
7 comprehensive plan." Like, you know.

8 And like, yes, like, I understand that.
9 But I just want to, like, ask that we all, like --
10 like, try to consider, like, a principle of, like,
11 designing rules that, like -- like, rule -- system,
12 something that can, like, simplify streamline. Like,
13 if we -- like, if we were create a, like,
14 comprehensive plan; right?

15 Like, the value of that would be -- in
16 creating -- like, simple agreement that, like, we can
17 later, like, revise and say, "Hey, like, that's what
18 you agreed to. Like, you don't have to go through
19 these complicated processes and it, like, speeds
20 things up"; right?

21 So you know, I guess I also wanted to
22 maybe just to address a little bit of this, like, you
23 know, what -- you know, what is the community New
24 York? Like you know, "Oh, you're a gentrifier";
25 right? Like --

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: You are.

2 MR. ABRAHAMS: -- the -- you know,
3 like -- it's like, you know, I've been living here for
4 eight years; right? Like, I'm a renter --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Yeah.
6 Gentrifier.

7 MR. ABRAHAMS: -- you know, and like,
8 you know, my friends are here. I've lived here. I've
9 been coming to New York, and this is my home; right?
10 Like -- and you know, like, I -- the --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Right. I
12 mean, it's just --

13 MR. BUERY: Please -- please -- all due
14 respect when --

15 MR. ABRAHAMS: Yeah. Ordinary --
16 ordinary -- trying to survive here. Like, you know,
17 we just want, like, prices to, like, come down.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Oh really?

19 MR. ABRAHAMS: Like, you know, we just
20 want to be able to live here.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: And we don't?

22 MR. ABRAHAMS: And so, like, you know,
23 I -- yeah. I just wanted to like -- like, you know,
24 ask that, like, you know, that -- that, you know --
25 you know, allowing -- housing for, like, you know,

1 people who want to live here. Like, that is New York.
2 Like, those are -- too, so yeah.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: One minute.

4 MR. BUERY: Thank you.

5 Any questions for the panelist?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Next.

7 MS. LAREMONT: Thank you. I just had a
8 question about your proposal to have -- require
9 supermajorities of the city council because it's
10 not -- it's not clear to me how that would change any
11 of the -- the dynamics that we have today. What --
12 what is your thought on that?

13 MR. ABRAHAMS: Yeah. I mean, we all
14 know this -- most things get -- committee, and then
15 just get voted through in a large package together. I
16 mean, the -- the hope is that that combined with
17 perhaps the citywide at large members if all -- say,
18 all ten of them were in favor of all new
19 construction --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Of course
21 they -- real estate --

22 MR. ABRAHAMS: -- and it's already
23 almost close to the required 25 -- that's required 25
24 percent. And I think there's not a great answer to
25 that. You could have a supermajority that requires 80

1 percent -- majority that requires 85 percent. You
2 know, I don't have the right numbers. But if --

3 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

4 Any other questions?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: I don't
6 think --

7 MR. DABARON: I had a quick question.
8 Just I wanted to learn something from you. You
9 referred to the 1900s.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Are you the
11 guy from -- he even acknowledged it. He --

12 MR. DABARON: Yeah -- so my question to
13 you is do you think it -- that we should look back to
14 that time period of even before right before that, or
15 should be -- time to do something different? We're
16 not -- of the 1900s -- before that. I think of places
17 like, you know, when policies allow for -- like Seneca
18 Village to turn into Central Park.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: That's right,
20 sir. Black History Month. Thank you for -- American
21 History.

22 MR. DABARON: So my thing is really,
23 like, I kind of -- like, look at all of the -- been
24 here that we have been doing and what we do. I want
25 to know from you, like, what do you think? Like,

1 how -- do you think that we really should, like, just
2 draw apart the maps --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: That was
4 what -- Washington, not New York.

5 MR. DABARON: -- and try to do
6 something new?

7 MR. ABRAHAMS: Yeah. I think there's
8 definitely something to be learned of the past. I
9 think a very pointed example that I considered here
10 was we had at large members -- they were borough-based
11 at large members as recently as 1984, of course,
12 before the Board of Estimates.

