

Testimony of the New York City Health and Hospitals

Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings and Dispositions

September 18, 2025

Dear Chair Hanks, Council Member Marmorato, and Members of the Subcommittee on Landmarks, Public Sitings, and Dispositions,

My name is Dr. Mitch Katz and I am the President and CEO of New York City Health and Hospitals. I am writing in regards to LU 0363-2025, Application No. G230033 HHX, a land use application submitted by the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, requesting authorization to lease a parcel of land located on the Jacobi Hospital Campus to The Fortune Society, Inc.

At this time, the Adams Administration is actively reviewing the Just Home project. The City is developing a new proposal that would identify a different location for Just Home and also deliver supportive and affordable housing at the Jacobi Hospital site. This approach would ultimately allow more people in need to receive the care and services they deserve.

We hope to come back to the Council in the near future with a plan that would continue to deliver the Just Home project and affordable and supportive housing on the Jacobi campus. We look forward to working with the Council on this process.

Thank you for your time,
Dr. Mitch Katz
NYC H+H President and CEO

From: waterburylasalle@yahoo.com
To: [Land Use Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Just Homes
Date: Thursday, September 18, 2025 1:08:47 PM

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To the city council land use committee:

On the subject of Just homes on the Jacoby hospital campus I AM OPPOSED to bring criminals into our community. We are a residential community with schools and churches and children living within walking distance of the Jacoby campus. We should not have a prison ward in any residential community. This empty building should be used for the veterans or seniors from our neighborhood, Not for criminals. It's time that the city stops dumping on the Bronx. It's time that the city listens to the community members. We live here, we own our homes and we pay our taxes. When we don't want something we should have the support of the city council to say NO. We should not have to fight to keep our children safe. The city should agree that safety must come first. Putting criminals in our neighborhood will put our children and seniors in a prison restricting residents to our own homes due to fear for safety. I am asking you to do the right thing, listen to the community, Vote NO.

Andrew Chirico
Bronx

Letter to the City Planning Commission regarding the LIC Neighborhood Plan public hearing

To the interested parties:

New York City – City Planning Commission

Greetings all, my name is Senjuen Hsia, and I help my family manage property lots in the IBZ North designated area of Long Island City. We are located on the corner of 21st Street and 40th Avenue, and represent the areas of Block 392 – Lots 1, 5, and 43. I have lived in Sunnyside and Long Island City for forty years and have worked in and around both areas for almost thirty. We also have been in regular contact with other property owners, workers, and residents for the area and property lots in and around Block 392.

While we support the rezoning plan's objectives to enhance Long Island City's mixed-use character, we believe that the areas designated in the IBZ North should ALSO be recommended for re-zoning as mixed-use so that it allows for at least some, or any kind of, residential or housing development. There are several compelling reasons why we believe that this should be done in as timely a fashion as possible.

New economic trends after the Pandemic

- The 2019 Pandemic has upended the market for New York City office buildings.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/01/nyregion/manhattan-office-building-auction.html>
In 2006, 135 West 50th Street in Midtown Manhattan sold for \$332 million. Last week, it sold for just \$8.5 million. The building was 23 stories and was once the former headquarters of Sports Illustrated.
- The sale follows the same recent trend of several Manhattan office buildings being sold at steep discounts over the past decade.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/12/business/distressed-office-buildings-buyers.html>
CoStar predicts that 2024 and 2025 will be the two worst years on record for office buildings in terms of the amount of floor space that tenants are giving back or vacating across the country.
- The pandemic has exposed economic trends ushering in a lasting shift to remote work in many sectors. Companies are embracing hybrid and remote work, employees do not visit the office as much, and most buildings are no longer considered safe investments. As such, building owners no longer collect enough rent to pay off their current mortgages. Additionally, rising interest rates have made those same owners reluctant to renegotiate financing deals or unable to afford new mortgages.

As bad as it is for commercial real estate, similar trends continue for NYC's industrial and manufacturing sectors. According to recent CBRE market reports, industrial leasing in the city hit new lows in the final quarter of 2023, with an average lease of just 7000 square feet.
<https://commercialobserver.com/2024/02/new-york-city-new-industrial-space-soundstages-demand/>

- In Manhattan, many developers are trying to convert office buildings into apartments as a way to deal with these trends. However, conversions are costly, and not all buildings are easy to retrofit.

LUCKILY, there are several building lots in the IBZ of LIC North, including the lots at 40th Avenue, 21st Street, that DO NOT have that problem, as those places can be quickly made ready to be demolished and rebuilt so that they be installed as new building projects.

Industrial Business Zones (IBZs) were created in 2006. They have not worked in LIC North.

