

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND
FRANCHISES

----- X

October 22, 2024
Start: 9:37 a.m.
Recess: 11:57 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Kevin C. Riley, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
David M. Carr
Kamillah M. Hanks
Francisco P. Moya
Yusef Salaam
Lynn C. Schulman

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Adrienne Adams, Speaker
Christopher Marte
Lincoln Restler
Mercedes Narcisse
Robert F. Holden
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Eric Dinowitz
Shahana Hanif
Chi A. Ossé
Vickie Paladino
Joann Ariola

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING: (continued)

Carlina Rivera
Amanda Farías
Gale A. Brewer
Rita C. Joseph
Kamillah M. Hanks
Linda Lee
Chris Banks
Alexa Avilés
Althea V. Stevens

A P P E A R A N C E S

Patrick Bohl, Senior Director at Enterprise
Community Partners

Thomas Devaney, Senior Director of Land Use and
Planning at Municipal Arts Society

Emily Goldstein, Director of Organizing and
Advocacy with the Association for Neighborhood
and Housing Development

Matthew Dunbar, Chief Strategy Officer at Habitat
for Humanity New York City and Westchester County

Matthew Murphy, NYU Furman Center

Sam Burtnick, HANAC

Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President

Zul Sulkowicz

George Janes, planner

Megan Fitzpatrick, Landmark West

Zeynep Turan, Friends of the Upper East Side

Lucie Levine, Historic Districts Council

Paul Devlin, Co-Chair of the Clinton-Hell's
Kitchen Land Use Committee of Manhattan's
Community Ward 4

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

Chad Purkey, Interim Executive Director at the
Association for a Better New York

Howard Slatkin, Executive Director of Citizens'
Housing and Planning Council

Emily Kurtz, Chief Housing and Development
Officer at RiseBoro Community Partnership

Tom Wright, President and Chief Executive Officer
of Regional Plan Association

Michelle de la Uz, Executive Director of the
Fifth Avenue Committee

Bria Donohue, Senior Manager of Government
Affairs at the American Institute of Architects
New York

Ronnie Wolf, self

Jennifer Petit, self

Peter Miller, self

Paul DiBenedetto, Chair of Queens Community Board
11 in Northeast Queens

Naomi Bushman, self

Matthew Robinson, self

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

Joseph Rosenberg, Director of the Catholic Community Relations Council, representing the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens

Sara Lind, Co-Executive Director at Open Plans

Maddie DeCerbo, Real Estate Board of New York

Annemarie Gray, Executive Director of Open New York

Rachel Fee, Executive Director of the New York Housing Conference

Anthony Bartolano, member of SEIU Local 32BJ

Barbara Larkin, self

Charles Nye, self

Mary Anne McGowan, President of the Clove Lake Civic Association in Staten Island, New York

Chris Coppa, Staten Island Public Service Association

Bernadette Ferrara, President of the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance

Antonio Reynoso, Brooklyn Borough President

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

Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters

Julie Chou, Vice Chair of the Land Use, Housing, and Zoning Committee for Manhattan Community Board 5

Rosa Chang, self

Gregory Smithsimon, Director of the Center for the Study of Brooklyn and Professor of Sociology at Brooklyn College in the CUNY Grad Center

Charlene Davis, self

Mark Greenberg, Executive Director of the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing and President of the Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative

Gordon Lee, self

Layla Law-Gisiko, President of the City Club of New York

Renee DeSantis, trustee of the Community First Development Coalition

Alfred Brand, Chairman of the Board of the Kew Gardens Queen Civic Association

Paul Briscoe, self

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

Ronald Colangelo, self

Jackson Chabot, Director of Advocacy and
Organizing at Open Plans

Kazi Hussain, self

Eric Shiner, President of Powerhouse Arts

Derek Marcus, TF Cornerstone

Diah Mehera, Director of Marketing and
Communications at Tech:NYC

Braden Crooks, self

Lori Travers, self

Alice Barrett-Mitchell, self

Tammy Meltzer, Chair of Manhattan Community Board
1

Patricia Loftman, President of the Park West
Village Tenant Association

Anna Barrett-Mitchell, self

Evidelia Boyd, President and Board Chairperson of
the Rosedale Civic Association

Eric Goshow, Fellow of the American Institute of
Architects

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

Emily Klein, Assistant Vice President for Policy
and Government Affairs at the Community
Preservation Corporation

Juan O'Neill, self

Gigi Gerefetari, self

Romero Rodriguez, self

MacKenzie Fallow, self

Connie Murray, self

Susan Breindel

Andrea Goldwyn, New York Landmarks Conservancy

Ronda Wist, self

Daniel Mayo, self

Susan Zinder, on behalf of B'nai Adot Kolbeth
Yisrael

Michael Sutherland, Policy Analyst at Open Plans

Catherine Trapani, Assistant Vice President for
Public Policy at Volunteers of America Greater
New York

Jacob Brooks, self

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

Rashida Tyler, Deputy Executive Director of the New York State Council of Churches and project manager for the Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative

Rabbi Baruch Yehuda, B'nai Adath Kol Beth Yisrael

Jamie Williams, Assembly Member

Daniel Cohen, self

Erica Turner, self

LaShaun Ellis, MTOPP, Crown Heights community, Block Association, Sullivan Ludlum Stoddard Neighborhood Association, and self

Mark Anaya, Vice President of the Neponset Properties Owner Associations

DJ Falkson, self

Darrick Borowski, architect and a member of the AIA New York Housing Committee

Sadia Rahman, Deputy Director at Chhaya CDC

Adeola Deloatch, self

Cathy Cebek, self

Alicia Spears, self

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

George Calderaro, Board Member of six New York City civic organizations

Angela Kravtchenko, Community Board 13, First Chair

Ilan Rabinovich, self

Tyler Baldwin, self

Michelle Koppersmith, self

Lora Tenenbaum, self

Esther Gimelfarb, self

Carin Bail, self and Hollis Hill Civic Association

Kevin Jones, Associate State Director for Advocacy at AARP New York

June Moses, self

Celines Miranda, self

Renee Kinsella, 29th Street Association

Tom Duane, self

Yahel Carmen, self

Isaac Alderstein, Executive Director of Broadway Community

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

Guillermo Gomez, Urban Design Forum

Talya Schwartz, Strategist at Open Plans

Rachel Simpson, architect

Margy Brown, Executive Director of the Urban
Homesteading Assistance Board

Jack Bolembach, Civic Associations against the
City of Yes

Thomas Diana, self

Vienna Levitan, Ridgewood Property Owners' Civic
Association

Michelle Alleyne, self

Migdalia Cortez, self

Austin Celestin, self

Ben Wetzler, self

Thomas Lopez-Pierre, President and CEO of the
Black Real Estate Forum LLC and fund manager of
BREF Fund Number One LLC

Paul Peart, Senior Pastor of New Testament Temple
Church of God in the Bronx

John Woelfling, architect

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

Julio Herrera, Executive Assistant to the Black Institute

William Scarborough, President of the Addisleigh Park Civic Organization in Jamaica, Queens

Vanessa L. Gibson, Bronx Borough President

Jess Coleman, member of Community Board 1

Kyle Jeremiah, Director of External Affairs at the Bowery Residents' Committee

Lindsey McCormack, self

Michael Kaess, self

David Mulkins, President of the Bowery Alliance of Neighbors

Corey Bearak, self

Suwen Cheong, self

Stella Grillo, self

Adam Brodheim, Open New York and member of Manhattan Community Board 7's Housing and Land Use Committee

Leo Guttmann, self

Rohan Kalyani, self

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

Gregory Marvin, self

Dee Vandenburg, President of the Staten Island
Taxpayer Association

Claudia Valentino, President of the Forest Hills
Community and Civic Association

Colette Wong, self

Diane Viggiano, Vice President of the Old Town
Civic Association of Staten Island

Kevin Wolfe, Deputy Director of Advocacy for the
Center for New York City Neighborhoods

Dan Miller, self

Chloe Sarnoff, Director of Policy Research and
Initiatives at Robin Hood

Sunny Ng, self

Cheyenne Deopersaud, Center for Fair Futures and
Next 100

Sharon Pope-Marshall, Executive Director of
Civitas

John Lynch, Juniper Civic Association

Laura Sewell, Director of the East Village
Community Coalition

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

John Mudd, Executive Director of Midtown South
Community Council

Edwin Westley, Community Board 3

Roxanne Delgado, activist

Julie Stein, Executive Director of the Union
Square Partnership, the Business Improvement
District in Union Square and 14th Street

Chloe Phitoussi, self

Elizabeth Denys, Board Member of Open New York

Reverend Dr. Terry Troia, self

Pilar DeJesus, Vice President of East Harlem
Preservation

David Lawrence, Ironclad Artists

Allie Ryan, self

Stephen Crim, self

Matthew Denys, self

Kurtis Weatherford, self

Vishnu Reddy, self

Luke Lavanway, self

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

Toby Hyde, self

Professor Joseph Kleinplatz, self

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

David Holowka, Community Board Member

Olivia Killingsworth, self

Gabriel Dougherty, self

Alex Armlovich, Housing Policy Manager at the
Niskanen Center

Dan Kent, Chief Executive Officer of Lantern
Organization

Puneet Lath, self

Bill Cryer, self

Rochelle Thompson, First Lady of Jazz in Harlem

Daniel Arnow, Entertainment Community Fund and
our Housing Development Corporation

Geoffrey Thomas, self

Daniel Golliher, self

Cassandra O'Hearn, self

Jorge Romero, self

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

Barbara Blair, President of the Garment District Alliance

Elaine Young, President of the West Cunningham Park Civic Association

Dena Tasse-Winter, Village Preservation

Arlene Schlesinger, Hollis Hills Civic Association

Grace Marrero, community advocate and activist

Susan Lunn, self

Tyler Lewis, self

Roland Nimis, Acting Director of Housing Unit at Bronx Legal Services

Sally Ann Sinisgalli, self

Latonia Harris, self

Ed Goydas, self

Cliff Bruckenstein, Zoning Board of the Community Board

Paul Graziano, urban planner

Marc Pittsley, architect

Jessica Rothkuo, self

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

Ernie Smith, self

Craig Gurian, Executive Director of the Anti-Discrimination Center

James Dill, Executive Director of the Housing and Services Team

Gui Marques, self

Saaif Alam, self

Sherida Paulsen, Senior Principal of PKSB Architects

Shams DeBaron, self

Emilia Decaudin, self

Judine Johnson-Harriott, self

Carolyn Iodice, self

Jane Buchanan, self

Reverend Carlene Thorbs, Chairperson of Community Board 12

Andrew Berman, Village Preservation

Maria Deinnocentiis, President of the Utopia Estates Civic Association and Area 6 Chair of Community Board 8

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

Joseph McAllister, President of South Beach Civic Association

Virginia Crawford, self

Amy Gross, President of Amy Gross Architects

Kayt Tiskus, self

Michael Zoorob, self

Jenny Dubnau, Western Queens Community Land Trust

Karen Argenti, self

Laura Spalter, Protect Bronx Neighborhoods from Overdevelopment

Pamela Wolf, President of Save Chelsea

Joseph Vaini, self

Jonathan Ortiz, self

Marieke Thomas, self

Lana Irons, psychiatrist

Valerie Mason, Chair of Manhattan Community Board
8

Jason Stahl, self

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

Amanda Agoglia, President of the Neponsit
Property Owners Association

Mark Anderson, President of the Westerleigh
Improvement Society

Kirsti Jutila, self

Lo van der Valk, Carnegie Hill Neighbors

Margo Margolis, self

Hien Piotrowski, self

Kate Van Tassel, self

Sanford Miller, self

Samir Lavingia, self

Michael Plottel, architect and a fellow of the
American Institute of Architects

Marie Marsina, Board Member with the Douglas and
Pacific Association

Lucy Koteen, self

Richard Gibbs, self

Julie Reyes, Chairperson for Bronx Community
Board 8

Elisa Koenderman, self

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

Jacqueline Dolly, self

Renee Monroe

Leigh Behnke, self

Emily Eisner, Fiscal Policy Institute

Jesse Lang, self

Eustacia Smith, West Side Federation for Senior
and Supportive Housing

Sean Scott, self

Stan Liao, self

Phil Wong, self

Theo Chino, First Secretary of the Social
Democrat of America

Nick Felker, self

Salvatore Franchino, self

Igor Nikitenko, self

Eddie Siegel, self

Andy Zhang, self

Henry Euler, President of the Auburndale
Improvement Association

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

Zishun Ning, self

Daisy Colon, self

Roberta Gelb, President of the Chelsea Reform
Democratic Club

Abigail Cliche, self

Ayaz Lavingia, self

Shamina Lavingia, self

Erik Nilsen, self

Alyssa Mayopinonia, registered New York State
architect

Juan Rivero, Village Preservation

Joanne Sullivan, self

Yiatin Chu, President of Asian Wave Alliance

William Meehan, self

Alan Gerber, self

Felix Stetsenko, self

Robert Jeffrey, Community Board 1

George Tormo, Co-President of Midland Beach Civic
Association

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

Doris Hughes, self

Maria Fiocca, self

Steve Barrison, self

Cara Eckholm, self

Isabel Kirsch, self

Sam Zimmerman, self

Mollye Liu, Manhattan Community Board 3 Housing
Committee

Theresa Westerdahl, self

Felicia Johnson, District Manager representing
Community Board 14

Rob Mazzuchin, President of the Marine Park
Community Association

Sadie Kol, self

Nancy Kong, self

Elena Sytcheva, self

Yehuda Pollack, self

Clayton Sanford, self

Jeremy Kaplan, self

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

Linda Cohen, self

William Matheson, President of Garrison Beach
Property Owners and Board Member of Community
Board 15

Nichola Cox, self

David Pecoraro, self

Mark Young, President of the South Midwood
Residents' Association

Joe Enright, self

John Sheridan, self

Ariana S., self

Jack Spadaro Vice President of the Bay
Improvement Group

Jean Hahn, self

Thomas Caffrey, Executive Director of Committee
for Environmentally Sound Development

Israel Peskowitz, self

Bonnie Harper, self

Sade Falebita, Managing Director of Downtown
Community Television Center

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

Roisin Ford, self

Carol Donovan, self

Daniel Fischer, self

Andrew Stern, self

Ryder Kessler, Co-Executive Director of Abundance
New York

Ramona Ferreyra, Save Section 9

James Freeley, self

Lindsay Lamb, Prospect Park South Association

Sarah McKenna, self

Joan Gilbert, self

Ken A., self

Peter Tooma, self

Neil Miller, self

Sachi Takahashi, self

Zachary Thomas, self

Amit Bagga, self

Charles Ober, self

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

Victoria Hillstrom, self

Nicholas Oo, self

Kevin LaCherra, self

Eric Miao, self

Peter Estes, self

Pedro Rodriguez, self

David Gordon, self

Raul Rivera, self

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Sound check for the
3 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. Today's date
4 is October 22, 2024, being recorded by Danny Huang in
5 the Chambers.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, and
7 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for
8 the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises.

9 At this time, please ensure all
10 cellphones and electronic devices are placed to
11 silent or vibrate.

12 If you wish to testify, please scan the
13 QR code and ensure that you check in in the back of
14 the room.

15 At any time throughout the hearing,
16 please do not approach the dais.

17 If you have testimony you wish to submit
18 for the record, you may do so at
19 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is
20 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

21 Thank you for your cooperation.

22 Chair, we are ready to begin.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Sergeant.
24 Good morning, everyone. [GAVEL] Welcome to a meeting
25 of the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. I am

2 Council Member Kevin Riley, Chair of the
3 Subcommittee. This morning, I am joined by Council
4 Members Schulman, Carr, Marte, and remotely by Moya.

5 Today, we are holding the public hearing
6 for the third of three major initiatives that the
7 Administration has called the City of Yes. The first
8 initiative was Zoning for Carbon Neutrality, which we
9 passed last year. The second initiative was Zoning
10 for Economic Opportunity, which Council modified
11 based on community concerns and passed earlier this
12 year. This third and last initiative of City of Yes
13 for Housing Opportunity, sometimes referred to here
14 as ZHO, which is a citywide text amendment affects
15 the entire city. Yesterday, we heard from the
16 Administration about the details of this City of Yes
17 for Housing Opportunity and today, entirely,
18 dedicated to a hearing for the public about this
19 proposal. Today's public hearing is important, if not
20 more important than yesterday, because we need to
21 hear directly from our constituents. This proposal
22 has many components and, in determining how to
23 respond to the Administration's proposal, we need to
24 hear from our constituents about their concerns,
25 which we take very seriously so we are looking

2 forward to hearing from you all today. Every
3 neighborhood throughout the city is experiencing very
4 real housing challenges. This proposal presents an
5 opportunity to address these challenges in a way that
6 makes sense for each neighborhood.

7 I will now go over the public hearing
8 procedures. This meeting is being held in hybrid
9 format. Members of the public who wish to testify may
10 testify in person or through Zoom.

11 Many of you have registered online to
12 testify. If you haven't yet registered to testify,
13 please register online by visiting the New York City
14 Council's website at www.council.nyc.gov/landuse.

15 If you are here in person, the wonderful
16 Staff from our Planning and Land Use Division are
17 here to help you register to speak. Please make sure
18 to register or else you will not be able to testify.
19 I'll repeat that again. Please make sure if you are
20 in here today to register or else you will not be
21 able to testify.

22 If you have already registered online and
23 you are here in person, you still need to check in
24 with our Staff at the back of the room to let us know
25 you are here. I will repeat that again. If you have

2 registered online and you are with us in the room,
3 please head to the back and check in with our Staff
4 to let them know you are here.

5 Members of the public can also view a
6 livestream broadcast of this hearing through the
7 Council's website at www.council.nyc.gov/livestream.

8 With several hundred people already
9 registered to testify today, as a result, public
10 testimony will strictly be limited to two minutes per
11 person. We have over 700 people that are registered
12 to testify. I will be cutting everybody off in two
13 minutes. You can present the rest of your testimony
14 to us, all right, if you have a statement, please
15 highlight the best of your statement that you could
16 repeat within two minutes. Thank you.

17 If you cannot finish this within two
18 minutes or you would like us to consider additional
19 materials, you can also submit written testimony to
20 the following email address,
21 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Written testimony
22 may be submitted up to three days after the hearing
23 is closed. Please indicate City of Yes for the
24 Housing Opportunity in the subject line of your
25 email.

2 Lastly, for everyone attending today's
3 meeting, this is a government proceeding and decorum
4 must be observed at all times. Members of the public
5 are asked not to speak during the meeting unless you
6 are testifying.

7 The witness table is reserved for people
8 who are called to testify and no video recording or
9 photography is allowed from the witness table.

10 Furthermore, members of the public may not present
11 audio or video recording as testimony but may submit
12 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-
13 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record. I would
14 like to remind everyone that today's public hearing
15 is only about the Administration's City of Yes Zoning
16 for Housing Opportunity Proposal. Please restrict
17 your testimony to this proposal.

18 I will now open up the hearing on LU-181
19 regarding the City of Yes for housing opportunity
20 proposal. For a description of this citywide text
21 amendment, you can refer to the PowerPoint
22 presentation that the Administration gave to this
23 Subcommittee yesterday. The presentation is available
24 through Council's Land Use webpage, which can be
25

2 accessed at www.council.nyc.gov/landuse where you can
3 also find additional materials on this proposal.

4 As of right now, there are approximately
5 300 members of the public who wish to testify in
6 person and approximately close to 300 members of the
7 public who wish to testify online. Consistent with
8 the instructions of the Council's registration page,
9 we will first hear people who are in here in person.
10 Starting at 1 p.m., we will start to hear people
11 register to testify through Zoom. We will switch
12 between in-person testimony and online Zoom testimony
13 every hour or so after 1 p.m. This means that if you
14 are testifying with us through Zoom, you will not be
15 called to testify before approximately 1 p.m. in the
16 order in which you are registered.

17 I will call people to testify in panels
18 of six today. Please note that after I call the panel
19 of people to testify, I will also indicate the names
20 of people who will be called on the next panel to
21 testify to prepare themselves.

22 For in-person panels, if your name is
23 called in the second panel, please come to the front
24 of the room and wait in the reserved seating for the
25

2 panelists. After your panel is excused from the
3 witness table, you may return to your initial seat.

4 The first panel consists of the following
5 people who should now proceed to the witness table.

6 We've also been joined by Council Member
7 Restler.

8 Thomas Devaney, Patrick Bohl, Emily
9 Goldstein, Matthew Dunbar, Matthew Murphy, and Sam
10 Burtnick.

11 Our second panel will consist of
12 Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine. We will
13 first begin by Thomas Devaney. You may begin. Thomas
14 Devaney.

15 Okay, we will move to Patrick Bohl. Oh,
16 Thomas. Are you Thomas? Yes. Thomas, you may begin.
17 Well, Thomas, let me give you some time. Can we start
18 with Patrick? Yeah, Patrick. Let me start with
19 Patrick, Thomas. You can get settled in. Wait one
20 second.

21 Patrick, go ahead.

22 PATRICK BOHL: Good morning. My name is
23 Patrick Bohl. I'm the Senior Director at Enterprise
24 Community Partners. Enterprise is a national non-
25 profit that exists to make a good home possible for

2 the millions of families without one. We support
3 community development organizations on the ground,
4 aggregate and invest capital for impact, advance
5 housing policy at every level of government, and
6 build and manage communities ourselves. Since our New
7 York office opened in 1987, we have committed more
8 than 4.5 billion dollars in equity loans and grants
9 to create or preserve over 66,000 affordable housing
10 units across the five boroughs of New York City. On
11 behalf of Enterprise, I want to thank Chair Riley and
12 the Members of this Subcommittee for the opportunity
13 to deliver this testimony.

14 As we all know, New York City is in the
15 midst of a persistent affordable housing and
16 homelessness crisis, with the lack of adequate and
17 diverse housing types playing a major role. The
18 latest Housing and Vacancy Survey showed a
19 historically low 1.4 percent vacancy rate overall and
20 a stunning 0.39 percent vacancy rate for apartments
21 renting under 1,100 dollars. Median rents in New York
22 City continue to reach one historic new high after
23 another. Fewer than 5 percent of available apartments
24 are affordable to the average household salary, and
25 there are more than 18,000 families with children in

2 the City's homeless shelter system. As these numbers
3 demonstrate, our housing crisis most acutely impacts
4 New Yorkers of low and moderate income. It keeps
5 individuals unhoused or in shelter longer than
6 necessary and prevents housing stability. We are long
7 overdue in revising New York City's Zoning Resolution
8 to allow for more flexibility, more as-of-right
9 development options, and more housing variety. To
10 that end, Enterprise supports the City of Yes for
11 Housing opportunity and applauds this effort to look
12 citywide in how we reform our zoning regulations to
13 foster growth and tackle housing need. This will not
14 solve every problem. It will not solve homelessness,
15 fair housing, and all the host of other issues, and
16 we support a broad, comprehensive housing package to
17 encompass all of those things, but this is a
18 necessary step to bring about the housing growth we
19 need to be able to house families in New York. Thank
20 you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Patrick. I
22 just want to state for the record we've been joined
23 by Council Member Salam. Thomas Devaney, you may go
24 next.

2 THOMAS DEVANEY: Thank you. Thomas
3 Devaney, Senior Director of Land Use and Planning at
4 Municipal Arts Society.

5 MAS supports the City of Yes as a way to
6 produce much-needed housing through incremental city
7 zoning changes. City of Yes would distribute
8 contextual residential density across the city and
9 expand it through different building types, many of
10 which are not permitted under current zoning, but
11 zoning reform alone will not solve our housing
12 crisis, and nor will City of Yes guarantee affordable
13 housing. City of Yes must be accompanied with
14 comprehensive planning and sensitive incentives, City
15 and State funding programs that allow the city to
16 grow and meet the needs of New Yorkers, particularly
17 those most heavily burdened by escalating housing
18 costs. Lifting the zoning parking mandate gives
19 developers flexibility and can unlock new housing. By
20 supporting transit-oriented development in lieu of
21 parking requirements, City of Yes also supports the
22 City's climate mandate by reducing greenhouse gas
23 emissions and air pollution. We believe this change
24 balances drivers' needs while prioritizing housing
25 and the environment. We recommend the Council pass

2 this amendment as drafted. UAP is a good way to
3 incentivize affordable housing and at a deeper level
4 than voluntary inclusionary housing, which UAP would
5 replace. Allowing ADUs is a smart, low-impact way to
6 increase housing stock in low-density residential
7 districts. More financial assistance will be needed
8 to make ADUs a more viable and accessible way to add
9 up to 40,000 dwelling units as projected. Expanding
10 the area for TDRs from landmarks has been long
11 overdue, and we support this proposal. We believe
12 that property owners of receiving sites should still
13 be required to obtain a special permit if they seek
14 bulk modifications to accommodate additional floor
15 area. And finally, MAS supports the changes that
16 allow office-to-residential conversions of buildings
17 constructed before 1991 and the expanded geographic
18 applicability. However, since most, if not all, of
19 recent residential conversions..

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Thomas.

21 THOMAS DEVANEY: luxury housing, we hope
22 the...

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Thomas.

24 THOMAS DEVANEY: City can explore
25 incentives. Thank you.

2 THOMAS DEVANEY: Next, we'll have Emily
3 Goldstein.

4 EMILY GOLDSTEIN: Good morning. Thank you,
5 Chair Riley and Members of the Committee, for the
6 opportunity to testify today. My name is Emily
7 Goldstein. I'm the Director of Organizing and
8 Advocacy with the Association for Neighborhood and
9 Housing Development, or ANHD.

10 ANHD has long supported a more equitable
11 distribution of housing development across New York
12 City to ensure that every neighborhood is doing its
13 part and unfair burdens don't continue to fall on
14 marginalized communities. We believe ZHO is an
15 important step in this direction, but we have several
16 recommended changes to ensure that the zoning can
17 actually maximize affordable housing, not just market
18 rate housing. In particular, in the Universal
19 Affordability Preference, we recommend requiring a
20 deep affordability band rather than simply allowing
21 it through averaging. We also recommend creating more
22 incentive to have a better ratio of affordable to
23 market rate housing rather than sort of an 80-20
24 across the board. We believe that can be done within
25 the scope of the current proposal by reducing the

2 maximum allowed for market rate housing and keeping
3 the total the same, so you're incentivizing 30, 40,
4 50 percent affordable as opposed to just the 80-20,
5 but within the current proposed density. I'd also
6 like to highlight that we are concerned that the
7 transit-oriented zoning and the town-center zoning
8 proposals don't have any affordability component at
9 all, and while that may be practical for very small
10 buildings, we believe there should be required
11 affordability in those proposals for buildings that
12 are 10 units and above to ensure that all
13 neighborhoods are getting some affordable housing. We
14 believe that's both important from an affordability
15 perspective and from a fair housing perspective to
16 ensure that certain neighborhoods aren't sort of
17 being left out of the affordability equation. Our
18 full testimony submitted online has a variety of
19 additional recommendations. Again, appreciate the
20 time to testify today.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Emily.

22 Next, we'll have Matthew Dunbar.

23 MATTHEW DUNBAR: Good morning. My name is
24 Matthew Dunbar. I'm the Chief Strategy Officer at
25 Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester

County. I want to thank Chair Riley, the Speaker, and the entire City Council for this opportunity. At Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester, we've spent 40 years building and preserving affordable homeownership with low-income New Yorkers in the pursuit of building a more equitable New York but, at this point in time, in order for us as a City to build a more equitable New York, we need to have a plan that allows for and requires that all communities contribute to that building of affordable housing. We wholeheartedly support the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity and specifically want to highlight yesterday's questions from the City Council that emphasize the need for more affordable homeownership opportunities, and this plan provides multiple ways for affordable homeownership to be created and homeownership generally to be increased as we currently have a 30 percent homeownership rate, where the national average is 66 percent, so we are far behind the national average on this, and through the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity, it provides opportunities for homeowners to build ADUs, for town-center and transit-oriented development to build moderate-density affordable homeownership

2 opportunities through co-ops and condos. It provides
3 opportunities for faith-based organizations and
4 campuses to build affordable homeownership alongside
5 rental. It removes parking requirements that stand in
6 the way of affordable homeownership projects being
7 more economically viable, and it also cleans up
8 technical fixes to the Affordable Homeownership
9 Program Open Door in relationship to MIH, which would
10 allow for projects like Habitat's Claremont House to
11 build 60 percent more units in the Bronx through this
12 technical fix so we want to encourage the City
13 Council to say yes and to build on what is being
14 proposed and not no because, and we wholeheartedly
15 support this program, and thank you for the
16 opportunity to testify.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Matthew. I
18 just want to state for the record we've been joined
19 by Council Members Holden and Narcisse.

20 Next, we will have Matthew Murphy.

21 MATTHEW MURPHY: Chair Riley and Members
22 of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity for
23 me to testify today. My name is Matthew Murphy, and I
24 represent the NYU Furman Center.

1 New York City is facing a severe housing
2 shortage. Over the decades, demand for housing has
3 far outpaced available supply. As of 2023, the city's
4 vacancy rate was just 1.4 percent, far below the 7
5 percent that economists estimate is needed for fair
6 housing markets with more choice. In Brooklyn, as one
7 example, property values have increased by 279
8 percent since the year 2000, much faster than wages
9 and inflation. Today, more than half of renter
10 households are cost-burdened, with 30 percent paying
11 over half of their income on rent. This forces
12 families to sacrifice essentials like healthcare,
13 education, and savings.

14 Housing growth has been inequitable
15 across the city. Between 2010 and 2020, just five
16 sub-borough areas accounted for 40 percent of all new
17 housing development. Low-density neighborhoods, which
18 cover 44 percent of the city's residential land,
19 house 28 percent of our population. These areas added
20 housing at half the rate of the city overall. They
21 also contributed just 9 percent of the city's new
22 low-income housing in that decade. Some districts
23 produced no new multifamily housing at all, much less
24 any affordable housing. Research consistently shows
25

2 that increasing both affordable and market rate
3 housing alleviates costs. Adding housing slows rent
4 growth, reduces competition for older, lower-cost
5 units, and allows more affordable homes to become
6 available as people move into newly built properties.
7 This benefits households across income levels. City
8 of Yes addresses these issues by reducing
9 construction and development costs, makes residential
10 development more feasible, removes parking
11 requirements, minimum parking requirements,
12 encourages modest density increases that are tied to
13 affordability, converts obsolete office buildings to
14 housing, promotes accessory dwelling units, and low-
15 density neighborhoods. At the time of passage, it's
16 critical that the proposal remains financially
17 feasible for development. Thank you for the
18 opportunity to testify today.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. And last
20 from this panel, we have Sam Burtnick.

21 SAM BURTNICK: Good morning, everyone. My
22 name is Sam Burtnick. I'm representing HANAC. The
23 Mayor's proposed City of Yes for Housing Opportunity
24 Plan is a desperately needed solution to the city's
25 ongoing housing crisis. Demand for housing far

1 outpaces supply in each neighborhood, necessitating
2 solutions such as City of Yes to allow for zoning
3 reforms and density bonuses. These changes will
4 increase the number of homes available to New
5 Yorkers. Far too few neighborhoods throughout the
6 city are contributing their share of housing, placing
7 an unnecessary burden on a handful of neighborhoods
8 attempting to build enough housing for the entire
9 city. The City of Yes zoning reforms will encourage a
10 more equitable distribution of housing to every
11 neighborhood and community district throughout New
12 York. The current City of Yes for Housing Opportunity
13 proposal must stay intact as the implications for
14 delaying solutions to the housing crisis will become
15 far more dire if they continue to remain unaddressed.
16 It's essential that New York City retains its
17 existing affordable housing and encourages additional
18 housing construction for the future if it is to
19 remain a place where those both young and old, from
20 near and from far can continue to call home for
21 generations to come. Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Are there
24 any questions for this panel?

2 There being no questions, this panel is
3 excused.

4 The next panel we're going to hear from
5 is Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine.

6 The following panel that could come up to
7 the front and get ready to speak after this next
8 panel is Zul Sulkowicz (phonetic), Zeynep Turan,
9 George Janes, Megan Fitzpatrick, Paul Devlin, and
10 Lucie Levine. Thank you.

11 Manhattan Borough President, you may
12 begin.

13 MANHATTAN BOROUGH PRESIDENT LEVINE: All
14 right. Good morning, Council Colleagues. I'm not used
15 to this view of the Chamber. It's very nice.

16 Mr. Chair, I'm so grateful that you are
17 the one leading this Committee and grateful for this
18 chance to testify today. I've been to hundreds of
19 Council hearings over the years, and this is, without
20 a doubt, one of the most important because New York
21 City is in the midst of a crisis. We are facing the
22 worst shortage of housing in living memory and maybe
23 the worst that this city has ever seen. If you or
24 anyone you know has tried to find a home recently,
25 then you know this. We are allowing so few homes to

1 be built, and the vacancy rate on existing homes is
2 so low, just 1.4 percent, the lowest in half a
3 century, that finding an apartment in the city is
4 something akin to the Hunger Games. Now, that's fine
5 for wealthy New Yorkers. They can just bid up the
6 rent, and they'll get their apartment. And that's
7 fine for landlords. They're more than happy to
8 collect those inflated rents. But for low-income
9 families, even working and middle-class families,
10 this is a catastrophe. The average rent for a market
11 rate apartment in Manhattan is now over 5,000 dollars
12 per month. There will be people in homeless shelters
13 tonight because of those rents. There are bus drivers
14 and nurses and teachers with no hope of living in
15 this borough because of those rents. Up until now,
16 we've been confronting this crisis, confronting our
17 housing shortage with the Zoning Code from 1961. From
18 1961, when we had the opposite problem. It was a time
19 when people were abandoning the city, and planners
20 were seriously worried we might have too much
21 housing. We have a Zoning Code that outlaws
22 converting vacant offices to housing if the building
23 was built after 1961. Yes, that is the current rule.
24 We have a Zoning Code that forces developers to build

2 huge parking garages on top of subway stations
3 instead of adding more apartments to their building.
4 We have a Zoning Code that outlaws the kind of shared
5 housing that can give an affordable option for a
6 young person starting out or someone who's just down
7 on their luck and might otherwise end up on the
8 street. City of Yes fixes all of that and much more.
9 The provision known as Universal Affordability
10 Preference would mean that buildings that might not
11 be built or might be built as exclusively market rate
12 would instead have 20 percent of their apartments
13 locked in as affordable in perpetuity. The total sum
14 of all these provisions would be an estimated 109,000
15 new homes for this city. This would be a game change
16 for our housing crisis. Now, tens of thousands of
17 those homes would be affordable, units that would be
18 targeted to low-income New Yorkers, and affordable
19 homes like this will not be built in absence of the
20 changes City of Yes would bring. There also will be
21 tens of thousands of market rate homes created, and
22 we need them, too, so that the bus drivers and nurses
23 and teachers who are getting blocked out now will
24 instead have a place to live, so that we have
25 negotiating power taken away from landlords and given

1 to tenants. And, yes, we must also help tenants who
2 have a home that they need to keep. That, in part,
3 should mean strengthening our City's landmark Right-
4 to-Counsel Law and ensuring every tenant facing
5 eviction has an attorney in housing court. I was very
6 proud to pass this law when I was sitting where you
7 were in the City Council, but it is not being
8 fulfilled today. There are thousands of tenants in
9 housing court who are not being provided with an
10 attorney. It's urgent that we fix this crisis, and we
11 must invest more in the community-based non-profits
12 which are providing all manner of assistance to
13 tenants, including organizing assistance. But this
14 will not be enough. This doesn't help someone who
15 doesn't currently have a home. There's no getting
16 around it. We need to build more housing in the city.
17 We have got to remove the barriers put in place in
18 our 1961 Zoning Code. We need the 100,000 units that
19 a more modern Zoning Code would unlock. We need to
20 pass City of Yes. Thank you.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much,
23 Manhattan Borough President.

