

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND
FRANCHISES

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November 10, 2021
Start: 1:11 p.m.
Recess: 1:33 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Francisco Moya
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Carlina Rivera
Diana Ayala
Barry Grodenchik
Stephen T. Levin
Antonio Reynoso
Joseph C. Borelli

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

2 [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON MOYA: Good morning and welcome
4 to the meeting of the Subcommittee on Zoning and
5 Franchises. I'm Council member Francisco Moya, the
6 Chairperson of this Subcommittee. If I could just
7 ask my colleagues to, just for a few seconds and then
8 we can get back to our conversations. Thank you.
9 Today, we are joined by Council members Ayala,
10 Reynoso, Rivera, Borelli, Levin, Barry G, of course,
11 Council member Lander is here, as well. Today, we
12 will vote on several land use applications. We will
13 vote to approve with modifications the Gowanus
14 Neighborhood Plan, LU number 869 through 874. These
15 applications affect property in Council member
16 Lander's and Council member Levin's district in
17 Brooklyn. Our modification to the zoning text
18 amendment will adjust the permitted use of
19 manufacturing in MX districts, refined the definition
20 of Gowanus mixed use, expand and strengthen the
21 Gowanus mixed incentives, establish lower height
22 limits south of Thomas Greene Park to reduce the
23 shadows on the park, adjust authorization for larger,
24 mixed used sites and strike MIH Option II, leaving
25 MIH Option I and the deep affordability option to

1 ensure the deepest affordability. Together, these
2 actions will transform an area of Brooklyn currently
3 zoned for limited industrial and commercial
4 development into a dynamic, mixed use, mixed income
5 neighborhood with approximately 8494 new housing
6 units, including nearly 3000 affordable units, 1.5
7 acres of new parkland, four acres off new waterfront
8 open space, and significant projected commercial and
9 community facility space. The Council members Lander
10 and Levin have negotiated a comprehensive package of
11 additional capital and policy commitments from the
12 administration, including an unprecedented city
13 investment in NYCHA which I will let them describe in
14 detail.
15

16 We will also approve LU numbers 884
17 through 887, the Gowanus CSO facility application,
18 and LU 888, the Mercy Home UDAAP amendment. These
19 applications include map changes affecting Douglas
20 Street and Fifth Street, a site selection action and
21 a site selection and acquisition action to facilitate
22 the Gowanus Canal CSO facility on the east side of
23 the tenant between DeGraw and Butler Straits in
24 Council member Levin's district and at Second Avenue
25 and Fifth Street in Council member. The UDAAP

2 amendment action will facilitate the development of
3 approximately 45 units of affordable housing at the
4 Mercy Home site at 485 and 847 Fourth Avenue. At
5 this moment, I'm going to turn it over for some
6 remarks to Council member Lander and then to Council
7 member Levin.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you so much,
9 Chair Moya, and it's good to be here with Chair
10 Salamanca, as well. I'm just thrilled, along with
11 Council member Levin and with so many members of our
12 community. The Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for
13 Justice, Community Board Six, and a whole array of
14 public housing tenants, homeowners,
15 environmentalists, artists, small business people to
16 be able to announce that we have reached agreement
17 with City Hall in the Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning
18 and that, with the points of agreement negotiated
19 here, believe that we have a powerful plan for
20 inclusive and sustainable growth in Gowanus for
21 decades, even generations to come. It is really a
22 because of deep community engagement buys so many
23 hundreds of people that we have a plan that makes an
24 unprecedented investment in the NYCHA developments
25 nearby. It includes the most stringent

1 affordability, sustainability, and mixed use and
2 creative neighborhood requirements. Really, I
3 believe any previous neighborhood rezoning. I won't
4 go there at all because it is 21 pages of points of
5 agreement, but a quick summary. I mean, first, my
6 back Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning is the first
7 mandatory inclusionary housing neighborhood rezoning
8 in a white, wealthier neighborhood, so it will not
9 push out low income residents. It will bring in low
10 income residents and people of color into a
11 neighborhood where they cannot afford to live today.
12 3000 of the 8500 units that will be created under
13 this rezoning are affordable to low and moderate
14 income families. The city-owned land is 100%
15 affordable. The public place site 950 units of 100%
16 affordable housing, half of it affordable to families
17 at or below 50% of area median income Moya is a new
18 park, a new school, beautiful design on site, the MIH
19 units are Option I, so six-- you know, 25% at or
20 below-- affordable at or below 60% of AMI with 10
21 percent at or below 40 with the deep affordability
22 option also mapped on site. So, 3000 affordable
23 units in between Park Slope and Carol Gardens. We
24 did a racial impact study of the type that will be
25

