

From: cindi.buckwalter@yahoo.com
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gaming Facility Text Amendment - OPPOSED
Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 7:47:38 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am highly opposed to the proposed zoning change that would allow gaming facilities approved by the state to SKIP the city approval process. This would result in the Community Boards and residents of the community having NO say regarding the impact that the proposed gaming facilities would have on our very own community, families, and day-to-day lives. **This proposed zoning change is unacceptable.**

Thank for your consideration of my submission on this important matter.

Cindi Buckwalter



New York, NY 10017

From: [Courtney Hirsch](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gaming Facility Text Amendment
Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 11:15:43 AM

Hi there,

I am writing to voice my **strong opposition** to the Gaming Facility Text Amendment.

The Uniform Land Use Review Procedure is an essential, trusted, tested mechanism for incorporating local residents' needs and concerns in our city planning processes.

I learned of this amendment and the casino bid in my area through my Community Board 6 meetings, which I began attending about three years ago.

The proposal for my area (Soloviev, First Avenue between 38th-41st Streets) provides nothing the community needs to support daily living (childcare, pharmacy, grocery store, laundromat)—and everything it doesn't (traffic, transient and gambling communities, congestion).

It is essential that my neighbors and I have a chance to voice our opposition to this bid through the ULURP process.

I have been a Murray Hill resident since 2002 and a homeowner in the area since 2017.

Thank you,
Courtney Hirsch


New York, NY 10016

From: [elisadevito](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gaming Facility Text Amendment
Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 10:14:26 PM
Attachments: [Petition to stop Casino at Soloviev Vacant Lot NEW1 sig.pdf](#)

We are strongly opposed to the text amendment to allow gaming facilities bypassing the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) and diminishing the voice of community boards and the public in the casino location review process.

Community boards and community groups across the city have championed the voice of the people that this is not something communities want. The mayor and planning board have continued to ignore the voice of the people and are not acting in our best interests. Will you now?

This is a city of people looking for a decent quality of life, to have access to basic services and feel safe. It is apparent now more than ever that many of our elected officials do not have that in mind but rather how to best increase the profits of developers and other interests. They claim buzz words like "jobs" and "housing" but ignore real needs and all the negative attributes something like casinos will bring to our communities.

As noted by State Senator Liz Krueger Casinos are a "tax on desperation" and "only the house wins".

Bringing casinos to nyc and making it an easy process without any community involvement ensures that the "house wins" even more and the hard working people of nyc lose.

The social costs of casinos far outweigh any benefits. We know of the severe effect addictions can have on mental, physical and financial well being. We talk of the mental health crisis in our city and instead of looking for solutions we are endorsing more paths to mental health issues.

A plethora of quality of life issues are impacted by proposals like this. We talk of the environment but casinos will add more traffic and parking issues.

Bankruptcy, financial strain and competition for existing small businesses should be considered, as well as the impact on property values. Casinos also pose huge human Trafficking risks along with other illegal activities.

The ripple effect is profound and in the end casinos exploit the little guy. The house wins.

We also know that existing casinos across the country and particularly in new york state are underperforming. The anticipated tax revenue simply is not there.

The casino in Philadelphia for example shows rapid decline in tax revenue in the 10 years its been open. Chicago's recently opened casino promised \$13m in revenue and only generated \$3m.

Nyc resorts world is down 25% in tax revenue

It's a boon for developers, not for the state tax coffers.
Again, we ask is it worth it?

Once upon a time when public good was actually considered by our elected officials and their agents, city planners actually planned. They carved out residential areas where the quality of life for residents could be put on the forefront. Neighborhoods were designed with Parks, schools and libraries. Certain commercial activities were set aside for specific areas. Our residential neighborhoods should be expanded and improved. Instead of lowering the bar for everyone and degrading quality of life, greater access for all to clean, safe neighborhoods with access to important infrastructure should be the priority.

State senator Kristen Gonzalez has told new Yorkers that she heard loud and clear from the community that a high quality of life (including green space and access to affordable housing) should not be contingent on a casino and that our path as a community should not be dictated by developers.