24 Any questions for this panel?
25

2 All right. This panel is excused. Thank
3 you.

4 I just want to state for the record, we
5 also have been joined by Council Member Sanchez.

6 The next panel that we're going to call
7 up is Zul Sulkowicz, Zeynep Turan, George Janes,
8 Megan Fitzpatrick, Paul Devlin, and Lucie Levine.

9 The follow-up panel that will come to the
10 front, that will be next, will consist of Chad
11 Purkey, Howard Slatkin, Emily Kurtz, Tom Wright,
12 Michelle de la Uz, and Bria Donohue. If I call your
13 name, please come to the front and wait right here,
14 please.

15 We will begin first with Zul Sulkowicz.
16 I'm so sorry if I butcher your name. Just press the
17 button, please.

18 ZUL SULKOWICZ: Good morning.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Good morning.

20 ZUL SULKOWICZ: I live in Midtown, but I
21 am originally from the South, the South Bronx. You
22 can take the boy out of the Bronx, but not the Bronx
23 out of the boy, which means to me a lifelong concern
24 for the poor, for the migrant, for working people of
25 all backgrounds and ages from all parts of our world,

1 for the least of these. I applaud Chair Garodnik for
2 his superhuman efforts to solve our decades-long and
3 ever-overwhelming affordable housing crisis. A little
4 more housing in every neighborhood and greater
5 density around transit hubs are excellent concepts,
6 but what kind of housing? Who's building it? Who's
7 profiting? Who's paying too high a price? We must
8 have modest contextual development, as Chair Garodnik
9 says, and housing affordability must come with
10 greater investment in places like Queens and the
11 Bronx, as Council Member Salamanca pointed out
12 yesterday, but the underlying question with this City
13 of Yes text amendment remains, will it increase or
14 decrease economic and racial segregation in our town?
15 Here's an example of how developers, bankers, and
16 venture cap game the global real estate market in
17 this town. The Prince George in 1904 landmark 13
18 stories of more than 400 units of supportive housing,
19 always in need of funds, sold rights for the
20 billionaire's bunker in the sky on 5th Avenue and
21 West 29th Street. More than 50 stories high with
22 maybe less than 30 units, none smaller than two-story
23 duplexes for people who might reside there for the
24 two weeks of the U.S. Open. Meanwhile, the Avenue is
25

2 teeming with our unhoused neighbors. Let us ask
3 ourselves when we might build the housing we need
4 while preserving light and clean air, our
5 streetscapes, and green spaces. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

7 CHAMBERS: (APPLAUSE)

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Whoa, whoa, whoa. No,
9 that's my fault because I didn't state this in the
10 beginning. We don't clap in here. We do this, please.
11 All right. Let's practice, everyone. All right. Thank
12 you.

13 UNKNOWN: Jazz hands.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, we're going to
15 call on George Janes.

16 GEORGE JANES: My name is George Janes.
17 I'm the planner who helped seven community boards in
18 their review of this amendment. I read all of the
19 zoning, I attended dozens of public meetings, but
20 today, I'm here on my own time.

21 This proposal is radical, the process was
22 terrible, and folks are rightly concerned it will not
23 produce affordable housing in their neighborhood.
24 Many Council Members have concerns. Housing
25 Opportunity changes basic zoning standards, reduces

1 sizes of rear yards, side yards, legal windows,
2 courts, open space. City of Yes changes the
3 fundamental building blocks of the city without
4 conditioning those changes on the creation of
5 affordable housing. It creates new CPC authorizations
6 where the Council would cede your power to an
7 unelected, unaccountable CPC, which would hold no
8 public hearings on those authorizations. Apparently,
9 the public has become part of the problem, and so DCP
10 wrote zoning to ensure the CPC won't have to hear
11 from them, at least for authorizations. It's
12 shameful. And I share some Council Members' concerns.
13 But instead of a flat no, I encourage Council to
14 consider modifications. Reject what you need to
15 reject, but definitely keep UAP. UAP won't be used in
16 most of the Manhattan core, it can't be used in most
17 of the outer boroughs, and a flat 10 percent
18 affordability requirement may have been better, but
19 UAP is better than what we currently have. UAP
20 provides an affordability option in all high-density
21 districts. If it gets used, it'll be good. It's at 60
22 percent of AMI, and it provides permanent
23 affordability, and I think it will be used, not
24 typically, but evidence suggests it will be used in
25

2 places like East Harlem, Central Bronx, where UAP
3 will be combined with 485-X. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, George.

5 Next, we're going to have Megan Fitzpatrick.

6 MEGAN FITZPATRICK: Hello, council
7 members. My name is Megan Fitzpatrick, and I'm
8 speaking on behalf of Landmark West. Thank you for
9 the opportunity to testify. Landmark West is a
10 neighborhood historic preservation and land use non-
11 profit based on the Upper West Side. We plan on
12 submitting to the Council a detailed testimony on
13 issues we feel impact our district the most.

14 City of Yes is a massive and often
15 internally inconsistent overhaul of our City's Zoning
16 Regulations. While we are not opposed to updating our
17 zoning, we do advocate for contextual zoning that
18 will protect our neighborhoods and produce a more
19 environmentally conscious, viable and affordable New
20 York. In our considered opinion, the City of Yes for
21 Housing Opportunity proposal will not serve these
22 goals. Contrary to certain claims in support of
23 proposals, it will not significantly increase the
24 stock of affordable housing. In fact, it will
25 legislatively make affordable housing optional. In

our opinion, City of Yes for Housing Opportunity will increase market rate development in already dense residential blocks, create substandard and unsustainable housing, supercharge gentrification, utilize cynically named affordability programs for the benefit of developers, contribute to traffic overflow in the neighborhood and affect community amenities that currently support our neighbors and quality of life. Our committee is concerned that UAP will not yield affordable housing but will incentivize more construction of luxury apartments by giving large concessions to developers. The removal of the existing Sliver Law which prevents non-contextual construction in the mid-block will change the character of residential blocks. Our city's valuable tower-in-the-park style structures which provide open green space in dense housing sites will be compromised with campus infilling, and loosening landmark transfer development rights regulations will allow taller market rate buildings, all the while removing these decisions both from public scrutiny and input. Our committee supports changes that will enhance livability and equity in our neighborhoods.

2 Very little of any of the proposed further that goal.
3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
5 going to hear from Zeynep Turan.

6 ZEYNEP TURAN: Good morning, Council
7 Members. Zeynep Turan speaking on behalf of Friends
8 of the Upper East Side. Like many New Yorkers, we
9 share the goal of creating affordable housing across
10 the city, but we firmly believe that zoning
11 amendments should be approached in a contextual and
12 equitable way that is respectful of the public review
13 process and of neighborhood character. COYHO proposes
14 to rely on markets to regulate prices, a system that
15 has failed on the Upper East Side, an area that has
16 also seen hundreds of existing relatively affordable
17 housing such as tenements demolished for ultra-luxury
18 high-rises. The proposed Universal Affordability
19 Preference allows developers to opt out of creating
20 affordable housing by foregoing additional FAR. We
21 need zoning reform that centers the creation and
22 preservation of truly affordable housing, especially
23 in high-density neighborhoods like ours. As
24 preservationists, we are deeply concerned about the
25 proposed changes to landmark transfer development

2 rights. These changes would allow development rights
3 to travel to receiving sites much further away,
4 potentially eroding the unique character of historic
5 districts and neighborhoods. We believe it's crucial
6 that the LPC retain its jurisdiction to review
7 development projects in receiving sites to ensure
8 they're compatible with the surrounding context and
9 appropriate for the area. Reducing rear yard size and
10 eliminating open space requirements in favor of
11 accessory developing units would diminish light, air,
12 and green space. The donut holes at the interior of
13 our city blocks are crucial for mitigating heat.
14 Lifting open space requirements for tower-in-the-park
15 campuses could lead to development that destroys
16 valuable green space residents depend on. We urge the
17 Commission to consider alternative solutions to
18 strengthen our neighborhoods, prioritize resident
19 well-being and livability, ensure a transparent and
20 inclusive public review process, and create a path to
21 more affordable housing options. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

23 Next, we're going to hear from Lucie Levine.

24 LUCIE LEVINE: Hi, Commissioners. My name
25 is Lucie Levine. I'm speaking on behalf of the

2 Historic Districts Council. What follows is our
3 abbreviated comments.

4 HDC supports some pieces of the proposal
5 but fears that COYHO will create market rate and
6 luxury housing while incentivizing demolition of
7 historic neighborhoods and replacement of existing
8 affordable and rent-regulated housing with denser and
9 less...

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I'm sorry, Lucie.
11 We're going to start all over. Can you just put the
12 mic a little bit closer to you?

13 LUCIE LEVINE: Sure.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Can we
15 restart her? Thank you. Go ahead.

16 LUCIE LEVINE: Thanks so much. Hi, Council
17 Members. My name is Lucie Levine, and I'm speaking on
18 behalf of the Historic Districts Council. What
19 follows is our abbreviated comments.

20 HCC supports some pieces of the proposal
21 but feels that COYHO will create market rate and
22 luxury housing while incentivizing demolition of
23 historic neighborhoods and replacement of existing
24 affordable and rent-regulated housing with denser and
25 less affordable housing.

1 First, some things we support. HDC
2
3 supports re-legalizing existing typologies such as
4 shared and supportive housing. We also endorse town-
5 center zoning, and we strongly support commercial-to-
6 residential conversion and adaptive reuse citywide.

7 Second, some things HDC supports with
8 caveats. HDC supports ADUs but seeks confirmation
9 that LPC will have jurisdiction over ADU design and
10 placement on landmark sites. HDC supports expanded
11 TDRs for individual landmarks but is concerned that
12 zoning lot mergers could allow TDRs to be transferred
13 further than COYHO proposes. We are concerned that
14 COYHO's effort to streamline special district
15 regulations will compromise their character and may
16 incentivize demolition of rent-regulated housing. We
17 believe any infill on public land must be 100 percent
18 affordable.

19 Things HDC opposes. HDC decries the fact
20 that COYHO does not require any affordable housing,
21 and we are concerned that COYHO's effort to
22 streamline housing development will remove these
23 projects from public oversight.

24 Items that are not addressed by COYHO.
25 The city is losing affordable housing through

1 building combination, affordable unit warehousing,
2 and bigfooting, a term coined by George Janes, right
3 here, to describe replacing smaller buildings with
4 rent-regulated housing with much larger luxury
5 buildings with fewer units. COYHO must address these
6 issues. COYHO should also incentivize restoration of
7 underutilized units by expanding programs like the
8 Unlocking Doors pilot.

10 Finally, HDC's 2016 report on affordable
11 housing in historic districts demonstrated that rent-
12 subsidized units remain within historic districts at
13 a higher rate than outside them. Therefore, the city
14 risks losing much of its rent-regulated historic
15 housing simply because...

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

17 LUCIE LEVINE: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Lucie, you can submit
19 the rest of your testimony to us online.

20 Last from this panel is Paul Devlin.

21 PAUL DEVLIN: Good morning. Thank you so
22 much. My name is Paul Devlin. I'm the Co-Chair of the
23 Clinton-Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee of
24 Manhattan's Community Ward 4. We submitted 34 pages

of commentary, but I'll limit myself to two minutes today.

Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea have been at the forefront of advocating for affordable housing, negotiating into every proposed rezoning reviewed by a public or private entity. We are one of the only Boards that has a district-wide affordable housing plan, a plan that was first developed in 2015 and goes through regular updates. That plan proposes 41,000 housing units, of which close to 16,000 are affordable units. In fact, our district has the highest production of housing in all of Manhattan. Our housing plan would actually produce more housing in our district than is being projected as a result of the City of Yes proposal. We are the only board that has proposed methods for the City to manage the newly lifted 12 FAR cap on residential buildings. So why is such a pro-housing board suggesting revisions to the City of Yes housing opportunity? Because we urge for more contextual reforms. Our district has the greatest number of special zoning districts of any community district in the city. It includes the Special Clinton District, Special Midtown District, Special Garment Center District, Special Hudson Yards

2 District, Special West Chelsea District, Special
3 Hudson Park District. These districts cover 75
4 percent of our geography. These were designed to
5 foster the historic economic, racial, and ethnic
6 diversity of District 4. These special zoning
7 districts have not stopped change, but rather
8 lessened redevelopment impacts while protecting long-
9 term residents and strengthening existing residential
10 communities. We are requesting that these special
11 zoning districts are allowed to maintain these long-
12 standing protections. Given that our geographic area
13 is covered by 75 percent special zoning districts,
14 yet we are still the top-producing district of
15 housing in Manhattan, we are hoping you can find a
16 way to recognize that special districts can produce
17 housing even with protections against height and
18 higher density. Our district is a working engine of
19 market rate and affordable housing, production
20 tempered with existing preservation.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much,
22 Paul.

23 PAUL DEVLIN: This is the model we urge
24 you to use. Thank you for your time.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Paul. Are
3 there any questions for this panel?

4 This panel is excused. Thank you so much.

5 I just want to state for the record,
6 we've been joined by Council Member Dinowitz.

7 The next panel we're going to hear from
8 consists of Chad Purkey, Howard Slatkin, Emily Kurtz,
9 Tom Wright, Michelle de la Uz, and Bria Donohue.

10 The following panel that could come to
11 the front is going to consist of Ronnie Wolf,
12 Jennifer Petit, Peter Miller, Paul DiBenedetto, Naomi
13 Bushman, and Matthew Robinson. If you heard your
14 name, please come to the front and wait in the front
15 because you will be on the next panel.

16 We'll first start with Chad Purkey. Chad,
17 you may begin.

18 CHAD PURKEY: Chair Riley and Committee
19 Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify on
20 behalf of the Association for a Better New York, or
21 ABNY, in support of the City of Yes for Housing
22 Opportunity Proposal. My name is Chad Purkey, Interim
23 Executive Director at ABNY, an organization with the
24 mission of fostering dialogue and connections between
25

2 the public and private sectors to make New York City
3 a better place to live, work, and visit.

4 As every New Yorker knows, we are in a
5 housing crisis. Addressing this crisis requires
6 substantive and impactful action, but it also
7 requires measured and balanced action. We believe the
8 proposed zoning amendment delivers just that, overdue
9 action and a balanced approach. We strongly encourage
10 the Council to support the entire scope of the text
11 amendment because each component of the proposal
12 introduces better balance between the current Zoning
13 Codes (INAUDIBLE) regulations, which too often
14 confine and limit, with that of choices and expanded
15 options. These changes provide more opportunity and
16 options to homeowners and property owners, allowing
17 them more decision-making power on how to most
18 effectively use their homes and property to meet
19 their families' or their communities' evolving
20 housing needs. We strongly urge the Council, as it
21 works with the Department of City Planning in the
22 weeks ahead, to not scale back on any one measure, as
23 doing so would only continue our decades-old pattern
24 of inequitable housing development, where we see few
25 communities seeing the majority of new housing

2 construction, while others see none or too little. If
3 the package's most sensible and overdue policy
4 changes regarding parking minimums, transit-oriented
5 development, or ADU legalization are pared down, that
6 will only maintain the status quo, leaving New
7 Yorkers for generations to come with our current
8 unaffordable and undersupplied housing market. We
9 acknowledge and agree with many of the Council
10 Members' previous comments that there is no singular
11 solution to the housing affordability crisis in our
12 city. This proposed zoning text amendment can and
13 only directly address as necessary changes to zoning.
14 This, albeit singular action, however, is one
15 important part of the multiple policy changes that
16 are needed to address housing affordability and
17 development. We commend the Council on acknowledging
18 this and choosing to do its part in developing its
19 own housing action plan, as the Speaker has recently
20 announced. This type of collaborative planning with
21 each body or agency in government doing its
22 respective part is needed if we want to see
23 comprehensive solutions and sustainable growth.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Chad.

25 CHAD PURKEY: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, we'll hear from
3 Howard Slatkin.

4 HOWARD SLATKIN: Thank you, Chair and
5 Council Members. I'm Howard Slatkin. I'm the
6 Executive Director of Citizens' Housing and Planning
7 Council and a former long-time senior city planning
8 official responsible for policy on affordable housing
9 and zoning. I'm pleased to testify strongly in
10 support of this proposal, and I encourage the Council
11 to approve it in substantially its current form.

12 First, I'd like to urge the Council to
13 adhere to the vision of fair housing that the Speaker
14 has so eloquently articulated. Every neighborhood
15 must fulfill its responsibility to contribute to
16 meeting our housing needs. CHPC's research has
17 documented how highly restrictive zoning has
18 decimated the ability to add housing, in particular
19 in low-density districts, eliminating 37 percent of
20 the land zoned for low-density apartment buildings
21 and barring the legal addition of a unit to small
22 homes. This disproportionately hurts communities of
23 color. Black homeowners are three times more likely
24 to rely on rental income and are more vulnerable to

2 being squeezed out when all we allow are single-
3 family homes.

4 Second, I encourage the Council to think
5 expansively and inclusively about housing of all
6 types. Our vast and diverse city needs all this
7 subsidized, affordable housing we can finance
8 publicly as well as privately financed housing for
9 all kinds of households. The more we restrict new
10 housing to a narrow, just-right formula, the more
11 we're going to consign New Yorkers to expensive and
12 ill-fitting housing and fan the flames of
13 gentrification. We need not just adequate zoning, but
14 to harmonize it with affordable housing resources and
15 with programmatic support for housing. The Council
16 and Administration should work together to launch a
17 basement legalization program based on the
18 recommendations of the BASE program.

19 I also urge the Council to expand the
20 applicability of the UAP off-site option to
21 everywhere UAP applies to enable the creation of
22 supportive housing in high-income neighborhoods
23 rather than only in the low-income neighborhoods
24 where it is typically built today. I also urge the
25

2 Council, well, I'll add any other recommendations in
3 writing. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Just want
5 to stay for a record we've been joined by Council
6 Member Hanif.

7 Next, we'll hear from Emily Kurtz.

8 EMILY KURTZ: Good morning. My name is
9 Emily Kurtz, and I am the Chief Housing and
10 Development Officer at RiseBoro Community
11 Partnership, a community-based organization providing
12 services to and building and preserving affordable
13 housing in neighborhoods across New York City. I am
14 speaking in support of the City of Yes for Housing
15 Opportunity Zoning Text Amendment, one of several
16 critical ingredients needed to address the housing
17 crisis in New York City. Predictably, I am in support
18 of a text amendment with provisions that will lead to
19 more efficient and scalable sites for the creation of
20 affordable housing, such as UAP. Creating affordable
21 housing is a core mission of RiseBoro and demand will
22 always be high in the New York City market, but as
23 much housing as RiseBoro and our partners across the
24 affordable housing industry create, we cannot address
25 the affordability crisis on our own. The

2 extraordinary weight of the housing crisis must be
3 addressed in every neighborhood of this city.

4 Starting in the late 1980s, RiseBoro has been
5 responsible for the development and preservation of
6 over 3,000 units of affordable rental housing, 2,500
7 of those units constructed or preserved since 2010.

8 In that same time period, low-density single-family
9 districts added only 700 net units of housing to New
10 York's housing stock. As skilled and prolific as

11 RiseBoro is at developing housing, we should not be
12 outbuilding the entirety of the single-family
13 districts in New York. Low-density districts

14 currently cover two-thirds of the city's landmass,
15 yet contributed only nine percent of the overall

16 housing start since 2010. Meanwhile, I am sure many
17 of you hear from your constituents that the cost of
18 housing in your Districts is unbearably high. Long-

19 time members of your Districts are leaving New York
20 City for neighboring communities that are adding

21 units through a development, allowing for a more
22 affordable housing market in those areas. Housing

23 production and supply are restrained by the current
24 Zoning Code, and the City of Yes for Housing

25 amendment aims to address that. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
3 hear from Tom Wright.

4 TOM WRIGHT: Good morning. My name is Tom
5 Wright, President and CEO of Regional Plan
6 Association, and I'm here today to register RPA's
7 strong support for City of Yes for Housing
8 opportunity. This pragmatic and innovative text
9 amendment would equitably expand New York's housing
10 stock in every neighborhood, limiting development
11 pressure on individual communities while addressing a
12 critical citywide shortage. The restrictive zoning in
13 many neighborhoods in New York City poses significant
14 obstacles and costs to building new homes, for both
15 affordable and market rate, even in places with good
16 transportation and access to jobs. This drives up
17 prices, drives out working and middle-class
18 residents, and constrains flexibility and choices for
19 renters and prospective homeowners. A recent analysis
20 conducted by McKinsey and Company for RPA concluded
21 that if the New York metropolitan region continues to
22 add housing at its current rate of production,
23 residents could see housing costs rise by another 25
24 percent by 2035, resulting in over a quarter of a
25 million new households facing severe housing cost

2 burdens. Together, the zoning reforms in City of Yes
3 form a cohesive and interconnected strategy to
4 equitably and reasonably expand the housing stock in
5 every neighborhood, and the payback will be enormous.
6 RPA's research has concluded that City of Yes would
7 deliver between 15,000 and 30,000 new jobs,
8 generating between 1.1 and 2.1 billion dollars in
9 earnings each year, and an overall economic impact of
10 between 41 and 83 billion dollars over the next 15
11 years. More than half the jobs would result from
12 building accessory dwelling units and smaller
13 multifamily buildings throughout the city, which
14 would be a huge benefit for smaller firms, especially
15 M/WBEs. Finally, if the UAP had been in place since
16 2014, we estimate an extra 20,000 income-restricted
17 affordable housing units would have been created.
18 City of Yes increases the land area by five times.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Tom.

21 I just want to state for the record,
22 we've been joined by Council Member Ossé.

23 Next, we'll hear from Michelle de la Uz.

24 MICHELLE DE LA UZ: Thank you, Chair Riley
25 and Council Members, for the opportunity to testify

1 today. My name is Michelle de la Uz, and I'm the
2 Executive Director of the Fifth Avenue Committee, a
3 46-year-old non-profit CDC whose mission is to
4 advance economic, social, and racial justice in New
5 York City. I'm testifying in strong support of City
6 of Yes for housing opportunity. At my core, I'm a
7 pragmatic idealist, and I believe that our housing
8 crisis, in particular our affordable housing crisis,
9 can be solved with two things, political will and
10 significant investment at the scale needed to solve
11 the problem. The Council today, with the City of Yes
12 proposal, gets to demonstrate whether or not it has
13 the political will to address in a modest way,
14 although broad, 100,000 units over 300 acres over 15
15 years is actually modest, but it unlocks tremendous
16 potential. It unlocks and removes barriers to common-
17 sense things like removing parking mandates, like
18 ensuring universal affordability preference and, of
19 course, helping to convert office to residential
20 uses. These are all common-sense things where there's
21 broad support and, of course, we know that the
22 Council, in addition to the City of Yes, is
23 considering multiple investments that would further
24 improve upon the City of Yes, and those investments,

2 whether they be to expand rental assistance or to
3 have capital investments in the development or
4 preservation of existing affordable housing or in
5 creating new affordable housing, these are critically
6 important investments to make sure that we address
7 both the supply of affordable housing and housing in
8 general, but in creating affordable housing. I'm just
9 going to give one small example. Fifth Avenue
10 Committee just recently completed the city's first
11 affordable housing over a library. UAP would have
12 created 10 additional units in that project. Doesn't
13 sound like much, but for the 4,000 Sunset Park
14 residents that applied, 10 of them would be living in
15 their community today had we had it.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
17 hear from Bria Donohue.

18 BRIA DONOHUE: Good morning. Thank you,
19 Chair Riley and Members of the Subcommittee of Zoning
20 and Franchises, for holding this hearing today. I am
21 Bria Donohue, Senior Manager of Government Affairs at
22 the American Institute of Architects New York. We
23 represent more than 5,000 architects and design
24 professionals committed to positively impacting the
25 physical and social qualities of our city. AIA New

1 York strongly supports the proposed citywide zoning
2 text amendment, City of Yes for Housing Opportunity.
3 Our city's housing shortage is in no small part a
4 result of decades of restrictive zoning laws. The
5 proposal takes an all-of-the-above approach, making
6 critical changes to the city's zoning to eliminate
7 antiquated barriers that restrict development, and
8 enabling every neighborhood to do their part to build
9 affordable housing. Zoning changes on their own will
10 not solve the city's housing crisis, but rather they
11 serve as a critical vehicle to unlock opportunity. We
12 urge the City Council to pass the proposal in its
13 entirety. Each component of the proposal builds on
14 the others to create the housing we need. Take out
15 parking mandates, for example, and key elements of
16 the proposal, like transit-oriented development,
17 town-center zoning, or accessory dwelling units, do
18 not work. To achieve the intended impact of over
19 100,000 units over the next 15 years, the proposal
20 must be passed with all key proposals intact.
21 Architects have done robust analysis of the projects
22 in their pipeline, and the answer is clear. This
23 proposal meaningfully changes what is buildable,
24 enabling sites to reach critical thresholds of being
25

2 developable and financially feasible. Today, I
3 encourage you to say yes to housing and vote in favor
4 of the City of Yes for housing opportunity. Thank
5 you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Bria. Are
7 there any questions for this panel?

8 All right, this panel is excused.

9 If I called you to be on the next panel
10 and you're in the front row, please step to the
11 table.

12 Before I call the next panel, if you just
13 came in here and you registered online, we need you
14 to check in the back. If you did not check in the
15 back, you will not be able to testify. Also, if you
16 came in here and you want to testify and you did not
17 sign up, please go to the back and speak to one of
18 the Sergeant-at-Arms or the Land Use Team.

19 The following panel that's going to be
20 next after this panel will consist of Joseph
21 Rosenberg, Sarah Lind, Maddie Discerbo, Anna Marie
22 Gray, Rachel Fee, and Anthony Bartolano (phonetic).

23 The first person we're going to hear from
24 is Ronnie Wolf.

2 Ronnie, can you just press the button and
3 speak?

4 RONNIE WOLF: Hello. Please reject the
5 City of Yes plan unless provisions in Section 15-01
6 against SoHo and NoHo residents are removed. These
7 provisions impose a discriminatory tax of millions of
8 dollars on us and does not make housing more
9 affordable. DCP has targeted solely the residents of
10 SoHo and NoHo and will not allow them to convert
11 their buildings from commercial to residential unless
12 they pay an Arts Fund fee. My name is Ronnie Wolf. As
13 a glass artist, we purchased our loft specifically
14 because it is a joint live/work quarters for artists,
15 which meant I could legally work and raise our family
16 here. This fee equates to over a quarter of a million
17 dollars to my family alone. It's audacious of DCP to
18 force these neighborhoods filled with artists and
19 seniors to fund art non-profits in order to convert,
20 while they are removing financial barriers for
21 commercial building owners across the five boroughs
22 to make conversions less expensive. Council Members,
23 I implore you to oppose this plan unless it treats
24 all New Yorkers equally by removing this

2 unjustifiable Arts Fund fee. Thank you, the Wolf-Leon
3 family.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ronnie.

5 Next, we're going to hear from Jennifer Petit.

6 JENNIFER PETIT: Good morning. I'm

7 Jennifer Petit. I'm a single mom working two jobs
8 living out of a loft in NoHo. The DCP claims that the
9 City of Yes Plan will reduce housing barriers and
10 costs by allowing commercial buildings to be
11 repurposed into housing. Yet Section 15-01 of the
12 Zoning Code includes a glaring exception to the M1-5B
13 districts, which apply only to my neighborhood of
14 NoHo and SoHo. The DCP planted this exception so they
15 can impose discriminatory tax of millions per
16 building in a so-called Arts Fund fee. This massive
17 tax punishes me and my family and my neighbors based
18 only on where we live. Why target only my
19 neighborhood for this unfair treatment? If your goal
20 is truly to increase housing and reduce costs, why
21 add a financial barrier? This contradicts the City's
22 stated housing inequality goals and undermines the
23 very essence of this housing reform. I urge you vote
24 against this plan unless it treats New Yorkers
25 equally. Reject this proposal unless the

2 discriminatory provisions in Section 15-01, which
3 specifically target NoHo and SoHo, are removed. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Jennifer.

6 I just want to state for the record we've
7 been joined by Council Member Paladino and Council
8 Member Ariola.

9 Next, we're going to hear from Peter
10 Miller.

11 PETER MILLER: Good morning. I am a
12 resident of SoHo for over 50 years. I'm an artist. My
13 wife is an artist. I live right next to
14 Bloomingdale's, which is difficult. I urge the
15 Committee to reject the City of Yes proposal unless
16 its discriminatory provisions in Section 15-01
17 against SoHo and NoHo residents are removed. The
18 proposal does not treat all New Yorkers equally. The
19 DCP claims the City of Yes plan will reduce housing
20 barriers and costs by allowing commercial buildings
21 to be repurposed into housing. Yet in Section 15-01
22 of the Zoning Code, the DCP makes a glaring
23 exception, singling out residents of SoHo and NoHo to
24 impose a discriminatory tax of millions per building
25 in a so-called Arts Fund Fee, which would be

2 impossible for me to deal with, to live there. This
3 massive tax severely punishes me and my neighbors
4 based solely on where we live. Why target our
5 neighborhoods for this unfair treatment? Why add this
6 impossible financial barrier? This inconsistency
7 contradicts the City's stated housing and equity
8 goals and undermines the very essence of this housing
9 reform. Please vote no.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Peter.

11 Next, we're going to hear from Paul
12 DiBenedetto.

13 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Thank you. Dear
14 esteemed Members of the City Council, my name is Paul
15 DiBenedetto and I am the Chair of Queens Community
16 Board 11 in Northeast Queens. I have been a civic
17 activist for the last 20 years, serving in various
18 leadership roles on multiple local 501(c)3 non-profit
19 boards. 12 of 14 Queens community boards, including
20 my own, voted no to ZHO in its entirety, and I'm
21 asking you to do the same. We need to come back and
22 revisit the affordability crisis in a meaningful
23 partnership with all local communities, council
24 members, and City planning officials working together
25 to achieve these goals. ZHO is a huge, one-size-fits-

2 all, omnibus-style proposal that doesn't consider the
3 many diverse types of neighborhoods and housing that
4 organically coexist across our big, beautiful city.

5 As CB11 Chair, I would never accept a motion that
6 would impose what may be good for my neighborhood
7 upon another and, as Council Members, you shouldn't
8 do that to your own Colleagues and their Districts.

9 ZHO is a top-down, oppressive, Robert Moses-style
10 approach to zoning, written by developers for
11 developers, that will create yet more market-rate
12 housing. It is anti-democratic, ignores community
13 input, takes away the all-important ULURP process,
14 employs overly centralized controls that ultimately
15 weaken the ability of voters to hold their City
16 officials accountable, and takes away a Council
17 Member's ability to do what is best for the very
18 Districts they know better than anyone else. During
19 the Bloomberg Administration, John Young, the Queen's
20 Director of City Planning, worked throughout the
21 borough over a 15-year period with Council Members
22 and Community Boards to craft rezonings that had buy-
23 in from all parties involved. It was a meaningful
24 compromise and partnership that, in the end, everyone
25 benefited from. The City Council should reject ZHO

2 and re-engage the community on a local level, working
3 together to achieve a more affordable and equitable
4 city for all New Yorkers. New York City has just 15
5 percent single-family zoning, which, by a great
6 margin, is the lowest percentage of single-family
7 zoning of any large city in the United States. Please
8 reject the City of Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
10 going to hear from Naomi Bushman.

11 NAOMI BUSHMAN: I'm a NoHo resident with a
12 very specific modification to City of Yes. I urge you
13 to reject the discriminatory Arts Fund Fee that is in
14 Section 15-01 of the City of Yes plan. It gravely
15 penalizes SoHo and NoHo residents with an enormous
16 fee, while allowing the conversion of properties from
17 commercial to residential in other parts of the city
18 without a fee. On what grounds do you unfairly single
19 out my neighborhood? It is not equitable. Artists
20 have made SoHo and NoHo more livable, safer for NYU
21 students, and increased the value of neighboring
22 property owners. How ironic that we should be fined,
23 have difficulty selling our homes when we need to
24 retire, and live under this threat. Our NYU neighbor,
25 a vast property owner, pays a pittance of real estate

2 taxes, while my co-op's tax bill is the highest
3 expense and increases every year. My building
4 received a certificate of occupancy as joint living-
5 working in 1981. There were no benefits from joint
6 living-working. We complied with all the requirements
7 and inspections of a residential building. The
8 imposition of a fine now implies that we had some
9 benefit from our joint living-working status and that
10 we should pay back the favor. In fact, nothing was
11 made easier for us. We met all the standards of that
12 time and continue to maintain safe buildings which
13 have been our homes for decades. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Naomi. Last
15 from this panel is Matthew Robinson.

16 MATTHEW ROBINSON: Hi, my name is Matthew
17 Robinson. I've been living in New York for over 50
18 years. I have an architectural background. How we
19 eat, sleep, and drink, how we work, and how we learn
20 today after the pandemic has radically changed so do
21 we really need the dining room? Do we really need the
22 kitchen? You know, with Grubhub, no one uses
23 kitchens. I'm concerned that they're addressing
24 affordable housing but not affordable office.
25 Affordable office, affordable manufacturing will

2 allow people who own these companies to hire people
3 at a much higher rate which will allow them to pay
4 higher rent so I think that we should think of that.
5 Also, retail. Retail, for the most part, is dead. So
6 how are we using those spaces that are offsetting the
7 cost of the housing properly? And can some of those
8 be support facilities like a, you know, where during
9 tax time it's a tax office. During some other time
10 it's maybe human resources. So that on the street you
11 could actually go into a storefront and get the help
12 that you need that's very, very visible. I think
13 that, you know, when you look at housing, if you want
14 to pare down things, you go, okay, so I don't live
15 with a doorman, so I walk up some stairs, so I don't
16 have a dishwasher, so I don't have so many things
17 that people think are common things. I think that you
18 can have smart architecture that re-examines how do
19 people live and how people live is different. The
20 approach for someone who's single is totally
21 different than someone who's thinking of a family,
22 and I think that that is not being addressed in the
23 issues that I've seen. Also, co-ops in terms of taxes
24 are being a wrong base in terms of other buildings,
25 and I think that equity has to be changed.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr.
3 Robinson.