- ONE-TIME relocation tax credits of only \$1000 per employee, capping out at just \$100,000 (<https://edc.nyc/industry/industrial-and-manufacturing>), are drops in the bucket for companies in today's business environment. Despite the growth of Long Island City in the south, more companies and businesses have left the Queensbridge / IBZ North area since 2006 than have arrived. In this modern economic climate, these tax credits barely scratch the surface of what is needed to attract manufacturing or industrial businesses to move here, especially in comparison to what other states and regions in the country are offering.

ZERO companies in the area currently apply for these IBZ tax credits because they DO NOT stack with other city and state tax credits or incentives. Tax benefits such as the REAP Program are taken by companies instead, as they provide better tax benefits, for more years, AND do not have the same sorts of geographic requirements mandated by IBZ policies.

<https://www.nyc.gov/site/finance/business/business-reap.page>

- Developers and banks will not fund or finance any construction projects without significant interest from larger companies. We can personally attest to this because it is exactly what has been communicated to us. Using a tiny one-time tax credit aimed at attracting businesses that have up to 100 employees or less, has had ZERO effect on convincing anyone to invest in the manufacturing sector of the IBZ, especially when there are much better incentives and subsidies that are offered by the city and state that CAN NOT be combined with the IBZ tax credit.
- A perfect example can be made by pointing to the property lot located across the street from us, addressed 38-50 21st Street – Block 471, Lot 703.
<https://propertyinformationportal.nyc.gov/parcels/parcel/4004710703>

Amazon, despite controversies before and during the pandemic, signed a TEN-YEAR lease for the property in 2020 to open a brand new delivery station of 20,000 square feet.

Renovations were made in 2020, and Amazon started operations in 2021.

<https://licpost.com/amazon-to-open-new-delivery-station-in-long-island-city>

<https://www.crainsnewyork.com/commercial-real-estate/amazon-heads-lic-latest-delivery-station-not-second-headquarters>

- Within a year, Amazon stopped operating out of the location, and the place sat empty for two years until Fisker Group – a now-defunct electric car company – leased the site to use as a storage space for its vehicles. In June 2024, Fisker Group filed for bankruptcy, and their lease expired for the year, and sat empty yet again for almost another year through 2025, until Rivian – another electric vehicle company (16% of which is owned by Amazon, Inc.), recently leased the property to serve merely as a private service center – providing maintenance and repairs of their vehicles (by appointment-only) for their customers.
<https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/14/map-of-amazon-warehouse-closures.html>
<https://property.compstak.com/3850-21st-Street-Long-Island-City/p/235623>
<https://www.google.com/viewer/place?mid=/g/11yfs9jfb>



Changes to how traffic is diverted along 21st Street / 40th Avenue no longer makes the lots in the area feasible for significant manufacturing transport.

Driving up and down 21st Street from Astoria down to Hunter's Point, we can see that LEFT TURNS were banned on nearly every intersection throughout the entire IBZ and beyond. In 2019, the 21st Street Corridor was officially designated as a Vision Zero corridor and has been completely redesigned to emphasize pedestrian safety and bus reliability.

<https://licpost.com/21-street-listed-as-priority-corridor-in-new-vision-zero-plan>

<https://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/21-st-bus-priority-safety-study-cb1-mar2022.pdf>

- Since the Vision Zero designation, the Department of Transportation installed three things that significantly inhibit the ability for facilities in the area to transport goods and materials:
 - A) An island divider for pedestrians
 - B) An entire bike lane
 - C) A full bus lane prohibiting parking or any other traffic

21st Street used to be a two-way, four-lane boulevard. There is now only ONE lane for each

direction. When the building was operational decades ago, the street was JUST wide enough for 40-foot containers to back into the loading docks. While those trucks were being loaded, they would block an entire lane of traffic.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/EkUvrs6Dw6hWV5jf6>



- After the DOT installed those three items, it is no longer possible for large trucks and containers to effectively maneuver around any building in that area for any significant amount of goods or materials transport. There simply isn't enough room for any large trucks or containers to load and unload goods or materials without completely blocking out an entire side of traffic on 21st Street.

This will scare away ANY manufacturing or wholesale company that might have been interested in a move to the area. Neither does it work as a support district for the neighboring business community.

The areas immediately north AND south of the LIC North IBZ are zoned for Mixed-Use.