Will the city council hear us as well?

Please see attached letter as well from several community organizations specifically in opposition of a proposed casino within cb6.

Thank you,
Elisa DeVito

From: [Gail Tauber](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gaming Facility Text Amendment
Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 9:51:33 PM

The best comment possible on the shameful, impolitic text amendment override to the ULURP process—in deciding on where to locate Gaming in the 5 Boroughs—is taken from City Council's playbook:

Elevating Community Engagement and Addressing Citywide Needs

We must expand participation and input from diverse stakeholders at the neighborhood level in the process—in frequency, depth, and inclusivity. Local input should be balanced with long-term citywide goals and needs, elevating the role of planning for communities and the city beyond specific projects and initiatives.

Never mind that our communities, ours for sure in Manhattan's CB6, (on the 7 acre vacant lot next to the UN Headquarters and embassies, schools and hospitals) are, by a great majority, opposed to Gaming Casinos, in this neighborhood, anywhere in Manhattan, (or, personally, anywhere in the 5 boroughs at that). What little voice we City residents, our communities, have had in major misguided seriously 'unplanned' development in this City, with little to no due process, is now more at risk with this proposed text amendment. The harm these casinos pose to our communities is in no way being considered by this mis-guided attempt and impolitic text amendment.

You would do well to listen to Liz Krueger's webinar <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVC8hI4RvAA>

on the harm done by gambling casinos, from addiction to the criminal element, to the **inflated actual value of fiscal return on investment and taxes**. There is little in this for our City, or our State. Casinos are failed enterprises all over our Country. While all over the world community planning, and affordable housing alleviate many of the problems that our City suffers from—because we bend to real estate and unethical developers. Our City has become a MESS of unresolved problems and an overbuilt and often USELESS, environment.

Every Town Hall event on the proposed casinos has met with vociferous opposition. Vote NO.
Gail Tauber

 NYC, NY 10017

From: [Harriett Galvin](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gaming Facility Text Amendment
Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 4:50:39 PM

To Members of the NYC Council:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the Gaming Facility Text Amendment under consideration by the City Council.

I live in the Turtle Bay neighborhood in midtown Manhattan, and I am a member of the Turtle Bay Association. Like most of my neighbors and elected representatives, I oppose having a casino anywhere in Manhattan, but especially on the undeveloped parcel of land just south of the UN.

I hope that you will do the right thing and vote against this amendment, which will have the effect of further eroding the quality of life in our city.

Sincerely,

Harriett Galvin

[REDACTED]

New York, NY 10017

Harriettgalvin@gmail.com

[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

Chair Riley, and members of the committee,

My name is Jamie Smarr, and I serve as CEO of the New York City Housing Partnership, a nonprofit and public-private intermediary created by Mayor Ed Koch and David Rockefeller in 1983. Since our establishment to Housing Partnership has created or preserved more than 83,000 units of affordable rental and homeownership units in the five boroughs.

Today, I urge your thoughtful consideration of the housing crisis as you deliberate on the proposed zoning text amendment for casinos. In exchange for these licenses, everyday New Yorkers should be gaining as many benefits as possible. The zoning text proposal before you removes zoning barriers to the creation of casinos, and I would ask that benefits like affordable housing that come as part of these proposals, receive the same treatment. Again, every large-scale development opportunity like mixed-use casino development should also bring with it affordable housing creation.

New York City's current housing crisis demands that both the City and the State move boldly and rapidly to ensure that we build new affordable supply whenever and wherever we can, and this includes making sure that housing is always included in large scale projects in the five boroughs. We must also ensure that housing creation is free of regulatory and legislative barriers as much as possible.

The urgency of this matter is underscored by recent findings from the New York City Housing and Vacancy Study (NYCHVS) released by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). The study, presented to the City Council in February, revealed an alarming decline in the city's vacancy rate, plummeting to a historic low of 1.4 percent, with only approximately 33,000 units available for rent citywide. It's the lowest score since 1968.