4 Council Members do have questions for
5 this panel? I'm going to start with Council Member
6 Hanif followed by Council Member Holden.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chair
8 Riley, and thank you to all of you for joining us and
9 testifying.

10 I have a question or a few questions for
11 Community Board 11 Chair. So, I think I heard you say
12 that there's no ULURP for this. The ULURP clock on
13 this proposal began last year in 2023, and I'd like
14 to understand from you what DCP's engagement was
15 like..

16 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And if you could
18 share what meaningful community input or engagement
19 looks like to you.

20 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Thank you, yes. Well, I
21 didn't say that the ULURP process was taken away. I
22 said that City of Yes will endanger the ULURP process
23 so yes, of course, City of Yes has gone through the
24 ULURP process. That's why the Community Boards and
25

2 Borough Presidents, etc., are now here. That's why
3 we're all hearing it.

4 Your second question was about
5 engagement.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: What does community
7 input look like?

8 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Right. Well, John Young
9 was the Queens Director of City Planning during the
10 Bloomberg Administration. He literally came to the
11 Community Boards and to the Council Members and said,
12 we want to rezone, you know, for my neighborhood, for
13 Bayside and Northeast Queens, and he came to us and
14 said what he wanted to do, and we said that, well,
15 that works and that doesn't work and it was a
16 meaningful to and fro. I was actually unhappy with
17 it. It was mostly an upzoning. But at least it was
18 done in partnership, and it made us feel as if our
19 voices were being heard as opposed to this, which is
20 entirely a top-down, like I mentioned, Robert Moses
21 way of approaching zoning.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then for our
23 NoHo/SoHo residents, are there parts of the proposal
24 that you do agree with? Go ahead.

2 RONNIE WOLF: So we agree with the City of
3 Yes plan if it rejects the provisions in Section 15-
4 01 against the SoHo/NoHo residents so we are looking
5 for those provisions in 15-01 to be removed. They are
6 the ones that impose that arts fund fee on the
7 residents of this neighborhood.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Now, do you know
9 how much that fee would...

10 RONNIE WOLF: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Cost you over the
12 15 years?

13 RONNIE WOLF: Yes, so it is tied to the
14 square footage of our homes. All of us, mostly of us
15 are artists, and so we live and work in our lofts.
16 This fee started off several years ago at 100 dollars
17 per square foot. It has escalated. I don't know what
18 the percentage is per year since it's been proposed,
19 but each year it goes up.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And so has there a
21 calculation been made as to in this proposal what the
22 cost would be?

23 JENNIFER PETIT: Yeah, it depends on the
24 square foot. For my loft, it would be 150,000
25 dollars.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Over 15 years or
3 per year?

4 RONNIE WOLF: No.

5 JENNIFER PETIT: No, if I wanted to sell
6 my apartment today, I would have to pay 150,000
7 dollars to an Arts Fund prior to sale.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. Thank you,
9 Chair. Thank you.

10 NAOMI BUSHMAN: More typically, it would
11 be 250,000 DOLLARS because artists' lofts are big
12 spaces.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And actually, since
14 I have a few more seconds, how many residents or
15 households would be impacted?

16 RONNIE WOLF: Over 8,000.

17 PETER MILLER: I think it's about 8,000
18 families. Most lofts are 20 by 100 feet, which means
19 it's 200,000 dollars. That's a base and would go up,
20 which...

21 RONNIE WOLF: And my loft, for example,
22 (INAUDIBLE)

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So one second, we're
24 just going to need, if you respond, if you could
25 respond through the mic. No, it's all right, Ms.

2 Wolf. I just want you to respond to the mic because
3 everyone can hear you, that's why, so you could say
4 your response to the mic and we'll just end the
5 question.

6 PETER MILLER: I'm not finished. I just
7 wanted to say one thing. This provision, for most of
8 us, would be impossible to meet. I mean, nobody has
9 200,000 dollars to give to the City, I think, in our
10 circumstances, okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Ms. Wolf,
12 if you could continue your thought quickly.

13 RONNIE WOLF: Yes. This is not a property
14 tax. This is nothing to do with a transfer tax. This
15 is an additional tax that has been put on us as a
16 burden, basically, and has nothing to do with us. We
17 are artists. We are seniors, and we should not be
18 responsible for funding City art non-profits.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

20 JENNIFER PETIT: When we die, the burden
21 is on us.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Ms. Jennifer, thank
23 you.

2 Next, we're going to hear from Council
3 Member Holden followed by Marte and then Paladino.
4 Council Member Holden.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair,
6 and thank you, panel, for your testimony.

7 Paul, I just want to... I worked with John
8 Young also as a civic leader, as a Community Board
9 Member for 30 years, and you felt that there was give
10 and take, they cared, you felt that City Planning
11 listened. We're not seeing that in the City of Yes.
12 City Planning is just heavy-handed with this, saying
13 one size fits all. Now, you fought, like I did, for
14 contextual zones to protect your housing stock.

15 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And we down-zoned.
17 We actually helped City Planning. We surveyed
18 everything. What's the problem in... well, 12 out of
19 the 14 Queens Community Boards voted against City of
20 Yes. Your Board voted against it.

21 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: What was the
23 reason? Was it flooding? Because I have flooding. I
24 have a poor electrical grid. I have poor
25 transportation. You have probably the same...

2 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: We have the same
3 issues, and a lot of it comes down to the Department
4 of Buildings can't enforce the current zoning we
5 have. You're going to add so many new layers. You
6 cannot get into an illegal apartment. I mean, there's
7 illegal apartments all over my neighborhood. You
8 cannot get into the... not me, but the Department of
9 Buildings can't get into them because everybody knows
10 you just don't answer the door when the DOB comes and
11 you don't let them in and so you have illegal
12 apartments in basements, in attics, in garages in
13 some cases and, you know, legalizing it doesn't help.
14 Taking away the parking mandates doesn't help because
15 where are all these new people going to park? You
16 know, we have zoning built into our area that is now
17 finally coming into R6B, up and down Northern
18 Boulevard, up and down Bell Boulevard. Apartment
19 buildings are being built six stories. Do I like that
20 personally? I may or may not like that, but it is
21 under the current zoning. We have a 16 million... when
22 1961, since people mentioned that the zoning
23 amendment or the zoning plan from 1961, it was built...
24 it says it in the Department of City Planning website
25 that it was built for 16 million people to live in

2 New York City. Now, that never happened. We had a
3 little over 8 million and, according to the
4 Department of City Planning website as well, we've
5 lost 600,000 to 800,000 people since the year 2000 so
6 I have... I understand that there's a housing
7 affordability crisis, and I agree with that, but, you
8 know, we can build what we have now. We don't have to
9 tear apart these neighborhoods of 100-plus years old
10 homes in order to make new housing. There's zoning on
11 every single home that exists in my neighborhood that
12 is in a larger than... that is in a multifamily zone,
13 gets torn down and replaced with a multifamily home.
14 I don't mind that. I think it's fine. But just let it
15 happen. It's been happening all along. It'll continue
16 to happen.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you so much.
18 Thanks.

19 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
21 Member Marte followed by Council Member Paladino.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: First of all, I
23 want to thank the Soho and Noho residents who are
24 here today. Thank you for amplifying your voice. I
25 agree with you. This is a discriminatory practice.

2 It's based on your geography and nothing else, AND I
3 think hopefully we could do away with that under the
4 current application.

5 Just a quick question. Under the current
6 Arts Fund fee, would you be able to give your
7 apartment to your children who are not certified
8 artists? You can answer on the mic.

9 RONNIE WOLF: No.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: And so in almost
11 every other rent-regulated, rent-stabilized
12 apartment, you have a right to succession. However,
13 in your apartment, in your loft, if you want to give
14 it to your family member who is not an artist, they
15 would have to pay that 200,000-dollar fee to acquire
16 a home that they've been living in their whole life.

17 JENNIFER PETIT: That's correct.

18 RONNIE WOLF: That's correct.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: That's a shame.

20 Thank you for being here.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
22 Member Paladino.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Thank you,
24 Council Member Riley. I want to thank Paul
25 DiBenedetto for being here. He is part of my

2 Community Boards in Northeast Queens, and this is a
3 very unique situation that we're in here today. We
4 have people who are for, we have people who are
5 against. That means there's a whole middle that's
6 missing out. A middle voice. There is none. And some
7 way, somehow, we have to find a middle voice. This is
8 not a one-size-fits-all. Paul, you and I have spoken
9 and gone to rallies, hosted rallies, news conferences
10 about the City of Yes and how it is going to destroy
11 neighborhoods that are historic. SoHo, NoHo, parts of
12 the Bronx, parts of Manhattan. This is not a one-
13 size-fits-all issue. Yesterday, when we discussed
14 about how are you going to look over the pre-existing
15 illegal apartments that we are... it's an infection in
16 my neighborhood. Two families have become three and
17 four families. There's not enough building inspectors
18 to go around. Paul, we have a very diverse
19 neighborhood, do we not?

20 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: We do. The neighborhood
21 I live in is primarily East Asian. People move there
22 from Taiwan, Korea, China. The neighborhood right to
23 the south of mine, which is Belrose and Queens
24 Village, is primarily South Asian. Homeowners, all
25 homeowners. A lot of single-family housing in that

2 slim little 15 percent of overall New York City
3 single-family zoning. And then to the south of that,
4 African-American population in Cambria Heights,
5 Laurelton, Addisleigh Park, which is a historic
6 district. Speaking of historic districts, Dan
7 Garodnik, who is the CPC Chair, he lives in a
8 historic district on the Central Park.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: And he won't be
10 touched.

11 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: And Dan will not
13 be touched. You see, this is the whole thing. There
14 are certain historic neighborhoods that have been
15 deemed historic. Everybody understand, you're not
16 going to get touched. It's the little guy. It's you
17 who sit in the middle that are going to get creamed
18 with this.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
20 Member.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: This is the
22 broadest... Excuse me one moment. This is the broadest,
23 broadest land use ever to come new zoning in 100
24 years of New York City. I want everybody to think
25 that over, and I want you to look real close and urge

2 those Council Members that think this is a good idea
3 and it's getting rammed down your throat...

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
5 Member.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay. Thank you,
7 Council Member Riley.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I appreciate you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I appreciate you
10 too.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Council
12 Member Narcisse.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good morning,
14 and thank you for being here. When you're talking
15 about artists, my eyes open up because artists are
16 very important in the City of New York, and for you
17 not to be able to pass on what you build on in New
18 York City, and more likely, like I said, in a family
19 of doctors, you get a lot of doctors. In a family of
20 artists, I'm expecting more artists to come. And for
21 you not to be able to keep your generational wealth
22 is important too. And I heard my Colleague said, you
23 cannot pass it on and, if you do, they would have to
24 pay out that 250,000. That's a lot. So, in your
25 aspect right now, is that anything we can do in this

2 Section 15-01 to actually... because let me start by
3 saying, in New York City, we need to address the
4 crisis right now we're dealing with. There is no
5 doubt. We have to. But having said that, we need to
6 open our eyes. That's the reason that we're here, to
7 listen, to see how the best way we can address the
8 problem that come. That's the purpose of the hearing,
9 and thank you, Chair. That's the purpose. So now,
10 what do you think in your mind we can do right now to
11 address that? Anyone want to answer?

12 RONNIE WOLF: Hi. Thank you for asking. We
13 could reject the provisions within Section 15-01 that
14 tax the residents of these two neighborhoods.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Rejected? I have
16 a background. I had to be in business sometimes in
17 New York City, but rejecting is one thing. What can
18 we do? Because we cannot take out... because you've
19 been paying taxes before. You said at one point it
20 was... how much it was?

21 RONNIE WOLF: It's 100 dollars a square
22 foot.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: If you could wrap it
24 up, Council Member.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So now, we're
3 not going to reject everything, but I want to know
4 what can we do, actually, for you to keep your home
5 to be able to pass it on. Maybe it will take further
6 conversation, but we cannot reject, you know, saying
7 like we cannot do. For me, in my area, like, nobody
8 wants to hear about City of Yes because of the
9 problem they're dealing with. We each have different
10 problem we're dealing with. But at the end of the
11 day, we need to address the crisis in New York City,
12 which I'm fully, fully, fully understood.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: If we could wrap this.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So now, what I'm
15 saying is that we have to hear what can we do in that
16 area for you in order to move forward with that. What
17 is it that you're looking for? So that's one.

18 And tell me, Paul.

19 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Council Member.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I'm going to
22 wrap it up.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Council Member, thank
24 you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: How do we make
3 affordable housing if we're not building in New York
4 City?

5 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: You can build. I'm not
6 against building. I'm just against taking
7 neighborhoods that have existed for over 100 years
8 that are ethnically diverse just because you, you
9 know, were able to scrape together the money to buy a
10 house doesn't mean you have to tear.. they will tear..
11 I live in a TOD, the Transit Oriented Development
12 District. It's a half a mile. It's a one-mile radius,
13 you know. My neighborhood will be destroyed. I'll
14 leave. I'll move out. It doesn't matter to the city,
15 but I'll leave because I chose to live there. I could
16 have lived in Long Island City. I could have lived in
17 Manhattan. I could have lived in Brooklyn. But I
18 chose to live in a single-family neighborhood. Raise
19 my kid there. I'm ready to retire in five years.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I appreciate
21 that.

22 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: I'll leave. But I don't
23 want to leave. I want someone else to have it.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I appreciate
25 that. The same thing for the 46th District. They

2 don't want to leave, but we have a lot of things that
3 have not been addressed.

4 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: It can happen. I have..

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right.

6 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: All over (INAUDIBLE).

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you. Thank
9 you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I don't want the
11 (INAUDIBLE)

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: [GAVEL]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, everyone.
15 All right. We're going to move on from this panel.

16 I'm going to call on the next panel.

17 PAUL DIBENEDETTO: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next panel is
19 going to consist of Joseph Rosenberg, Sara Lind,
20 Maddie DeCerbo, Annemarie Gray, Rachel Fee, and
21 Anthony Bartolano. That's going to be the panel
22 that's speaking now.

23 The following panel can move to the
24 front, which is going to consist of Barbara Larkin,

2 Charles Nye (phonetic), Mary Anne McGowan, Chris
3 Coppa, Bernadette Ferrara, and Bruce Rosen.

4 We'll begin first with Joseph Rosenberg.

5 JOSEPH ROSENBERG: Good morning. I'm
6 Joseph Rosenberg, Director of the Catholic Community
7 Relations Council, representing the Archdiocese of
8 New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens. We
9 strongly support the City of Yes, which focuses on
10 many current zoning obstacles preventing the
11 development of housing throughout New York City.
12 Catholic Charities of both of the dioceses understand
13 our city's housing challenges and focus on the
14 mission of producing affordable housing. They've
15 developed over 6,500 units of affordable housing,
16 housing the neediest New Yorkers, such as working
17 families, low-income elderly, and the formerly
18 homeless. For too long, New York City has required
19 off-street parking spaces to be incorporated into
20 housing developments. This burdensome mandate reduces
21 the number of apartments that can be built on site as
22 well as increasing housing costs. Removing this
23 mandate is long overdue and would allow space that
24 was once reserved for cars to now be used to produce
25 apartments. The UAP would benefit Catholic Charities'

1 housing programs by providing 20 percent additional
2 affordable housing units in residential buildings
3 located in medium and high-density districts. This
4 increase would produce a significant amount of
5 affordable housing citywide. The City of Yes contains
6 initiatives that would be instrumental in generating
7 housing while assisting faith-based organizations.
8 Currently, landmark buildings can only transfer
9 development rights to adjacent properties of those
10 that are directly across the street. In many cases,
11 these receiving sites are already built to capacity
12 and there's nowhere for the landmark development
13 rights to land. The City of Yes changes this by
14 allowing the development rights of landmark buildings
15 to be transferred to properties on all blocks
16 adjacent to where the landmark is located. Not only
17 does this create the opportunity to generate housing
18 in these communities, but it also provides funds for
19 parishes to maintain and repair their landmark
20 churches. Many churches are over a century old and
21 contain stained glass, slate roofs, and ornate stone
22 exteriors. Conserving these buildings is extremely
23 costly, and this program combines the welcome
24 elements of spurring housing while creating an income
25

2 stream for both dioceses to help repair and maintain
3 landmark houses of worship. Thank you. I've got other
4 points in the testimony that it will assist faith-
5 based organizations.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: We got it, Joseph.
7 Thank you so much.

8 JOSEPH ROSENBERG: Thanks very much.

9 Next, we're going to call on Sara Lind.

10 SARA LIND: Hi, my name is Sara Lind, and
11 I'm Co-Executive Director at Open Plans. We testify
12 today in strong support of City of Yes and especially
13 in favor of lifting parking mandates citywide. Years
14 ago, when Open Plans began advocating to lift parking
15 mandates, we joined the chorus of people trying to
16 answer a fundamental question, how do we make the
17 city more affordable for the people who live here now
18 and those who will live here in the future, and over
19 the years, during this advocacy, we've had countless
20 conversations with community members, Council
21 Members, City Planning, and other cities who've made
22 this reform. We've published a white paper, held info
23 sessions, spoken with community boards, and hosted
24 rallies. And in all those conversations, one message
25 has stood out. New Yorkers are desperate for more

2 housing, and if the tradeoff is between parking and
3 housing, they demand housing. What we've been hearing
4 on the streets is borne out in polling over and over
5 again. Just yesterday, a new poll came out that shows
6 that 74 percent of New Yorkers support lifting
7 parking mandates. Support is highest among lower-
8 income New Yorkers who are less likely to own cars
9 and more likely to be rent-burdened. And even in
10 southeast Queens, a neighborhood typically thought of
11 as opposed to City of Yes, 72 percent of residents
12 support lifting parking mandates. So, although there
13 are some loud opponents, they do not represent the
14 majority. We, the supporters of City of Yes, are the
15 majority. A few weeks ago at a rally we hosted, an
16 older woman came and stood the whole time in the rain
17 with a sign that said, How's Everyone? After the
18 rally, I asked her her story. She told me that she
19 was living in a homeless shelter and desperate for
20 housing. She uses a walker, and she does not have a
21 car, and she couldn't believe that our leaders would
22 force developers to build parking instead of allowing
23 them to build new homes. Lifting parking mandates
24 citywide is one of the most important and impactful
25 things that this Council can do to help the woman

2 like her finally find stable housing and ease the
3 housing burden for all New Yorkers. And I will say,
4 in cities that have done this, like Minneapolis, that
5 have made zoning changes like those in City of Yes,
6 lifting parking mandates has been the most impactful
7 thing that they have done, and we need to do it
8 citywide.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Sarah.

10 Next, we're going to hear from Maddie DeCerbo.

11 MADDIE DECERBO: Hi, my name is Maddie
12 DeCerbo, and I'm here on behalf of the Real Estate
13 Board of New York. REBNY represents commercial,
14 residential, and institutional property owners,
15 builders, architects, and land use attorneys with
16 decades of experience in zoning matters. We are
17 pleased to support City of Yes for housing
18 opportunity. REBNY strongly supports the goals of
19 housing opportunity, which marks one of the most
20 significant updates to the Zoning Resolution since
21 1961. New York City is facing a housing crisis
22 deepened by years of underproduction and evidenced by
23 a 1.41 citywide vacancy rate. New York City has
24 lagged behind rapidly growing cities like Orlando,
25 Dallas, and Phoenix over the past decade in

1 permitting housing units. While housing production
2 remains anemic, rents continue to rise, and outdated
3 zoning regulations hinder the construction of much-
4 needed homes to address this crisis. The zoning
5 reforms in City of Yes for Housing Opportunity are
6 therefore essential to the City's goals of producing
7 500,000 units over the next decade. REBNY especially
8 supports key components of this proposal, such as the
9 expanded opportunities for office-to-residential
10 conversions, increased density through the creation
11 of R11 and R12 districts, and the introduction of
12 UAP. The changes for office-to-residential
13 conversions align with the recommendations by the
14 City Council-created Office Adaptive Reuse Task
15 Force. Additionally, these measures align with the
16 recently adopted tax incentives 467M and 485X created
17 through this year's State budget and have the
18 potential to lead to the creation of thousands of
19 affordable homes for New York City residents. The
20 changes embodied in this text amendment represent the
21 next generation of zoning rules for the planning,
22 design, and development of housing for New Yorkers.
23 This proposal can ensure housing of all types and
24 sizes are built, and we ask that the City Council
25

2 carefully consider any changes through the lens of
3 whether those changes will protect, encourage, and
4 enhance the housing pipeline for the City. We look
5 forward to collaborating with the Council on
6 refinements to the proposal. Thank you for the
7 consideration of these points.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I just want
9 to stay for record we've been joined by Council
10 Member Rivera.

11 Next, we'll hear from Annemarie Gray.

12 ANNEMARIE GRAY: Thank you, Chair Riley,
13 Members of the Subcommittee. I'm Annemarie Gray,
14 Executive Director of Open New York, an independent
15 statewide grassroots pro-housing organization with
16 hundreds of volunteer members, many of whom are here
17 with me today to testify in strong support of City of
18 Yes for Housing Opportunity. New York's housing
19 affordability crisis is rooted in the fact that we
20 simply do not build enough homes. Displacement,
21 exclusion, tenant harassment, and homelessness are
22 all exacerbated by our dire housing shortage. It is
23 now consensus from the top of the Democratic Party
24 that cities like New York must reform our outdated
25 zoning policies to help manage soaring housing costs.

1 City of Yes is a sensible, thoughtful plan to do just
2 this. For far too long, many of the most well-
3 resourced parts of the city have been de facto off-
4 limits to new homes, driving up rents and reinforcing
5 long-standing patterns of segregation. City of Yes
6 will allow more homes of every type in every
7 neighborhood to meet the needs of New Yorkers in a
8 more equitable way. This means more income-restricted
9 workforce housing, more backyard cottages to support
10 homeowners, more of the cheapest forms of housing to
11 get New Yorkers out of our shelter system and onto
12 their feet. It includes smart policies to allow new
13 homes in low-density districts, which is imperative
14 for fair housing goals and must remain intact through
15 final negotiations. Of course, zoning changes are
16 necessary but not sufficient. To protect tenants and
17 those struggling most with housing insecurity, we
18 must pair zoning reforms with actions that bolster
19 fair housing, invest in our neighborhoods most
20 impacted, sustain affordable housing capital funding,
21 and support low-income homeowners navigate new
22 regulations. We strongly support the Speaker and
23 Council in your efforts to secure additional
24

2 commitments to push forward an even more
3 comprehensive set of solutions.

4 While this proposal has seemed
5 controversial throughout the extensive public
6 process, I urge you to remember that the loudest,
7 most oppositional voices are not representative of
8 the majority. A poll of New York City voters released
9 yesterday shows a staggering 81 percent support for
10 the proposal. 75 percent said they are more likely to
11 support elected officials who vote in favor. The City
12 Council has an important opportunity for leadership
13 on the biggest issue facing everyday New Yorkers
14 right now. I look forward to working together to
15 seize the moment and start to turn the tide on our
16 housing crisis. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
18 going to hear from Rachel Fee.

19 Rachel, can you press the button, please?
20 Thanks.

21 RACHEL FEE: Good morning, Chair Riley and
22 Members of the City Council. My name is Rachel Fee.
23 I'm Executive Director of the New York Housing
24 Conference. We lead the Yes to Housing Coalition, a
25 group of nearly 150 organizations united in support

2 of the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity. Thank you
3 for this opportunity to testify today.

4 I've worked in affordable housing in New
5 York City for 20 years, and I can tell you with
6 certainty that this proposal is long overdue and that
7 it will help our affordable housing crisis. Adding
8 housing supply can help slow rising rents. More
9 affordable housing can be built with a Universal
10 Affordability Preference, and in the low-density
11 neighborhoods, affordable rental housing and also new
12 homeownership opportunities will be generated with
13 the 485X tax abatement. Even commercial conversions
14 combined with a tax incentive will include affordable
15 housing. All of this will add up to meaningful action
16 on housing supply that is desperately needed.

17 Our New York City Housing Tracker data
18 shows that last year, the top 10 producing City
19 Council Districts each added 600 units or more of
20 affordable housing. Meanwhile, the lowest producing
21 districts added 0 to 10 units. City of Yes will
22 ensure that every part of this city contributes to
23 solving the crisis.

24 I urge the City Council to pass this
25 proposal in its entirety with minimal modifications.

2 We can't afford to leave out ADUs, which can add
3 40,000 units, or to maintain parking requirements
4 that are driving up construction costs. Additionally,
5 increased capital commitments and more rental
6 assistance can further enhance the significant impact
7 we expect zoning reforms to have on affordability.
8 It's time to meet the urgent needs of today and
9 ensure a better tomorrow for all New Yorkers. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Just want
12 to state for record we've been joined by Majority
13 Leader Fariás and Council Member Brewer and Council
14 Member Joseph.

15 Next, we're going to hear from Anthony
16 Bartolano. Good morning, Chair Riley and committee
17 members.

18 ANTHONY BARTOLANO: My name is Anthony
19 Bartolano. I'm a member of SEIU Local 32BJ and I work
20 as a handy person in the public school system. I am
21 pleased to be here today to express my support and my
22 union support for City of Yes housing opportunity. In
23 addition to being an 11-year member of this great
24 union, I'm a lifelong Brooklyn resident who knows the
25 housing crisis firsthand. Currently, I rent an

1 apartment in Bensonhurst with my wife and young
2 daughter. In the last four years, we have moved three
3 times. And because there was nothing else available
4 at an affordable rent, our current home is both more
5 expensive and smaller than the apartment we rented in
6 2020. Moving at the fragile ages of one, three, and
7 four has meant that my daughter doesn't get to
8 experience the peace of mind that comes with having a
9 stable home and, as my wife and I struggle every
10 month to pay rent, we can't save for the American
11 dream we share with millions of families to one day
12 purchase our own house. I know that I'm not the only
13 person with this experience and that my story is
14 shared by thousands of my 32BJ brothers and sisters.
15 The reasons that we win in every union contract are
16 hard-fought victories, but it's hard to celebrate as
17 our wallets are squeezed by skyrocketing housing
18 costs. Earlier this year, my union joined many others
19 in urging the State to pass legislation to kick-start
20 development and bring new homes onto the market
21 because as countless experts have shown, the housing
22 crisis is rooted in a huge housing shortage. Now it's
23 the City's turn to act. City of Yes is a common-sense
24 proposal to unlock tens of thousands of units of
25

2 housing across the city. These will go a long way
3 towards shrinking the housing shortage so that
4 families like mine might be able to find comfortable
5 and affordable housing options in the communities we
6 lived in our entire lives. On behalf of my family and
7 70,000 32BJ members who call New York City home, I
8 urge you to support City of Yes for housing
9 opportunity. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being
11 no questions for this panel, this panel is excused.

12 The next panel that's in the front, you
13 could come to the dais, please.

14 The next panel we're going to hear from
15 is Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso.

16 Not now, Borough President, following
17 this panel.

18 The following panel after Borough
19 President Reynoso goes will be will consist of Alia
20 Soomro, John Wilson, Julie Chou, Rosa Chang, Gregory
21 Smithsimon, and Mark Greenberg. If you just heard
22 your name, please come up to the front and just wait.
23 Thank you.

24 The first person we're going to hear from
25 from this panel is Barbara Larkin.

2 BARBARA LARKIN: (INAUDIBLE)

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Ms. Larkin, can you
4 just press the button, please?

5 BARBARA LARKIN: Good?

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yep.

7 BARBARA LARKIN: I'm a volunteer. I'm not
8 representing a union or the city. Many years of
9 service dedicated to my community. Good morning, all.
10 My name is Barbara Larkin. I am a retired
11 schoolteacher in the City of New York over 30 years.
12 I'm the past President of the Bell Harbor Property
13 Owners Association, and I am here representing 1,300
14 homeowners. I'm also the Vice President of Queens
15 Civic Congress, and during our Zoom meetings, I've
16 had the opportunity to listen to representatives from
17 Springfield Gardens, from Rosedale, from Forest
18 Hills, from the Poncet, and many other Queens civics.
19 All of the speakers that I have heard are adamantly
20 opposed to this proposal for a variety of reasons.
21 Objections include, but are not limited to, lack of
22 infrastructure needed to absorb increased density,
23 which I haven't heard from or read about in a
24 newspaper lately. Absence of enough classroom seats
25 to accommodate mandates limiting class size. If you

2 think parking traffic and crowded streets are
3 horrendous now, just imagine what increased density
4 will do to our city. The population is now below 8
5 million due to hundreds of thousands of taxpayers
6 moving to other states. If this proposal, which is a
7 top-down Robert Moses approach, is approved, hundreds
8 of thousands of hard-working New Yorkers would pack
9 up and leave for sure. I thank God the City Council
10 Members who understand that much goes into rezoning.
11 In 2008, dozens of civics worked cooperatively with
12 John Young and together over months reached
13 consensus. Recently, I have heard over Zoom meetings
14 that one real estate fellow who's also an attorney
15 said there are enough empty housing units already in
16 existence and that passing this draconian proposal...

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Larkin.

18 BARBARA LARKIN: Is totally unnecessary. I
19 would just like to say those of you who are familiar
20 with Choose Your Own Adventure series, if you want to
21 leave a legacy to your children and grandchildren...

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Larkin.

23 BARBARA LARKIN: Choose one for the middle
24 class, not two for developers.

25 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

2 BARBARA LARKIN: Thank you very much.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

4 CHAMBERS: (APPLAUSE)

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Hold the applause. Hold
6 the applause.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: [GAVEL] I'm gonna say
8 this one more time. We do not clap in here. You can
9 wave your hands like this, okay? Secondly, we have
10 over 600 people signed up to register. We have staff
11 here. I'm going to cut everyone off at two minutes.
12 You could present the rest of your presentation
13 after, but respectfully, so everyone could be heard,
14 we're going to cut everyone off at two minutes, okay?
15 We got it? Can I get a wave hands? Appreciate it.

16 Next, I'm going to hear from Charles Nye.

17 CHARLES NYE: Hello. I'm a blind New
18 Yorker who lives in midtown Manhattan on a fixed
19 income, which is SSI, food stamps, and Medicaid.
20 Someone like me would not be able to afford an
21 apartment on this Housing Opportunity plan, just like
22 I cannot afford a rent-stabilized apartment or any
23 apartment on any of the so-called affordable housing
24 lotteries. Someone like me in my position would not
25 be able to afford any apartment on this Housing

2 Opportunity so I'm very much against this. We need
3 mandates to mandate affordable apartments, because
4 affordability should be for everyone, even those who
5 are on fixed income on SSI and who are disabled.

6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Charles.

8 Next, we're going to hear from Mary Anne McGowan.

9 MARY ANNE MCGOWAN: Is that? Okay. Good
10 afternoon or good morning, and thank you very much
11 for holding this public hearing. My name is Mary Anne
12 McGowan. I'm President of the Clove Lake Civic
13 Association in Staten Island, New York, and the first
14 thing I want to address is the rent control, rent-
15 stabilized market rate and affordable housing here in
16 the city. Presently, there are more than 64,000
17 vacant apartments within New York City's limits.
18 Close to 30,000 of those vacant apartments are under
19 City programs of rent control and rent stabilization.
20 The other 34,000, I assume, are under what would be
21 market rate, whatever that really means. As a
22 lifelong New York City resident and a taxpayer, I
23 want to know how do we explain that we have 64,000
24 available apartments in this city and yet we are
25 still dealing with this kind of a crisis for people

2 who need housing. There has to be the Buildings
3 Department who is supposed to be the enforcer, but
4 there has to be a total and complete examination of
5 rent control systems and the rent stabilized. Are the
6 people in these eligible to be there? Is this being
7 abused? And why aren't these apartments available if
8 they have to be? If it's the landlords not
9 maintaining them, something has to be done, and that
10 requires us to get more inspectors into the Buildings
11 Department.

12 The second area I want to address
13 directly affects most of Staten Island and many areas
14 of Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, and that is that
15 the proposal, the City of Yes proposal, eliminates
16 all defining characteristics that are specific to the
17 separate types of residential districts citywide, and
18 I guess I will submit the rest. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next we're
20 going to hear from Chris Coppa.

21 CHRIS COPPA: Okay. I'm Chris Coppa from
22 Staten Island Clove Lakes Civic Association. We're
23 against the City of Yes proposal in Staten Island
24 because we don't have the infrastructure to support
25 it. These changes would greatly impact Staten Island.

2 We only have two highways which are overly congested
3 as it is for the whole day. We don't have a subway
4 system and our bus system is poor as well. In a
5 recent study it was found that half of the buses were
6 not able to go out because of maintenance issues and
7 lack of drivers. Just today, I took what was normally
8 a 15-minute bus ride to go to the ferry and it took
9 almost an hour. I had to take the following ferry
10 half an hour later. The roads are narrow. Most main
11 roads such as Amboy Road, Victory Boulevard, Forest,
12 Seguin Post, and Castleton Avenues all are only a
13 single lane in each direction, and those are our
14 major roadways. Those are the roadways that the buses
15 go on. They're single lane. Having these types of
16 changes will just impact Staten Island even more so
17 and will just make travel impossible. To go three
18 miles for a normal 15-minute bus ride that took
19 almost an hour is ridiculous. We only have two full
20 hospitals and no City hospitals. Emergency personnel
21 won't be able to respond to emergencies in a timely
22 manner. We don't have enough fire houses and firemen
23 to handle the current fires. Sometimes when there is
24 a large fire, firemen are sent here from Brooklyn
25 because we don't have enough firemen. We only have

2 four precincts and without an increase of police
3 officers. When the 121 precinct was built, they
4 pulled policemen from our other precincts to man it.
5 Our schools are overcrowded as it is. There aren't
6 enough seats. Our outdated sewer system cannot handle
7 more buildings.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
9 going to hear from Bernadette Ferrara.

10 BERNADETTE FERRARA: Okay, here we go.
11 Good morning, Chair Riley and Members of this
12 Committee. My name is Bernadette Ferrara, and I
13 represent thousands of families in the East Bronx.
14 I'm the President of the Van Nest Neighborhood
15 Alliance, a member of SEBCA (phonetic), former Chair
16 and 17-year Board Member of Bronx Community Board 11,
17 and a lifelong East Bronx resident still living in
18 one of the oldest neighborhoods of Van Nest
19 established in 1853. I am urging City Council to
20 reject the City of Yes Housing Opportunity in its
21 entirety. For the past year and a half, many like
22 myself have testified that we do not have a housing
23 shortage but an affordability crisis. There are no
24 HPD programs that lead to homeownership and we need
25 to prioritize on our infrastructure. Earlier this

2 month at the 11th hour with the vote in City Council,
3 Speaker Adrienne Adams said before voting on the City
4 of Yes changes, the Council will be developing an
5 housing action plan that includes affordability and
6 will be attached to the City of Yes Housing
7 Opportunity. This is a tactic to get a yes vote from
8 City Council. If you care about your communities and
9 those that voted you in office, you will fully reject
10 this, vote no, and protect your communities. Next
11 year, 34 City Council Members will be up for re-
12 election, and your constituents will remember how you
13 voted. As diverse are our ethnicities, so are the
14 unique diverse characteristics of each community. We
15 need your no vote to protect and preserve those
16 special qualities. Also, how can you vote yes on an
17 initiative that will take away both community and
18 City Council input of land use items? Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Bernadette.

