

Protect Bronx Neighborhoods from Overdevelopment

Alternative Facts to the False Narrative on the Housing Crisis 2024

1. The City's Zoning has not changed since 1961.

FACTS: The citywide zoning text ZQA/MIH passed in 2016. Zoning for Quality and Affordability (ZQA) and Mandatory Inclusion for Housing (MIH) zoning changes enacted by then Mayor DeBlasio in 2016. Those zoning amendments were modified by the City Council to add “affordable and equitable changes that are not as profitable for developers”. In 1987, there was zoning for Quality Housing.¹

2. The city has a housing and affordability crisis.

FACTS: Trying to solve economic problems with a zoning text change avoids the issue of income inequality. While unemployment insurance is low in most of the city, the Bronx is at 6%. The question of affordability is who is it for -- the developer or the renter? The size difference between market rate housing and income restricted is inequitable; it is no different than having a separate door to enter the building. Moreover, the need and purpose for this phantom housing crisis has not been adequately identified; and, the paucity of preservation of and enforcement for existing housing is not fair.

Additionally, this citywide zoning text does NOT promote affordable housing, something most of us have been saying for years. Instead, the only mention of affordability is where it promotes fair market and luxury housing, where developers receive a 20% bonus in Floor Area Ratio (FAR) in R6-10 if they include a small number of so-called affordable or supportive units. Basically, this is similar to current city policy and zoning codes.

3. Current zoning cannot meet our housing needs.

FACTS: Current zoning can accommodate a build out of at least an additional 8.8 million residents today.² According to DCP's data 74,000 new housing construction projects have been

¹ Quality Housing' Zoning Nearing a Vote - The New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/1987/07/12/realestate/quality-housing-zoning-nearing-a-vote.html>

² <https://buildingtheskyline.org/floor-area-ratio-4/> “The theoretical maximum population that the city could hold—in terms of housing units—has increased from about 11.9 million in 1961 to 16.6 million today—an increase of 1.4 billion square feet (130 km²) of residential space.[ii] From this perspective, one could say that changes in the zoning codes have allowed the city—in theory—to nearly double its current population of 8.8 million.”

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permitted in the past 14 years under current zoning laws.³ In 2021 NYC HPD estimated that landlords have kept 89,000 units off the market by choice;⁴ today it is down to 30,000.⁵ A Columbia University report documents the loss of units due to apartment consolidation in some neighborhood.⁶ NYCHA has almost 5000 vacant apartments.⁷ Finally, the New York Times just reported that from April 2020 to July 2023, the city lost almost 550,000 residents, or more than 6 percent of its population⁸.

How many housing units do we need? We figured it out. See attached

4: Zoning Text Change will NOT harm the Environment.

FACTS: These proposals ignore accepted **Climate Change** projections, outcomes, and federal mandates. The cost in dollars to the city's taxpayers will be catastrophic. NYC is already experiencing more severe rain events due to climate change. The increase in building construction and density via implementing these changes reduces open space that will dramatically harm the environment with the increase in impervious surfaces, reduce the ability of storm water to infiltrate the ground, cause flooding and erosion, and raise local temperature so severe that no one will want to visit NYC.

³ ArcGIS Housing Database file contains all NYC Department of Buildings (DOB) - approved housing construction and demolition jobs filed or completed in NYC since January 1, 2010.

⁴ <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/2021-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>

⁵ Accurately Assessing and Effectively Addressing Vacancies in NYC's Rent Stabilized Housing Stock MARCH 2024, NYC Comptroller Brad Lander's report <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Accurately-Assessing-and-Effectively-Addressing-Vacancies-in-NYCs-Rent-Stabilized-Housing-Stock.pdf> states:

- The number of rent stabilized units in NYC that are vacant but not available for rent for any reason declined from 42,860 in 2021 to 26,310 in 2023.
- The number of rent stabilized units deemed dilapidated or otherwise uninhabitable declined from 11,500 in 2021 to just over 3,000 units in 2023.

⁶ <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23925294-bigger-houses-fewer-homes-dwelling-unit-consolidation-in-new-york-city>

⁷ <https://nychamonitor.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Rpt.6-2023Q2-Office-of-Analytics-Contract-Management.pdf> page 14

⁸ NYC Population Decline ... <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/14/nyregion/nyc-population-decline.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share&referringSource=articleShare>

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Furthermore, NYC is under a **federal and state mandate** to reduce Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO). This occurs when our sewer and storm systems are overwhelmed by rain events that result in raw sewerage being released into our local water bodies. The only way to meet this mandate and avoid fines (as well as damaging flooding and toxic pollution) is to update our antiquated sewer and water systems and expedite a comprehensive Storm Water Management Plan. These actions must occur prior to enacting zoning changes that exacerbate climate change issues.

Schools, Libraries, Roadways, Parks and more are needed. While new housing may provide an increase in income taxes, it will be eaten up by the increase in the capital budget as much of the city's current infrastructure is old and in need of repair or replacement.

5. A little bit of housing in every neighborhood.

FACTS: The jingle is cute, but disingenuous. Just as there is no way to control the open market when it comes to building. Therefore, if these changes are passed, there will be no way to assure it will be a little bit here or there. Unlike other urban areas, the city does not require builders to bear the burden of the infrastructure cost they incur to the sewers, the streets, the schools, etc.

This is more like an excuse to not have to make capital improvements. Unlike other administrations, there is no infrastructure, no enforcement, no negotiations between the city and its people. This was recently discussed in the March 2024 IBO report⁹:

“Under Mayor Bill de Blasio, the City aimed to increase housing through neighborhood rezonings in transit-connected areas of the city, typically with the goal of enabling more housing to be built in those select neighborhoods. Part of the neighborhood rezoning process is a negotiation between the City—represented by the Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB)—and representatives from the neighborhood—often the City Council Member. The negotiations result in a Points of Agreement document (POA), wherein the City agrees to provide various capital and expense investments to the rezoned neighborhood, referred to as “pledges” in this report.”

Thank you.
2024 April 15

⁹ CAPITAL COMMITMENTS for Recent Rezonings, Independent Budget Office, March 2024
<https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/capital-commitments-for-recent-rezonings-march-2024.pdf>