Furthermore, data from the Coalition for the Homeless paints a stark picture of the homelessness epidemic gripping our city. As of November 2023, nearly 93,000 individuals, including over 33,000 children, sought refuge in New York City's main municipal shelter system. This figure includes 24,036 single adults seeking shelter every night in December 2023.

It is evident that we are facing a crisis of monumental proportions. The convergence of these statistics illustrates a disturbing reality: without incorporating a priority of developing new affordable housing in every policy decision we make, including this one, we are guaranteeing homelessness and housing insecurity in our city.

I am aware of the ambitious housing goals set forth by our state and city leaders, including Governor's aim for 800,000 new units statewide, Mayor's vision for 500,000 new units in the city, and the framework established by the Speaker for shared responsibility in housing creation. Many of you, have echoed similar commitments to addressing our housing shortage.

As we deliberate on the proposed zoning text amendment, we must seize the opportunity to leverage substantial investment in affordable housing in exchange for these licenses. I commend those who have heard our calls and recognized the importance of housing, including it as a component of their proposals. Their acknowledgment of this responsibility and responsiveness to the calls from elected officials at all levels should be encouraged.

I urge you to consider their commitments seriously as you evaluate this zoning text amendment. If we are to proceed with expediting casinos in New York City, let us also expedite the delivery of all associated benefits, including attainable housing. The need for affordable housing cannot be overstated, and we must ensure that every avenue for its creation is pursued vigorously. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

Written Testimony Regarding Application number N 240179 ZRY (Gaming Facility Text Amendment)

Layla Law-Gisiko

Resident

In 2013, an amendment to the New York State Constitution authorized the establishment of up to seven commercial casinos statewide, with four subsequently licensed in upstate New York. Legislation enacted in 2022 designated the remaining three licenses to be permitted for the downstate New York region, encompassing New York City and several neighboring counties. Oversight of gaming activities falls under the jurisdiction of the New York State Gaming Commission, which established the Gaming Facility Location Board to oversee the selection, siting and review process for the unissued licenses. This process involves the establishment of Community Advisory Committees (CAC), comprising six elected officials, with a representative for the Governor, the Mayor, the Borough President, the State Senator, the State Assembly Member, the City Council Member, to evaluate and approve individual applications.

Currently, gaming facilities are not permitted in New York City. The proposed text amendment by the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) seeks to permit gaming facilities in specific commercial and manufacturing districts, including prominent areas like Times Square and Hudson Yards. Under this amendment, approved gaming facilities would be deemed compliant with all relevant zoning regulations, regardless of the size, massing, bulk, signage, capacity as well as any ancillary uses associated, effectively bypassing city oversight and the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP). While DCP has clarified that this exemption applies solely to the three licenses issued under the 2022 legislation, concerns have been raised regarding its potential impact on the standard public review process in New York City.

The current proposal effectively deprives the ny city council of their prerogative to approve or modify zoning proposals. It also renders the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) a symbolic entity, devoid of genuine community representation and technical expertise. By designating

approved gaming facilities as automatically compliant with zoning regulations, the proposal relinquishes the public review process to a six-member committee composed solely of elected officials. The process lacks transparency and community input, leaving vital interests potentially unheard amidst the influence of external entities. This departure from the mandated public review process outlined in the 1975 NYC Charter raises concerns about the legitimacy of eliminating such a fundamental responsibility without proper scrutiny.

Additionally, the proposal's one-size-fits-all approach fails to account for the diverse needs and zoning requirements across New York City's varied neighborhoods, highlighting a lack of comprehensive consideration. The limited presentation of the proposal to only seven of the city's 59 Community Boards further exacerbates the issue, potentially allowing for gaming facility proposals to be imposed on unsuspecting communities without adequate education or input from their constituents.

The proposed ZTA seeks to significantly diminish the authority of city council members in land use affairs by distributing it equally among the five other Community Advisory Committee (CAC) members. This redistribution effectively undermines the council members' ability to autonomously influence the trajectory of land use decisions within their respective districts. By circumventing the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), this proposal severely limits the empowerment of council members, rendering their roles less impactful in shaping local land use policies.

