

Group proposes changes to make city's public review process more inclusive

The group includes local pols, grassroots and think tank organizations

By [Emily Nonko](#) Feb 18, 2018, 12:30pm EST



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Every major development project that includes a rezoning—from the redevelopment of the [Domino Sugar Plant](#) (rendered above) to the [Essex Crossing](#) mega-development—has to go through the city's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure, or [ULURP](#). It's a standardized procedure in which development proposals affecting land use of the city go through a public review that includes the local community board, borough president, borough board, city planning commission, city council and mayor. Now a working group of over 40 organizations and elected officials are suggesting the process could be improved.

Following a year of group meetings, the coalition just released a white paper focused on resources for planning in New York City, increasing transparency for the public, and suggestions for environmental reviews. "The reforms proposed by the working group would enact a citywide comprehensive planning framework, create an office of community planning to resource and legitimize bottom-up planning, and reform community boards," according to a press release.

The group recommends the city dramatically increase the amount of proactive planning to include more community voices. That means increased communication, participation, and

transparency in development decisions before and during the formal ULURP procedure. The group also asks for improved accountability, oversight, and enforcement in the City Environmental Quality Review process, plus updates to the City Environmental Quality Review technical manual.

The suggestions are backed by pols like Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and Public Advocate Tish James, plus organizations like the Regional Plan Association (who recently proposed sweeping changes to improve the city subway system) and the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development.

The idea is to make the ULURP process—which is often contentious, pitting developers against community residents—more inclusive and therefore more predictable for everyone. By doing that, the group hopes, it'll lessen the opposition toward developers and better engage those who fear displacement from their neighborhoods.

This piggybacks off a bill proposed last year requiring City Planning to consider land use applications in a more timely manner, pushing the process into public review.

"Many of the ideas put forward in this white paper are things we've experimented with already, and they're worth pursuing," Manhattan Borough Brewer stated in the press release . "Community input works, building in more of it earlier will make projects better, and it can often make the process more predictable and worthwhile for developers as well."