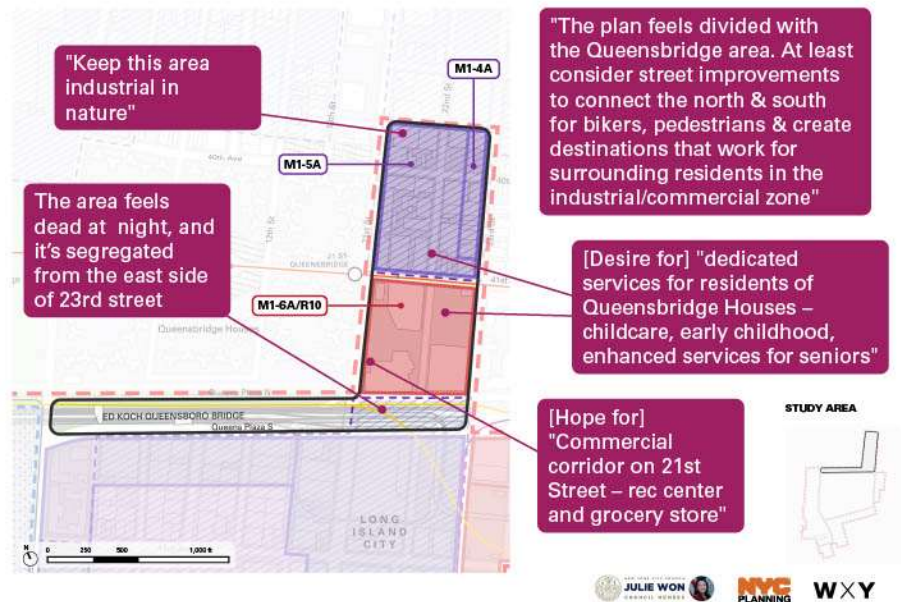
- The LIC North IBZ is surrounded on all sides by residential and mixed-use buildings.
 - a) The area is filled with hotels, retail stores, and restaurants/ markets specifically catered to the growing number of tourists and residents in the area.
 - b) The site is also serviced by the 21st Street – Queensbridge subway stop, and four bus lines. They are all geared towards residential commuting and servicing commercial and retail activity.
- The area lost key elements of its manufacturing /industrial character decades ago. Zoning should be changed to match the characteristics of the neighboring areas, based on the

Planning Committee's own land-use rationale guidelines.

- Multiple comments during the break-out sessions were concerned about the empty, desolate feel of the manufacturing district segregating Queensbridge Housing from the rest of the area.

2 NORTH: ZONING FEEDBACK

- Concerns about lack of height limit in M1-6A/R10
- The proposed density is inappropriate next to QBH, worried about isolating QBH
- Need deeply affordable housing here
- Need to improve pedestrian and cyclist connectivity and safety under QBH
- Support more affordable commercial uses on the ground floor such as a rec center and grocery stores
- Support for residential uses adjacent to QBH to better connect the campus to the surrounding neighborhood



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LONG ISLAND CITY NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Large manufacturing facilities will not be able to operate due to environmental restrictions, as a result of their proximity to Queensbridge Housing and the surrounding residential neighborhoods immediately bordering the area.

Neighborhood comfort and safety issues along streets zoned for manufacturing and warehousing:

- Barnett Avenue next to Sunnyside Gardens is a prominent example. It is common knowledge never to park along the warehouses, parking lot facilities, etc. on this road. There is very little pedestrian traffic, a lack of security cameras or CCTV, leading to vagrancy, crime, smashed car windows, and car thefts for many years.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/382555689074911/posts/1409766246353845/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/382555689074911/posts/1409406753056461/>
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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/654863675068167/posts/1789736744914182/>

- It is a very similar situation on the lots around 21st to 23rd Street and 39th Avenue to 40th Avenue. In addition to vagrancy and crime, it is a popular area for illegal garbage dumping, and a common spot for people to sell drugs to the homeless and those with substance use disorders.

We have had multiple meetings and conversations with building developers and banks. Zoning without residential or mixed-use designations is an absolute non-starter for any construction project financing.

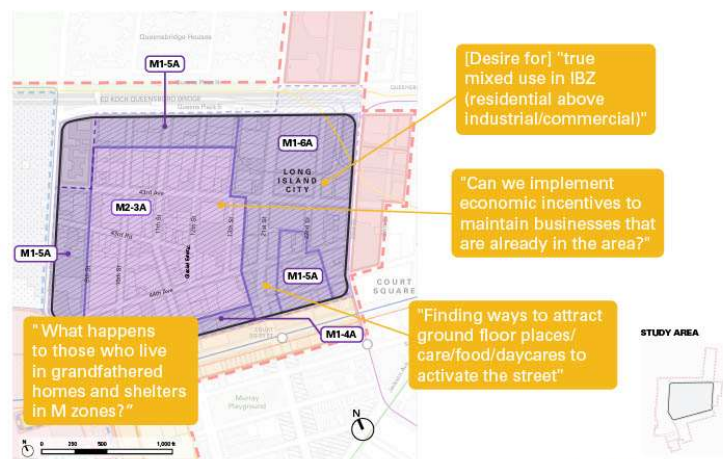
- No companies or businesses are interested in any form of development without a mixed-use or residential zoning designation.
- Upon request, we can present to the committee multiple letters and communications from developers and banks who directly informed us of this.