13 But you know, this is -- I think this
14 is -- before where we've had borough at large members.
15 Those -- dropped down because they were not equal
16 votes because of -- populations. But they -- citywide
17 at large members -- would be more present. So there
18 is certainly precedent for many of these old options
19 that we could, you know, take our --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Real estate --
21 support that.

22 MR. ABRAHAMS: -- and use what, you
23 know -- what we've done before as a -- as a -- when
24 you think about what could be done going forward.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: And where

1 would the black people --

2 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: -- could seats
4 at that time. You're not going to --

5 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. I
6 really appreciate it.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Boo --
8 gentrifier. Boo.

9 MR. BUERY: Next up we have Daniel
10 Golliher and Julio Pena.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Oh. Another
12 one. Coming out of the woodworks like roaches.

13 MR. BUERY: And again, I'm really going
14 to ask everyone if we could please be respectful for
15 each other. It's very difficult to get through --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Excuse me.
17 This person's out of order. Why is he -- me when he's
18 up?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 9: Watch
20 yourself -- watch yourself.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 10: We're having
22 a discussion here. Be respectful.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 9: Right. Watch
24 yourself -- watch yourself.

25 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 11: This is a
2 public hearing. Can we all just be respectful please
3 and allow the testimony to continue?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Yeah but we're
5 not letting anybody harass our women; okay? Nobody's
6 harassing our women.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 11: We stayed to
8 support everybody. I just want that to be for the
9 record. Everybody else left. We're still here.

10 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. We
11 appreciate it. Thank you.

12 MR. GOLLIHER: Hello. My name is
13 Daniel Golliher. I am the founder of the civics
14 school, Maximum New York, and my students include city
15 and state employees as well as wide cross section New
16 York City. I submitted my full testimony
17 electronically, which includes five --
18 recommendations.

19 But I want to highlight one
20 recommendation for the Commission today, which is
21 actually something that Cormac already mentioned.
22 Section 197-d of the charter covers city council
23 review of land use decisions rendered by the City
24 Planning Commission. I recommend amending this
25 section -- the reality of the housing shortage, which

1 means, among other things, while the council has
2 declared a legal housing emergency, it shall have
3 limited authority to disapprove of new housing supply
4 only.

5 If the City really is in a housing
6 emergency as the council has dutifully declared in our
7 administrative code for at least 50 years, I believe
8 the charter should hold them by mandated procedure to
9 their work. City and state law acknowledge that the
10 emergency is created by a severe shortage of housing
11 supply, particularly private residential construction.
12 And the charter should facilitate rapid supply of this
13 nature.

14 To that end, during a council-declared
15 housing emergency, I think Section 197-d could say the
16 following with regard to any decision that proposes
17 new housing supply: One, the council shall only
18 disapprove a decision with a three-quarters vote of
19 all councilmembers; otherwise, the decision shall be
20 considered approved by default.

21 Two, the council may approve a decision
22 with modification with a majority vote of all the
23 councilmembers if those modifications to not decrease
24 estimated housing unit production.

25 While the City Council will likely not

1 be pleased by these amendments to put it mildly, they
2 are appropriate given these things: One, the
3 council's own declaration of an emergency of the past
4 five decades; and two, the lack of major action to
5 solve the same emergency.

6 These changes would also provide the
7 council with an incentive to get us out of this
8 supply-induced emergency so that they can proclaim
9 broader land use -- authority. These changes would
10 structurally alter discretionary housing proposal so
11 the current default "no" that must be argued to a
12 "yes," which privileges member deference already
13 discussed to a default "yes" that must be argued to a
14 "no." This places the argument to burden correctly
15 given our housing crisis. Thank you for your
16 consideration.

17 MR. BUERY: Any questions for
18 Mr. Golliher?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: I've heard
20 enough.

21 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: Gentrifier.

23 MR. BUERY: I assume Mr. Pena's not
24 here? All right. Next up we have Gillian Morris and
25 Stephen Crim.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 8: A white male
2 is coming up.

3 MR. CRIM: Okay. Hi. My name is
4 Stephen Crim. It's getting late. I'll be really
5 brief. I'm a Manhattan resident, and I'm excited that
6 this review commission is working on housing and land
7 use.