2 required in the future by the legislation we passed
3 in this Council which provides strong evidence that
4 we are creating a more diverse and inclusive
5 neighborhood, innovative zoning tools for schools,
6 for transit, to preserve the mix of uses in the
7 neighborhood, 150 affordable artists studios, and
8 then, thanks to the organizing and hard pushing by
9 Council member Levin and myself, we were able to
10 secure \$200 million for comprehensive in unit
11 renovations of every single one of the 1662 NYCHA
12 units in Gowanus Houses and Wycoff Gardens-- the
13 first time that has happened in the rezoning--
14 powerful organizing by residents. Big commitments on
15 stormwater infrastructure, on flooding, on community
16 facilities for the Pacific library and the Old Stone
17 House. Council member Levin will talk more about the
18 investments in NYCHA and some really powerful
19 investments there that he has secured. So I will
20 stop there, but I will point people to both the press
21 release that we put out and the points of agreement
22 and then I do just have to say a set of thank yous
23 because this has been so much work by so many people
24 and you know how this real estate and development and
25 land use stuff is. It can be really bruising and

2 it's not that there weren't hard conversations.

3 There were a lot of hard conversations, but people

4 just kept going and were really willing to lean in

5 together. So, to the folks in the room who made that

6 happen, and many more, I just want to say a lot of

7 thank yous. Steve, I do want to start with you.

8 Like to have a partner in the Council should be able

9 to do this with, like I don't take that for granted.

10 This was hard work and we had each other's backs and

11 we stuck together and that is kind of amazing. And

12 our staffs were incredible. Ben Solitaire and, for

13 me, especially, Julia Ermond, who is just an amazing

14 on this. Julia, thank you. You are really, really

15 incredible and props the Catherine Zanell who did

16 that before Julia got there. City Planning folks

17 aren't in the room, but for the record, Jonathan

18 Keller who led this team at Brooklyn City Planning

19 did hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of meetings.

20 Winston Von Engle, Jonah Rogas, Segi Golan-- All the

21 DCP staff who did this amazing indoor/outdoor public

22 hearing that was required by the courts for the

23 Community Board Six at the Old Stone Houses,

24 incredible. The Council land use team was amazing on

25 this. Raju, Julie, and, when she was here, Rosa

2 Kelly, and in her role at HPD, as well-- impossible
3 without you and then especially Bryan Paul who just
4 stuck with this community through like thick and thin
5 and really did an extraordinary job pushing and
6 organizing. The City Hall team who, you know, barely
7 none of us have slept, but really productive in back
8 and forth with Shawn Fitzpatrick, with Emory Gray.
9 Thank you both. And Jodi Calendar, who I don't see
10 but who was also really fantastic in working on
11 especially the NYCHA pieces. Greg Russ came out last
12 week, so, to Greg, Steve Lovechee, Shalisa Reid, and
13 Bryan Honan from NYCHA, so many agency staff, but
14 Mike Deloach from DEP, folks from HPD, Parks, SCA,
15 DOT-- Community Board Six's recommendation on this
16 is really what set the table Steve and I, so thank
17 you, Mike Grassiopo and Alex Sheranbeck, and then,
18 finally, hundreds of people through the Gowanus
19 Neighborhood Coalition for Justice, a really
20 remarkable coalition who were serious about their
21 demands, but open to the possibility that if those
22 demands were met, that this would be worth doing and
23 worth leaning into and getting to yes. So, Michelle,
24 Sebine, Karen, Monica, Paula, Val, Ed, Teresa, SJ,
25 Andrea, Diana, Amy, Jonny, David, Lin, and lots more

2 leaders with the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for
3 Justice, this one is really yours and it is what sets
4 up the future for Gowanus to be a more sustainable,
5 thriving, and diverse neighborhood. I'm really proud
6 of it and I hope you guys will join in supporting and
7 then vote yes today. Thank you so much, Chair, for
8 the time.

