



## WHY DO WE NEED A NEW APPROACH TO PLANNING?

Our city's planning processes are failing us. Our current system for making land-use, budgeting, and policy decisions perpetuates a landscape of inequitable development and investment that fuels displacement and exclusion. Low-income communities of color suffering the effects of decades of disinvestment are pushed to accept rezonings in order to have their existing needs addressed, while whiter and wealthier communities are largely exempted from doing their part to address citywide needs. The city's budgeting process lacks transparency and accountability, fails to address identified neighborhood needs or historical disparities, and tends to neglect longer term and larger scale investments.

**Comprehensive planning offers the opportunity for a new approach that centers racial and economic equity in the planning process to correct disparities and disinvestment in communities of color and ensure a more equitable distribution of development and investments citywide.**

## WHERE DOES THE IDEA FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COME FROM?

Comprehensive planning is an approach that is followed in most major cities across the country. New York City is in fact a major outlier in that regard. The current push for comprehensive planning in New York City grew out of the experience of residents and community organizations in low-income communities of color that have seen the destructive effects of our current planning system and understand the need for change.

## HOW WOULD COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING WORK?

Instead of a piecemeal approach - with different plans from different agencies that contradict each other - comprehensive planning is a way for local and citywide planning to complement each other. Through a transparent public process, citywide and local needs would be identified across a host of issues (housing, jobs, health, capital investment). A plan to meet those needs, with an emphasis on reducing racial and economic disparities across communities, would then guide where and how development and investment should occur.

Future land-use and budget decisions would have to speak directly to the detailed, quantifiable goals and needs of the relevant communities laid out in the comprehensive plan and thoroughly explain any deviations from it. Communities would have an opportunity to move forward their own proposals or rally behind those that align with the comprehensive plan to advance equity.

## WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING?

### *Under-resourced communities will benefit.*

A more transparent planning process will allow the public to see — and help determine — how citywide and community needs for housing, jobs, open space, schools, climate change and other infrastructure are identified and balanced against each other - with an eye towards reducing displacement, correcting for past disinvestment, and opening access to *all* the city's neighborhoods. The result should be a more equitable assignment of benefits and burdens across all communities, and investment more driven by New Yorkers' needs.

Comprehensive planning will also streamline the currently scattered planning processes so that community members can invest their time more proactively to fight for the futures they want. The transparency and accessibility of the information in the plan will afford communities greater opportunities to hold the City and developers accountable, to limit inequitable and speculative development, and to advocate for the resources needed for their communities to thrive.

### *City Council Members will benefit.*

Comprehensive planning provides abundant opportunities for city council member input on the needs and priorities of the communities in their districts. The process will ensure that the City is constantly working in partnership with council members and their districts to rigorously assess and prioritize infrastructure needs, so that we're funding communities' most urgent repair needs. Comprehensive planning will create significantly more transparency in annual budget negotiations and new tools to ensure that all communities are better protected from the impacts of climate change.

Comprehensive planning also creates a larger framework for determining ahead of time how benefits and burdens of development should be shared by all, free from the urgency and politics

of a particular land-use application. Council members would have a clearer understanding of the actual impact of any given project in relation to local and citywide needs and would be able to evaluate whether other areas of the city are taking on similar burdens for the benefit of all. Projects aligned with the comprehensive plan could be approved through an expedited process, with council members retaining the ability to call them up to be reviewed through ULURP.

### ***Community Boards and Borough Presidents will benefit.***

Under the current system, community boards and borough presidents receive insufficient opportunities to participate early in the planning process. Comprehensive planning flips the script, forcing the City to provide community boards with the resources they need to develop a proactive vision for developers to react and respond to, instead of the other way around. Through comprehensive planning, each district will gain more insights and data on what their actual needs are when preparing district needs assessments and budget requests.

More information and transparency will allow community leaders to better hold officials and agencies accountable when their goals are not met. Community boards and borough presidents — while retaining their current role in the ULURP process — will have more opportunities to center their needs and priorities when they vote in an advisory capacity on land-use scenarios to inform the Council's deliberations.

### ***New York City will benefit.***

Communities face an ad hoc planning process made worse when city agencies operate in silos. Currently, agencies differ on how they approach equity issues, and limited interagency coordination creates inefficient and duplicative work. A citywide vision and planning process will help agencies work more closely with each other, center equity in budget decisions, and help strategically invest city dollars. This is especially important as we grapple with fiscal challenges coming out of the pandemic.

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## **ABOUT THE THRIVING COMMUNITIES COALITION**

The Thriving Communities Coalition includes grassroots organizing, advocacy, policy and technical assistance groups who work across various issue areas and neighborhoods. We believe that the status quo approach to planning and land use in New York City does not work for most New Yorkers, and that without meaningful changes, the processes we have now will only continue to exacerbate inequality, segregation, and displacement. We are working together to win meaningful reforms to create a City where everyone has a chance to thrive.

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