8 I want to call attention to some of the
9 roles you've heard about reforming or improving the
10 Landmarks Preservation Commission -- historic
11 preservation, more generally. I support some of the
12 proposals that you've heard about expanding what
13 should be considered in a landmarking process. I
14 value the base of historic buildings in our city, but
15 I strongly believe it needs to be balanced against the
16 need to provide more housing and just opportunity for
17 change over time.

18 I happen to live in a part of Manhattan
19 that has a lot of historic districts. And while it's
20 very pretty, I often walk around thinking, "I hope
21 those don't get bigger," because I think that means
22 that we're going to -- decrease in the opportunity for
23 growth and change. I think the suggestion simply of
24 changing of what could be considered could be
25 potentially powerful because then at least on the

1 record there's some sort of consideration on the
2 implications of landmarking and historic preservation
3 rules on housing affordability and supply.

4 Perhaps, like, some more specific ideas
5 could be some sort of cumulative affect-style analysis
6 that's like, "Well, in this area, we already have this
7 much of the land or land use or housing stock under
8 landmark, so you know, we have to make a much --
9 there's a higher bar to allow further landmarking or
10 restriction on adjacent properties or perhaps some
11 sort of an idea that, well, if you're going to put
12 this much more housing under some sort of regulation,
13 then an equivalent amount needs to be taken out or
14 something like that. Specific recommendations like
15 that are beyond what I can offer right now.

16 But I just want to say that I know a
17 lot of the attention will be around ULURP, but -- and
18 I think it's very important, but I do think that
19 there's some really positive, perhaps easier, reforms
20 possible through landmarking and historic
21 preservation. Thanks.

22 MR. BUERY: Very helpful. Thank you.

23 Any questions? One question for you.

24 MS. GREENBERGER: I think it would be
25 very much that -- you know, when we did some --

1 rezoning, we removed that, you know, the talented --
2 districts was really empty. And they should -- and so
3 I absolutely welcome thinking about things in which
4 that process can take into account the impact that it
5 has on housing. And so I would just encourage any
6 ideas that you have in that regard to be shared with
7 us because I also agree that that is probably lower-
8 hanging fruit than some of the other things that we
9 talked about. But -- would be meaningful.

10 MR. CRIM: Yeah. I agree. Thank you.

11 MR. BUERY: Thank you. All right.

12 Thank you so much.

13 We're going to move to virtual
14 testimony -- oh. I'm sorry.

15 MS. MORRIS: Gillian Morris.

16 MR. BUERY: Okay. Sorry.

17 MS. MORRIS: My name is Gillian Morris.

18 I was born in --

19 MR. BUERY: Press the button. Thank
20 you so much.

21 MS. MORRIS: My name is Gillian Morris.

22 I was born in New York City, and I moved away as a
23 child because my parents couldn't afford to live here.
24 I've recently been able to move back. I'm an
25 entrepreneur and founded a technology company, and I'm

1 renter now in Fort Greene.

2 I, like everyone here, have witnessed
3 the housing crisis. We know that we have less than
4 1.4 percent vacancy. I also moved -- I lived in San
5 Francisco for a while, and I moved -- slightly ashamed
6 to San Francisco, which is known for being NIMBY and
7 anti-housing and anti-development has actually built
8 more housing per capita in the last ten years than New
9 York City has. And I personally think New York City
10 is much better suited than San Francisco on nearly
11 every level, but this is something where I think we
12 could do a lot better.

13 We've heard a lot of great ideas here
14 tonight. I do think as many, many others have said,
15 ULURP can be reformed. It could be faster, more
16 representative of the City's best interest rather than
17 those -- older, wealthier, whiter community board
18 members that -- that have undue representation in the
19 process and undue sway.

20 There is also a lot of needless extra
21 bureaucracy in new building. The Department of
22 Housing Preservation and Development and the
23 Department of City Planning have a ton of overlap, and
24 there could be -- reform that combines a lot of those
25 departments. Oversight is also split between the

1 Department of Buildings and the Fire Department,
2 Department of Housing Preservation and Development.
3 I'm sure there could be a lot of streamlining there as
4 well.