20 Next, we'll hear from Bruce Rosen.

21 BRUCE ROSEN: I'm a lifelong New Yorker. I
22 was a City Planner for the City. The only reason I'm
23 here is because friends kept nudging me. I'm trying
24 to be retired from that. It makes no sense to me that
25 if the goal of this is affordable housing to provide

2 more stimulus to whatever the market-will-bear
3 system. Our market-will-bear system has an expression
4 in the art world, which is actually very important
5 because now we had bids of eight and nine figures for
6 certain pieces of art and we have people on the
7 planet who come here on occasion and they can bid for
8 real estate on that. What happens is a simple
9 principle concept in real estate economics. You
10 change the comparable values. Comparable values, if
11 you don't know, are what a piece of property is going
12 for to sell or to rent, be it residential,
13 commercial, industrial, institutional, and doing this
14 this way is just encouraging further speculation. I
15 would like, since people think that there are big
16 numbers of here, to note in the quarter century that
17 followed the Second World War, when all three levels
18 of government were priming the housing market, the
19 City added 40 to 50,000 new units of housing every
20 single year and, in the last two years, the
21 interregnum, with the bringing of the 1961 Zoning
22 Resolution, the City built 100,000 units per year so
23 you're doing nothing with this. Is that it?

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, that is.

25 BRUCE ROSEN: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
3 Member Ariola.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you, Chair.
5 I just want to thank everyone who will testify today,
6 no matter which side of the City of Yes that you fall
7 on. I think it's important that you're engaged and
8 that you came out, but I'd especially like to say
9 thank you for this panel, because Barbara Larkin, who
10 we have been community activists for over 30 years
11 together, and to see you here really reinforces why
12 I'm in opposition of the City of Yes because the
13 people that I represent do not want the City of Yes,
14 and so therefore, that gives people great
15 understanding, whether it's the Administration or the
16 City Council, why we are so opposed, because I
17 represent your views, your needs, your wants, the
18 community, and that's why I'm so happy that you came
19 today. You waited it out, as many others will, but
20 Barbara, I appreciate your partnership over the
21 years. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much,
23 Council Member. Any more questions for this panel?

24 There being no more questions, thank you
25 for testifying.

2 The next panel we're going to hear from
3 is Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso.

4 Following Borough President Reynoso's
5 testimony, we are going to hear from Alia Soomro,
6 John Wilson, Julia Chow, Rosa Chang, Gregory
7 Smithsimon, and Mark Greenberg. If your name is
8 called, please make sure that you're sitting in the
9 front. Thank you.

10 Borough President, you may begin whenever
11 you're ready.

12 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: Thank
13 you, Chair, and thank you to the Council Members.
14 It's always great to be back to my old stomping
15 grounds. Again, I want to thank you and the Council
16 for holding this important hearing today and for
17 spinning it up into two days to allow for the
18 public's voice to be heard in a meaningful way. I am
19 Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso,
20 representing the greatest borough in the City of New
21 York, Brooklyn, Chair Riley, and I'm encouraging the
22 City Council to pass...

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I'm about to stop your
24 testimony.

2 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO:

3 Encouraging the City Council to pass the City of Yes
4 and Housing Opportunity in its entirety. Because our
5 City doesn't plan, unfortunately, we zone. Certain
6 neighborhoods, usually low-income communities of
7 color, have done all the work or more of the work
8 than their fair share to address the housing crisis,
9 while other neighborhoods have done close to nothing.
10 For example, between 2010 and 2020, Brooklyn
11 Community District 1, which was rezoned in 2005,
12 added more than 18,000 new units of housing, while
13 Community District 18 only added 500 units during
14 that same time. It's almost 40 times the number of
15 housing units created in one District over another.
16 For affordable housing, the discrepancy is even
17 worse. During that decade, Brooklyn Community
18 District 5 constructed and preserved over 12,000
19 units of affordable housing, while in Community
20 District 10, the number is a meager seven units. That
21 is 1,700 times the number of affordable units
22 constructed and preserved in East New York,
23 (INAUDIBLE), and Star City versus in Bay Ridge, Dyker
24 Heights, and Fort Hamilton. Low-density neighborhoods
25 make up almost half of the city, and in some of those

1 areas, no affordable housing has been permitted since
2 2015, according to the NYU Furman Center. This is how
3 we ended up with the least available housing in our
4 city since 1968. The Regional Plan Association
5 estimates that New York State needs to build over
6 800,000 units by 2032 to address current needs and
7 meet expected population and job growth, and New York
8 City needs to do its part. City of Yes isn't a silver
9 bullet that's going to get us all the way there, but
10 with this proposal, we have the opportunity to set a
11 standard citywide that no neighborhood is exempt from
12 doing their part for the greater good and
13 contributing to new housing. In my recommendations, I
14 supported the proposal with significant conditions
15 and modifications. Most importantly, the proposal to
16 legalize ADUs must move forward. If the City Council
17 removes ADUs from the City of Yes, I will withdraw my
18 support because this is how we get to a more
19 equitable framework that allows for lower-density
20 parts of the city to contribute. In parts of Borough
21 Park, Bay Ridge, and Bensonhurst, more than a quarter
22 of households are overcrowded, with families doubling
23 and tripling up. Allowing ADUs means more units in
24 these neighborhoods on a practical level, and it
25

2 means that for these families, grandma can move over
3 to the garage, or a daughter and her family can move
4 into a safe and affordable basement unit down the
5 street instead of out of our city. Right now, the
6 families leaving New York City at the fastest rate
7 are people of color who make roughly between 30 and
8 50 percent of the AMI according to the New York
9 Times, and this has to stop, meaning we need more
10 options for them. We need everyone here in this city.
11 Research has shown that the chains of moves sparked
12 by new construction free up apartments that are then
13 rented or retained by households across the income
14 spectrum. In short, the availability of all kinds of
15 new housing options benefits everyone. To be clear,
16 I'm not saying we don't need to build more affordable
17 housing. I know there are some Council Members who
18 want to require deeper affordability in the UAP
19 program. I support this effort and acknowledge that
20 more affordable housing is desperately needed,
21 especially at lower incomes. However, I want to
22 caution the Council to be mindful that this is a
23 voluntary program. We need to find a balance that
24 maximizes affordability without de-incentivizing
25 developers from taking advantage of the option. If

2 the numbers don't pencil out, at the end of the day,
3 we'll be left with less affordable housing than we
4 could have under a well-considered plan.

5 In conclusion, I want to remind everyone
6 that this proposal is just one chapter in a much
7 larger book. Good planning has to be comprehensive,
8 and planning for housing must consider not just
9 zoning, not just production, but preservation of
10 existing affordable housing and strong tenant
11 protections as well. The Council should also pass
12 meaningful legislation aimed at these goals,
13 including those around broker fees, co-op disclosure,
14 and public benefits on public land. To the City
15 Council, I want to repeat what I said to DCP, do not
16 back down, do not scale back, do not shy away. If
17 you're going to do anything, do more. Many things
18 about the future are uncertain, but we know that
19 right now this is our shot to make changes that our
20 City needs to move forward. Let's not waste it. Thank
21 you. I do have 20 seconds. I just want to say when I
22 was in the City Council, we passed MIH. It was a
23 wholly, wholly more unpopular initiative amongst the
24 Community Boards than this plan. There were less
25 Community Boards supportive of MIH, and now almost

2 every single person on this dais would say that the
3 work that we did on MIH is insufficient. It's not
4 enough. We should have done more. We're held
5 accountable for not being affordable enough. We're
6 not more affordability. It was arguably the most
7 unpopular proposal we had in the City Council and,
8 looking back, because we took that bold step against
9 an unpopular Community Board position, we're looking
10 back and thinking, should we have done more, should
11 we have pushed back more, and I hope that when you
12 are here 10 years later, 20 years later, you'll see
13 that these are the right decisions to make, even if
14 it's Community Board unpopular. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Borough
16 President.

17 First, we'll have Council Member Narcisse
18 followed by Hanif.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: You know I love
20 you, right?

21 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: I
22 know you do. It's all good.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: But you
24 mentioned District 18.

25 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And the City of
3 Yes... I'm in agreement with a lot of things that you
4 said. We want to do our part. My District want to do
5 our part, and so is the other District. But some part
6 the government have not done their part in the
7 infrastructure, in addressing the water backup. Like
8 yesterday, I was talking to Dan, because Dan and I,
9 we've been talking, and I know we're dealing with a
10 crisis in New York City, but how do we... because my
11 community is enraged, because when there's a rain, we
12 all have to cross our finger and pray. We have backup
13 from the bottom. We have backup from the water. So
14 how do we do that? Because the government have... we,
15 the government, have to address the infrastructure
16 for some area that we know is a problem so how do we
17 do that? How do we do that?

18 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: So, I
19 would just say a couple of things to that. The first
20 thing is, we are government. There's a budget that's
21 going to come down very soon, and the choices we make
22 are reflection of the ideas or the goals that we
23 wanna set forth. In what time in the City Council
24 have we made it popular to push for the
25 reconstruction of our sewer system in the City of New

2 York in a meaningful way? We don't have those
3 conversations, because we're more induced to push for
4 fluff stuff that got us re-elected versus things that
5 are not sexy, that nobody's going to pay attention to
6 or no one's going to see, that can actually make a
7 difference.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: And that's the
9 problem. I'm not sexy when it comes to those things,
10 because I talk out of.. because we need to address the
11 infrastructure problem that we have, and we need to
12 address housing. It's a crisis that we need to
13 address.

14 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: But
15 the thing is, I think this all comes down to
16 comprehensive planning. We don't do it in the City.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: That's the
18 problem.

19 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: The
20 Department of City Planning doesn't plan when it
21 doesn't zone, and it's a problem. It doesn't make
22 this proposal bad, right, so two things could be
23 true. DCP's done a terrible job at planning. The City
24 of New York doesn't plan. When you try to pass a
25 Charter Revision Commission proposal to include

2 comprehensive planning, and DCP was the number one
3 group or agency standing against it, so I would just
4 say asking for legislation to be pushed through the
5 City Council...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I don't want my
7 Chair to punish me today, but planning have to be
8 comprehensive. That's how we're going to leave it.

9 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: I
10 agree.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
12 Member. We're going to have Council Member Hanif
13 followed by Council Member Brewer and Council Member
14 Ossé.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you to the
16 best Borough President...

17 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: Yes,
18 thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: For being here...

20 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO:
21 Appreciate that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: For your continued
23 support. So. there was a testimony right before you
24 from CB11 in the Bronx, and I was just looking up
25 some numbers from 2018 to 2022. 276 units were built

1 in totality. 10 were affordable units. Brooklyn
2 Community Board 6, which I represent, between that
3 timeframe, built 593 units, one affordable unit. This
4 has, of course, changed due to the Gowanus Rezoning,
5 bringing me to the top 10. And then Queens Community
6 Boards 9, 10, 11 all built less than 300 units each
7 and less than 15 units of affordable units. Could you
8 just share why some of these communities have been
9 able to get away with not building anything
10 meaningful and, despite having ULURP, despite having
11 Community Board representatives who are selected by
12 Borough Presidents with input from Council Members,
13 why is it that we are lagging behind?

14
15 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: So,
16 it's a perspective that I've been able to gain
17 becoming Borough President that is different than
18 when I was a Council Member. Member deference is one
19 of the biggest problems we have when it comes to
20 being able to build citywide adjustments or citywide
21 solutions to citywide problems. We are not a fiefdom
22 in any way, shape, or form. These local communities
23 think that what happens to them doesn't affect the
24 rest of the city, and it's just not true. What
25 happens in your community affects the rest of the

2 City of New York, and it's hard for us to have
3 comprehensive conversations about dealing with crisis
4 in a citywide level when Member deference is king,
5 and that is an issue that I think we should talk
6 about and we should address because I do think that
7 the exercise that we're having here while in policy
8 is very strong and the City of Yes is the right thing
9 to do, I think something that is lost upon people
10 that is even more deeply important is that we're
11 about to pass a citywide text amendment that is
12 speaking to a City Council that can come together to
13 address an issue as a whole, not doing spot work or
14 spot zoning or spot, you know, fixes to one school or
15 one neighborhood, just actually coming together and
16 doing something for the city as one, which I think is
17 more valuable than even the proposal itself.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
19 Member Hanif. Next, we're going to have Council
20 Member Brewer followed by Ossé and Ariola.

21 We've also been joined by Chair Hanks.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
23 much. I actually have the same position as Council as
24 I did as Borough President, and I did support MIH.
25 However, the challenge for me is this notion, and it

2 was definitely told to me in the de Blasio and the
3 Adams' Administration, which is the market in high-
4 density, high-income areas will solve all your
5 problems for affordable. I don't agree with that, and
6 I think that the problem is that the city, state, or
7 federal government, if we're going to talk about the
8 market, that the city, state, and federal government
9 have to come through with some more affordable
10 housing. You cannot just have 20 percent and have a
11 tall building, and that is what I was told for like
12 eight years. Gale, I'll put all my money in the
13 Bronx. I was told that all of my subsidy is going to
14 go to the Bronx. I want affordable housing. I want
15 affordable housing. We've got the schools. We've got
16 the transportation. And I'm just tired of being told
17 over and over again, just market. So you have some
18 not as dense, but in Brooklyn you have some dense.
19 How do you answer that question? Because I'm all for
20 rezoning. I've been doing this for a long time. I got
21 the rezoning. But why are we doing it if we're not
22 getting to the affordable at the same time? How do
23 you answer that question in your area?

24 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: For
25 me, it's a balance. Subsidized affordable housing is

2 deeply important, but we also need to have.. the
3 market angle, the market value to it is also
4 important. We can't do it all. We can't build through
5 the lots that are available to us by HPD and by the
6 City of New York.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I have no lots,
8 zero lots.

9 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO:
10 Right. So, I just think the affordable housing that
11 gets built through MIH is deeply valuable, and the
12 subsidy should be happening in your community.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: It's not.

14 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: I
15 actually disagree with the City of New York in how
16 they move forward with subsidizing affordable housing
17 in the city because it's actually neighborhoods in
18 Manhattan or parts of Brooklyn that are not building
19 that can actually sustain more students that might be
20 challenged or have poverty being a foundational piece
21 of their upbringing. They need to go to better
22 schools, and those better schools are in places that
23 don't build housing. They have better parks, better
24 transportation systems so I actually think that when
25 it comes to the subsidy of affordable housing, that

2 the City should be diversifying its work and not
3 putting all of its money in the South Bronx or in
4 parts of the east part of Brooklyn.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But you didn't say
6 that in your testimony, and I would hope that in the
7 future you would say that.

8 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: The
9 thing is, I think this is, because this is not
10 comprehensive, I think the challenge that you guys
11 have right now is that you're trying to cram
12 everything into this one proposal. I see this
13 proposal as a chapter of a larger book.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know, but the
15 thing...

16 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO:
17 Unfortunately...

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Council Member Brewer,
19 if you could wrap it up.

20 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: I
21 just want to say, unfortunately, I just don't think
22 the City wants to write the book. This Mayor is not
23 going to write a book. But this chapter is still
24 valuable and it's still important, and I hope that
25 our future leaders and you guys can help finish that

2 book, which includes affordable housing,
3 infrastructure, parks, transportation, schools, all
4 those things that are important, but we don't do
5 comprehensive planning. We are all working as
6 individuals instead of working as a whole, and this
7 Mayor has a good plan here, but doesn't do
8 comprehensive work, unfortunately.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
10 Member Brewer. Next, we're going to have Council
11 Member Ossé followed by Ariola then Paladino.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Good morning,
13 Borough President Reynoso. So, I just want to
14 speak...

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Oh, pause, pause. We
16 have to pause. The live link is down. Pause one
17 second.

18 Okay. We're going to take a pause for
19 five minutes. We have to provide a live link so
20 everyone can tune in so it's down right now so just
21 give us five minutes. Thank you.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Ladies and gentlemen,
23 at this time, please find your seats. Once again,
24 please find your seats. We shall resume momentarily.

2 Once again, please come in and find your
3 seats.

4 Please ensure all cell phones and
5 electronic devices are placed to silent. Please find
6 your seats.

7 Order in the chambers. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. If we could
9 just have everyone take their seats. So, two quick
10 announcements. We have the link and we're back and
11 running. We're back on livestream but, unfortunately,
12 the different rooms on livestream wasn't working so
13 if you go to the Council's webpage, you're going to
14 see a message below that says if you're experiencing
15 difficulties watching the livestream of City of Yes
16 for Housing Opportunity Public Hearing at the
17 Subcommittee of Zoning and Franchise on October 22,
18 2024, at 9:30, please click this link. It's going to
19 be right below. So, if you're in touch with anyone
20 that's not here, you can let them know, but you can
21 still access the link.

22 We're going to continue with questions
23 for the Borough President, and we're going to start
24 back with Council Member Ossé.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you, Chair.
3 Borough President Reynoso, so you seem very
4 supportive of City of Yes, and you've been very vocal
5 about that. I do want to ask a couple of questions
6 about some of your support, and maybe you could
7 highlight some answers that may make the Council more
8 comfortable or gain some insight about City of Yes.
9 Are there other cities that have taken an approach
10 similar to what this city is attempting to do in
11 increasing housing stock, and how has that taken
12 effect on affordability within those cities? If you
13 can list specific examples, that'd be great.

14 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: So
15 the closest thing to, it's never apples to apples, is
16 Minneapolis, and I just want to say that this city
17 speaks to exceptionalism when it wants to, and it
18 speaks to it when it doesn't want to, right? This
19 city is not like anywhere else. It's not like
20 Minneapolis. And so they want to talk about something
21 that they do want to do, and it's like there's no
22 City like New York, so I just want to be careful with
23 this idea of exceptionalism and when we address it.
24 Minneapolis, what it did was in its removal of
25 single-family zoning was, I guess, apples to oranges

2 comparison of an opportunity to do the ADU work, and
3 that allowed for a significant increase in units that
4 actually reduced rents in Minneapolis. They also did
5 a significant rezoning that allowed for a significant
6 upzoning that allowed for more housing units to be
7 built, and they also did a significant tenant
8 protection package that we've seen come from the
9 state, and we've seen successes in Minneapolis that I
10 think we could mirror here. But instead, somebody
11 always says, if we knew how to deal with
12 gentrification, if we knew how to deal with the
13 housing crisis, it would have already been solved.
14 Well, Minneapolis has shown initially some of that
15 worked, and it doesn't seem like we're taking those
16 models to try to address our crisis here.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Great. Another
18 concern that I receive from my constituents or an
19 alternative approach to how to deal with our housing
20 crisis and affordability crisis is there are so many
21 vacant apartments within New York. What is your
22 response to that in terms of maybe addressing
23 warehousing, maybe the amount of warehouse units...

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Sorry, Council Member.
25 You can wrap it up, please.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Yes.

3 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: So,
4 yes, we have a huge issue, a vacancy issue. I think
5 this is a state issue and not a city one. I think we
6 need a vacancy tax. We need to talk about in your
7 second property, if vacant, you should be taxed at a
8 higher level so we can either bring income so we can
9 subsidize more affordable housing or make those
10 apartments available for rental so I would just let
11 you know that I think it's a state issue. I agree
12 that that exists, but the solution, like I said, we
13 can't cram the entire housing crisis solutions to the
14 City of Yes. This is just one chapter of a larger
15 problem.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: The vacancy rate, is
17 it 1.4 percent right now?

18 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: Yeah,
19 so right now we're talking about in the City of New
20 York having almost less than 30,000 units available
21 at one time a month in the City of New York, which
22 means that 50,000 people are looking for apartments
23 more or less, 20,000 people can't find apartments and
24 the people that tend to be those 20,000 are people
25 that can't afford the rents that the other 30,000

2 can, they end up leaving the city, which is why the
3 flight that's happening outside of New York City is
4 not happening by upper class individuals or
5 billionaires. It's happening by poor and middle-class
6 families.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
9 Member Ossé. Council Member Ariola.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you, Chair.
11 Thank you so much, Borough President, for coming in
12 today. In your testimony, you encouraged the City
13 Council to pass the City of Yes for Housing
14 Opportunity in its entirety. You go further on in
15 your testimony to say to the DCP, do not back down,
16 do not scale back, do not shy away. If you're going
17 to do anything, do more. How many Community Boards
18 are in your borough?

19 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO:
20 Eighteen community boards.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Eighteen Community
22 Boards. I have 16. So, ten Community Boards voted
23 against the City of Yes. Do you think that you're
24 reflective of their needs, their wants, their desires
25 for their borough?

2 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: I

3 represent the entire Borough of Brooklyn. Community
4 Boards are a representation of a small subset of my
5 Borough. If you looked at the polling that was done
6 recently, 81 percent of New Yorkers support the City
7 of Yes, and I can't turn a blind eye to them. Also,
8 the people that are on Community Boards tend to be
9 folks that are homeowners, not rent-burdened, and are
10 actually housing secure, versus the people that can't
11 attend those meetings because they're either working
12 jobs, or newer families that are actually rent-
13 burdened and are not housing secure so the
14 demographics of the Community Boards don't tend to
15 necessarily portray the demographics of the entire
16 community in which they represent so, while their
17 opinions do matter, they're not a conclusive
18 representation of the sentiment of the Borough.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: You're the Borough
20 President. Don't you have a large part of appointing
21 those members to the Community Board to be
22 representative of what is happening and what is
23 needed for the borough?

24 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: Yeah,
25 so right now, what we've been doing over the last two

2 years, I've been the Borough President for two years,
3 we've been ridding the Community Board of mostly
4 members that don't show up is the first line of
5 defense, and now we're starting to have conversations
6 about adding more pro-housing, more pro-cycling, and
7 more pro-transportation, public transportation folks
8 in it so the Community Boards are slightly moving
9 towards a reflection of what my goals are, but also
10 I'm not a dictator or a tyrant. I like the diversity
11 of my Community Boards. I like to hear about the
12 different needs and wants of members of the Borough,
13 what is good for Williamsburg isn't good for Canarsie
14 isn't good for Coney Island so I like to hear the
15 diversity of opinions but, again, those opinions are
16 not law, right? Those are the opinions of the
17 Community Board, not necessarily of the entire City
18 of New York. And I'll just give one more example.
19 There are over 60,000 people living in homeless
20 shelters, and I would argue that if I've appointed
21 more than five people that are homeless on Community
22 Boards, it would be a lot, and those people need a
23 voice too, and a lot of them are living in Brooklyn,
24 and I want to make sure that they're represented as
25 well, even if they're not on the Community Board so

2 that's the work that I'm doing, even if politically
3 unpopular.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: And I can
5 certainly appreciate that...

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
7 Member Ariola.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: But your own
9 testimony just now shows that you have different
10 communities with different needs, which is why the
11 one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work with City of
12 Yes. Thank you so much.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
14 Member Ariola. Council Member Marte.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Hey, thank you,
16 Borough President, for being here.

17 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: Thank
18 you, Council Member.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Williamsburg, in
20 the past 10 years, is similar to my District. We have
21 produced a lot of housing, and Williamsburg
22 specifically, I think they increased housing units by
23 62 percent, almost 12,000 units. However, rent has
24 skyrocketed, almost double, 93 percent increase, so
25 it's just not a supply-side issue, right? Because

2 rent would be going down in your District, in my
3 District, as we continue to produce so much supply.
4 First, I want you to answer that, and then secondly,
5 you know, a lot of the Council Members here, a lot of
6 people who have testified, who will testify, wanted
7 this application to have mandated affordable housing.
8 You know, you touched on MIH. Are you committed to
9 asking City Planning and this Administration to take
10 another look at MIH so we can broaden the scope and
11 add also deeper affordability to make it affordable
12 for the New Yorkers who need it most?

13 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: Yes.

14 So, the second question first is yes. I think that
15 you should reopen the conversation to MIH to make it
16 more deeply affordable and add more affordability to
17 the projects where possible so I do think that that's
18 a conversation that you guys should be having and
19 would be more than happy to be supportive of so I do
20 think that that's one case. The other thing is that
21 Williamsburg's rezoning in 2005 came alongside the
22 largest downzoning in the history of the City of New
23 York everywhere else. So mostly politically affluent
24 neighborhoods got downzonings, got landmarked, got a
25 reduction in height versus places like Williamsburg

2 that had an increase so all you ended up doing was
3 moving units from one place to another, but there was
4 no overall increase in housing development at a pace
5 that would be meaningful or representative of the
6 growth of the City of New York. What we're trying to
7 do here is unlock a lot of that, undo the hurt that
8 was put forth by the Bloomberg Administration's
9 downzoning in a lot of neighborhoods so I just think
10 that's my point that I'm trying to make here is, as a
11 Council Member of Williamsburg, what I feel there is
12 significant, but the work in Riverside, in the Bronx,
13 or in Bay Ridge, in Brooklyn, affect what's happening
14 in Williamsburg so the rents didn't go down, even
15 though we did our part, because other places didn't
16 do theirs.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much,
18 Council Member Marte. Council Member Paladino.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: (INAUDIBLE)

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Thank you.
21 There being no more questions for this panel.

22 BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT REYNOSO: Thank
23 you so much, Council Members. Thank you, Chair.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next panel we're
25 going to hear from, just going to say that again

2 because we took a break, is Alia Soomro, John Wilson,
3 Julie Chou, Rosa Chang, Gregory Smithsimon, Charlene
4 Davis, and Mark Greenberg.

5 If you're in the front row and you're not
6 testifying, you have to find another chair so, sir,
7 if you're in the front row and you're not testifying,
8 you have to find another chair, please.

9 The following group that we're going to
10 hear after this group will consist of Gordon Lee,
11 Layla Law-Gisiko, Renee DeSantis, Alfred Brand, Paul
12 Briscoe, and Ronald Colangelo.

13 UNIDENTIFIED: (INAUDIBLE)

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Colangelo, that's
15 right. Correct me out loud, but don't do that again.
16 Thank you.

17 All right. If you could just come to the
18 front. Thank you.

19 It's all right to correct me. I'm going
20 to butcher some names today.

21 First, we're going to hear from Alia
22 Soomro.

23 ALIA SOOMRO: Good morning. My name is
24 Alia Soomro, and I'm the Deputy Director for New York
25 City Policy at the New York League of Conservation

2 Voters. Thank you, Chair Riley and members of the
3 Zoning Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify.

4 NYLCV strongly supports the passage of
5 City of Yes for Housing Opportunity. Our city faces
6 two pressing challenges, the climate crisis and the
7 housing crisis. While the State boasts some of the
8 nation's most ambitious climate laws, the City's
9 zoning regulations often act as a barrier to reducing
10 our greenhouse gas emissions and addressing the
11 pressing need for denser, more affordable housing.
12 City of Yes will serve a dual purpose, mitigating the
13 impacts of climate change..

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I'm so sorry to
15 interrupt you before you.. Sergeant, just stop our
16 time real quick. We were joined by Tiegerman High
17 School so I want to break decorum and just clap it up
18 for the young people that came in here today. Thank
19 you for coming in here.

20 Let's start that over again. You may.

21 ALIA SOOMRO: Can I start from the
22 beginning?

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yeah, you can start
24 from the beginning. Go ahead.

ALIA SOOMRO: Good morning. My name is Alia Soomro, and I'm the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters. Thank you, Chair Riley and Members of the Zoning Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify.

NYLCV strongly supports City of Yes for housing opportunity. Our city faces two pressing challenges, the climate crisis and the housing crisis. While the State boasts some of the nation's most ambitious climate laws, the City's zoning regulations often act as a barrier to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and addressing the pressing need for denser, more affordable housing. City of Yes will serve a dual purpose, mitigating the impacts of climate change and improving housing accessibility and affordability for New Yorkers in an equitable manner. While NYLCV fully supports the entirety of the zoning proposal, we strongly support the following components, removing parking mandates, transit-oriented development, town-center zoning, accessory dwelling units, and residential conversions. One prime example of showing how zoning limits housing from being built and incentivizes fossil fuel use are parking mandates. Parking

mandates were included in the City's ZR in the 1950s and '60s as suburbanization was taking hold. To this day, our ZR contains outdated minimum parking requirements for housing developments, even for homes built close to mass transit, and despite the fact that a vast majority of New York City residents use public transit. Parking mandates raise the cost of housing, inhibits more units from being built, and incentivizes the use of private automobiles.

Eliminating these mandates will not only encourage alternative modes of transit but also free up valuable land for affordable housing. Eliminating parking mandates does not ban new parking or eliminate parking entirely. The proposal will allow developers to meet the needs of each neighborhood in the city and, as a general manner, NYLCV believes that these proposals will not change the fundamental character of neighborhoods or unduly burden the city's sewer system. These are modest changes that will allow more options throughout the city. While individual... I'll wrap up. I've submitted longer written testimony. Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Appreciate it. Next, we're going to hear from John Wilson.

2 John Wilson.

3 Okay. Next, we're going to hear from

4 Julie Chou.

5 JULIE CHOU: Thanks, Chair Riley. My name
6 is Julie Chou, and I serve as the Vice Chair of the
7 Land Use, Housing, and Zoning Committee for Manhattan
8 Community Board 5. I'm here today to testify on
9 behalf of CB5.

10 In July, our Board passed a conditional
11 resolution in support of the proposal with 34 votes
12 in favor and one against. We are currently facing an
13 unprecedented housing crisis in our city, and as
14 folks have noted, vacancy rates have reached their
15 lowest levels while our homeless shelters are
16 operating at peak capacity, leaving many vulnerable
17 individuals and families without stable housing. This
18 alarming situation requires urgent action, and we
19 cannot afford to wait any longer. However, to create
20 a truly equitable housing landscape, we need mandates
21 for affordable housing that extend beyond current and
22 future MIH zones. Relying solely on incentives and
23 government agencies to create affordable housing is
24 insufficient, especially when half of our city is
25 rent-burdened and a third of our residents are

1 severely rent-burdened. We must go further. There
2 should be a requirement for a minimum number of
3 affordable units in all projects over a certain size,
4 whether they are new construction or building
5 conversions. This is essential to address the
6 severity of the housing crisis we face. We're asking
7 that the transfer of development rights for housing
8 developments be required to include affordable
9 housing comparable to the UAP minimum in order to
10 generate more affordable housing in our District. We
11 must implement robust tenant protection programs and
12 expand homeownership opportunities to prevent
13 displacement. In our District, conversions often fail
14 to meet open space requirements and frequently
15 request waivers from the Department of City Planning.
16 This only worsens our already limited access to green
17 space. Therefore, we strongly urge our elected
18 officials to mandate a minimum of 10,000 square feet
19 of privately owned public space in very high-density
20 residential developments, similar to the requirements
21 established in the East Midtown rezoning.
22 Furthermore, these open spaces should include vital
23 amenities such as public bathrooms to effectively
24

2 meet the needs of our community. Thank you for the
3 opportunity to testify today.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
5 going to hear from Rosa Chang.

6 ROSA CHANG: Thank you very much. Thank
7 you very much for the opportunity to testify today.
8 My name is Rosa Chang, and I'm here to testify for
9 myself. I am deeply involved in my community. I'm the
10 President of my condo board where we have over 400
11 units. I'm a member of my local Community Board, but
12 to be clear, I am speaking on my own behalf today. I
13 have served and continue to serve on PTAs and SLTs
14 for years at three public schools. I am the co-
15 founder of a new public plaza creating desperately
16 needed recreation space in a historically
17 disadvantaged community with over 47,000 residents
18 that live within a half mile radius of the plaza. All
19 this is to say I care deeply about my neighbors, my
20 community, and my city. I am so excited that the City
21 is working to update our zoning text to adapt to our
22 evolving needs. We are not the same city nor the same
23 people that we were in 1960. We need to build homes
24 for existing and new New Yorkers, for renters and for
25 owners, for our children, our adults, and our

2 seniors. I am in support of the City of Yes with
3 conditions. With upzoning and the resultant increase
4 in the people living in our communities, we need to
5 ensure that our infrastructure keeps up with the
6 increased density. We need to address the quality-of-
7 life concerns. A zip code set-aside for civic
8 infrastructural funds would keep infrastructural
9 improvements in the community that is being
10 densified, specifically funding for parks and open
11 space, school seats, and hospital beds. The 10-year
12 sunset provision for off-siting of affordable housing
13 should be reduced to five years. We want affordable
14 housing in our neighborhoods and in every
15 neighborhood that is increasing in FAR. For
16 conversions and enlargements above a certain size, we
17 must mandate essential building infrastructure,
18 including garbage collection and storage rooms,
19 package rooms. As we densify, we create more trash,
20 more deliveries, which inevitably impact our
21 sidewalks. Regarding large campus infill projects
22 mandating any additional residential space, oops, I'm
23 done.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

25 Next, we're going to hear from Gregory Smithsimon.

2 GREGORY SMITHSIMON: Thank you, Chair
3 Riley and Council Members for the opportunity to
4 testify, and thank you for addressing the urgent need
5 for affordable housing in New York. I'm Gregory
6 Smithsimon, Director of the Center for the Study of
7 Brooklyn and Professor of Sociology at Brooklyn
8 College in the CUNY Grad Center.

9 For the past two years, I've been
10 conducting research on basement flooding in New York,
11 funded by a U.S. Geological Survey project. I support
12 City of Yes. At the same time, I want to warn the
13 Committee that our research finds that current City
14 of Yes proposals would legalize apartments in cellars
15 and basements that would put the most vulnerable
16 families at deadly risk, especially from floods. City
17 of Yes recognizes that living in apartments below
18 ground level during a flood can be deadly, so it says
19 basement apartments won't be permitted in coastal
20 flood zones. However, when 11 New Yorkers died in
21 basement apartments during Hurricane Ida, none of
22 them lived in coastal flood zones. They died from
23 rain flooding, not coastal flooding. Unfortunately,
24 there are no existing maps to predict what properties
25 are more or less likely to flood from rain. The

1 City's own predictions show that by 2080, rainfall
2 like Ida would flood thousands of streets in every
3 single City Council District. Our research found rain
4 flooding happens even on the highest elevations, and
5 basements sometimes flood on blocks where the street
6 itself never does. There is no way to make cellars,
7 which are below ground, safe from floods.

8
9 There are other risks. Asthma is epidemic
10 among low-income children of color. Basement
11 apartments would disproportionately expose kids at
12 risk to known asthma triggers, including mold, rodent
13 and mouse and trappings, and natural gas and exhaust
14 from furnaces and hot water heaters.