9 CHAIRPERSON MOYA: Thank you so much. Now,
10 I want to turn it over to Council member Levin for
11 remarks.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very
13 much, Chair. I just want to knowledge the work that
14 Council member Lander put into getting to this day.
15 The first meeting that Brad organized about this
16 issue was in the summer 2013. Mike Bloomberg was
17 still Man. That is how my work went to this. It was
18 hundreds of meetings. Easily 150 to 200 meetings,
19 community meetings. And now, you know, every aspect
20 of this was really thought through in a really
21 conscientious way and I think that this provides a
22 really good template for any future administration,
23 any future Council, any future Council members of our
24 you can to community-based planning, how you can do
25 responsive planning to community needs and have that

1 drive the agenda and not have the agenda driven by,
2 you know, other interests or players from outside the
3 community. This is truly a community driven zoning
4 in the priority is in investments in sustainability,
5 no new SCO's into the Gowanus Canal, you know, a
6 resiliency and sustainability our top priority. The
7 investments in NYCHA and public housing. I represent
8 the two developments and they have-- you know, their
9 infrastructure has been crumbling because of lack of
10 investment. And I really appreciate the
11 administration, City Hall and Greg Russ who came out
12 a couple weeks ago to take a look at it and really
13 saw firsthand what tenants are living through with
14 holes in their walls and sewage coming up through
15 their kitchen sink. You know, conditions that we
16 wouldn't deem acceptable if the landlord with anybody
17 else but New York City. And the response from NYCHA
18 and from the administration is that they're going to
19 fully modernize every unit in these two developments
20 at a cost of roughly \$200 million. That is a
21 historic level of investment. In addition, the
22 administration is committed to expanding the Mayor's
23 Action Plan, the MAP program, to these two
24 developments. It's the first expansion in eight
25

2 years or seven years, and these are the first two
3 developments since the program started in 2014 and
4 this will bring ongoing real resources to these two
5 developments in terms of human infrastructure or
6 youth services, senior services, domestic violence
7 services, and really providing those wraparound
8 services that are so necessary for communities that
9 are-- that can be marginalized or disinvested in
10 over generations. And so, this is starting that work
11 of turning that around. And so, I just want to
12 acknowledge GNCJ, all of the people that have
13 volunteered their time to do this. I mean, this has
14 been an immense amount of work on everybody's part
15 and, again, Council member Lander who has really
16 led-- and this is a great accomplishment, but your
17 staff, Katherine, Julia, Ben from my staff, as well.
18 And I also want to acknowledge the folks from the
19 Mayor's Office who are here and City Planning for
20 being so collaborative and negotiating in good faith.
21 And so, I thank them and I'll turn it back over to
22 you, Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON MOYA: Thank you. Thank you,
24 both. Oh. I'm sorry.

25 [background comment]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: A lot of work with
3 us and I shouted out Jodi Calendar before, but she
4 wasn't in the room, so I just want to say thank you
5 to both of them, as well.

6 CHAIRPERSON MOYA: Thank you. We will
7 also vote to approve with modifications 343 Madison
8 Avenue MTA HQ special permit applications under LU
9 numbers 867 and 868. These actions relate to
10 property in Council member Powers' district in
11 Manhattan. The Council's modifications will be to
12 lower the buildings podium height.

13 We will also vote to approve with
14 modifications, LU numbers 864, 865, and 866 related
15 to the New York Blood Center. This proposal seeks
16 zoning map amendment's and zoning text amendments and
17 a special permit pursuant to the proposed zoning
18 text. These actions affecting property in the
19 districts of Council members Kallos and Powers will
20 facilitate the development of a proposed new 16 story
21 334 foot tall life science research and development
22 building at 310 East 67th Street in Manhattan. The
23 Council's modification to the special permit would
24 lower the building's height to 218 feet at the top of
25 the street wall of the building with any mechanical