5 I'm not an expert in these matters.
6 My -- more -- more well-informed people have
7 testified, and I just wanted to add my small voice to
8 the urgent need to pay attention to these matters and
9 address our affordability prices so that more
10 people -- I -- so that more people like me could
11 actually grow up in New York City, and more people can
12 move here. Thank you.

13 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.
14 Any questions for Ms. Morris? No?
15 Thank you so much for being here.
16 Really appreciate it.

17 Okay. I believe now we're going to
18 move on to virtual testimony, beginning with Michelle
19 de la Uz.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 12: Chair, I
21 don't think she's here.

22 MR. BUERY: No? Okay. Thank you.
23 Well, hopefully Michelle submitted her testimony in
24 writing.

25 Next we have Suwen Cheong.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 12: Chair, we
2 don't think she's here.

3 MR. BUERY: Okay. Frank Morano.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 12: Not here,
5 Chair.

6 MR. BUERY: Jay Sorid.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 12: He's here.

8 MR. BUERY: All right. Thank you.

9 Thank you, Mr. Sorid. Please continue.

10 MR. SORID: Yes. How long do I have to
11 the time?

12 MR. BUERY: Three minutes.

13 MR. SORID: Okay. Thank you very much.

14 My name is Jay Sorid. I'm a former
15 member of the Community Board 9 Lens Committee, former
16 member of the Community Board 17 Land Use Committee.
17 I volunteered for community boards and for --
18 committees.

19 If this -- if the Charter Revision
20 Commission, which is basically discussing whether or
21 not to put ULURP on the chopping block, what you
22 should all do is have people from the -- the land use
23 committees of community boards as part of the Charter
24 Revision Commission. The Charter Revision Commission,
25 for instance, when you deal with Brooklyn, you should

1 have had 18 members on this -- on the Charter Revision
2 Commission as the heads of the ULURP committees for
3 the various community boards so they could give input
4 as to how many -- that's Point Number 1.

5 Point Number 2 is the -- if you want to
6 change things and make it more democratic, more
7 progressive in -- in the city and be -- you know, have
8 all the integrity and the lofty ideas everybody is
9 talking about, it should be directed -- community
10 board members. That's so nice, I got to say twice.

11 There should be direct election of
12 community board members instead of them being
13 appointed as political cronies who are simply loyal to
14 the hand that feeds them. That's the problem. So if
15 you have 40 -- districts in Community Board 9, you
16 could simply have elections for the 40 different
17 census -- districts and you get 40 members. And then
18 you have ten more spots which would be large, but then
19 you fill up 50 spots.

20 There should be direct election of the
21 -- of community board members. What's going on is the
22 local communities are losing control. You're getting
23 rid of the local voices of the local community, and
24 you're basically making this a city decision over
25 local matters, which nobody wants, which is hardly

1 progressive.

2 I've heard a whole bunch of people add
3 in the racial elements and to say that all of these
4 community boards are too white where they have older
5 white people. You come into a place like Community
6 Board 9, and you see many Community Board -- many
7 people who had joined the community -- matter of fact,
8 joined the community board -- yet, they vote against a
9 lot of different proposals. So the Community Board
10 does not want to give up power.

11 In the City of Yes, I think a majority
12 of -- words -- almost all the -- were between black
13 and brown voting down the City of Yes. So it working.
14 And I -- I think that the very elitist -- that the
15 Charter Revision is saying that we are going to get
16 rid of local control, and it's going to be up to the
17 city because there's a tremendous -- that happens as a
18 result of the decision making and --

19 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. I'm
20 sorry -- I'm sorry, Mr. Sorid. We're out of time. I
21 apologize.

22 Any questions for Mr. Sorid?

23 All right. Thank you so much for your
24 testimony. We appreciate it.

25 Next I'm going to call on a Olivia

1 Gonzalez Killingsworth. Is Ms. Killingsworth there?
2 Okay. Great.

3 MS. KILLINGSWORTH: Yeah. Hi.
4 Thanks -- I'm calling in as a member of the local
5 community. I'm actually away right now. I'm out of
6 the country. But this matters to me so much, I'll
7 take a break from my vacation to call y'all.

8 And just speak in support of a lot of
9 the different closings that have come before you
10 tonight in favor of fast-tracking affordable housing
11 and other types of mixed income and subsidized housing
12 that meets the fair housing framework and other
13 community goals for affordable housing. And I'm
14 saying that as someone who is a former resident of 100
15 percent affordable subsidized housing.