I urge the City Council to reject the proposed zoning text amendment and instead work with the Department of City Planning to undertake a rezoning for the proposed sites, to permit gaming activities.

Testimony to the New York City Land Use Committee
Against the Gaming Facility Text Amendment
Submitted by Meryl Brodsky
District Leader, 73rd AD, Part A
March 27, 2024

One example of a misplaced project to reverse Manhattan's affordable housing problem and vacancy rate is a planned casino on the Soloviev site east of First Avenue, between East 38th and 41st Streets. The project promises fewer than 500 affordable residential units or a third of the total, 1,325 units slated for development on 6.6+ acres. The proposal rests on if the Mohegan Company, a tax exempt entity or Indian reservation, charged with development of a casino, "Freedom Plaza," can generate enough cash to support additional affordable housing and green space.

To sell the project, Mohegan has installed a field of light at the Freedom Park site for twelve months featuring 17,000 low-light, fiber-optic stemmed spheres that slowly change colors throughout the day, symbolizing the freedom to dream. Conversely, despite the bright lights, this could represent a horror show for our entire community. The casino deal is expected to collapse since the CAC (Community Advisory Committee), devised to usurp ULURP (Urban Land Use Review Procedure), comprised of our assemblyman, state senator, council member and borough president, etc. is expected to veto it. Several other sites including the Times Square New Year's Eve site, Saks Fifth Avenue and the mall at Hudson Yards might meet the same fate.

For these reasons, the Gaming Facility Text Amendment should be defeated. Currently, this proposed boondoggle does not solve the affordable housing or vacancy rate crises in Manhattan.

Several park and neighborhood associations have followed CB #6's lead and opposed the project as well as any revisions. They include Ralph Bunche Park, Murray Hill, Turtle Bay, etc. Anyway, if the project cannot be accepted by the New York State Gaming Commission, the Soloviev Group will move forward with a 1.2 square-foot office building which may require rezoning. Thus we hope to defeat the Text Amendment and keep ULURP in place for this eventuality.

Thank you.

From: [Michael Zullo](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Gaming Facility Text Amendment
Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 1:15:34 PM

To: City Council Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises

March 26, 2024

I've lived in Manhattan's Turtle Bay community since 2017. It's a wonderful residential area with the United Nations Headquarters; Dag Hammarskjold Plaza; a farmers market at the Plaza every Wednesday; schools; churches; a snyague; East public bus transportation - M-15 & M50; in addition to Mom & Pop shops.

Why would voting to squeeze in gaming & casinos be suited for a residential community of 30,000 families and children?

Gaming will most likely knock out the quality of life residents enjoy in NYC Council District 4.

Please don't let that happen. Thank you.

Michael Zullo

[REDACTED]

NYC 10017

cell: [REDACTED]

November 14, 2023

**To: Borough President, Mark Levine
NYS Senator Kristen Gonzalez, 59th SD
Assembly Member Harvey Epstein AD74
Council Member Keith Powers, D4**

Petition to vote NO on a proposal to build a Casino on Vacant Lot

located between 41th St and 38th St on First Avenue, First Ave to the FDR Drive, in the Turtle Bay, UN Headquarters and Tudor City neighborhoods, bordering North Murray Hill, on approximately 6–7 acres of property owned by the Soloviev Group, Real Estate Developers.

The Soloviev Group has proposed building a casino on this property. The origins of proposed use for this lot began when Sheldon H. Solow and partners purchased this lot and others from ConEdison in 2000. Upon his death it was taken over by his son Stephan Soloviev. The original Solow proposal (including parcels which have been sold or developed) a series of 7 glass towers, 4.8 acres of gardens, lawns and a public connector to East River Greenway at the time were met with community resistance, public approval processes, and financing issues. (NYTimes, Nov 17, 2020). An eventual rezoning concession was granted with the further caveat of a modification of height and set back and lower-income housing calculator. Unfinished, for the most part it has remained a vacant lot. *