15 Basement apartments also expose people to
16 naturally occurring radon gas, which causes 21,000
17 cancer deaths last year and has a greater effect on
18 children than adults. We need to make sure that we're
19 creating housing that is both safe and affordable.
20 Burying poor New Yorkers in basement and cellar
21 apartments during climate change is a well-
22 intentioned but deadly move. Anyone concerned about
23 the most vulnerable New Yorkers must prevent this
24 part of an otherwise admirable bill. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
3 going to hear from Charlene Davis.

4 CHARLENE DAVIS: Good afternoon, everyone.
5 My name is Charlene Davis, and I appreciate the
6 opportunity to speak. Normally, when I come to
7 different places and organizations, you don't see
8 people like me here. It's very difficult for someone
9 who's handicapped or someone who has asthma to get
10 into buildings and stuff and elevators. I feel that
11 this proposal is not one that was well thought of.
12 There's a lot of issues that need to be taken care of
13 first. It feels like you're putting the cart before
14 the horse. I want to thank our Brooklyn Borough
15 President for allowing me to be on the Community
16 Board. For five years, I tried to get on the
17 Community Board so that I could represent people like
18 myself. Coney Island is where I live at. Coney Island
19 is a peninsula. We have a lot of issues and stuff
20 there with transportation, schools, and also a rat
21 issue. I know that he had a program that was supposed
22 to deal with mice and stuff, but with all the digging
23 and everything that they're doing in the communities
24 and stuff, it's running ragged. We have to do
25 something about that. We also have to do something

2 about the infrastructure. Coney Island floods very
3 easily. My townhouse was full with water when we had
4 Sandy. A lot of people died. A lot of issues need to
5 be thought about. It's very nice to think about
6 having more places for people to live, but these
7 places need to be affordable. The rents are
8 constantly going up, and the subsidies are being
9 limited. You have subsidies that may last for five
10 years, and then after the five years, the person
11 doesn't have a subsidy and has to move. A lot of
12 people who are moving into these places move in, but
13 their rent and stuff constantly goes up. You see a
14 lot of people moving in, but then they're moving out
15 because they can no longer afford the apartments.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. You
18 brought up a really good point. Thank you.

19 Mark Greenberg?

20 MARK GREENBERG: Yes, thank you. Good
21 morning, good afternoon, Chair Riley and members of
22 the Council. I'm Mark Greenberg, Executive Director
23 of the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and
24 Housing and President of the Interfaith Affordable
25 Housing Collaborative. Interfaith Assembly grew out

1 of efforts based at the Cathedral Church of St. John
2 the Divine in 1982, and as we watched the number of
3 people on our streets explode, we committed ourselves
4 to bear witness to the crisis of homelessness and ask
5 what our many faith traditions call us to do. Over
6 the last 40 years, I've seen homeless census grow
7 from under 10,000 to over 60,000, and now with the
8 migrant influx to over 100,000. I've heard the
9 stories of thousands of people struggling with the
10 traumas of homelessness, striving to rebuild their
11 lives. I speak here on behalf of the thousands of
12 good and decent people just looking for a chance to
13 reclaim their humanity. I applaud the New York City
14 Department of City Planning for putting together this
15 bold and innovative proposal to enable New York City
16 to live up to the great promise, and I trust that the
17 City Council will produce a plan that best balances
18 the concerns and aspirations of all New Yorkers. All
19 great faith traditions command us to stand in
20 solidarity with those who are struggling, and New
21 York City should do no less. New York's faith
22 community stands ready to do our part, but we need
23 New York zoning rules to enable us to do so. Some New
24 Yorkers have strongly opposed the changes proposed by
25

2 the City of Yes, but for the tens of thousands in our
3 shelters and on our streets, and many struggling to
4 pay the rent or simply find an apartment they can
5 afford, their fear is not change, but the status quo.
6 The City of Yes for housing opportunity will mean
7 that more of the lowest-income New Yorkers will have
8 a greater chance to find stable housing and give back
9 to our great city. With a housing crisis of this
10 proportion, inaction is not an option, and from the
11 Hebrew Bible, those from among you shall rebuild the
12 old waste places, you shall raise up the foundations
13 of many generations, and you shall be called the
14 repairers of the breach, restorers of streets to
15 dwell in. Let us be known as the repairer of the
16 breach and restorers of streets to dwell in. Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. Are
19 there any questions for this panel? Council Member
20 Hanif.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Less of a question
22 and more of a comment. It's just really wonderful to
23 hear the support from faith-based institutions, and I
24 appreciate you acknowledging the thousands of people
25 who are not here, who are not housed, who would be

2 benefiting, and thinking about this proposal as a
3 collective as opposed to how is it going to impact me
4 is the framing that I think we should all be thinking
5 about so thank you so much.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
7 Member Hanif.

8 There being no questions, this panel is
9 excused.

10 Just two quick announcements. One, the
11 regular link is working back again. The regular link
12 is working back again. Two, due to technical
13 difficulties, we're going to push online testimonies
14 to 1:30. That means we're going to get some more in-
15 person testimonies in.

16 Okay. All right. So, the next panel that
17 I'm going to call up, the panel that's in front, you
18 guys can come up. The next panel following after that
19 will consist of Jackson Chabot, Kazi Hussain, Eric
20 Shiner, Derek Marcus, Diah Mehera, and Bradon Crooks.

21 From this panel, we could start, begin
22 with Gordon Lee.

23 GORDON LEE: Good afternoon, ladies and
24 gentlemen. I'm Gordon Lee from Kings, Brooklyn, New
25 York, but you can also call me God. That means I

2 happen to be God. I was a Nixon protester when I was
3 born in June 23, 1973, also, Vice President Gerald
4 Ford in Fort Lauderdale City, Florida. I came to
5 Brooklyn-King County, New York City in 1977 when I
6 elected James Carter, and I grew up here under the
7 Reagan presidency. I also take issue with what I was
8 told is the idea of the City of Yes, you know, it was
9 given another name, City of Mess, you know,
10 unaffordability. The Mayor wants to make sure that
11 everything's unaffordable, and he wants to eliminate
12 community control, and he wants to make policies only
13 for the developers. I also take issue with it, and I
14 also take issue with the crisis in the city that
15 everyone is talking about. Now, part of the problem,
16 you know, what's encouraging the rising cost of
17 living, and increasing unaffordability, including
18 rising rents, you know, because some people, I find
19 that, and it bothers me that some people say that
20 that's how it should be. They say you're getting
21 service, so you have to pay, so they're saying...

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr. Lee.

23 GORDON LEE: People shouldn't be
24 affordable either. They think affordable is
25 equivalent to free.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr. Lee. I
3 appreciate it. You can wait right there. You're not
4 excused yet. Stay right there.

5 Next, we're going to hear from Layla Law-
6 Gisiko, but first, I just want to state for record
7 we've been joined by Council Member Lee. You can
8 begin.

9 LAYLA LAW-GISIKO: Good afternoon. Thank
10 you, Chair Riley and members of the City Council. My
11 name is Layla Law-Gisiko, and I serve as the
12 President of the City Club of New York. Yesterday,
13 Chair Garodnik in this Chamber laid out the reality
14 of our housing market. He said, and I quote, "those
15 who have resources compete against those who don't.
16 Usually, those with resources win." And yet, City of
17 Yes is a proposal that promises changes but fails to
18 bend the arc. While well-intentioned, the proposal
19 fails to address the City's urgent need for
20 affordable housing. Many mistakenly believe that more
21 housing automatically means more affordability. This
22 is a dangerous misconception. The market cares little
23 about our social needs. Its mission is solely to
24 maximize profit. The proposal is expected to create
25 approximately 7,000 units per year, most of them at

2 market rate. New York is already achieving this level
3 of development without sacrificing air, light, or
4 putting our historic buildings and rent-regulated
5 units at risk. The plan relies on developers'
6 willingness to prioritize affordable housing, but it
7 is likely that it will accelerate demolition of
8 existing rent-regulated units. It opens the door for
9 corporate landlords and venture capitalists to
10 infiltrate the housing markets, driven by speculation
11 rather than social responsibility. Specifically, the
12 R11 and R12 new zoning districts should demand that
13 any FAR above 10 is affordable. Currently, the plan
14 does not make this provision. The plan is both overly
15 expansive in its negative impact and far too modest
16 in its delivery of affordable housing. While UAP has
17 merits, we urge the City Council to reject campus
18 infills without ULURP, dwelling unit factor change,
19 landmarks transfer changes. The City of Yes is an
20 imprecise tool that delivers the wrong results. Vote
21 no on the City of Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
23 going to hear from Renee DeSantis.

24 RENEE DESANTIS: My name is Renee
25 DeSantis. I have lived in Independence Plaza, or IPN,

1 in Tribeca for 32 years and am a trustee of the
2 Community First Development Coalition, a non-profit
3 recently established to advocate and educate on
4 thoughtful development in Tribeca and to address
5 unchecked, over-scaled development and inadequate
6 opportunities for affordable housing in our
7 community. I urge you to vote no to the City of Yes
8 in its current form for two key reasons. First and
9 most importantly, this proposal does not include any
10 mandates for adding permanently affordable housing,
11 and when you hear about all of the "additional
12 housing" potentially being built under City of Yes,
13 in my community, this housing typically means luxury
14 towers filled with large, expensive units completely
15 out of reach for the vast majority of New Yorkers,
16 not affordable housing units. This is the case for
17 the mega tower planned to be built next to my home.

18
19 Second, the City of Yes will make even
20 more development "as of right," allowing for
21 increased developments without oversight, review, or
22 public accountability. Under City of Yes, fewer
23 projects will be subject to ULURP. This, too, is
24 happening with the proposed 900-foot tower planned
25 next to the IPN building. My home in Independence

2 Plaza, note, Plaza, was once one of the Mitchell-Lama
3 housing complexes in the city, providing over 1,300
4 affordable apartments to middle and low-income New
5 Yorkers. But after leaving the program in 2004, when
6 the owners left Mitchell-Lama, the number of
7 affordable units were depleted and are now
8 disappearing. Now, the owners are planning to wedge a
9 90-story building next to our homes, blocking
10 sunlight and air.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much, Ms.
12 DeSantis.

13 RENEE DESANTIS: Please vote no to City of
14 Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, we're going to
16 hear from Alfred Brand.

17 ALFRED BRAND: Thank you. My name is
18 Alfred Brand. I'm Chairman of the Board of the Kew
19 Gardens Queen Civic Association, which has been
20 representing residents of Kew Gardens since 1914, 110
21 years. I'm speaking against the proposal for the City
22 of Yes. It will remove some of the protections of
23 ULURP that will concentrate power in the Mayor's
24 office and reduce or eliminate the opportunities for
25 public input and for City Council approval of

1 development projects. There is no provision for
2 substantial affordable development. There are no
3 provisions to improve infrastructure in advance of
4 development. There are no provisions to expand the
5 Building Department to deal with existing code
6 enforcement issues and to control future development.
7 It will eliminate one- and two-family zoning, which
8 will promote uncontrolled development and ultimately
9 destroy the balanced residential character of many
10 New York City neighborhoods.

12 Kew Gardens has a mix of residential
13 types. We have multifamily apartment buildings, which
14 are rentals, co-ops, and condos. We have two-family
15 homes, and we have one-family homes. Our neighborhood
16 zoning has been crafted through years of careful
17 planning to be a blend of residences suitable for a
18 wide variety of personal life preferences and
19 economic ability. A mix of densities enhances the
20 quality of life for all. I urge you to vote no and
21 force the Adams' Administration and whatever
22 Administration follows to craft a plan which will
23 have a middle vision, which encourages appropriate
24 residential development without harming existing
25 communities. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
3 going to hear from Paul Briscoe.

4 PAUL BRISCOE: Well, thank you. Good
5 afternoon. Thank you, Council, for giving me the
6 opportunity and everybody else to speak. My name is
7 Paul Briscoe, and I'm running for Congress of New
8 York's District 10. My wife, Gia, and I are lifelong
9 Brooklynites and working musicians that live right
10 over the bridge in Cobble Hill. The constant struggle
11 to push against the overdevelopment of my
12 neighborhood, along with others within my district
13 like Sunset Park, Park Slope, and Red Hook is very
14 real. We already live in a City of Yes, and it's
15 overcrowded and unsustainable. We're seeing it real
16 time with our Brooklyn Marine Terminal project that
17 stretches over 122 acres of waterfront from Atlantic
18 Avenue to Red Hook. Developers and City Planners say
19 they include residents in community input meetings,
20 and they conveniently do by holding these meetings on
21 weeknights, usually around 5:30 at night, with little
22 to no community outreach or door-to-door engagement.
23 It's a game that's designed to make you feel like
24 you're involved when the truth is you're not. Behind
25 the scenes, these decisions are having already been

2 made, getting the most money out of every square foot
3 of parcel. So, when I hear the Mayor and the City
4 Council pushing for this rezoning, it begs the
5 question, where are elected officials' priorities? We
6 have a rapidly declining infrastructure where our
7 schools and transportation can't keep up with demand,
8 but our City is quick to spend housing on illegal
9 migrants within hotels and open shelters like the 10-
10 story mega shelter in Clinton Hill, but they don't
11 see our mismanaged subway system, the lack of parking
12 in many boroughs and our crowded classrooms. We are
13 taxpaying residents that want better roads, better
14 schools for our kids, safer communities with less
15 crowding. Stop punishing people that want to live in
16 a low-density area. That's all right. Many families
17 opt to stay at our city's border just so they can
18 have some space. Yet the luxury high-rises continue
19 to sprout up, and there is little to no affordability
20 within their confines. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
22 going to hear from Ronald Colangelo.

23 RONALD COLANGELO: There you go. I don't
24 own the Phoenix Suns. So, the problem is a lot of
25 people don't believe what goes on in the City

1 Council. You make decisions that really don't... you're
2 closing Rikers Island 2027. You don't have anywhere
3 to put people 'til 2030, three years. What's going to
4 go on with that? Next, you've got... you complain the
5 commercial real estate in Manhattan is dying. Your
6 answer, congestion pricing. Let's try to keep
7 everybody out. They've up-zoned my neighborhood.
8 They're going to open 7,000 apartments along the
9 Metro North Station. So, I guess we're taking care of
10 a tenth of the problem that you're discussing. But
11 the City of Yes doesn't really look into what's going
12 to happen tomorrow to the homeless people. We're
13 talking about years and years in the future. What's
14 going to happen to these people living on the streets
15 when it's 15 degrees out? You have all these NYCHA
16 apartments that are closed for renovations. That
17 needs to be addressed now. Hundreds and hundreds of
18 them. Oh, they have bad this, bad that. The problem
19 is you have to start dealing with the homeless crisis
20 today and not plan for something five and six and
21 eight years ago when people in commercial real estate
22 are going to make a fortune by putting up these
23 buildings. And the City of Yes now, oh, you got this
24 property here on the corner. It's 150 by whatever.
25

2 We're going to tear that down. We're going to put up
3 a 10-story building, talking about doing it right
4 down the block from my house. Oh, we're going to take
5 this down. No parking regulations. I live near Jacoby
6 Hospital. If you don't have a spot at 8 in the
7 morning, you're done for. There's people everywhere.
8 Also, they've made a decision that since you are
9 going to call this Rikers Island, they're going to
10 move in prisoners into one of the buildings in
11 Jacoby. They're sick and dying was the first thing.
12 Then the City Council said, oh, no, they're going to
13 be pretrial detainees. We can't even get a straight
14 answer out of anybody. What's going on with this
15 building? And you wonder why people don't believe
16 you. You can't even get a clock to work.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much for
18 this panel. Do we have any questions for this panel?

19 There being no questions, the panel is
20 excused.

21 Can we have those that called prior to
22 step up to the dais?

23 The following panel I'm going to call up
24 includes Fletcher Kopp (phonetic), Lori Travers,
25 Alice Barrett, Patricia Loftman, Anna Barrett-

2 Mitchell, and Evidelia Boyd. You can sit in the front
3 section if you heard your name called.

4 This first panel, we're going to begin
5 with, we're going to start with Jackson Chabot.

6 And we've been also joined by Council
7 Member Banks.

8 JACKSON CHABOT: Good afternoon, everyone.

9 My name is Jackson Chabot, and I'm speaking this
10 afternoon on behalf of Open Plans, where I'm the
11 Director of Advocacy and Organizing. I want to speak
12 to car dependence relative to the City of Yes
13 proposal. Research shows parking mandates have
14 detrimental effects on urban environments and
15 contribute significantly to car dependence. By
16 requiring developers to provide a specific number of
17 parking spaces, as our current zoning does, these
18 regulations encourage the belief that car ownership
19 is essential, leading to a culture where cars are
20 prioritized over other forms of transportation.

21 Developers often build larger structures with more
22 parking than is necessary, as the Department of City
23 Planning said yesterday in their presentation, with
24 numerous examples in many districts across the city.

25 This leads to less dense, more car-centric

1 neighborhoods. This sprawl not only increases the
2 reliance on vehicles, but also reduces walkability
3 and access to public transportation. Additionally,
4 the focus on accommodating cars can divert resources
5 away from essential public services, such as
6 transportation systems, pedestrian infrastructure,
7 etc. This creates a vicious cycle as public
8 transportation becomes less viable and more
9 individuals turn to cars, further reinforcing the
10 need for parking. In summary, parking mandates foster
11 car dependence, promote urban sprawl, inflate housing
12 costs, and undermine public transportation. To create
13 more sustainable, livable cities such as ours, it is
14 crucial to rethink these regulations and prioritize
15 transportation options that reduce car reliance. I'll
16 offer in the remaining 30 seconds that cities far
17 more car dependent than ours, such as Minneapolis,
18 Anchorage, Alaska, and Austin, Texas, have already
19 lifted parking requirements. I'd also like to offer
20 that in organizing for this work, we had people
21 submit testimony as well. I'll read just one of them.
22 Cars are the biggest public health and safety crisis
23 in New York City. Like guns, we need them to get them
24 off our streets. From Alan, among others. Thank you.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
3 going to hear from Kazi Hussain. Kazi.

4 Okay, hold on one minute. All right.

5 I'm going to, the panel that's supposed
6 to be right here right now consists of Jackson
7 Chabot, Kazi Hussain, Eric Shiner, Derek Marcus, Diah
8 Mehera, and Bradon Crooks. If that's not your name,
9 you have to wait in the front. It's all right. I
10 think you got confused. You're next up. Okay. You can
11 go back.

12 Kazi, you may begin.

13 KAZI HUSSAIN: Good afternoon. Hello,
14 Council Members. My name is Kazi Hussain, and I'm a
15 proud union member and a proud resident of Elmhurst,
16 Queens. I am here to express my strong support for
17 City of Yes for housing New Yorkers. Even people like
18 me with good union jobs are having a harder time
19 finding good affordable housing. We need more housing
20 all over the city. The proposal is a good way to make
21 that happen. Please vote yes for City of Yes. Thank
22 you, everybody.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
24 going to hear from Eric Shiner.

2 ERIC SHINER: Good afternoon. I'm Eric
3 Shiner, the President of Powerhouse Arts, a brand new
4 cultural non-profit located in Gowanus, Brooklyn,
5 dedicated to supporting artists in production,
6 education, and community engagement. Today, we
7 express our strong support for the City of Yes
8 Housing Initiative and highlight the urgent need for
9 affordable housing solutions to prevent the ongoing
10 displacement of artists across New York City. As one
11 of the world's great cultural capitals, New York
12 thrives on the creative energy of its artists. These
13 artists and cultural workers are essential not only
14 to the city's identity but to its economy. New York's
15 cultural sector generates more than 110 billion
16 dollars annually, fueling industries such as tourism,
17 education, and hospitality. Yet, the soaring cost of
18 living, especially housing, has made it increasingly
19 difficult for the very people who enrich our city's
20 cultural fabric to actually afford to live here.
21 Powerhouse Arts, situated in Gowanus, is witnessing
22 this displacement of artists firsthand. Gowanus is a
23 neighborhood known for its rich artistic history and
24 is undergoing rapid change. Without proactive
25 measures, the artists who have long called this area

2 home will be priced out along with the cultural
3 legacy they've built. The City of Yes Initiative is a
4 critical step towards addressing this crisis by
5 updating outdated zoning laws, reducing barriers to
6 new housing construction, and promoting denser
7 transit-oriented developments. The initiative will
8 help make housing more accessible to all New Yorkers.
9 Lastly, Powerhouse is a steward of a New York City
10 landmark. The proposed changes to the City of Yes
11 will create more opportunities and lower obstacles to
12 transferring excess development rights, and as a non-
13 profit, this flexibility will help us immensely.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
16 going to hear from Derek Marcus.

17 DEREK MARCUS: Good afternoon, and thank
18 you for the opportunity to provide testimony in
19 support of City of Yes. My name is Derek Marcus, and
20 I represent TF Cornerstone, a New York City-based
21 real estate developer, owner, and operator. Since the
22 early 1980s, our company has developed over 20,000
23 apartments across the city, including 3,000
24 affordable units, most of which are located in mixed-
25 income buildings that we continue to own and manage

1 today. I'm here to support City of Yes because I know
2 firsthand how it'll generate affordable housing that
3 we wouldn't get without it. TF Cornerstone currently
4 has two large development sites in our pipeline, one
5 in Chelsea and the other in Greenpoint. However, even
6 with the recently enacted 485X tax exemption, mixed-
7 income rental housing is not financially viable at
8 these sites. But with the City of Yes proposal,
9 especially the UAP bonus and the elimination of
10 parking minimums, we would be able to move forward
11 with these developments as mixed-income rental
12 projects, creating 1,400 units, including 350 homes
13 for low-income New Yorkers. Without City of Yes, the
14 only feasible development at these sites is market-
15 rate condominiums, which are simply out of reach for
16 the majority of New Yorkers. The reality is
17 straightforward. We need zoning policies that
18 incentivize and support the development of mixed-
19 income rental housing if we are to effectively
20 address the city's housing crisis. City of Yes offers
21 that crucial opportunity to do that. Thank you for
22 your time and consideration.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
25 going to hear from Diah Mehera.

2 DIAH MEHERA: Good afternoon, Chair Riley
3 and Council Members. My name is Diah Mehera. I'm the
4 Director of Marketing and Communications at Tech:NYC,
5 a leading technology industry organization. The
6 housing crisis in New York is a serious concern.
7 Earlier this year, Tech:NYC and StreetEasy released a
8 report on housing availability in New York, and the
9 findings were ominous. The tech sector, a major
10 driver of our city's economy, is struggling to
11 attract and retain talent because of the exorbitant
12 housing costs. Young professionals are being forced
13 to relocate to another city or forego living in New
14 York City altogether. That is not the future we want.
15 We want a strong pipeline of diverse talent to be
16 able to afford to live and remain here to continue to
17 drive economic growth. But this is a citywide crisis,
18 not just a tech crisis, and the City of Yes proposal
19 offers a solution. Increase the supply of housing,
20 particularly mixed-income housing, to create a more
21 inclusive city that benefits all its residents. This
22 will benefit not only the tech sector, but also
23 teachers, nurses, firefighters, sanitation workers,
24 and the countless others who keep our city running.
25 Tech:NYC recently coauthored an op-ed with Council

2 Member Bottcher on the need for more housing, giving
3 our support to two solutions proposed by City of Yes.
4 One, enact zoning reforms to allow modest increases
5 in housing near public transit, which could create
6 more than 1.1 million new homes and ease commutes for
7 workers. Two, remove off-street parking requirements
8 for new apartment buildings, which will reduce the
9 cost of building new apartments and decrease rents.
10 Maintaining the status quo is no longer viable. The
11 City of Yes represents a decisive move to keep New
12 York's promise of opportunity alive for everyone.
13 Thank you. I urge you to approve this critical
14 proposal.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Last person
16 in this panel is Braden Crooks.

17 BRADEN CROOKS: Hello, my name is Braden
18 Crooks, and I'm testifying in favor of City of Yes.
19 Our exhibit, Undesign the Redline, is installed in
20 City Hall downstairs. I really encourage everyone to
21 go take a look at it. Celebrating nine years touring
22 New York City and the nation, this exhibit tracks the
23 history of redlining and urban policies that design
24 structural racism and inequality into cities and
25 places across America. Here in New York, the legacy

1 of redlining is clear. Whether a neighborhood has
2 experienced gentrification, remains disinvested, or
3 has a history of racial exclusion. Redlining maps
4 often use the term "Negro infiltration" to denote
5 areas deemed hazardous for investment. The Federal
6 Housing Administration would later warn of
7 neighborhoods being "invaded" by undesirable racial
8 groups. They're blunt about the housing system that
9 they bequeath to us. Property value and desirability
10 was a measure of exclusivity. A pattern of
11 concentrated areas of poverty with mostly people of
12 color in cities with whiter, wealthier neighborhoods
13 and suburbs surrounding them became the norm across
14 America, and when explicit racial segregation in
15 housing was outlawed, many areas simply stopped
16 building much new and affordable housing at all. By
17 the 1968 Fair Housing Act, it became illegal to
18 discriminate in housing. Though that didn't end
19 racial discrimination in real estate, it did spur an
20 already growing movement of restrictive zoning,
21 including single family home zoning, setback
22 requirements, minimum square footages, and more. All
23 of this meant that little to no new housing could be
24 built in many exclusive areas. At least since the
25

2 Fair Housing Act, not one comprehensive change to New
3 York City's zoning code has made it easier to build
4 new housing across the entire city. Building a little
5 more housing in every neighborhood would be a
6 historic break from a history of exclusion that dates
7 back to redlining. It is far from the only thing we
8 need to do to undesign the legacy of redlining,
9 further Fair Housing, rebuild wealth and communities,
10 and assure everyone has the right to a home, but it
11 is a critical step. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. We're going
13 to begin with Council Member Paladino followed by
14 Council Member Lee.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: First off, I'd
16 like to start with you on the end there with the
17 glasses. I'm not sure, I believe your name is
18 Jackson?

19 KAZI HUSSAIN: Kazi Hussain.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Not, no, not
21 you, sir. You.

22 JACKSON CHABOT: That's correct, Jackson
23 Chabot.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I want to know
3 what your objection is. I hear a lot. First of all,
4 where are you from?

5 JACKSON CHABOT: Originally, or where do I
6 live now?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Originally,
8 where were you born? Where, and how long have you
9 lived in New York?

10 JACKSON CHABOT: Do you want my original
11 address too?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Excuse me?

13 JACKSON CHABOT: Do you need my original
14 address as well?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: No, I do not,
16 and don't get smart.

17 JACKSON CHABOT: Okay.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay, because I
19 don't like it.

20 JACKSON CHABOT: I was born in Cincinnati,
21 Ohio.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Cincinnati,
23 Ohio. Okay. What's the population of Cincinnati,
24 Ohio, my friend?

25

2 JACKSON CHABOT: These days, I think it's
3 about 600,000.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: 600,000.

5 JACKSON CHABOT: Correct.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Now you moved to
7 the big city, 8 million people. Wow.

8 JACKSON CHABOT: About eight years ago for
9 the record.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay. Five years
11 ago. That's it?

12 JACKSON CHABOT: Eight years ago. Thank
13 you.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay, so you're
15 a newbie. Let me explain something to you. You claim
16 car dependence.

17 JACKSON CHABOT: That's correct.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: That's right.
19 Because you've only lived here for eight years. You
20 don't know a thing about New York or how we work.
21 Okay. How dare you come to this panel with your so-
22 called expertise and kill car people? Car people are
23 murderers. I mean, look, what did you lay out,
24 because actually I was cracking up. You actually made
25 me laugh.

2 JACKSON CHABOT: I saw.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay. This is
4 not Amsterdam. This is New York City. Take a back
5 seat because you have no idea what you're talking
6 about.

7 Next, you. I'm going to go with you. And
8 I'm going to go with this.

9 JACKSON CHABOT: Do I get an opportunity
10 to respond?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Excuse me.
12 Excuse me.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Sir. All right. One
14 second.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: I have a..

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: [GAVEL] Council
17 Member, one second, one second.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay. Sorry.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I don't like my
20 hearings going like this.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I like people to have
23 respect so what we're going to do moving forward,
24 Council Members are going to direct their questions
25 to a panelist. The panelists are going to have a

2 short response and then Council Members can redirect.
3 Everyone's going to have respect for each other. You
4 can start the Council Member's time over again. All
5 right. Mr. Jackson, you can respond to the Council
6 Member and then, Council Member, you can proceed with
7 your next question, please.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Thank you.

9 JACKSON CHABOT: Presently, I'm a District
10 39 resident. I live in Park Slope. I live very close
11 to the 2-3 train. I also live right across from a
12 parking lot that has approximately 15 spaces.
13 Consider this. All of you could be my neighbors. This
14 podium could be my neighbors. The first row could be
15 my neighbors and yet we have parking there. I would
16 love to see you be my neighbor, Council Member
17 Paladino, so that you can also live close to the
18 train too. I'd offer for your District, I came to the
19 school in your District, which you wrote the letter
20 of support for their school street. I took the 7
21 train to the end of the line and then I took the bus
22 to your District. I understand the context. So, yes,
23 I might be a relative newbie to not having been born
24 here or not having lived here, but so many other
25 people that are testifying today want to live in New

2 York City as well, regardless of whether they were
3 born here or if they moved here more recently than
4 not so, yes, to answer some of your questions. I'll
5 cede the time. I don't have anything further to say.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
7 Member, you could direct your question to someone
8 else. Please, no clapping.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Excuse me, I'm
10 sorry.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You could direct your
12 next question.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Thank you. Okay.
14 You came to my District when I closed that one
15 street?

16 JACKSON CHABOT: That's correct. It was
17 roughly (INAUDIBLE)

18 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: In College
19 Point?

20 JACKSON CHABOT: Yes, that's correct.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Yes, because I
22 do believe in all of that. However, when you come
23 after cars and people who need them to get around,
24 you were in my District, it took you a while to get
25 around, did it not?

2 JACKSON CHABOT: Yes, and guess what? It
3 would have been a lot faster to get there if the bus
4 had not been backed up by vehicles and there were
5 other many working-class neighbors in your District
6 that were on the bus with me, both to and from.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Jackson, when
8 you live in a residential area such as we do, we need
9 our cars to go to the stores, to buy our food, to go
10 to do our banking. We need our cars. So City of Yes
11 is, you know, we've got a lot of different issues
12 here. Right here today, we have seen an amazing
13 amount of people with a great many needs that
14 everybody is different. We sit here, we listen to my
15 friend here, the artist, who discussed how important
16 Gowanus is. It is terribly important to maintain that
17 historic part of New York City. You are indeed the
18 fiber of New York City. You are part of it. My
19 family, too, comes from artists, so I understand
20 that.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
22 Member. Next, we're going to go to Council Member Lee
23 followed by Council Member Hanif and Council Member
24 Dinowitz.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, how are you?

3 Thanks for being here today, and I just want to say

4 that yesterday when I asked questions to Chair

5 Garodnik, I understand obviously that we need housing

6 and as Chair of Mental Health Disabilities and

7 Addictions Committee, I fully understand that. So,

8 you know, housing is one of the most important social

9 determinants of health, so I believe all these

10 things. However, the question I wanted to pose to you

11 all is that I live in one of two City Council

12 Districts that literally has no railway, subways, we

13 rely very heavily on buses and cars, and we have a

14 lot of older adults, seniors. We're a very diverse

15 community in terms of background, ethnic background.

16 I represent parts of Northeast and Southeast Queens.

17 Tons of flooding because of Hurricane Ida, because of

18 the Southeast Queens water table rising, as well as

19 rainfall falling. So, I have two questions, which is,

20 and this is open for any one of you guys, is how

21 would you propose more housing with the fact that the

22 MTA budget is not improving and that we don't have

23 more buses. In fact, our bus lines and bus services

24 are getting cut. So, we need to make sure that we can

25 all live in this city, and this is the conundrum I

2 think that all of us are facing as Council Members,
3 is that each District is very different. The
4 characteristics are very different, and my issue with
5 this plan is that it sort of has a one-size-fits-all,
6 right? So, my question is, how would you propose a
7 District like mine getting around transportation-
8 wise, given the limits? And the second question is
9 more, I guess, for the developer, which is one of the
10 questions I had yesterday for Chair Garodnik is, if
11 we were to perhaps do a sliding scale for the parking
12 mandates but keep them, because as we know, we need
13 to keep City agencies accountable as Council Members,
14 because we can't even get them to do simple reporting
15 bills on how they're spending funds, right, so can we
16 keep the mandates? And what I understood is that the
17 waiver process, which developers can apply for, is
18 cumbersome, so my question is, would it be beneficial
19 to have a relook at the waiver process but keep the
20 mandates? So those two questions.

21 DEREK MARCUS: I'll address the parking
22 question. I think maybe a more logical solution,
23 rather than seeking a waiver, is to craft City of Yes
24 so that there's more tailored approaches. Once you
25 get further out from Manhattan and Greenpoint,

2 Brooklyn Waterfront, Long Island City, Queens, these
3 districts, I think, are better served by
4 transportation. There's got to be a way to thread the
5 needle to address your concerns and address concerns
6 of providing too much housing where it's not needed.
7 I'm sorry, too much parking where it's not needed.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: And that may be true,
9 which is why I brought up the scale and all of that
10 thing. And also, I will say that I understand cars
11 can be detrimental...

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Council Member, could
13 you wrap up?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: To health, but even
15 as someone who drives an EV car and the electric grid
16 not being capable of handling everything, also these
17 are challenges that we're facing because people do
18 want to drive more EV cars in my District, too.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
20 Member. Jackson.

21 JACKSON CHABOT: I just offer that, you
22 know, as we heard from the evidence yesterday, as you
23 hear from the developers, they'll still build parking
24 in their District, in your District, because they
25 know that you don't have any rail access and that you

2 don't have buses so there's copious amounts of
3 evidence, both from New York City, that the
4 Department of City Planning presented yesterday, as
5 well as nationwide so happy to share that with John
6 afterwards via email.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Yeah, no, totally,
8 and I would like to, again, have the good faith and
9 belief that developers will do right per District
10 wherever they're developing, but also, you know,
11 that's the same with City agencies as well so I'm
12 just putting that out there.

13 JACKSON CHABOT: Totally, and I know for
14 the recent Metro North example is one where the
15 developer is still building more parking than
16 mandated.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
18 going to have Council Member Hanif followed by
19 Dinowitz.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, and
21 great to see so many of my constituents here testify.
22 I guess I'll start first with Undesign the Redline.
23 Thank you so much for taking me through the exhibit a
24 couple of days ago, and it's still downstairs, and I
25 highly recommend that you all really read through the

1 exhibit to learn the decades-long racial segregation
2 that had been built through policy and has residually
3 just been in place, and Council after Council, Admin
4 after Admin have attempted, through the support of
5 community organizing, tenant organizing, tenant
6 rights movements, to lift the segregation, and this
7 also speaks to the kind of nativism that, you know,
8 was shared with you, Jackson, that additionally
9 fosters xenophobia and all types of social division
10 and exclusionary practices. I'd like to know, in
11 terms of the parking mandates, like this isn't saying
12 that parking is gone. It's saying it is optional. So,
13 actually, nothing changes because the places where
14 developers will have a plan for parking will remain,
15 and potentially, given historical precedents, they
16 may create more parking spaces. Can you just speak to
17 why in the Districts that are closer to transit, in
18 rich transit neighborhoods, why removing this parking
19 mandate is critically urgent?