16 I used to live in the -- in Downtown
17 Brooklyn, breaking ground property. And I qualified
18 for that because I am a low-income artist -- or I was
19 a low-income artist. I've been a professional actor
20 for over 20 years, and half my neighbors were also
21 low-income artists. The other half were formerly
22 homeless and veterans. So I'm very happy to see my
23 friend, Shams, on the -- on the panel tonight, and I'm
24 glad that you're part of this discussion.

25 Time is money in housing development.

1 The building that I lived in, it took a long, long
2 time for it to be approved and built and shovels in
3 the ground. So in housing advocacy, we say that
4 housing delayed is housing denied. So anything that
5 this Revision Commission can do to consider fast
6 tracking the process for the approval of housing that
7 is 100 percent affordable for mixed income,
8 subsidized, that can make our subsidy dollars go
9 further and create more housing for early career and
10 emerging artists like myself. I mean, at the time I
11 was early career.

12 And then just last thing. As a union
13 member for 20 years, I am a member of -- and Actors'
14 Equity Association. I want to just boost all of the
15 other union members who have come before you tonight.
16 I think it really is important to see them in these
17 discussions. They do the work. They build the
18 housing. They are the experts. So I think that we
19 have to keep affordability and speed in mind, but I
20 also think that union members deserve a place at the
21 table just as formerly homeless New Yorkers do, just
22 as members of the community do -- the broader
23 community. So thank you so much for your time.

24 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. I
25 really appreciate it.

1 Any questions for Ms. Killingsworth?

2 Nothing.

3 Next testifying virtually is Vadim
4 Grayboys, who will be followed by Chloe Phitoussi.

5 Welcome, Mr. Grayboys.

6 MR. GRAYBOYS: I -- in 1989 with my mom
7 as a refugee from the Soviet Union. We were part of
8 a -- virtual connectivity interruption -- New York.
9 Back then -- and that was only \$100 a month. Easily
10 affordable on -- I've recently returned to my old
11 neighborhood, but this time I'm paying \$2,000 a month
12 to share a two-bedroom apartment.

13 Recently, New York experienced another
14 flood of refugees. But this time, we did not have
15 nearly enough housing to house them because of the --
16 housing shortage. We spent billions of dollars
17 housing refugees, forcing cut backs from other city
18 services, making immigration a crisis, turning the
19 public against immigration and refugees, and
20 propelling Donald Trump back into the White House.

21 We've talked about how the actions of
22 the Community Boards and the City Council members
23 protecting their local interests have negative effects
24 on the overall city. But not only that, but by
25 negatively affecting New York as the largest and most

1 important city in America, local interests can
2 negatively affect the entire country. That we were
3 unable to handle a flood of refugees without adversely
4 affecting other city residents is shameful.

5 I am ashamed for this city. We should
6 all be ashamed. This is a city with the Statue of
7 Liberty. Have we forgotten what the Statue of Liberty
8 represents? We've always been able to accept large
9 floods of immigrants and integrate them into our city
10 until very recently. The reason the influx of
11 refugees cause a crisis is that there's a massive
12 shortage of homes. We need to significantly reform
13 the charter with a focus on building as many homes as
14 possible requires -- that doesn't happen again.

15 I support all of the -- passing reforms
16 discussed by this commission during this meeting,
17 but -- that they do not go -- hope that one day I'll
18 see New York City accepting waves of refugees again as
19 we've always done so except for a few shameful decades
20 in recent history. Thank you.

21 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much for your
22 testimony.

23 Next we have Ms. Phitoussi.
24 Ms. Phitoussi?

25 MS. PHITOUSSI: Hi. My name is Chloe

1 Phitoussi. I am a native New Yorker and a mother of
2 two. I am here because unaffordable housing doesn't
3 just mean unaffordable housing. As we all know, it
4 means that everything else becomes unaffordable too
5 from coffee to childcare, as I know too well. I'm --
6 by tonight's consensus that ULURP should be reformed,
7 and I support Annemarie's recommendation to streamline
8 the process. Accepting community input -- doing so
9 more quickly, ultimately bringing down costs.