Based on the comments and feedback provided in the last two town-hall meetings, every zone in the LIC Plan advocated for more available housing.

- We have been to every town-hall meeting and focus-area meeting during the LIC planning committee process. The overwhelming response in these meetings has been to call for more housing.
- During the break-out sessions in May / June, even the Industrial / Commercial Area was full of comments and advocacy for carving out zoning for residential housing. This was a running theme in every meeting.

3 INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL AREA: ZONING FEEDBACK

- Concerns that proposed changes would not sufficiently activate the area
- Safety concerns in the IBZ area
- More parks, green and open spaces are needed in the area
- Confusion about mid-block district separations
- Desire to keep area industrial to protect existing industry and artists spaces, in addition to growing tech, science, and film industries



It has become apparent that throughout the community planning process, there is an overwhelming desire from the local community to see industrial/residential mixed-use developments throughout the IBZ area. This includes areas that are currently zoned for only manufacturing/industrial-only use.

There are several compelling reasons why IBZ-only zoning no longer makes sense for the areas that we have highlighted. The most important of which is that the city itself has already isolated 21st Street and the surrounding blocks into a residential / commuter-friendly transportation hub. This completely locks out manufacturing and industrial businesses from using the area as a place that is conducive for transporting goods and materials.

Allowing for a blend of industrial, commercial, and residential uses will create a better environment for businesses of all kinds, and residents to thrive together. Many of us in this area have become frustrated and remain stuck because of this IBZ designation – as it isolates the area from the rest of Long Island City. We need to have more residential and mixed uses so that these IBZ-designated areas can be made cleaner, safer, and more walkable to attract better quality activity and economic investments into the area.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Senjuen Hsia

SUBCOMMITTEE ON LANDMARKS PUBLIC SITINGS & DISPOSITIONS

CITY HALL CHAMBERS, NEW YORK, NY

IN-PERSON AND ONLINE TESTIMONIES

Thursday – September 18, 2025 – 10:00 A.M.

Project #364 — JUST HOMES

In-person testimony prepared by Bernadette Ferrara

Thursday, September 18, 2025

President of Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance (VNNA)

Life-long NorthEast Bronx Resident

Good morning Chair and Committee Members,

My name is Bernadette Ferrara. I am President of the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance and a life-long NorthEast Bronx resident. Today I speak on behalf of my many years as a Bronx resident. These are the reasons why I strongly oppose the Just Homes Project which will permanently house Rikers' homeless and detainees at 1900 Seminole Avenue, the unused building#2 on Jacobi Campus. For the record, Just Homes is an experimental project, never before managed by Fortune Society or NYCHH.

The communities ask NYCHH, NYC Mayor and the City Council to work towards a win-win solution.

The communities respect NYCHH's need for revenue. We ask that you respect our love and the needs for our communities we call home. The Just Homes Project is not what our communities need. Our community's needs list, prioritized first to last, is Senior Housing, Veterans Housing, STEM School, Community Center, Wellness & Culture Center, and Birthing Center that will work in this location before the need for this Just Homes Project.

Our major concerns are its close location to five of our schools and the safety of our residents.

The Fortune Society will screen and choose who permanently lives there with the inmates referred by Correctional Health Services. CHS has disclosed that most of the medical conditions suffered by Rikers inmates are not "complex medical needs" but mental health and substance abuse problems. This permanent housing will have minimal security. The Fortune Society has publicly stated that when screening, there will be no discrimination on the inmates' reason for being incarcerated, **only their medical needs**. This means that the Rikers "tenant" might be a former convicted rapist, murderer, robber, child pornographer, sex offender of any level that will roam freely in our communities without accountability.

Who will be accountable when a senior gets assaulted, a child gets raped, a home gets robbed, a person gets killed? Presently, residents are being robbed while walking their dogs by guys on scooters in broad daylight!! Don't you think NYCHH'S employees who work staggered hours and double shifts are nervous? Why is NYCHH not thinking of the safety of their employees?

The Just Homes Project at 1900 Seminole is too risky at this location for our communities.

Thank you.