1 space limited to a maximum of 233 feet. That is a
2 reduction of over 100 feet from where we started.
3 Combined with investments in St. Catherine's Park and
4 Julia Richmond Education Complex, that makes this a
5 great outcome for New York City. It's our
6 responsibility after what we have been through as a
7 city to do everything to upgrade our public health
8 infrastructure. This project will create space for
9 new research labs which we hope will help cure
10 diseases like sickle cell and it is an important set
11 forward in improving out public health
12 infrastructure. With the changes we're making today,
13 I think we have responsibly balanced the concerns of
14 this community with the broader citywide need and,
15 frankly, national need for improving our life
16 sciences sector. We will also produce high-quality
17 construction jobs and building service jobs which is
18 always a win for communities across New York City.
19 The compromise is never easy and this project proves
20 the maximum. A good-- As they say, good compromise
21 is when everyone is unhappy, but compromise is what
22 is required to solve problems and I want to thank the
23 blood center for all that they do for the city. Dr.
24 Hillyer, thank you. And I want to thank Council

2 members Powers, Kallos, Borough President Brewer,
3 Senator Krueger, Congressman Maloney for all your
4 passionate advocacy on behalf of your community and,
5 with that, all items are coupled and I now call for a
6 vote to approve LU 884, 885, 886, 887, and 888 and to
7 approve, with the modifications I have described, LU
8 867, 868, 864, 865, and 866 and 869 through 874.
9 Counsel, can you please call the role?

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Moya?

11 CHAIRPERSON MOYA: I vote aye.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council member
13 Levin?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Permission to
15 explain?

16 CHAIRPERSON MOYA: Permission granted.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you. So,
18 again, I want to congratulate Brad on the Gowanus
19 vote. I also want to acknowledge that the work that
20 Council member Kallos put into negotiations, and I
21 realize that it might now be at a place exactly where
22 he was hoping to end up, but I think that his
23 advocacy on behalf of his community and his district
24 is commendable and here he is. I just wanted to

2 acknowledge, you know, his hard work and dedication
3 and, with that, I vote aye.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council member
5 Reynoso?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER REYNOSO: Permission to
7 explain my vote? I also want to comment Council
8 member Kallos on the work that he did for his
9 community on this project. The funding that he got
10 for the school and for the park and also the
11 reduction-- the significant reduction-- of height
12 on this center, his fingerprints are all over that.
13 While we might have come to a place where he's
14 comfortable with, I feel that he worked admirable and
15 very hard to get us to where we are today, his
16 community should be very proud. I also want to thank
17 Council member Brad Lander for this long, long time
18 to get to Gowanus rezoning. You talked about the
19 victories, but the \$200 million to NYCHA is the
20 largest commitment every made by the city for a NYCHA
21 development and we're talking about improving the
22 lives of people that need better homes, more dignity
23 in the work that they are doing. So I want to thank
24 you for the great work you did there alongside

2 Council member Levin and I would like to vote aye on
3 all.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Grodenchik?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Please come
6 back to me.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Is that a pass?
8 Council member Ayala?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Permission to
10 explain my vote?

11 CHAIRPERSON MOYA: Permission granted.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: I also want o
13 congratulate Council member Lander and acknowledge
14 all of the hard work on Council member Kallos and,
15 you know, I just really wanted to add that I think
16 that this is one of those projects that is the
17 ability to do a better good for the entire city and I
18 think and I look at it from that perspective and I'm
19 really excited about the possibility of, obviously,
20 bringing new jobs and helping to advance medicine in
21 this way. The blood center supplies 80% of the blood
22 to Health and Hospitals in districts like mine, they
23 have advanced science medicine in several fields that
24 primarily impact people of color. So, to me, it was
25 a really important step but I wanted to acknowledge

2 all of the hard work on behalf of Council member
3 Kallos. I know that he worked hard on this and so,
4 with that, I vote aye.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council member
6 Rivera?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: I want to align
8 myself with the colleagues comments and commend all
9 of the Council members for their work. I vote aye.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council member
11 Borelli?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Aye.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council member
14 Grodenchik?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Aye on all and
16 no on Land Use numbers 864, five, and six.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: The land use items
18 are approved and referred to the full-- approved in
19 accordance with the description and we are referring
20 them to the full Land Use Committee.

21 CHAIRPERSON MOYA: Thank you and that
22 concludes today's meeting. I would like to thank the
23 members of the public, my colleagues, Council, land
24 use staff, and the sergeant-at-arms for attending.
25 This meeting is hereby adjourned.

2 [gavel]

3 [background comments]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date December 5, 2021