10 I also want to second earlier
11 testimony. Voters will vote on these reforms. Let's
12 being in some bold thinking from randomized recruiting
13 to reforming state agencies, and allow the democratic
14 process to show us what the city wants. Incremental
15 changes are not going to suffice, and I urge you to --
16 moment. Thank you.

17 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much.

18 I believe we have Theresa Westerdahl in
19 the room to testify. Thank you.

20 MS. WESTERDAHL: Hi.

21 MR. BUERY: Do you have a -- can you
22 press the button on the microphone?

23 MS. WESTERDAHL: Hi. My name is
24 Theresa Westerdahl. I live in Crown Heights near --
25 and -- where we have an incredible amount of

1 development. My -- I just serve on a community board,
2 not on your committee, by the way. But I'm here just
3 to talk for myself.

4 But I have been -- meetings and
5 listening to my neighbors for a decade -- but we --
6 all of this development and all of this building going
7 up, I -- we have worked to protect our green space.
8 The City hasn't protected us. The City Council hasn't
9 protected us. Our community members have had to sue
10 to protect our green spaces. I find that appalling.

11 Right now, there's development in -- on
12 Empire that's going to probably shade -- if it goes
13 through, it's going to shade Jackie Robinson's
14 school -- not just the ball course. The school, the
15 garden, the playground. It's -- the development
16 that's happening there now, our city agencies are not
17 putting out for -- I've been in touch with the City
18 Council and my community board because we've had a
19 water main break, a street collapse. We have the --
20 they did not do proper remediation for the
21 development.

22 This is -- this is -- of Sullivan and
23 Bedford and Empire -- so we -- we're dealing with a
24 lot -- an environmental crisis, a water main broke.
25 It took the City three weeks to fix it. And this --

1 this is going to continue. We're not being protected.
2 And I don't think deference should go to city -- from
3 -- to Reynoso, our borough president, or the City.
4 I think it should be kept within the community boards
5 because we're best able to identify what's happening
6 in our board. And we want to protect our resources,
7 and we want to keep people safe that are already
8 living there.

9 And not -- the amount of people that
10 are having to leave my community is astounding.
11 They're not -- none of those places -- them. It's all
12 going to be luxury housing. There's very, very little
13 affordable housing being built. And it's -- it's sad.

14 And we -- I -- there's not really a
15 housing crisis. There's plenty of housing. There's
16 plenty of apartment buildings if you have four or
17 \$5,000; right? There -- it's there. There're
18 thousands of units. I've been looking for a friend.
19 Thousands of units that are out there. Over 5,000 in
20 Brooklyn right now if you could pay that much. But
21 nobody should have to pay that much.

22 I -- we need some help, and this isn't
23 it. Changing this isn't going to help anybody. It's
24 going to help tech bros; you know? Our city is being
25 taken over by technology.

1 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much. Thank
2 you for your testimony. I appreciate it.

3 MS. WESTERDAHL: Okay. Any questions?
4 I didn't think so.

5 MR. BUERY: All right. Thank you so
6 much. Appreciate it.

7 We have testimony from Nichola Cox
8 remotely.

9 MS. COX: Good afternoon -- good
10 evening. I feel like I'm tag teaming with Theresa
11 Westerdahl, who is actually a neighbor of mine. And I
12 appreciate her voice and many of the other voices that
13 occurred tonight representing the community and the
14 people that have been longtime residents. I -- as
15 Theresa mentioned, I live in Crown Heights South.
16 We're near Prospect Park and Ebbets Field.

17 And my blocks are comprised primarily
18 of one- and two-family houses, but we're -- we're
19 zoned R6. So even as of right development, especially
20 with the City of Yes changes that have taken place
21 recently can be detrimental to the 100-year-old houses
22 that we have as a -- as a woman spoke about earlier.

23 It's important that the people that are
24 in the community are considered when we're making
25 these changes. Even -- I know fast tracking is

1 important, but keep in mind the people that are here
2 and have to live with the changes that will be
3 proposed. There has been talk about fast tracking
4 developments where you look at the highest building in
5 the community, and make sure that is a proposed
6 development. It's lower than that building, but
7 you're going to fast track it.