The latest offering by the Soloviev Group includes 1,325 apartments, nearly 40 percent of which would be offered permanently below market-rate rent, according to the firm. [We would add that 40% of market rate, in this neighborhood, would probably render these apts. unaffordable to a majority of low income earners.] **But it's a package deal: no casino, no affordable housing** (NYTimes, Oct 27, 2023), **despite a 2007 agreement for affordable housing that pre-dates this casino proposal. Building low income housing does not need to be predicated on the building of a casino.** As a matter of fact, low income households that gamble at casinos spend more than double the average spent by low income households on gambling overall. **

A casino is untenable in this neighborhood. The proximity to the United Nations Headquarters is problematic.

The UN has made known their opposition. Congested traffic along the Avenue would worsen, especially during the weeks that the UN General Assembly meets when traffic is diverted and other Avenues are brought to a halt. The reason traffic is diverted is of course a safety precaution in order to control and avoid any potential danger. Car traffic entering and leaving a casino underground garage would create potential danger as well. Additionally, the lot is adjacent to the Dept. of Parks Robert Moses Playground; there are schools in proximity, including Ps 281 The River School 2 blocks south built on a lot previously owned by Solow. There are major hospitals nearby, Health+Bellevue, NYU Langone as well as numerous Embassies, Consulates, UN and Governmental organizations and offices.

According to NY4Parks, the Manhattan Community District 6 (CB6) has just 1% green space. We need to invest in the quality of life for all New Yorkers, creating more Parks, affordable housing, libraries and the like, not gaming casinos. Manhattan CB6 voted overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution opposing the plan on March 9, 2023, sending a letter to Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams opposing the development of a casino or other gaming facility on the Solow Site in Manhattan Community District 6. The results of a survey conducted by the Murray Hill Neighborhood Association in May also demonstrated a resounding objection from the community to the proposition of a casino in our area.***

We ask that you vote NO to a casino in this neighborhood.



Elisa DeVito
Friends of Ralph Bunche Park



Gail Tauber
Friends of Ralph Bunche Park



Sarah Woodside Gallagher
Upper Green Side



Susan Blackwell Price
Green Park Gardeners



Charles Giovanni Vanzan Coutinho
Sutton Area Community (SAC)



Juniper June Tanareh Shay
Stewards of Little Armenia



Ellen B. Ross
Stuyvesant Park Gardeners

**The lot has rewilded many times over the years it has been vacant. There is documentation of regrowth of native flora and fauna. Attached here is a list of birds spotted in the lot and/or area, including The Chimney Swift, which is listed as Vulnerable.*

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L1940751?yr=all>

*** https://www.raisethehammer.org/article/1703/casinos_and_low-income_households_research_review*

****https://www.murrayhillnyc.org/photos/News/20230522_News_for_Murray_Hill.pdf*

From: [Robert A. Scott](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Land Use Testimony
Date: Saturday, March 23, 2024 12:56:45 PM

Dear Members of the city Council

A vote to bypass the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure in order to introduce gaming facilities without the voice of local community boards and citizens is an outrageous and arrogant vote against democracy. It would allow the state to determine city zoning and undermine local government.

If this is approved, what next, what other responsibilities of local government and the citizenry will be taken away to smooth the path for developers?

Abide by your oath of office and vote against the vote to bypass.

Thank you, Robert A. Scott

Dr. Robert A. Scott, President *Emeritus*, Adelphi University
36 Sutton Place South, 5F
New York, New York 10022
M: 

From: [susan price blackwell](#)
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Casinos/Gaming facilities
Date: Saturday, March 23, 2024 8:18:39 AM

In my opinion, casinos etc will do nothing to improve the life of New Yorkers or visitors. Research shows that the economic benefits are sparse at best and often exaggerated by those seeking to add these elements to our city. To diminish the community's voice with regard to the introduction gaming facilities to a neighborhood is outrageous and goes against democratic principles. The People's voice and opinions should be heard and heeded.

Susan Blackwell

Paris home

US home

US cell