21 JACKSON CHABOT: Totally. It's
22 fundamentally about housing our neighbors. You know,
23 I alluded to the parking lot across the street. For
24 me, I would love for that to be supportive housing. I
25 bike by Chips on 4th Avenue, which serves many at-

2 risk New Yorkers and homeless New Yorkers, and it
3 breaks my heart that these people are waiting in line
4 for food and yet have no place to stay in the
5 evening, and this is near the R train. There's so
6 much in development being built along 4th Avenue, and
7 many of these new buildings have parking because of
8 the requirements, even though it's close to the R
9 train there, and this is true for many of your
10 Districts that do have trains. For those that don't,
11 it's a slightly different dynamic, as I was
12 discussing earlier, but it's vitally important that
13 we build more housing near transit so that more New
14 Yorkers have access to good jobs in Manhattan and
15 across the boroughs close to transit.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
17 Member Dinowitz.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: You know, there
19 are good jobs in the Bronx, too.

20 JACKSON CHABOT: That's why I said the
21 boroughs.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you so
23 much. I find it interesting, the parking mandate
24 question is one that comes up. The evidence in my
25 District is that when there's as-of-right

2 development, when a developer can provide zero
3 parking, they do, and I don't blame them. They're
4 there to make money. But that's not the needs in our
5 District. I mentioned yesterday. I am interested to
6 hear some of your thoughts, Mr. Marcus. For example,
7 in my District, we have a number of R6 areas where
8 it's zoned for R6 where there are single-family
9 homes. Under current zoning, what is preventing a
10 developer from developing apartment buildings there
11 now, under current zoning, where single-family homes
12 exist?

13 DEREK MARCUS: I can't speak to that
14 specific District, but what I can say is that we have
15 a development site where parking is required for 50
16 percent of the units. It's a transportation-rich
17 area. It's completely unnecessary. We will build
18 parking there, but that is excessive.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So this is, I
20 think, a fundamental question. Who believes that
21 parking is unnecessary? Who's determining that?

22 DEREK MARCUS: I think we're assessing the
23 market because this is what we do as developers. We
24 look at what the demand is, and we'll decide how much
25 parking is right for the site, so we'll have the

2 option to decide, okay, we could go, you know, we
3 could do zero, but we're not going to do zero. We
4 know some residents will demand it because they have
5 cars. They rely on cars for lots of reasons. So
6 instead of doing 50 percent, which is mandated, we
7 would have the option of doing 20 percent.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I just want to
9 point out, only because I have time, I think it is an
10 interesting question of who makes that ultimate
11 determination. I think I heard the phrase, thread the
12 needle. I think that's really important because our
13 jobs are not Manhattan-centric. A lot of people in
14 the Bronx, the number one employer is Montefiore. The
15 DA's office employs a lot of people. That's across
16 the Bronx, and cross-Bronx travel is awful. If I want
17 to get to my buddy's house, it's an hour and a half
18 from my house. It's quicker for me to get to City
19 Hall. It's quicker for me to get to New Jersey. So I
20 just, I think it's important to point out, if I may
21 just finish, Chair, that..

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Real quick, Council
23 Member.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: You know,
25 parking isn't about, you know, what you determine.

2 It's what the community needs, and I do find it
3 rather surprising that housing advocates are relying
4 on unfettered free market arguments to make their
5 arguments about, when we don't believe in unfettered
6 free markets, if we did, we would do away with rent
7 stabilization. We would do away with tenant
8 protections, but we do realize in this city that
9 there is some need to have a say in these things,
10 that it's not unfettered capitalism that is keeping
11 our neighborhoods and our tenants safe and protected
12 and supporting the type of neighborhoods that we like
13 to live in. Thank you, Chair.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
15 Member Dinowitz.

16 There being no questions for this panel,
17 this panel is now excused. Thank you.

18 We've been joined by Council Member
19 Aviles.

20 I just want to make note that we are
21 going to be moving online testimony to 2 p.m. We are
22 trying to accommodate as much in-person testimony as
23 possible.

24 Another thing, this proposal is very
25 contentious. It's very challenging. There are so much

2 different feelings on this proposal here. I'm going
3 to ask everyone if we could show everyone respect. We
4 could ask questions, we could answer questions, but I
5 want everyone to show everyone with respect. All
6 right? That's the type of hearing that we're going to
7 have here today. Thank you.

8 Next, if you're in the first panel,
9 please just join the dais.

10 The following panel I'm going to call up
11 after consists of (review) Eric Goschel, Emily Klein,
12 Juan O'Neill, Gigi Gerefetari, sorry if I butcher
13 your name, Romario Rodriguez, and Mackenzie Filo.

14 No, you can sit down. That's the
15 following panel.

16 All right. This panel that's right here,
17 we're going to begin with Fletcher Kopp.

18 Do we have Fletcher Kopp right here?
19 Fletcher? Going once, going twice.

20 Okay. Next, we're going to go with Lori
21 Travers.

22 LORI TRAVERS: Dear City Council Members,
23 I'm Lori Travers from the Lower East Side. I have
24 read carefully the rezoning proposal, and while I
25 like some parts of it, I am alarmed at others and ask

2 you to vote no if they are part of the text. One, the
3 removal of the Sliver Laws, two, the Universal
4 Affordability Preference program, three, the
5 expansion of landmark air rights transfers, and four,
6 the campus infills. All of these encourage developers
7 to destroy affordable tenement buildings, displacing
8 their inhabitants and small shops to replace them
9 with unaffordable, larger buildings. The developers
10 say that the only way we will lower the cost of
11 housing is by building more housing. That's
12 convenient for them to say, but the past proves the
13 contrary. According to the US Census American
14 Community Survey, since 2006, New York City's
15 population has increased by 121,000 people, 121,000
16 people, while the number of New York City housing
17 units has increased by 368,000 units, 368,000 units.
18 Please take a few seconds to ponder these two
19 numbers. Have the prices gone down? No. Actually,
20 they have skyrocketed. We have to stop listening to
21 them, and you have to listen to us.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Lori.

23 Is Tammy Meltzer here? Tammy, can you come up to the
24 desk? We're going to have you testify with this panel
25 right here.

2 Next, I'm going to call on Alice Barrett.

3 ALICE BARRETT-MITCHELL: My name is Alice
4 Barrett-Mitchell, and I am a 31-year resident of
5 Ditmas Park. I am speaking today in opposition to the
6 plan to rezone Beverly Road to allow three- to five-
7 story apartment buildings because it is half a mile
8 of a subway station. Our neighborhood is unique in
9 that there are three subway stations within four
10 blocks of one another, Church Avenue, Beverly Road,
11 and Cortelyou Road. What distinguishes Beverly Road
12 from the other thoroughfares, however, is that it is
13 not a commercial strip. It is lined with freestanding
14 Victorian homes, most with front porches and gardens.
15 This area provides architectural and aesthetic
16 continuity between Ditmas Park and Prospect Park
17 South, the landmarked area which also borders Beverly
18 Road. Much of the neighborhood has already been
19 rezoned to allow for apartment buildings, most
20 notably Coney Island Avenue. A new building is
21 currently under construction on the corner of Coney
22 Island and Beverly that is to be 11 stories high and
23 a full block long. Directly across the street from
24 it, a 14-story building is proposed. The point is
25 there is considerable construction already underway

2 in the neighborhood. Beverly Road is gridlocked most
3 hours of the day. The turn on Ocean Parkway onto
4 Beverly Road is so congested that it can take as many
5 as four lights to make the turn. City of Yes also
6 lifts mandatory parking mandates in new buildings.
7 Given the current dearth of parking availability in
8 the neighborhood, this is untenable. The 2009
9 Flatbush Rezoning allows for ample multifamily
10 housing near transit, including Mandatory
11 Inclusionary Housing. Given all of the availability
12 in the neighborhood, to take the four-block strip of
13 freestanding homes which lends the area its sense of
14 cohesion feels gratuitous. The residents of the
15 neighborhood take pleasure in the green space
16 Prospect Park South and Ditmas Park provide. The
17 neighborhood has tree-lined streets and beautiful
18 flower gardens. As we learned during the pandemic,
19 quality of life is immeasurably enhanced by the
20 comfort of grass, trees, and birdsong. It is for this
21 reason that I strongly urge the City Council to carve
22 out the Victorian Flatbush neighborhoods involved in
23 the 2009 rezoning. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
25 going to have Tammy Meltzer.

TAMMY MELTZER: Good afternoon. I'm Tammy Meltzer, Chair of Manhattan Community Board 1 and a downtown resident for nearly 30 years. I worked at Windows on the World, where we had seamstress, banquet waiters, managers, and owners who all lived downtown and walked to work. The diversity in Lower Manhattan was thriving with small businesses. After 9/11, the City and State put massive efforts into rebuilding, and by 2016, we had nearly tripled the number of people living in Lower Manhattan, through a huge push in 421A housing that required a stabilized affordable housing. In 2014, State Comptroller DiNapoli said the number of children living downtown tripled to 7,300, with three new schools being built. Once we boomed, developers chose to offset affordable housing to outer boroughs, and 421A started to expire. Buildings transformed into condos or full market-rate housing, and people were pushed out through skyrocketing rents. Our Senate District has lost more affordable housing than any other District in the entire state. Our local retail suffered from less people and higher rents than the pandemic hit. However, the housing market continued to add more market units, and rents and rack rates continued to

2 rise. Announced office conversions are almost
3 exclusively market-rate or luxury. Our elementary
4 schools, which 10 years ago had long waiting lists,
5 now have hundreds of seats available, enough to
6 enroll over 150 migrant children into open school
7 seats. Lower Manhattan is the example of failed
8 trickle-down housing theory. Waiters, essential
9 workers, middle-income families can no longer afford
10 housing downtown. The City needs to mandate more than
11 shelters, but provides no path for stabilized low-
12 income or even middle-income households to stay in
13 neighborhoods that they have ties. We know how to
14 desegregate schools, stabilize retail, and create
15 vibrant live-work communities. It required affordable
16 housing. We need City of Yes to mandate affordable
17 housing. We proved it worked in Lower Manhattan, and
18 I urge you to use the decades of growth as an example
19 of success, not today's empty storefronts with the
20 most...

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms.Meltzer.

22 TAMMY MELTZER: Expensive housing zip
23 codes in New York City.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, we're going to
25 have Ms. Patricia Loftman.

2 PATRICIA LOFTMAN: Good afternoon. My name
3 is Patricia Loftman. I am President of the Park West
4 Village Tenant Association, located on the Upper West
5 Side of Manhattan, where I have been a resident for
6 51 years. The proposed City of Yes is simply a
7 deregulation of the current zoning rules. The public
8 is told that the proposed goal is to address the
9 current housing crisis. I maintain that a housing
10 crisis does not exist. A housing affordability crisis
11 exists. This is the legacy of the deregulation of
12 over 400,000 rent-stabilized apartments lost during
13 the past 20 years. Were those apartments still in
14 existence, there would neither be a housing crisis or
15 an affordability crisis. Under the City of Yes,
16 developers will be permitted to build market rate and
17 luxury apartments wherever and whenever they want,
18 creating residentially segregated communities. At
19 Park West Village, zoning currently permits community
20 facility users up to 6.5 FAR on our lot, which is
21 much higher than the amount used for residential
22 purposes. It is nearly impossible to use that floor
23 area because most of our lot is required to be
24 residential open space, which can include both green
25 space and parking. That open space on our lot is a

2 zoning requirement. It is not a development site
3 under current zoning. City of Yes allows infill
4 development to ignore the residential open space
5 requirement. Instead, developers just need to keep at
6 least 50 percent of the lot open. Most developments
7 like ours are around 25 percent building and around
8 75 percent open space. If City of Yes gets rid of the
9 residential open space requirement, that means about
10 25 percent of the lot like ours can be developed as
11 the developer sees fit. City of Yes also changes the
12 space needed for legal windows and yards and courts
13 so that developers can put new buildings closer to
14 existing buildings than most current zoning permits.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms.

16 Loftman. Next, we're going to ask Anna Barrett-
17 Mitchell to speak.

18 ANNA BARRETT-MITCHELL: How you doing?

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: How you doing?

20 ANNA BARRETT-MITCHELL: All right. My name
21 is Anna Barrett-Mitchell, and I'm a lifelong resident
22 of the Ditmas Park Flatbush area. I would like to
23 preface this by saying I am not against affordable
24 housing units in my area. What I am vehemently
25 against is building large complexes in areas that

2 would only serve to exacerbate the problems that my
3 community is already facing and immediately place
4 residents into untenable situations. Over 2,300 units
5 have been placed in this area over the past 10 years,
6 500 of which were built in the past year, and a vast
7 majority, if not all of which, were not affordable
8 but were categorized as luxury apartments. The rent
9 in my neighborhood did not go down due to the
10 expansion of housing units. In fact, it has
11 skyrocketed. That is not progress. That is the
12 definition of, say it with me, gentrification. It is
13 a giveaway to developers. As of now, an 11-story
14 building is under construction and a 14-story
15 building is soon to be rebuilt on the main
16 intersection of Beverly Road and Coney Island Avenue.
17 Coney Island Avenue and Church Avenue are commercial
18 streets containing several empty lots and dilapidated
19 buildings, and therefore developing on those main
20 strips makes perfect sense. However, putting large
21 apartment buildings directly on Beverly Road and
22 other residential streets in a historic neighborhood
23 with no parking units would be bedlam. In the past
24 decade, the streets have become completely
25 gridlocked. It has become impossible to find parking

2 and the intersections have become extremely
3 dangerous. The corner of Beverly Road and Westminster
4 was already deemed to be too congested and dangerous
5 for a Citi Bike rack, so it flies in the face of
6 reason to put a five-story building there, especially
7 considering that only 20 percent of the units would
8 be affordable, while the other 80 percent would be,
9 once again, luxury housing units. The 120-year-old
10 residential streets were simply not built to
11 accommodate such a large amount of people, especially
12 if you do away with parking mandates. Just because a
13 housing unit is placed near a train station does not
14 mean that all the residents of that building will
15 agree to not own cars. I fully support affordable
16 housing in Flatbush and addressing the housing crisis
17 that we all face. All I ask is that we do it in such
18 a way that makes sense and works for everyone. I
19 beseech you to build predominantly affordable housing
20 units on the main streets and to include parking
21 units. The defense rests.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, I'm
23 going to call on Evidelia Boyd.

24 EVIDELIA BOYD: Thank you. That's exactly
25 how you pronounce my name. Good afternoon, Chairman

1 Riley and to the Council Members present. My name is
2 Evidelia Boyd. I am the current President and Board
3 Chairperson of the Rosedale Civic Association. The
4 Rosedale Civic Association has been in existence
5 since 1946. That's 78 years of thriving in the
6 Rosedale community. The Rosedale community strongly
7 opposes the City of Yes initiatives. Our opposition
8 is not based solely on City of Yes impact on the
9 dynamics of our suburban community, which is
10 completely made up of one- and two-family homes,
11 because currently, we're experiencing overdevelopment
12 in certain parts of Rosedale. They're already
13 converting single family homes into one family homes,
14 and we're opposing it also because of the City of Yes
15 impact on our infrastructure. The infrastructure in
16 Rosedale was installed well before the 1940s so these
17 new developments will not be able to be sustained by
18 infrastructure that needs to be repaired, that needs
19 to be replaced. Speaking particularly about the idea
20 of putting two to four apartments in our town
21 centers, I mean, we found that in other areas of the
22 city, when this happened, small businesses, they
23 faced rising rents and sometimes displacement so
24 these proposals and TODs, that would take half of
25

2 Rosedale so that would eliminate Rosedale, and
3 basically, what we're saying, and the other thing,
4 the ADUs, people do not belong in garages. Absolutely
5 not. So, this City of Yes plan that was put together
6 by the Planning Commissioners is so unbalanced. Think
7 about it. When they put this plan together, which is
8 supposed to be addressed, a very important issue,
9 it's actually making it worse for most of the people
10 that you heard from today, so thank you for
11 listening, and we hope that you vote no on the City
12 of Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Boyd.

14 I just want to state for the record,
15 we've been joined by Council Member Avilés.

16 Do we have any questions for this panel?

17 There being no questions, this panel is
18 excused. Thank you so much for your testimony.

19 I'm just going to restate the names I
20 called before for this panel. We're going to call on
21 (review) Eric Goshaw, Emily Klein, Juan O'Neill, Gigi
22 Girafatari, Romario Rodriguez-Aguilar, and MacKenzie
23 Fallow. If you hear your name, please come to the
24 dais.

2 The following panel will consist of
3 Connie Murray, Susan Breindel, Andrea Goldwyn, Ronda
4 Wist, and Daniel Mayo. If you are in the front row
5 and you are not joining a panel, we're going to have
6 to ask you to find another seat. Thank you, sir.

7 We can begin first with Eric Goshow.

8 ERIC GOSHOW: My name is Eric Goshow. I'm
9 a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and
10 I'm an active member of the A.I. New York Chapter's
11 Housing Committee, and I'm a partner in my firm,
12 Goshow Architects, where we focus on market rate and
13 affordable and supportive housing in New York City.
14 First the bad news, which we all know, New York City
15 is in the midst of a housing crisis. This is a crisis
16 at all levels, from market rate housing to affordable
17 and supportive and special needs housing. The
18 Regional Plan Association has estimated that we now
19 have a deficit of 540,000 dwelling units in New York,
20 and that will only get worse over time. So the
21 question is, are we now willing to address this for
22 the health and the future of our beloved city? The
23 answer is good news. We have the City of Yes for
24 Housing. It's an opportunity that I have personally
25 not experienced since my firm was established back in

2 1978. What is it? It's a comprehensive, more or less
3 comprehensive, review of New York City's zoning laws
4 that have been in place since 1961, and are now in
5 2024, long overdue for revision. Housing production
6 has suffered as a result. Our rethinking of zoning
7 resolutions and regulations cannot be piecemeal, but
8 have to be comprehensive and holistic, because
9 everything is interrelated with one another. So, if
10 we're looking for, for example, revisions in parking
11 requirements, density around transit nodes, it's very
12 difficult.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Eric. I
14 just want to state for the record, we've been joined
15 by Council Member Stevens.

16 The next panelist we're going to hear
17 from is Emily Klein.

18 EMILY KLEIN: Good afternoon. Thank you,
19 Chair Riley and Members of the Committee. My name is
20 Emily Klein, and I am the AVP for Policy and
21 Government Affairs at the Community Preservation
22 Corporation, a 50-year-old non-profit affordable
23 housing lender with a significant footprint in New
24 York City. CPC is honored to provide testimony today
25 in support of City of Yes for Housing Opportunity and

2 to urge the Subcommittee to support these critical
3 zoning reforms.

4 City of Yes would update the City's
5 Zoning Code to meet our current housing needs and
6 promote more equitable neighborhoods across our city
7 by enabling the construction of a little bit more
8 housing in every neighborhood. These reforms can
9 create the overall amount of housing the city needs
10 without necessitating dramatic changes in any one
11 neighborhood. A common criticism that we've heard of
12 the proposed changes is that they would radically
13 alter the fabric and character of our existing
14 neighborhoods. It's important to stress that the
15 proposals of City of Yes for Housing Opportunity were
16 crafted specifically to do just the opposite. Yes,
17 these proposals would enable specific and targeted
18 changes in what type of development is permitted in
19 each neighborhood, but these changes are small by
20 design. In low-density neighborhoods, this would look
21 like adding two to four stories of housing above
22 existing ground floor commercial and town centers, or
23 three- to five-story apartment buildings within a
24 half mile of transit stations, where one- to three-
25 story development is already common. In medium and

2 high-density districts, City of Yes would introduce
3 Universal Affordability Preference, which would allow
4 buildings to add 20 percent more units if permanently
5 affordable. For example, a 40-unit building in a
6 medium-density district, this would mean adding eight
7 more units and likely going from eight stories to 10
8 stories, a change of scale well within the existing
9 neighborhood character. These common-sense reforms
10 fit existing neighborhood conditions and specifically
11 avoid changes that would bring out-of-scale
12 development to New York City neighborhoods. City of
13 Yes for Housing Opportunity offers a once-in-a-
14 generation chance to modernize our regulations,
15 comprehensively address our housing shortage, and
16 build a city that meets all of its residents' needs.
17 On behalf of CPC, we applaud the Department of City
18 Planning and support this reform and urge the
19 subcommittee to support it. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
21 going to hear from Juan O'Neill.

22 JUAN O'NEILL: Good afternoon, Juan
23 O'Neill, a relatively recent graduate from the New
24 School, Master's in Urban Policy and Planning, Senior
25 Planning for Community Economic Development where I

2 worked on the foundation and legislative fundamentals
3 of the City's Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. I urge
4 this Council and Subcommittee to vote yes for the
5 City of Yes proposal with the following requirements.
6 Adherence to contextual zoning and an amendment and
7 expansion of the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing
8 zoning for the entirety of Manhattan Island, Long
9 Island City, downtown Brooklyn, and areas near the
10 Staten Island Ferry.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, sir.

12 JUAN O'NEILL: You're welcome.

13 Next, we're going to hear from, I'm sorry
14 if I mispronounce your name, Gigi Gerefetari.

15 GIGI GEREFETARI: Yes, sir. Good
16 afternoon. My name is Gigi Gerefetari, and I'm
17 working as a houseman at Courtyard by Marriott
18 Eastside. I'm here to show strong support for the
19 City of Yes for Housing Opportunity proposal. Like
20 many hospitality workers, I have struggled to find
21 affordable housing due to high rents, long commutes,
22 and currently this housing crisis affects not just me
23 but also thousands of middle-class hospitality
24 workers. The City of Yes proposal will maintain low
25 current affordable housing and reduce commute times,

2 letting workers live closer to their job. I agree
3 with the City Council to support this bill. Thank
4 you.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
6 going to hear from Romario Rodriguez-Aguilar.

7 ROMARIO RODRIGUEZ: How you doing,
8 Council? My name is Romario Rodriguez. I work at the
9 Temple by Hilton. I'm a kitchen steward, and I'm here
10 to show some support with the union, the Hotels and
11 Gaming Trades Council. I'm over here to support that
12 you guys pass this bill, and I am a resident from
13 Queens and Woodside, Queens. I do see a lot of
14 abandoned places that I believe should be housing. I
15 am a single father, and I do believe that I can't
16 afford to buy the nicest thing at the moment, but if
17 I get an opportunity to have some housing to raise my
18 son and make sure that he's good, I don't want to
19 leave my community. I'm from Queens, and I feel like
20 every District should play their part and let
21 affordable housing in. So, you know, why? Because
22 it's our community, and not all of us are born to
23 this lifestyle that's, you know, you could afford
24 everything, but if you give somebody a chance that
25 has, like, a single father that has two incomes

2 coming in, you could afford something in your
3 neighborhood, and the more people that come to the
4 neighborhood, it's the more money to the businesses
5 around it because there's more people. So, like me, I
6 strongly urge you guys to pass this bill, and as
7 well, like, the city, like, with parking and
8 everything, I believe, like, there's not that much
9 problem. The more people, it means, like,
10 transportation. You could put, like, Citi Bike.
11 People don't mind. We're in New York. We could travel
12 all over and just be better for, like, people to stay
13 in their own city to get faster to work. Like, I say,
14 like, the housing crisis just doesn't affect me, but
15 it affects a lot of New Yorkers and, like, young
16 people like me that, like, want to stay in their
17 city, but need an opportunity to live there, which
18 would be, like, buildings affordable for us, like,
19 and as well, like, just give us an opportunity to
20 develop because in the future, we're going to be the
21 ones here 20 plus years, and we want our city to
22 develop more and more. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much,
24 Romario. Next, we're going to hear from MacKenzie
25 Fallow.

2 MACKENZIE FILLow: Good afternoon. My name
3 is MacKenzie Fillow, and I live in Brooklyn. I'm here
4 to ask you to vote in favor of City of Yes for
5 Housing. The Mayor is wrong about almost everything,
6 but he's right about this. We need to build more
7 housing in every neighborhood. Upzoning in a
8 piecemeal fashion is inadequate and lets the most
9 politically connected neighborhoods opt out. Doing it
10 citywide is the fairest way to get where we need to
11 go. I am a homeowner. I will be fine no matter what
12 you do, but government doesn't exist just to protect
13 the comfortable and well-off. You're supposed to help
14 the poor, to make life a little easier for those who
15 are struggling. The biggest problem this city has is
16 the cost of housing. You have the power to do
17 something about it. Please do it. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being
19 no questions for... You can't redirect. Sorry, sir.
20 There being no questions for this panel, this panel
21 is now excused.

22 If you're in the front row, you could now
23 sit on the dais.

24 If you have further testimony, you could
25 present it to the Sergeant-at-Arms when you're done.

2 GIGI GEREFETARI: No, I submitted already.
3 I just omitted something I wanted to say.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. You could
5 tell us after.

6 GIGI GEREFETARI: Okay. All right. Thank
7 you.

8 We have the following panel come to the
9 dais. I'm going to be calling two more panels after
10 this panel, and then we're going to be transitioning
11 into online testimony. All right. Welcome.

12 The following panel after the panel here
13 will consist of Susan Zinder, Michael Sutherland,
14 Catherine Trapani, Jacob Brooks, Rashida Tyler, and
15 Baruch Yehuda.

16 This panel, we're going to begin first
17 with Connie Murray.

18 CONNIE MURRAY: Hi. My name is Connie
19 Murray. I am a born and raised New Yorker. I was born
20 in Manhattan, and I've lived in beautiful Long Island
21 City for almost three decades now. The preceding
22 panel, finally, somebody mentioned the Mayor, so I'm
23 here to urge you to vote against this plan, and our
24 corrupt Mayor, his corrupt Administration, and their
25 paid lobbyists are the only ones pushing for a one-

2 size-fits-all development grift and, as a Queens
3 resident, we have so much construction. We have high-
4 rises. We have 80-story high-rises, 70-story high-
5 rises, 60-story high-rises in my neighborhood.
6 They're expensive. None of the rents have come down.
7 And when people talk about the 1.4 percent vacancy
8 rate, we're leaving out the fact that it is more than
9 double that for units which are above 2,500 dollars,
10 and Mark Levine just testified that the average rent
11 in Manhattan is now above 5,000 dollars so the data
12 that we have for vacancies is a little outdated. Very
13 curious to see what newer numbers will bring because
14 it doesn't feel vacant in my neighborhood. There's
15 also Jamaica and Flushing. Jamaica has these massive
16 buildings. Flushing is building like crazy. Current
17 zoning, if never changed again, can accommodate 16 to
18 20 million people in total. NYC has lost 800,000
19 residents in the past six years. And that's my time.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

22 Next, we're going to hear from Susan Breindel.

23 SUSAN BREINDEL: Thank you for such a
24 smooth hearing, a respectful hearing, and thank you,
25 Christopher Marte, for really, you know, staying the

2 course with us and supporting the Coalition for
3 Fairness in SoHo and NoHo. After the rezoning of
4 SoHo, NoHo was passed in 2020, the total units
5 affected with impossibly costly penalties was 1,636.
6 We would need to pay this enormous sum to an Arts
7 Fund as well as to come up with maybe a half million
8 or hundreds of thousands of dollars to convert our
9 JLWQ homes to residential usage. This was then
10 renegotiated, forgiving 40 percent of those units
11 protected under the Loft Law, leaving only 1,000
12 units to pay this huge Arts Fund fee. Most of us are
13 retirement age and pioneered this unique
14 neighborhood. Succession rights are not enough. What
15 if you have more than one child or your children
16 don't want to live in their parents' apartment or
17 they moved somewhere else? Shouldn't you be able to
18 sell to the general public like everyone else? We ask
19 that you change the text, remove the discriminatory
20 exception for M1-5B from section 15-01 of the
21 Rezoning Code, and make residential conversion equal
22 everywhere. I would like to clarify one point made by
23 my fellow SoHo NoHo residents. If we want to sell our
24 apartments or even give them to our children, each
25 owner would need to come up with those few hundred

2 thousand dollars out of pocket before any sale or
3 transfer takes place. It also would not be refundable
4 should we not be able to convert to residential once
5 we've paid it. To clarify, to get rid of this Arts
6 Fund conversion fee, we ask that the council remove
7 just five sentences in section 143-13, which require
8 the 100-dollar-per-square-foot fee to fully legalize
9 our apartments. We just want to follow the same
10 conversion requirements as everyone else, which City
11 of Yes makes easier for the rest of the city and are
12 laid out in section 15-01. This is discriminatory.
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
15 going to hear from Andrea Goldwyn.

16 ANDREA GOLDWYN: Good day, Chair Riley and
17 Council Members. I'm Andrea Goldwyn, speaking on
18 behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. We've
19 submitted our full statement and have copies. We have
20 significant concerns about City of Yes for Housing
21 Opportunity. This would be the biggest change to the
22 Zoning Resolution in decades, but it's been rolled
23 out in less time and with less meaningful public
24 input than any neighborhood or even site rezoning.
25 Previous rezonings relied on residents' on-the-ground

1 knowledge about their neighborhoods. This
2 complemented the City's Planners and led to more
3 appropriate rezoning, and those valuable insights are
4 missing here. We're glad to see that landmarks will
5 have new opportunities to transfer unused development
6 rights, but this will bring significant changes to
7 the box where the rights land. It's vital that the
8 Council retains its review and that the public has a
9 voice in this process. We support expanded building
10 conversions. Reuse of existing buildings is a more
11 sustainable way to create new housing, but there's
12 little projection of what City of Yes will do to
13 older buildings designated or not. The environmental
14 reviews glossed over impacts to historic resources.
15 Another resource New Yorkers value is green space.
16 City of Yes prioritizes new construction over
17 backyards and campus open spaces. They'll be chipped
18 away. City of Yes will dramatically change our
19 streets and communities. It will give developers so
20 many options for new larger buildings, it's hard to
21 see how many will opt for UAP bonuses. Thousands more
22 luxury condos won't solve the affordability crisis.
23 If this is approved, many land use actions will no
24 longer require ULURP. We have to ask why you'd give
25

2 up the Council's voice and that of your constituents.
3 Residents have made investments in their community.
4 They shouldn't be deprived of certainty,
5 predictability, and a say in how their neighborhoods
6 will evolve and grow. We ask the Council to press
7 pause. We ask you to give residents more time to
8 learn about how City of Yes will impact their
9 communities, to keep the public's voice in the land
10 use process, ensure that affordable housing takes
11 priority over luxury developments, and protect our
12 irreplaceable green spaces. Thank you for the
13 opportunity to express the Conservancy's views.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you for
15 testifying. Next, we're going to hear from Ronda
16 Wist.

17 RONDA WIST: Good afternoon, Chair Riley
18 and Council Members. I'm Ronda Wist. Previously, I
19 was the Director of Land Use at the City Planning
20 Department, Executive Director at Landmarks, and Vice
21 President of MAS. Now I'm on the Board of Friends of
22 the Upper East Side, but today I'm speaking on behalf
23 of myself. I was very disappointed that this is the
24 best that the City's Urban Planners could come up
25 with for Manhattan. My neighborhood, Yorkville, needs

2 affordable units because for years decisionmakers and
3 the media have been silent as hundreds of reasonably
4 priced units have been replaced by luxurious
5 oversized condos. City Planning says that every
6 community must take a little more housing. Using
7 Yorkville as our evidence, we know that the trickle-
8 down theory of real estate development does not work.
9 Zoning and zoning lot mergers, combined with lack of
10 planning, have actually caused the destruction of
11 affordable units. These demolished four to six-story
12 buildings house New Yorkers for decades, the very
13 people that decisionmakers purport to care about.
14 Could you possibly fool yourselves into thinking that
15 more ultra-luxury buildings will foster even a tiny
16 number of affordable units? If that's the case, why
17 hasn't that happened in Yorkville? Zoning to allow
18 even taller buildings will not address our affordable
19 housing crisis. Have we learned nothing from the past
20 when affordable and dense developments such as the
21 historic Cherokee Apartments, Tudor City, converted
22 hotels, Penn South, and SROs were constructed? Small
23 family apartments and studios were offset by outdoor
24 space. We need affordable apartments, not grandiose
25 three-story lobbies, indoor soccer pitches, and yoga

2 studios. If the City wants to add housing that will
3 support existing communities, it must partner with
4 other agencies and entities, financial, social,
5 union, environmental, and neighborhood. Otherwise,
6 this document is simply a real estate roadmap to
7 promote 4-million-dollar apartments and go-stores,
8 make a few more developers even richer, and
9 neighborhoods even less diverse. City Council,
10 Yorkville needs affordable units, and the City of Yes
11 needs your help. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Last person
13 on this panel is Daniel Mayo.

14 DANIEL MAYO: Good afternoon. First of
15 all, I want to thank Councilman Holden for his
16 steadfast position. Please listen to him. He's a man
17 that speaks a lot of wise words.

18 Now, severe housing crisis, which is
19 basically the reason why this proposal is before you.
20 Will this severe housing crisis be solved by this
21 proposal? A lot of you acknowledge it will only put a
22 dent. It will not solve. Agree. How about
23 affordability? Practically, everyone's talking about
24 affordability, but we all know it won't solve
25 affordability. Fifteen years, people want

2 affordability now, not 15 years. Now, when I first
3 ask is zoning the problem? Well, when I moved to New
4 York in the '80s, my one-bedroom apartment in
5 Lawrence City was 450 dollars. In the '90s, I moved
6 to West Village, Manhattan, and my first lease was
7 980 dollars, but the zoning hasn't changed. Zoning is
8 not the problem. Now, there's two facts here, I'm
9 sure all of you are aware. Over 800,000 people have
10 basically moved out of the city. If a census were
11 done now, we would lose one congressional seat. And
12 also, if you read the notice of apartments
13 availabilities for those who are on low income of
14 available apartments, I just opened up one for Long
15 Island City, one bedroom, the minimum rent is 3,100
16 dollars. That's not affordable, and that is an
17 affordable apartment that the developers made
18 available. Now, I have solutions. At least I'm going
19 to do something different from what everyone's done.
20 What I recommend is, for those people who are in
21 public housing and there are over one million of
22 them, allow their apartment to be subleased.
23 Currently, that is not allowed. And almost half of
24 those people who are paying their rent are
25 delinquent. This would help them.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr. Daniel.
3 I would love to hear your suggestions, so please give
4 it to the Sergeant when you're done. We really,
5 really appreciate it. Thank you so much.