8 The highest building in our community
9 would be Ebbets Field and Tivoli Towers, which is
10 always considered out of context. But they were part
11 of Ebbets Field when Ebbets Field -- when the Dodger's
12 moved. This apartment building was built in the '70s.
13 We still had primarily a low-rise community here. But
14 every development that comes along, they look to
15 Ebbets Field as being contextual.

16 And now we have, again, as Theresa
17 mentioned, development all along Prospect Park and --
18 and the Bontanic [sic] Gardens being proposed. So
19 again, my main thing is to look at the black and brown
20 communities that have done our fair share through the
21 last few years. I want to make sure that we continue
22 to be protected because we have been the ones that
23 survived red lining, survived high crime rates.

24 These are people that have lived in
25 this community for 60 years, 50 years. And now

1 because we're now desirable, the rates are going up,
2 development is increasing, and now we -- these
3 residents -- residential -- renters as well as
4 homeowners are being pushed out. And it's not fair to
5 us. It's not fair to the diversity and the liveliness
6 of this -- of this city.

7 And I want to make sure that our voice
8 continues to be heard. It's critical that community
9 boards that have been protecting these communities
10 over the years continue to have a vital role in this
11 project. It can't just be top down. You have to be
12 able to have people with their feet on the ground,
13 ears to the street that understand the community and
14 know where -- affordable housing can be built in this
15 community -- that's truly what's needed, not just
16 market-rate housing. Thank you.

17 MR. BUERY: Thank you so much, Ms.
18 Cox. Any questions for Ms. Cox?

19 MR. DABARON: I -- I have a question.
20 So -- so the one thing that I'm struggling to
21 understand is if -- if every community board can --
22 and I'm -- I really want to learn. If every community
23 board is able to reject housing for whatever reasons
24 whether it's too tall or whatever, the question is
25 that what happens when we try to spread development to

1 places that -- where there is not the -- the fair
2 share? How do we -- how do we address that part?

3 MS. COX: Well, I think it's key to --
4 as I think someone talked about earlier -- creating a
5 framework criteria. Basically, a checklist. When has
6 this community contributed to the city goals?
7 Again -- Borough President Reynoso spoke about the
8 fact that we have to look at it from a citywide lens,
9 which I agree. Citywide borough, et cetera. We don't
10 to just have a tunnel vision and only look at what's
11 happening in our specific community.

12 At the same time, you need to balance.
13 And so we need to make sure that we do have those
14 people that can speak to the City, "What's going" --
15 "How is it going to impact our community?" And if we
16 haven't contributed any housing at all in the last ten
17 years and you're only asking for two -- two additional
18 stories, then that's a big difference than telling
19 someone who's in a two-story building that "I'm going
20 to put a 14-story building in your backyard," and your
21 community has already contributed several thousand
22 units of -- of housing.

23 So I think that if you have some kind
24 of a criteria where you can check off and understand
25 what has that community contributed, what is the

1 impact to the surrounding buildings, what is already
2 in the pipeline for that community, that can make a
3 big difference in the decision-making process.

4 MR. DABARON: Thank you for that. I
5 appreciate it.

6 MR. BUERY: Thank you. Any other
7 questions for Ms. Cox?

8 All right. I want to thank everyone
9 for testifying, especially those of you who held out
10 with us for the evening. I appreciate it. Remind
11 everybody who's still listening, you can submit
12 testimony to chartertestimony@citycharter.nyc.gov.
13 And our next public hearing will be in Queens on
14 February 24th at 5 p.m. at the New York City of
15 Department of Design and Construction at 30-30
16 Thomspon Avenue -- place in the first -- group.

17 I would detain a motion to adjourn our
18 meeting. Any discussion? All in favor?

19 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

20 MR. BUERY: You're adjourned. Thank
21 you so much.

22 (Whereupon, the meeting concluded at
23 8:35 p.m.)
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CERTIFICATE

I, ARKADY SANDOVAL, the officer before whom the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn; that the proceedings were recorded by me and thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this act



ARKADY SANDOVAL
Notary Public in and for the
State of New York

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I, ELIZABETH WALKOWSKI, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from the digital audio recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.



ELIZABETH WALKOWSKI

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