6 DANIEL MAYO: No problem. I'll also email
7 you a copy and give you a copy.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
9 Member Marte and then Council Member Holden has
10 questions.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Thank you, Susan,
12 for being here. So, I just want to clarify what you
13 said. Even before you convert from your manufacturing
14 apartment, joint live-work-quarter apartment, into a
15 residential apartment, you have to pay out-of-pocket
16 close to 200,000 dollars.

17 SUSAN BREINDEL: That's my understanding,
18 yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: And so the sale
20 might not go through of your apartment, but that
21 still comes out-of-pocket, and I'm well aware, but
22 I'm sure you have a lot of friends who are still
23 artists in SoHo and NoHo who are low-income, middle-
24 income individuals and can never find 200,000 dollars

2 to move forward with, hopefully, the sale or the
3 transfer of their apartment.

4 SUSAN BREINDEL: Not to mention the then-
5 residential conversion, which is way more than the
6 Arts Fund.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: And which is
8 estimated at close to 1 million dollars per
9 apartment.

10 SUSAN BREINDEL: Yeah.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: And my last
12 question. There is no other place in the city where
13 this is happening. Is that correct?

14 SUSAN BREINDEL: Not that I've heard of,
15 no.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Just in SoHo and
17 NoHo?

18 SUSAN BREINDEL: No.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: That's not right.
20 Thank you.

21 SUSAN BREINDEL: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
23 Member Marte. Council Member Holden?

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, panel.
3 Some good information here. I just want to talk and
4 ask Ronda. Is that your first name?

5 RONDA WIST: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: You work for City
7 Planning?

8 RONDA WIST: I did a long time ago, yeah.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And your City of
10 Yes that you're seeing, did you ever think you'd ever
11 see something like this where most of the regulations
12 are being thrown out, because City Planning protected
13 us in zoning. It protected neighborhoods, the
14 character of neighborhoods. It protected where we
15 bought into. So, I'd like to hear your take on this
16 as to who's driving this.

17 RONDA WIST: Well, I cannot speak to who's
18 driving this, but I think that parts of it are
19 actually very useful, and so when I worked at City
20 Planning, I don't think we would have done such an
21 overall overhaul at one time. Remember, the 1916
22 zoning resolution was 50 pages, right? So when they
23 first zoned New York City. So, this was, I don't
24 know, over 1,000 pages for us to digest. I think it's
25 been very, very complex. I think had they done it,

2 this is me, and I don't work there, and I haven't
3 worked there, but obviously they have a reason for
4 doing it citywide, but clearly from what we're
5 hearing here, you know, Queens and Manhattan have
6 very different issues, unlike the City of Yes for
7 Economic Development, where I think the issues were
8 citywide. I think here the boroughs have very, and
9 the communities have very different issues from each
10 other, so I think it's very complicated.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right, which I
12 just want to go to the one size fits all, which they
13 won't budge on this. We had the Chair of the City
14 Planning saying, well, all neighborhoods have to
15 share the burden or to share affordable housing or
16 housing, period. Now, and I brought this up. I said
17 my District has probably the worst flooding. Our
18 sewers are backing up in a normal thunderstorm,
19 normal. I'm not talking about hurricanes or tropical
20 storms. I'm talking about sewers backing up. My
21 electrical grid is the worst. So, as a City Planner,
22 would you, you know, recommend more housing?

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: If you could wrap it
24 up, Council Member Holden?

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I just want to
3 finish that. One more, you know, additional housing
4 when the infrastructure does not warrant it. It
5 doesn't allow for it because flooding, stormwater
6 runoff into the Newtown Creek, poor subways or no
7 subways, bus service only, and then take away the
8 parking. It's almost carte blanche for developers to
9 just make more money, and that's what I see this as a
10 City of Yes.

11 RONDA WIST: Well, I just want to say I do
12 think Chairman Garodnik did an amazing presentation
13 yesterday. I thought it was unbelievable for a
14 Chairman to do that presentation. But I want to say
15 in terms of infrastructure, I'm in Yorkville and we
16 have, you know, different infrastructure issues, so I
17 think, yes, infrastructure is a big piece of it, and
18 I think that's what everybody's saying, that, you
19 know, that all the agencies and all the entities must
20 work together, right, to make sure.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: We're not seeing
22 that, though. We're seeing take it or leave it.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
3 Member Avilés.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you. I just
5 wanted to follow up. You mentioned a couple of parts
6 of the proposal that you've seen that you said are
7 okay. Could you mention which parts of the proposal
8 seem to be?

9 RONDA WIST: I grew up in southern
10 Brooklyn, not south Brooklyn, but southern Brooklyn,
11 and so there are parts of it that I definitely see
12 are useful because my old neighborhood does have
13 available school seats and there's available outdoor
14 space so I do see certain infill pieces. This is me
15 personally, this has nothing to do and, you know. So,
16 again, anyway, I would like to have this conversation
17 with you offline if that's okay, but, yeah, I
18 definitely think there's some very good, I only have
19 two minutes for 1,200 pages.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER Avilés: Okay. We'll follow
21 up with you offline, but it's an important part of
22 the conversation, too. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being
24 no more questions, this panel is excused.

2 The next panel could come up. I just want
3 to remind everyone after this next panel, we will go
4 into, thank you for testifying, we will go into
5 online testimony after this panel and then we'll be
6 back to in-person testimony at 3 p.m.

7 SUSAN ZINDER: The first panelist I'm
8 going to call to testify is Susan Zinder.

9 SUSAN ZINDER: I am Susan Zinder,
10 testifying in support of City of Yes for my client,
11 B'nai Adath Kol Beth Yisrael, located in Bed-Stuy.
12 For 54 years, B'nai Adath celebrated its Jewish
13 faith, Black heritage, and neighborhood community
14 with a broad range of Jewish and community services,
15 including hosting the only kosher soup kitchen within
16 Bed-Stuy, available to all who needed food, no matter
17 their observance or faith, but in 2017, fire
18 destroyed the synagogue. During the past eight years,
19 B'nai Adath has been in neighborhood exile, fighting
20 to rebuild while discovering the impossibility of
21 doing so without a developing partner due to the
22 City's construction costs and zoning delays and other
23 challenges. Currently, B'nai Adath's lot is Zone 6A,
24 with size limits that render a multi-use building too
25 small to enable fulfillment of B'nai Adath's needs.

2 We know this because we issued an RFP for a partner
3 developer only to receive responses that our deal did
4 not have enough square footage to generate interest
5 for B'nai Adath to meaningfully rebuild its
6 synagogue. Attempting to rezone the lot for B'nai
7 Adath alone, under current zoning, will only result
8 in increased delays and costs. We believe that the
9 changes embodied in City of Yes will enable B'nai
10 Adath to timely attract a partner so it can use its
11 real estate capital to benefit its future
12 generations, rebuild its home, and bring needed
13 affordable homes and services into Bed-Stuy,
14 providing a vibrant community asset for its
15 neighbors. We understand the worry that City of Yes
16 may expand gentrification, undermining existing
17 communities. B'nai Adath intends to use any multi-use
18 rebuilding of its home to modernize and benefit not
19 only itself, but its Bed-Stuy neighbors as well.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
22 hear from Michael Sutherland.

23 MICHAEL SUTHERLAND: Good afternoon. My
24 name is Michael Sutherland, and I'm the Policy
25 Analyst at Open Plans, an organization that fights

2 for a more livable city. I'm also a born and raised
3 Brooklynite from deep southern Brooklyn in District
4 46. While there are many parts of this plan that Open
5 Plans supports, I'm here to focus specifically on
6 parking mandates, and there's a lot that's been said
7 already about parking, and with my testimony, I'd
8 like to present in good faith some of the evidence
9 that's come out of cities that have done this
10 already. Like Council Member Ossé mentioned, it's
11 important to hear about what other cities have done
12 in the results of that. There are close to 100 cities
13 across the country, ranging from San Francisco to
14 Birmingham, that have lifted mandates before New York
15 City has. I'll talk about one a little closer to
16 home, Buffalo. Buffalo lifted mandates in 2017. The
17 impacts of this reform span decades, but early
18 findings indicate that lifting mandates citywide
19 works. A SUNY Buffalo study found that many new major
20 developments included less parking spaces than would
21 have been required previously. Importantly, it also
22 showed that there were many developments that built
23 the same or more parking than would have been
24 required. Buffalo shows that parking is still built
25 where it makes sense, but not citywide at an

2 arbitrary rate, and I think the evidence is important
3 because it's important to not just blindly trust
4 developers, but also to trust the data that's come
5 out of these cities. And I'd like to close with
6 important truths about lifting parking mandates. So
7 right now, parking is often built where it isn't
8 needed because of mandates. Lifting mandates wouldn't
9 ban parking or require less parking to be built
10 anywhere. In areas where there's high car dependency,
11 parking will still be built. But in more dense areas
12 where parking is unneeded, lifting mandates will
13 allow more housing to be created. And finally,
14 without lifting mandates, this proposal would not
15 live up to its fullest potential to create as much
16 affordable housing as possible. It could drive up
17 costs in UAP developments outside of the transit zone
18 and make SROs and ADUs more difficult or impossible
19 to build in some places so it's vital that the
20 Council lifts parking mandates in this proposal, and
21 it would be tragic for New York City to remain behind
22 the curve. We urge the Council to take the step that
23 dozens of other cities have already taken, lift
24 parking mandates citywide. Thank you for your time.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
3 going to hear from Catherine Trapani.

4 CATHERINE TRAPANI: Good afternoon. My
5 name is Catherine Trapani, and I'm the Assistant Vice
6 President for Public Policy at Volunteers of America
7 Greater New York. Our mission is to end homelessness.
8 We cannot do that if we can't build more housing. We
9 are proud to support the City of Yes for Housing
10 Opportunity because we agree that if every
11 neighborhood did its part and allowed for a little
12 more housing in every neighborhood, the city would be
13 much better positioned to address the shortage of
14 affordable homes that exist today. While it's true
15 that a zoning plan isn't a comprehensive housing
16 plan, without necessary zoning changes, building more
17 affordable housing will be exceedingly difficult.
18 Right now, we have a project in our pipeline that
19 could produce over 700 units in the next few years.
20 This project envisions at least 60 percent of the
21 units being set aside for homeless New Yorkers, with
22 the balance being affordable to those earning less
23 than 60 percent of the AMI. If the ability to build
24 to the height of existing adjacent structures are not
25 implemented, those homes might not get built. In

1 fact, the as-of-right development options for that
2 parcel would only allow us to create around 300 homes
3 in total. That's 400 fewer units overall, with a loss
4 of 240 that would have been guaranteed to go to
5 homeless households. We must always make choices
6 about priorities, but maintaining height
7 restrictions, even when the height proposed is
8 contextual, as it is with this project, over
9 providing homes will leave the largest homeless
10 population in New York City history just isn't right.
11 I also want to add our full support for waiving
12 parking requirements for new developments. Adding
13 costly parking for a project in a city as rich in
14 transit in New York defies logic. Parking increases
15 the per-unit cost to build, which is typically passed
16 on to tenants in the form of higher rents. The City
17 should be doing everything in its power to slow the
18 growth of rental prices in New York City to make the
19 city more affordable for everyone. While zoning is
20 important, it is equally critical for the City to
21 invest in the programs and agencies that are housing
22 people experiencing homelessness so that once
23 implemented, the City of Yes will address the housing
24 crisis for those who are most acutely feeling its
25

2 impact. Investments in more City capital funds for
3 extremely low-income and supportive housing
4 production are necessary. Additionally, City agencies
5 must be able to effectively manage a robust pipeline
6 of affordable housing. We also urge full funding for
7 city agencies and the implementation of the CityFHEPS
8 program. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
10 going to hear from Jacob Brooks.

11 JACOB BROOKS: Hello. My name is Jacob
12 Brooks. I'm a nobody. I just live here. I'm
13 testifying in support of City of Yes. First and
14 foremost, the rent is too damn high. I won't dwell on
15 that. We all know our money is better spent
16 elsewhere. The only cities in America where rent
17 hikes have slowed or rents have declined are cities
18 that have built more housing. Many issues that New
19 Yorkers are concerned about are also addressed by
20 building more housing. Climate change. Thanks to
21 walkability, public transport, and economies of
22 scale, urban living dramatically reduces individual
23 emissions versus suburban and rural living. If we're
24 worried about climate change, we should be striving
25 to make urban living the affordable option, not the

2 most expensive. Fears of gentrification.

3 Gentrification happens because new residents compete
4 with existing residents for older, limited housing
5 stock. If we're able to say yes to more housing, we
6 can build a city that's big enough for all of us.

7 Today, I've heard nebulous concerns over preserving
8 neighborhood character and aesthetics. I say if your
9 neighborhood character demands regulations that keeps
10 rents high and makes housing unaffordable, then your
11 character is elitist and exclusionary. I've heard
12 concerns over parking and where will new residents
13 park. I have good news for you. You're in New York.

14 They don't need parking. They can take the train or
15 the bus with the rest of us. I've heard complaints
16 about infrastructure. We don't have enough
17 infrastructure. That's not a justification to not
18 build housing. It's an impetus to build more
19 infrastructure. For years, we've let the perfect be
20 the enemy of the good, and out of fear of change, we
21 have empowered naysayers. I say we have to remember
22 that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself
23 and envision a future where the city is big enough
24 for all of us. New York needs to be able to say yes
25 to a better future.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
3 going to hear from Rashida Tyler.

4 RASHIDA TYLER: Thank you. My name is
5 Rashida Tyler. I'm the Deputy Executive Director of
6 the New York State Council of Churches and a project
7 manager for the Interfaith Affordable Housing
8 Collaborative. We work with many faith leaders across
9 the city who would like to develop affordable
10 housing, senior housing, and supportive housing on
11 their properties. However, due to current zoning,
12 they are unable to develop the number of units that
13 would be feasible to a developer. For example, one
14 congregation in Brooklyn would love to redevelop its
15 property to include affordable housing, but if they
16 were to rebuild, they would lose about 18,000 square
17 feet, and that would mean dipping below the number of
18 units that would actually make their project viable.
19 Faith leaders are actively trying to combat the
20 outflow of community members who are being pushed out
21 of their neighborhoods by gentrification, and they're
22 even turning down market rate and luxury development
23 to do so. However, while they have the desire to
24 develop, many do not have the financial ability to go
25 through a costly and lengthy rezoning waiver process

2 or variance processes. The City of Yes would enable
3 them to build a little more, which is the difference
4 between development being viable or not, keeping
5 families in the neighborhood or not. For these
6 reasons, we are generally supportive of the City of
7 Yes. Although we support the City of Yes, we do agree
8 with what we've heard from faith leaders across the
9 city, advocates and community members, which is that
10 the Universal Affordability Preference falls short of
11 what is necessary to truly address affordable housing
12 and homelessness crisis in New York City and, yes, it
13 is an affordable housing crisis. We only need to de-
14 aggregate data from the housing crisis to see that
15 those in luxury housing market are not having trouble
16 or struggling finding homes. We need to make sure
17 that if affordable housing is a goal of the City of
18 Yes, then the policy needs to reflect this and create
19 a mandate and deeper affordability than having just
20 20 percent of floor area allotted to affordable
21 housing. I don't know where my time is at, so.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: No, I think your time
23 is up. They didn't restart the clock. You can submit
24 the rest of your testimony to us. Thank you.

2 Last person on this panel is Baruch
3 Yehuda. Sorry if I mispronounced your name.

4 BARUCH YEHUDA: Good afternoon, everyone.
5 I'm Rabbi Baruch Yehuda representing B'nai Adath Kol
6 Beth Yisrael, one of those congregations that she was
7 just talking about. We're a 71-year-old Jewish
8 congregation primarily made of Jews of African
9 descent located in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. I
10 stand in support of the City of Yes legislation.
11 Unfortunately, our congregation suffered a
12 devastating fire in November of 2017. Since then,
13 we've tried to rebuild only to run into obstacle
14 after obstacle, the largest of which is the way our
15 congregation is zoned. The bottom line is we need the
16 developers who work with us to rebuild with helping
17 to provide affordable housing to the citizens of New
18 York City. Developers are in it for their profit
19 margins, which means they need to have a certain
20 number of square footage to make the plan viable, and
21 under the current zoning laws, no set of mathematics
22 work without cutting our congregational building size
23 by two-thirds. This will inhibit our community work,
24 which in the past has included free space for youth
25 of the area, clothing, kosher soup kitchens, teenage

2 programming, provided shelter for families who had
3 nowhere to go. We do not, for the most part, have the
4 means to handle all of the varied obstacles
5 associated with the building. The seven-year
6 rebuilding delay caused by our inability to close the
7 deal with the current zoning has resulted in the
8 needed demolition of the building by the City.
9 Accordingly, we now owe the City hundreds of
10 thousands of dollars. Only because we have an
11 architect, attorneys, and consultants who have
12 rendered services pro bono and used their networks
13 for us, we've been able to maintain and keep the
14 building. The City of Yes will enable synagogues,
15 mosques, churches, and not-for-profits to reduce the
16 timing needed to realize the full potential of their
17 real estate assets to fulfill their varied mission
18 statements, thereby making the city more inhabitable
19 and less stressed. City of Yes impacts on those
20 houses of worship and other congregations will enable
21 them to provide to the citizens of the city new homes
22 and services. Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, sir. Any
24 questions for this panel?

25 You're now excused. Thank you so much.

2 Okay, so we have heard really good
3 testimony this morning from people here in person. It
4 is now time to also start hearing testimony from
5 people who have signed up to testify online.

6 If you have not registered and you want
7 to testify remotely through Zoom, please go to New
8 York City Council's website at
9 www.council.nyc.gov/landuse to register. For those
10 testifying through Zoom, you will remain muted until
11 you are recognized by myself to speak. Please take a
12 moment to check your device and confirm that your mic
13 is on. Once you are done testifying, please remain in
14 the meeting until excused by myself as Council
15 Members may have questions.

16 Once an online panel is excused, you will
17 be removed from the meeting as a group, and the next
18 group of speakers will be introduced. Once removed,
19 the participants may continue to view the livestream
20 broadcast of this hearing on the Council's website.

21 For the next hour, we will hear testimony
22 from online registrants. We will then alternate one
23 hour at a time, people here to testify in person and
24 people who signed up to testify remotely. I will
25 continue to call out two panels at a time so that

2 people can get ready to testify. The first online
3 panel will consist of Assembly Member Jamie Williams.

4 The following panel will consist of Mary
5 Francois, Brian Dembowski, and Daniel Cohen.

6 For those with us in person who are
7 testifying in person, I know you've been here. You
8 can step out, grab something to eat, use the
9 bathroom. I just ask that you come back by 2:45.

10 Okay? Quietly, please.

11 We're going to start with Assembly Member
12 Jamie Williams. Assembly Member, you may begin.

13 ASSEMBLY MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you so
14 very much. For the record, not against affordable
15 housing. This initiative set forth by Mayor Adams and
16 the City Planning of City of Yes will definitely
17 cripple our middle-class communities and will forever
18 change the suburban communities across the five
19 boroughs, threatening one- and two-family dwellings,
20 devastating lower-density communities. This is so
21 flawed, lacking a true comprehensive analysis,
22 especially communities that are transit deserts, like
23 mine in South Brooklyn. As a community, we
24 collectively oppose the City of Yes initiative. Our
25 aim is to preserve our communities and green spaces

2 rather than forcing further the expulsion of
3 homeownership, which can result in more people
4 fleeing the city in search of a more modest
5 residential setting and a sense of community safety
6 for their families. Together, the Joint Community
7 Council of Southeast Brooklyn strongly opposes the
8 City of Yes. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Assembly
10 Member, for your testimony. We really appreciate it.

11 I just want to remind those in here
12 decorum is to be kept. We are hearing testimony
13 still. Please take your conversation to the rotunda.
14 Thank you.

15 Next, we're going to call on this panel
16 Mary Francois, Brian Dembowski, and Daniel Cohen.

17 The following panel will be Erica Turner,
18 LaShaun Ellis, Mark Anaya, and Alan Baker.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Marie Francois, if you
21 can hear me, please unmute, and you may begin.

22 MARY FRANCOIS: I'm sorry. You can pass to
23 somebody else.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Thank you,
25 Ms. Francois. You don't want to testify anymore?

2 MARY FRANCOIS: No.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Thank you.

4 Next, we're going to call on Brian
5 Dembowski followed by Daniel Cohen.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Brian, if you can hear
8 me, please unmute, and you may begin.

9 Brian Dembowski. Okay. We'll come back to
10 Brian.

11 We'll move to Daniel Cohen. Daniel, if
12 you can hear me, please unmute, and you may begin.

13 DANIEL COHEN: Yes. Can you hear me?

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you,
15 Daniel.

16 DANIEL COHEN: Hi. My name is Daniel
17 Cohen, and I live on the Upper West Side of
18 Manhattan. My rent has gone up by 20 percent in the
19 last three years because we don't build enough
20 housing, so I strongly support City of Yes because it
21 would make housing more affordable by helping to
22 alleviate our severe housing shortage. There are two
23 parts of the proposal that I especially like. The
24 first is repealing parking mandates. Not only is this
25 environmentally friendly, but it's also economically

2 progressive. Parking spots don't get built for free,
3 so when we force developers to build parking, they
4 pass the costs on in the form of higher rents. People
5 who own cars would be paying for the parking anyway,
6 but people who don't own cars have to pay extra rent
7 for something they don't need, and since people who
8 don't own cars tend to be less wealthy than people
9 do, the economic effect is that the less wealthy are
10 subsidizing the more wealthy so repealing parking
11 mandates is very economically progressive.

12 The other part of City of Yes that I want
13 to highlight is legalizing SROs. This part speaks to
14 me because I myself lived in an SRO when I was
15 younger and couldn't afford a full apartment to
16 myself because the SRO was naturally more affordable.
17 Legalizing SROs is a great way to add more housing
18 that's naturally affordable to people who aren't
19 wealthy enough to afford a full apartment to
20 themselves. Thank you, and I sincerely hope that City
21 of Yes passes in its full form without getting
22 watered down.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much,
24 Daniel.

2 We're going to try Brian Dembowski again.
3 Brian, if you can hear me, please unmute.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Brian Dembowski, are
6 you there?

7 Okay, Brian, if you cannot unmute and you
8 still would like to testify, we'll try to try you
9 back later.

10 I'm going to call on the next panel, and
11 then I'm going to step away for a break, and I'm
12 going to turn it over to Council Member Schulman to
13 be the Acting Chair.

14 The next panel is going to consist of
15 Eric Turner, LaShaun Ellis, Mark Anaya, and Alan
16 Baker.

17 The following panel will consist of
18 Darrick Borowski, D.J. Fulkson, Sadia Rahman, Adeola
19 Deloatch. If you hear this, please be ready to speak.

20 We'll begin first with Eric Turner. Erica
21 Turner, excuse me. Erica Turner.

22 ERICA TURNER: Thank you for correcting
23 that. Can you hear me?

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.
25 You may begin.

2 ERICA TURNER: Hello, everyone. I am
3 testifying to oppose the City of Mess. I live in a
4 small complex which has a playground in the center of
5 it and adjacent to a building which we share parking
6 lots. Because of the new zoning rules, Settlement
7 Housing Fund will be able to build a 15-story
8 building in our parking lot and turn our playground
9 into a parking lot with no space for a fire zone. Our
10 backyard will be vulnerable to strangers to enter
11 into our private spaces, which currently is a gated
12 area. Today, we have air, safety, and sun. With this
13 new building going up, people who sit on their
14 balconies will no longer be able to get the vitamin D
15 recommended by doctors. Everything will be taken away
16 from us. I understand people need a space to live,
17 but why must our quality of life be imposed upon just
18 for someone else to have somewhere to live? On
19 September 17, Brooklyn Paper reported our Council
20 Member, Justin Brannan, stated during a ribbon-
21 cutting for a NYCHA city housing playground, in Coney
22 Island, we deserve the best for our city that our
23 city has to offer, which includes safe places for our
24 kids to play, learn, and grow. For so long, the
25 powers that be overlooked our needs. Coney Island is

2 being overdeveloped and is affecting the people that
3 live here. I please and pray that you please oppose
4 the City of Yes because it's going to affect the
5 children as well, not just the adults that have to
6 pay rent here. Thank you.

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
8 very much. I'm now going to ask for LaShaun Ellis.

9 LASHAUN ELLIS: Yes. Hello.

10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. Go
11 ahead.

12 LASHAUN ELLIS: All right. Thank you. I
13 want to thank all the folks that have testified
14 before me against this proposal. My name is LaShaun
15 Ellis. I represent both MTOPP, my Crown Heights
16 community, my Block Association, Sullivan Ludlum
17 Stoddard Neighborhood Association, and myself. As one
18 of the biggest corruption scandals in our city, the
19 first New York City Mayor to be indicted will
20 continue to affect the city with his dirty dealings
21 for decades to come if these so-called City of Yes
22 text amendments are put into law. The Mayor, along
23 with his BLAST Planning Committee, wants to create
24 100,000 apartments with the City of Yes text
25 amendments, but there are almost 200,000 apartments

2 that are vacant. 70,000 apartments are simply vacant,
3 available to be rented. 123,000 are vacant or missing
4 key components for habitability, like stoves,
5 refrigerators, kitchens. Someone mentioned before,
6 like, who needs kitchens? We have Grubhub. We have,
7 you know, all these delivery services that we can
8 use. I'm not for that, but I'm just, it's a little
9 joke, tongue in cheek. 60,000 are available for
10 occasional use. I'm confused about some people
11 mentioning these parking mandates and that they
12 should be eliminated because they take up space. They
13 take space away from housing or because they're
14 costly for developers. Last I checked, apartments are
15 not placed in basements and developers are not
16 lacking funds, especially with all of the giveaways
17 through abatements that many receive. As Mayor Eric
18 Adams uses the race card to justify the CYHTA and
19 swears the only reason people don't like him is
20 because he is black, take a hard look at the CYHTA
21 and you will find that there are racist and
22 prejudiced against people who are black and anyone
23 else who may qualify for affordable housing. Under
24 the CYHTA, all of the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing,
25 MIH, apartments, and Universal Affordability

2 Preference units can actually reside outside of the
3 zoning lot that is supposed to have the affordable
4 units. The apartments can either be in the community
5 district...

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

7 LASHAUN ELLIS: Or outside of the district
8 as long as the lots and apartments are within half a
9 mile of each other. Please, I really implore you to
10 vote against this plan. There's so much more..

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay, we're
12 keeping everybody to two minutes, but thank you.
13 Thank you very much.

14 Mark Anaya.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

16 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Mark, is
17 Mark Anaya there?

18 Okay. We can come back to Mark. Alan
19 Becker?

20 Oh, Mark. Okay. We have Mark Anaya.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: That's not him.

22 UNIDENTIFIED: No, he's here.

23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Mark Anaya
24 is there? Mark Anaya? Mark Anaya?

2 All right, we need to move to the next
3 person. Alan Becker.

4 All right, can we move to Alan Becker,
5 please?

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Alan Becker?
8 Okay, we're going to skip to Brian Demboski.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: We're having
11 a technical issue so please bear with us.

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Mark Anaya cannot get the
13 microphone feed.

14 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Mark, we
15 should be able to hear you. Are you there?

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Please let the people know
17 if you download the workplace Zoom, then you will see
18 the microphone. When I didn't have that, I couldn't
19 see the microphone.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: We also need to make sure
21 they've accepted being a panelist.

22 MARK ANAYA: All right, can you hear me
23 now?

24 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yes.

25 MARK ANAYA: Okay.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Go ahead,
3 your time begins now.

4 MARK ANAYA: All right, I'm sorry. All
5 right, so I'm the Vice President of the Neponset
6 Properties Owner Associations. We've been around
7 since 1919. We're one of the largest associations in
8 probably New York City. We represent about 3,000
9 members in our area. I just want to cut to the chase.
10 We want you to vote no for the City of Yes. And one
11 of the reasons why in this location, we are in a
12 flood zone. We got destroyed by Hurricane Sandy.
13 We're surrounded by water on all three sides. We're a
14 peninsula. The water table keeps getting higher. Even
15 when we get just rain, our sewer system is flooding.
16 We cannot take any more structure or more building.
17 The infrastructure is not going to handle it. We did
18 our fair share. We have numerous of senior centers
19 here, adult living, SROs, halfway houses so they even
20 asked the Community Board 14 what they think about
21 the City of Yes. They overwhelmingly said no. We do
22 not want the City of Yes, and they voted it down.
23 Donovan Richardson, the Queens Borough President who
24 appointed these people that live in the community,
25 handpicked them, and they said no, we don't want the

2 City of Yes. So, we're asking you to side with the
3 people that live in these communities and not the
4 builders or the developers. People work real hard to
5 live in these places. There's plenty of places that,
6 these buildings that are empty and these commercial
7 buildings. We could do a smarter way to house these
8 homeless people or affordable housing with these
9 existing buildings. We don't have to build more of
10 these high-rises and put people more in buildings.
11 It's not going to work. So again, we want you to
12 stand with the people of this community and
13 throughout the whole city to vote no for the City of
14 Yes and do not stand with the builders or the
15 developers. And if anybody in City Council is going
16 to vote for this, the...

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Your time is
19 up.

20 MARK ANAYA: Vote people out, and if you
21 stand for this and you vote this, we have zoning to
22 protect our communities. Do not destroy...

23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Mark, your
24 time is up. Thank you.

2 MARK ANAYA: Sorry about that. I'm not
3 that tech savvy with this whole thing. Thank you for
4 getting me in. Can you still hear me?

5 UNIDENTIFIED: Go ahead and mute yourself.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Brian
7 Demboski, please.

8 Darrick Borowski.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

10 DARRICK BOROWSKI: Hi.

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Hi, you're
12 Derek? Okay.

13 DARRICK BOROWSKI: Good afternoon, Chair
14 and Council Members, and thank you for this
15 opportunity. I'm an architect and a member of the AIA
16 New York Housing Committee where, with colleagues,
17 I've had the opportunity to study key elements of
18 this plan and its impact on neighborhoods. I also
19 teach, research, lecture, and write on the future of
20 cities and housing. What both my practice and
21 academic work have shown is that our zoning codes
22 establish what is possible and, as a result, help
23 shape what we get, and the current zoning code,
24 written to address a very different crisis in 1961,
25 has, as a result, helped shape the crisis we face

2 now, and the possible fixes for this crisis are
3 limited by the possibilities written into this code.
4 If we want a city where people of diverse incomes can
5 afford to live, we must change this code. In this
6 proposal, my colleagues, students, and I that have
7 studied it have found that the changes proposed to be
8 modest but important tools to help dig us out of the
9 current crisis, including bonuses for affordability,
10 densifying town centers and transit zones, legalizing
11 shared living, small apartments and ADUs, and,
12 importantly, eliminating outdated parking
13 requirements. But I'm also here as a constituent, as
14 a small business owner, and as a resident of
15 Ridgewood, Queens. In the last 20 years, I have seen
16 housing costs skyrocket, forcing friends and fellow
17 creatives to leave or to hang on by a thread to an
18 apartment they and their family have long outgrown.
19 My students, when they graduate, struggle to find an
20 apartment they can afford on a starting salary in
21 design, and mid-career architects who, hoping to
22 start a family, must consider leaving because even
23 with 10- or 15-years' experience, they find it hard
24 to find a home they can afford. So, this great city
25 has seen its ups and downs, but always it's been the

2 people who historically can least afford to live
3 here, young people, artists, creatives, immigrants
4 who have kept the city vital, and those who have
5 nothing to lose, who have the courage to move here
6 and reinvent themselves, and in the process, reinvent
7 New York City. I don't think New Yorkers are
8 generally opposed to new housing. Understandably,
9 they, we, are worried about the impacts of higher
10 density on our already tenuous hold on our quality of
11 life, and we must address those issues as well. But
12 right now...

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

14 DARRICK BOROWSKI: The opportunity to make
15 housing a priority, that means changing what's
16 possible.

17 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Your time is
18 up.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: If you want
21 to submit testimony, you have 72 hours to do that, to
22 give us your entire testimony, but we need to keep it
23 short. We have several hundred people that are signed
24 up to testify today. Thank you very much. D.J.
25 Falkson.

2 D.J. FALKSON: Hi. My name is D.J.
3 Falkson, and I've lived on the Upper East Side for
4 over five years, and I urge the City Council to
5 support City of Yes. I'm a member of Open New York
6 and a concerned citizen who loves the city, loves its
7 dynamism, and I'm worried about the lack of
8 opportunities for young people and families to find
9 affordable places to live. I have a five-day-old
10 infant, and I want to thank my very generous wife for
11 letting me take the time to testify today. We want to
12 be able to stay in the city. We may want to have more
13 children, but the reality is that there are not
14 nearly enough family-sized apartments being built. I
15 personally had friends leave the city as their
16 families have grown, and it's heartbreaking. I want
17 to share a personal story to illustrate why I feel
18 this so deeply. My mother grew up in current Council
19 District 19, Council Member Paladino's District, in a
20 development called Crider's Point in Beechhurst. She
21 lived there in the 1950s and '60s, and it was a
22 wonderful place to raise a family. It had spacious
23 apartments, waterfront views, and amenities that
24 supported the kind of strong community New York City
25 was known for. Crider's Point was the kind of

2 development where families could grow and thrive
3 together. It was a community hub, and people wanted
4 to stay long-term because it had what families
5 needed, space, connection, and a sense of belonging.
6 But here's the issue. That kind of development, and
7 indeed development that's far less dense even, is no
8 longer possible under today's zoning laws. The
9 District isn't zoned to allow new developments like
10 Crider's Point anymore, and that's a shame. We're
11 seeing fewer opportunities to create the types of
12 family-friendly homes throughout the city that my
13 mom's generation benefited from. I want to push back
14 on the idea that dense housing destroys communities.
15 In fact, vibrant communities thrive when there's a
16 mix of people, different generations, families,
17 newcomers. We need reforms like the City of Yes to
18 bring back the possibility of building those
19 communities for future generations like my own new
20 family. I'm excited about City of Yes and urge its
21 approval with as few qualifications or modifications
22 as possible. Each of these modifications will chip
23 away at the amount of affordable housing that can be
24 built citywide, so I urge the members of the Council
25 to support City of Yes. Thank you.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
3 very much. Sadia Rahman.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

5 SADIA RAHMAN: Good afternoon. My name is
6 Sadia Rahman and I'm the Deputy Director at Chhaya
7 CDC. I'm also here representing the Basement
8 Apartments Safe for Everyone, or BASE, coalition.
9 We're here today because we have been fighting for
10 more than 15 years to make basement homes safe and
11 regulated. Sorry, I can't put my video on. City of
12 Yes for housing opportunity includes zoning reforms
13 that are necessary to create a program for basement
14 apartment conversions and we urge the Subcommittee
15 and the Council to ensure that the final version of
16 this proposal maintains these key components for safe
17 basement apartments. Number one, allowing for the
18 conversion of basement and cellar apartments and
19 existing building footprints without raising
20 noncompliance issues. Two, eliminating the
21 requirements for additional parking when a subgrade
22 unit is being converted. And three, not considering
23 cellar conversions to be creating new floor area. As
24 a result of these proposed changes, livable spaces
25 and small homes can be safely occupied without

2 creating a zoning noncompliance. The impact that this
3 sound policy will have cannot be understated. It will
4 bolster our city's ability to be more resilient to
5 climate disaster. It will provide homeowners drowning
6 and mounting expenses to come up for air. It will
7 ensure that tenants do not have to live in fear of
8 their locks being changed when they leave for work or
9 worse, losing their home or life during the next
10 storm surge. This policy can have such a positive
11 impact with minimal adverse consequences to
12 communities. It allows for a measured proportionate
13 increase in density in neighborhoods with small
14 homes. It doesn't indelibly change the character of
15 the neighborhoods and it minimally changes the
16 footprint of the structure itself. This is a win/win
17 for the city. Of course, zoning changes alone will
18 get us all of the way there and we want to use this
19 opportunity to also highlight that we need
20 comprehensive legislative program that includes
21 building code updates and an opt-in program for
22 homeowners. It is our hope that as the City
23 contemplates these zoning changes...

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

25 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Time is up.

2 SADIA RAHMAN: Thank you so much.

3 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
4 very much. Adeola Deloatch.

5 ADEOLA DELOATCH: Good afternoon. My name
6 is Adeola Deloatch. I'm originally from Nigeria, and
7 I'm voting for the City of Yes to support the Housing
8 Opportunity and I'm standing on behalf of myself and
9 I'm standing on behalf of the homeless people. I'm
10 standing on behalf of the domestic violence because I
11 was a victim of domestic violence and I was living in
12 a shelter for one year. I couldn't get any help
13 because of my immigration status and I keep losing
14 the custody of my kids because of affordable housing.
15 I couldn't afford to rent an apartment which is like
16 3,000, 4,000 and I keep losing the custody of my
17 kids. While I was living in the shelter, I could
18 listen to a series of stories a lot of hard-working
19 women which they are just a victim of domestic
20 violence living in a shelter and they all start as
21 City voucher but there is no housing to move out.
22 Some of them have been there for years. They keep
23 working. They keep looking for hope that one day
24 they're going to get an affordable housing so they
25 can move out of the shelter. I was terrified. I was

2 traumatized. I was tortured mentally with my kids.
3 That's all I want. I just want my kids. I just want
4 to put my kids in a (INAUDIBLE) but I couldn't do it
5 because I could not afford affordable (INAUDIBLE).
6 After one year, I had to leave the shelter because
7 they provide everything. Food, everything but I can't
8 eat the food. I managed to rent a room which is in
9 the basement and there's no way I can still win the
10 custody of my kids while living in a basement.
11 Meanwhile, I'm still going to lose the custody of my
12 kids with my court cases coming next week. On behalf
13 of the people, on behalf of the voiceless, and I'm
14 raising my voice on behalf of the domestic violence
15 victims, on behalf of the homeless people..

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

17 ADEOLA DELOATCH: This is what is city for
18 affordable housing. Thank you.

19 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
20 very much.

21 Do any of the members have questions for
22 anybody in the panel? Yes, no?

23 All right, we're going to call the next
24 panel. Cathy Cebek. It's Cathy Cebek, Alicia Spears,
25 George Calderaro, Angela Kravtchenko.

2 We're going to first call Cathy Cebek.

3 CATHY CEBEK: Hi. Good afternoon.

4 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Go ahead.

5 CATHY CEBEK: Okay. Thank you. I didn't
6 know if you could hear me.

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Sure.

8 CATHY CEBEK: Good afternoon. I think we
9 should have had a City of Yes infrastructure hearing
10 first. I think you would have had a resounding yes on
11 this. I was going to read my testimony, but it's only
12 two minutes. I emailed it. I'm hoping that Council
13 Committee reads all the testimony from today and from
14 City Planning hearing. My testimony was basically
15 asking for City Island Special District Zoning to
16 remain. We are a flood zone. We are inundated during
17 coastal storms and just plain rain. These
18 infrastructure issues need to be addressed before any
19 plan. I was happy to hear Council Member Riley ask
20 the question about Special District. I would like to
21 thank Council Member Marmorato and Borough President
22 Gibson for listening and advocating to allow Special
23 District Zoning to remain. We're wondering if they're
24 going to change the actual zones and will you put in
25 additional language in place that City Island Special

2 District residential areas should remain one- and
3 two-family homes as it currently exists. City
4 Planning doesn't seem to have a plan for
5 infrastructure with all this building because they
6 don't think it will be a problem. Thank you to the
7 Speaker and Council Members for pressing on this
8 issue. It's real. There's no comprehensive plan
9 regarding infrastructure. There is not 20 billion
10 dollars in DEP. Not until all of us pay more over a
11 decade on our water bill. As many from the Bronx have
12 attended hearings, Community Boards, City Planning
13 through media is claiming they were more than for
14 against City of Yes. They did not take into account
15 all the written testimony sent to them nor the
16 Community Boards which mostly really means more to
17 those opposing City of Yes. You would see this if you
18 just add up the written testimony and the in-person
19 testimony. I encourage City Council Members to
20 request all written testimony from City Planning and
21 City of Yes.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

23 CATHY CEBEK: Thank you.

24 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
25 very much. Okay. Alicia Spears.

2 CATHY CEBEK: I don't think I had two
3 minutes.

4 ALICIA SPEARS: Yes. Good morning. I'm
5 Alicia Spears. Can you hear me?

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Yes.

7 ALICIA SPEARS: Okay. Alicia Spears from
8 Cambridge Heights, Queens, and a homeowner. Stop the
9 lying and quackering. This isn't about housing. All
10 of you know it and don't care. We are the hospitals,
11 the schools, the supermarkets which are extremely
12 crowded already and support this value of people.
13 Infrastructure decades behind. Those who really are
14 honest and fight for the homeless, you have been
15 hoodwinked. This is a shakedown. Our own government
16 representatives and agencies are not law-abiding
17 either. What makes you think they will make
18 developers and others follow laws, buildings, codes
19 and restrictions as well? I ask that all involved
20 with the City of Yes be fully investigated. Governor
21 in that office, our politicians, Department of City
22 Planning Head and those in that office, Housing
23 Preservation and Development Head in that office,
24 DEP, Trade Unions, Fire Department Chiefs,
25 Inspectors, Developers in New York City and other

2 states and namely other countries, not-for-profit
3 homeless organizations, churches, church leaders,
4 investigate all connected to City of Yes. Don't leave
5 one rock unturned. No to City of Yes.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
7 very much. George Calderaro.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

9 GEORGE CALDERARO: Hello, I'm George
10 Calderaro, Board Member of six New York City civic
11 organizations. City of Yes for Housing Opportunity
12 won't create affordable housing because it does not
13 require or even prioritize affordable housing from
14 building owners and developers except for one
15 optional voluntary provision, but it does encourage
16 more unaffordable market rate and luxury housing. If
17 the City were serious about creating and retaining
18 affordable housing, it would not allow the demolition
19 of massive buildings such as the Hotel Pennsylvania
20 whose 2,000 rooms with bathrooms could easily be used
21 for housing as opposed to the massive vacant lot
22 we'll all be stuck with for the rest of our lives,
23 like those vacant lots that are found throughout
24 Midtown Manhattan, where massive historic buildings
25 were destroyed by so-called developers with impunity.

1 The City of Yes is part of a current multipart
2 offensive to deregulate development in New York City,
3 often using the disingenuous empty promises of
4 affordable housing. These coordinated efforts include
5 City of Yes, Open New York and its infiltration of
6 Community Boards, and Abundant New York, a PAC
7 created to fund pro-development elected officials,
8 hopefully no one listening to this call, as well as
9 other overt and covert tactics to "streamline
10 development and regulation". What these pro-
11 development, pro-developer proposals including City
12 of Yes for Housing Opportunity have in common is that
13 they argue we need more units, period, including
14 market rate and luxury units, despite the fact that
15 there are many empty market rate and luxury units,
16 not to mention the thousands of units that landlords,
17 including the City, are sitting on because current
18 rents are too affordable due to rent regulations.
19 Also, I ask that my and others' criticism of parts of
20 City of Yes not be branded and dismissed simply as
21 NIMBY. Our concerns for our communities and how they
22 look and function are considered insincere and they
23 should be yours too.

24
25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

2 GEORGE CALDERARO: Thank you.

3 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
4 very much. Angela Kravtchenko.

5 ANGELA KRAVTCHENKO: Kravchenko, yeah,
6 that was perfect. Thank you so much. No, that's okay.
7 That's perfect.

8 Good afternoon. I'm Angela Kravtchenko.
9 I'm Brooklyn resident and I'm a member of Community
10 Board 13, First Chair. Community Board 13 is Coney
11 Island, Brighton Beach, Seagate area, and we voted no
12 for the City of Yes, but I want to say we're not
13 against affordable housing. Also, we cannot rely on
14 developers to solve the housing affordability crisis.
15 It didn't work in Coney Island. In the past 10 years,
16 developers built 3,370 units, mostly rentals. 72
17 percent were rented at the market value. 28 percent
18 are marked affordable, but not by Coney Island
19 residents. Our median income is 44,000. 25 percent of
20 Coney Island residents live below poverty line and
21 very few of them have a chance to live in those
22 buildings with indoor pools and gym and other
23 amenities. Homeownership decreases at the same time 5
24 percent. Residential prices went up 55 percent. So
25 that was our reasoning. Another important issue is a

2 flood zone. I've heard a lot of people talk about it.
3 Coney Island is the fastest sinking area of New York
4 City as of now. So, we don't have a solidification
5 plan and it's not only flood, it's even heavy rain
6 brings us overflow from the sewer and the mixing is
7 not nice. Probably people who live in flood areas
8 they know what it is. So, until that 100 years, the
9 old system is solved and we have a new sewer so we
10 can afford bringing new residents and new people in
11 the area.

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

13 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Your time is
14 expired. Thank you very much.

15 Do any of the Council Members have any
16 questions for this panel?

17 The next panel is Ilan Rabinovich, Tyler
18 Baldwin, Michelle Koppersmith and David Tenenbaum, so
19 Ilan Rabinovich.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

21 ILAN RABINOVICH: Thank you for the
22 opportunity to testify in support of City of Yes for
23 Housing. I think it's a key first step in addressing
24 our housing crisis. I support any initiative that
25 adds more housing units to our city that direly needs

2 them. History has repeatedly shown us that having
3 supply that exceeds demand is the best way to bring
4 costs down. We saw this during the pandemic when
5 demand dropped, prices dropped. Supply remained
6 constant. We saw this in Minneapolis and Austin where
7 supply was allowed to outpace demand, so prices went
8 down. We need to do the same here. I understand the
9 changes aren't palatable to everyone. We all want our
10 neighborhood to stay the way it was when we moved in,
11 but we have to hold our noses and vote yes rather
12 than saying not in my backyard because we want people
13 to have homes, beds, safe places to live.

14 That being said, I want to raise a few
15 concerns. The proposal does not do anything to remove
16 the barriers that prevent housing expansion or
17 modernization coming from the Landmarks Commission.
18 My building was built in 1890, a time when the City
19 of New York had one-eighth the current population.
20 There's nothing I can do to change my building
21 because Landmarks will say no. I can't add more
22 housing. Similarly, there's economic challenges here
23 as well. The Universal Affordability Preference
24 builds in permanently affordable housing, but it has
25 no release valve or pressure valve should the cost of

2 providing housing grow at a faster rate than medium
3 incomes do. We've had years of this happening already
4 with inflation, taxes, insurance outpacing income
5 growth here in New York, so there's no reason to
6 believe that median area income will suddenly grow
7 faster than it has in the past, leaving housing
8 insolvent. If we want more affordable housing, we
9 need to make it affordable to provide that housing.
10 While I ask you to approve the City of Yes, I also
11 want you to sit back and think about the operational
12 costs of that housing and how we can make that
13 housing pencil out and quickly follow up with
14 initiatives that bring our property taxes to match
15 our goals, bring insurance costs down, regulate
16 utilities and other compliance costs so our costs for
17 providing rentals can be in line with affordable
18 rentals you want us to provide so thank you. Please
19 support this initiative.

20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
21 very much. Tyler Baldwin.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

23 TYLER BALDWIN: Hello. Thank you for
24 hosting this hearing today regarding City of Yes. New
25 York City is at a critical juncture, either continue

1 with population decline or rebuild and prioritize
2 working families within our city. By voting yes on
3 City of Yes, we can help build a little more housing
4 throughout the city. I currently reside in Astoria, a
5 neighborhood that has experienced substantial housing
6 development in recent years. According to StreetEasy,
7 Astoria's rental inventory has surged 47.1 percent
8 year-over-year while rental prices have increased 5.5
9 percent. While 5.5 percent may appear significant, it
10 represents nearly half of the rent growth absorbed in
11 the rest of the world, which stands at 11.1 percent.
12 Notably, Astoria is the only Queens neighborhood to
13 rank among the top ten in rental inventory growth.
14 Many of my friends reside in two- or three-bedroom
15 units with roommates, sometimes accommodating up to
16 six individuals per apartment. Many of them would
17 love to live alone but cannot due to financial
18 constraints that prevent them from affording studio
19 or one-bedroom units independently. Increasing the
20 availability of single-unit housing options will
21 enable younger individuals to obtain independence
22 while simultaneously providing larger units for
23 family. I support City of Yes, and I hope that it
24 passes in the fullest possible way. Cutting anything
25

2 out of City of Yes will significantly decrease the
3 viability of future projects and decrease the
4 substantial choices that City of Yes offers. Thank
5 you so much.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
7 very much. Michelle Koppersmith?

8 MICHELLE KUPPERSMITH: Thank you, and
9 thank you Council Member Schulman. I spend a lot of
10 time in your District. My grandmother has lived on
11 62nd Drive for almost 70 years now. I also want to
12 thank the other Council Members for being here and
13 listening to our testimony. My name is Michelle
14 Koppersmith, and I'm here to ask you to vote in favor
15 of the entirety of the City of Yes Housing
16 Opportunity Proposal because our city is in a
17 shameful and dire housing crisis that leaves 45,000
18 children sleeping in shelters every night. I'm a
19 Council District 1 resident, which had the dishonor
20 of creating one subsidized housing unit last year,
21 and I thank my Council Member for that failure.
22 Please be skeptical when he says he supported
23 subsidized projects in our District, such as Grand
24 Street Guild or (INAUDIBLE) Broom, both of which were
25 approved many years before he was elected Council

1 Member. We need City of Yes so that we can build in
2 Districts with do-nothing Council Members like mine
3 who say they want affordable housing, yet take no
4 steps to propose zoning changes that would hasten
5 their creation. Folks might have been a little
6 confused about earlier testimony, and I think there
7 might be some coming up regarding the SoHo/NoHo
8 rezoning, which passed all the way back in 2020. You
9 should be aware that this is a stunt by my District 1
10 Council Member to set up the removal of certain
11 provisions of that rezoning from the zoning text
12 during City of Yes negotiations in an effort to
13 benefit his real constituency, rich SoHo apartment
14 owners who knew full well that purchasing multi-
15 million-dollar apartments zoned only for artists and
16 residents was illegal. It's distressing that my
17 Council Member seems more interested in protecting
18 the profits of rich SoHo apartment owners than
19 welcoming neighbors to his District. When CB3, my
20 Community Board that I'm a member of, although I'm
21 here in my personal capacity, has year after year
22 named affordable housing as our number one District
23 need, and in fact, Community Board 3 in Manhattan did
24 overwhelmingly support this proposal so please vote
25

2 yes on City of Yes in its strongest possible form so
3 we can address the racist housing crisis that is
4 ongoing, and which a recent poll said 80 percent of
5 New Yorkers support. It's not only the right thing to
6 do, it's the popular thing, and thank you for
7 spending so much time here. I know it must be very
8 difficult. Have a good one.

9 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
10 very much. David Tenenbaum.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

12 LORA TENENBAUM: Well, I'm not David. I'm
13 Lora Tenenbaum. I did sign up to speak, and I hope
14 I'm not speaking out of turn. Shall I start?

15 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Are you part
16 of the same household as David?

17 LORA TENENBAUM: No. No, I do not know
18 David.

19 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Hold on one
20 second. You signed up?

21 LORA TENENBAUM: Oh, yeah. I signed up.

22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Can you just
23 tell us your name again? I'm sorry.

24 LORA TENENBAUM: It's Lora Tenenbaum.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. All
3 right. Go ahead. You can testify. Your two minutes
4 starts now. Go ahead.

5 LORA TENENBAUM: I want to first thank my
6 City Council Member, Chris Marte, for being such a
7 fierce advocate for his constituents in the city. I
8 see that you, too, value his knowledgeable input
9 here. This plan seeks to solve, in one overly broad
10 stroke, problems that beset our city, respecting
11 residential land use. I think most of you have made
12 clear you recognize its flaws, and I hope it leads
13 you to require the revisions within scope it needs to
14 meet its goals or to an outright rejection. The
15 greatest flaw in the plan is its simplistic,
16 neoliberal approach to housing. It seeks to have the
17 marketplace solve our housing crisis, removing most
18 restrictions, and the mistaken idea that build, baby,
19 build is the solution. That only benefits real
20 estate, of course. It may well bring us more housing,
21 but not the kind needed, which is affordable housing,
22 including supportive housing. DCP has ignored the
23 many economists and studies that expose its flaws,
24 including a glacial and temporary growth in the type
25 of residences we need. So, my major ask would be to

2 require substantial mandatory affordable housing in
3 all new construction, recognize the vital part rent
4 stabilization plays in affordability, and address the
5 problems intrinsic in how we measure affordability,
6 which is a moving target as communities gentrify.
7 Another ask is to reinstate the say the Council and
8 Community Boards have in land use decisions.

9 Democracy is messy, but it beats the alternative, and
10 DCP is offering the alternative. I live in SoHo, in
11 an only artists co-op, and I moved into it as a young
12 married back in 1973. SoHo would not be the generator
13 of so much commerce if it had not been for those of
14 us who brought an empty, decaying manufacturing
15 district to life. It's wrong that the community that
16 practically invented adaptive reuse is now the only
17 community required to pay an enormous conversion fee.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: The time has expired.

19 LORA TENENBAUM: Needs to be fully
20 inclusive. Thank you.

21 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
22 very much.

23 Okay, so two things. One is, do any of
24 the Council Members have questions for this panel?
25 Nope.

2 Okay. The other is that I want to just
3 tell folks, if you signed up online, please stay by
4 your computer. If you're not there when we call your
5 name, we're going to have to skip over it, and then
6 see if we have time for you at the end so please,
7 please stay by your computer.

8 The next panel is Esther Gimelfarb, Carin
9 Bail, Edward Ray, Diane Vigiano, Kevin Jones.

10 Okay. We're going to start with Esther
11 Gimelfarb.

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

13 ESTHER GIMELFARB: Hello. I am Esther
14 Gimelfarb. I am a lifelong New Yorker, a resident, a
15 proud taxpaying homeowner in Regal Park, Queens. This
16 entire process has been untransparent and a very
17 cynical, disingenuous theater that pretends to listen
18 to ordinary New Yorkers and residents and has
19 deployed unscrupulous, very arrogant, very divisive
20 ad hominem such as we're NIMBYs and elitists and even
21 racists, despite overwhelming opposition by every
22 demographic as we have seen in hearings like this and
23 previous ones. We have respectfully participated, put
24 our lives on hold, struggled to get informed,
25 struggled to inform others in this, like I said, very

2 untransparent process. We have complied, trying to
3 register our valid concerns only to feel like they
4 are dismissed for a predetermined outcome by a
5 clearly corrupt Administration, a Mayor that has been
6 indicted, whose Administration has been also
7 resigning and being charged with things like fraud
8 and bribes, including by construction companies such
9 as KSK, which had over 400,000 dollars in safety
10 violation fines. We are so angry. We are watching to
11 see what you guys will do because we feel like we are
12 just being railroaded, like I said, for a
13 predetermined outcome for the sake of padding
14 developers' bottom lines in a pay-to-play quid pro
15 quo scheme by a corrupt Administration. That is the
16 only people that would benefit this. Many other
17 people have already pointed out over and over again
18 all the different ways why this City of Yes proposal
19 is wrong...

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

21 ESTHER GIMELFARB: Ill-advised,
22 counterproductive (INAUDIBLE).

23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
24 very much. Carin Bail.

25 CARIN BAIL: Hi. My name is Carin Bail.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Sorry about
3 that.

4 CARIN BAIL: Thank you so much. I am here
5 before you today on behalf of myself and the Hollis
6 Hill Civic Association to voice our firm opposition
7 no to the City of Yes proposal. Despite these
8 overwhelming concerns that are raised by numerous
9 community members, it seems that the City and certain
10 members of this Planning Commission are intent on
11 pushing this forward. Over the last months and year,
12 countless residents have expressed their objection
13 through public forums, written statements, petitions.
14 They've articulated fears about potential negative
15 impacts in our communities, environmental
16 sustainability, and overall community well-being, and
17 these voices are being met with disregard. What is
18 your goal here? Are we to believe that the City
19 prioritizes progress over the genuine concerns of its
20 constituents? This situation raises serious questions
21 about the commitment to democratic principles. And
22 when community members are repeatedly expressing
23 their opposition, the responsible course of action is
24 to listen and engage in meaningful dialogue.
25 Reconsider this proposal. And if the City continues

2 to ignore the will of the people, how will they ever
3 trust that our voices will matter in future
4 decisions? It's time for our leaders to recognize the
5 true democracy involves valuing inputs of community,
6 and we deserve better than the City of Yes to
7 overlook our concerns, and I urge the Planning
8 Commission to reconsider and prioritize the voices of
9 those they represent. Thank you.

10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
11 very much. Edward Ray.

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin. Edward
13 Ray?

14 Okay, we're going to move on to Diane
15 Vigiano.

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

17 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay. Kevin
18 Jones.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

20 KEVIN JONES: Good afternoon, Chair Riley,
21 Chair Schulman, and Members of the Subcommittee on
22 Zoning and Franchise. My name is Kevin Jones. I am
23 the Associate State Director for Advocacy at AARP New
24 York, and I am here today on behalf of the 1.3
25 million older adults living in the five boroughs, and

1 I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to
2 testify.
3

4 While the housing crisis impacts all New
5 Yorkers, older adults acutely feel the effects of
6 high housing costs and fear they'll be priced out of
7 the communities they've lived in for years. According
8 to a report from Center for Urban Future, New York's
9 65-plus population grew by 36 percent, or about
10 363,000 people, between 2011 and 2021. As our older
11 adult population grows rapidly, New York City must
12 ensure housing policy meets this growing need. AARP
13 New York supports a number of housing proposals,
14 including allowing homeowners to build accessory
15 dwelling units on their properties. ADUs increase
16 affordable housing options for all New Yorkers and
17 give older New Yorkers the freedom to downsize and
18 live near their loved ones or caregivers. For older
19 adults on fixed income struggling to stay in their
20 homes, adding a small basement or attic apartment to
21 their property can be the difference that allows them
22 to age safely in their communities. Family
23 caregivers, often friends or family members, are the
24 backbone of a broken long-term care system. They help
25 with everything from buying groceries, managing

2 medications, to bathing and dressing. This intense
3 level of care is often balanced with other full-time
4 jobs and responsibilities, made much easier if
5 caregivers live near or even with the older adults.
6 Without increasing the affordable housing options,
7 older New Yorkers and their caregivers, whose help is
8 crucial to allow older adults to age in place and
9 independently, will struggle to remain in the city.
10 The City should also look for opportunities to create
11 housing close to public transportation without
12 disrupting neighborhood character. For medium and
13 high-density districts, New York City should also
14 adopt Universal Affordability Preference, which
15 allows buildings to include at least 20 percent more
16 housing if the additional homes are permanently
17 affordable. This would promote economic diversity and
18 inclusion across New York City.

19 I want to thank you again for allowing us
20 to testify today, and I will be submitting a longer
21 statement with more detail in writing. Thank you so
22 much.

23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you,
24 Kevin.

2 I'm going to go back. Is Edward Ray here
3 on Zoom? Diane Vigiano?

4 Okay. The online portion is now closed.

5 We're going to go back to in-person for
6 the next hour, so I'm going to call this panel up to
7 the front. June Moses, Celinas Miranda, Renee
8 Kinsella, Leonard Palletta (phonetic), and Tom Duane.

9 Is June Moses here? Hi. Okay. We'll start
10 with you. You have two minutes.

11 JUNE MOSES: Thank you, sir. Hi. My name
12 is June, like the month, Moses, like the Bible. I am
13 a past president of a tenant association in Harlem,
14 1,000 people, but right now I'm here as a private
15 citizen and a very concerned one. I'm struggling to
16 understand how the City of Yes on Housing
17 Opportunity, which is to address the desperate need
18 we have for housing in New York City, will meet the
19 needs of those this ambitious plan claims to help.
20 First, let's talk about the 87,000 people living in
21 DHS shelters. That number is not my number. I didn't
22 come up with it. It's from the New York City
23 Department of Investigations report on October 17,
24 2024. Google it, look it up, see what I'm talking
25 about. See, I wonder if that number would be less if

1 people who are already there would benefit from the
2 present housing that we have and that they would
3 income qualify. Right now, that number is high, so it
4 doesn't, and I'm not clear on how the City of Yes
5 would provide housing for those residents at 40
6 percent AMI. Now, there's about 2 million residents
7 here in the city that are considered low-income New
8 Yorkers and we are barely making it. It's not my
9 feelings and vibes on the subject. This is documented
10 by the poverty tracker presented by Columbia
11 University and the organization Robert Hood. These
12 are people for whom affordable housing is necessary,
13 not a luxury, yet I don't see how the City of Yes
14 offers a real path to affordable living and most of
15 us who are living at 40 percent AMI, we recognize
16 that that type of rent at 40 percent and above is not
17 viable for low-income residents. Now, let's move on
18 to the middle-income folks who are here who are also
19 getting squeezed and they are usually the ones who
20 have cited that the City of Yes is truly going to
21 help. Now, for those who rent, again, me, we already
22 know that AMI is a fluid number, which just this year
23 experienced a 10 percent increase. This has
24 effectively raised the bar on what affordable means,
25

2 making housing less affordable. Now, keep in mind..
3 sorry, I'll submit the rest. Thank you.

4 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Submit the
5 rest, but if you want to just wrap it up and..

6 JUNE MOSES: Oh, yes. The cost of living
7 from employers only went up 3.8 percent. The math
8 ain't math, and until we can take care of everybody,
9 I would have to say no or give us a plan on how we're
10 going to leave.

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
12 very much. Celines Miranda.

13 CELINES MIRANDA: Housing crisis, a
14 terminology that's constantly being abused, used to
15 give private developers the right to exploit our
16 communities. All they do is build market rate housing
17 and provide the minimum of 20 percent affordability,
18 and our housing crisis persists. We need a different
19 solution. There's plenty of underutilized buildings.
20 Let's work with the ones we have now. Let's return to
21 rent control regulations. Housing is a necessity, not
22 a commodity. City of Yes is a plan to service private
23 developers. Height restriction must remain. Why not
24 allow the constituents to participate in the changes
25 of their own community? Developers abuse their power,

1 such as related owners of Hudson Yard who want to
2 demolish our Fulton and Elliott Chelsea public
3 housing under the guise of resident engagement and a
4 false narrative that our buildings are falling apart,
5 but our buildings are strong, solid, and built to
6 last, which only need maintenance and repairs. They
7 want rezoning to triple the height and change the
8 aesthetic of our tranquil, cozy community with plenty
9 of open space and an abundance of trees. The elderly,
10 sick, disabled, and the mental well-being of the
11 tenants are not being taken into account. We will be
12 sacrificed. Elected officials going along with it to
13 give preference to developers. We are a capitalist
14 society but a democracy first. Protect our city. We
15 cannot withstand so much more weight. We are at risk
16 now. Stop debilitating New York City. Keep our height
17 limit and no more rezoning in Chelsea. What the Mayor
18 needs to do is put a rent cap 30 and 40 percent for
19 higher income earners and hardworking class. He
20 should lay out a rent control plan. City of Yes
21 should be put to a complete halt. Mayor Adams is
22 under investigation and all of his approved proposals
23 are suspicious. No demolition of Fulton, Elliott, and
24 Chelsea.
25

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
3 very much. Renee Kinsella. You can start now.

4 RENEE KINSELLA: Thanks for the
5 opportunity to speak today. My name is Renee Kinsella
6 and I'm speaking on behalf of the 29th Street
7 Association on the East Side of Manhattan. We are
8 concerned about the adoption of City of Yes for
9 Housing Opportunity because it fails to guarantee
10 affordable housing will be built in our community and
11 further absolutely fails to preserve our existing
12 affordable housing. We've seen previous rezoning,
13 some of which generated a large supply of market rate
14 and luxury housing, yet did not alleviate the housing
15 crisis so we're skeptical that this time some sort of
16 trickle down supply side will provide the
17 affordability that we seek. We've been told that this
18 plan includes specific affordable housing provisions,
19 yet it appears what this means is leaving the
20 incredibly important goal of producing affordable
21 housing almost entirely up to developers to decide
22 how much affordable housing will be built or whether
23 any affordable housing will be built in our community
24 at all. And if developers choose to build all luxury
25 buildings without a single unit of affordable

1 housing, this plan will allow for that. Even more
2 concerning, the City of Yes for housing plan does not
3 have a provision for preserving the affordable
4 housing that currently exists. In our neighborhood,
5 Rose Hill and Kips Bay, we have a lot of natural
6 affordable housing, older stock of brownstones and
7 walk-ups, and the neighborhood is really known as a
8 place where people can afford their first apartment,
9 but what's happening now is that those affordable
10 units are not being preserved. Instead, they're being
11 bought up and knocked down to create luxury buildings
12 that provide less units and more expensive so-called
13 affordable housing than the original buildings they
14 replace. Take a walk around our community and you can
15 see the destruction of what remains of affordability.
16 City of Yes will add density to our neighborhoods,
17 yet it does not address the very things that make our
18 city livable, the light, air, and green space while
19 taking away most of the community input and
20 oversight. So, we, the 29th Street Association, urge
21 the Council to reject the zoning proposal and instead
22 adopt a citywide rezoning plan that includes
23 affordability mandates, anti-displacement measures
24 for current affordable housing, guaranteed
25

2 infrastructure improvements, and community input
3 processes.

4 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
5 very much. Is Leonard Palletta here? No? Okay.

6 So, former State Senator and former City
7 Council Member, Tom Duane.

8 TOM DUANE: Thank you very much. I'm going
9 to just go through a bunch of stuff. You could say
10 I'm neither totally opposed nor totally for this. I
11 am one of the authors of the Chelsea Plan I also
12 shepherded through the City Planning Commission and
13 then through the City Council. It has been modified
14 through the years, but I just want to give one
15 example of something that happened, because I heard
16 the woman from VOA saying (INAUDIBLE) do anything,
17 they actually put a development with supportive
18 housing. We permitted them to put in an extra floor
19 and the mechanicals on top. And Hell's Kitchen does
20 the same thing. Very accommodating, and I know not
21 every neighborhood is, but to people who could use
22 supportive housing. In a perfect world, even if this
23 does go through, although I understand the Council's
24 going to do its own, but really, it would be, I don't
25 know, Community Boards don't have planners, they

2 don't get planners paid to be on their staff, do
3 they? No. That would even the playing field. So, I
4 mean, I could tell you every building, every lot,
5 every place you could build housing in my
6 neighborhood. I'm going to tell you a terrible story.
7 We rezoned Flatiron, which was garages and factories.
8 We kept commercial on the bottom floor, but it
9 allowed residential buildings to be built and to have
10 the manufacturing converted. At the time, there was
11 no program when, this is when Joe Rose, the City
12 Planning Commissioner, there was no program for
13 affordable housing, but written into the Chelsea Plan
14 was, should there ever be a City-owned site that
15 becomes available, it would be made available for
16 low-income people, and what happened was, there was
17 sanitation, garage, and lot, which they didn't want
18 to use anymore, and housing should have gone there
19 but, instead, people who, because of changing the
20 zoning and letting them live in those buildings,
21 passed around a petition that said, do you want a
22 park? Like, really disingenuous, do you want a park?
23 So now there's a park there where there should be
24 housing. I haven't vandalized it or anything, but it
25 breaks my heart every time I go by there, because it

2 was supposed to be for affordable housing. There is
3 no way to build affordable housing. I mean, as far as
4 I know, the State Legislature has not given any
5 incentives to build affordable housing.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Okay.

7 TOM DUANE: And also, one last thing. Two
8 last things. One is, okay, what they're doing Chelsea
9 and Elliott and Fulton houses. How come that's not
10 being done in East New York? I mean, let's look at
11 where affordability matters. And also, now you've
12 made it so that someone who lives in East New York
13 will have a more difficult time getting an apartment
14 in a new building because of the way the Community
15 Board... now, I understand that it doesn't work that
16 way in Manhattan, but it works everywhere. The other
17 thing is, New Yorkers are Americans. They drive. I
18 think you have to have garages where people have
19 cars. They want to get out of the city. Uber, Lyft,
20 you know, is not enough, rental cars, and if
21 congestion pricing comes in, I can't wait to see what
22 61st Street looks like. Are they going to have, like,
23 an internal parking there? I mean, you have to give
24 people a place to park. People are Americans.

25 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you.

2 TOM DUANE: And the Port Authority should
3 have built places where buses could go after they
4 dropped off tourists to go to shows so that the bus
5 drivers didn't have to sit around idling. They could
6 eat food and, you know, relax until they had to bring
7 people back.

8 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Senator.

9 TOM DUANE: I can give you more than that,
10 as you know, Lynn, but look at me. I'm stopping now.
11 Thank you.

12 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you
13 very much.

14 Okay. Does anybody have questions for
15 this panel? No?

16 Okay. Thank you very much, all.

17 TOM DUANE: There might be questions. That
18 was very fast, Lynn.

19 ACTING CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: That's okay.
20 No, that's okay. We have a lot of folks today.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. I am back.
22 Thank you so much, Council Member Lynn Schulman.

23 The next panel that we're going to call
24 up consists of Yahel Carman, Isaac Alderstein,
25 Guillermo Gomez, Talya Shwartz-Neor (phonetic),

2 Rachel Simmons, and Garrett Armwood, and Marjorie
3 Brown.

4 The following panel after will consist of
5 Jack Bolembach, Thomas Diana, Vienna Levitan,
6 Michelle Alleyne, I believe, and Migdalia Cortez.

7 If you heard your name, please come up to
8 the front seat. We will begin first with Yahel
9 Carmen. Sorry if I mispronounced your name.

10 YAHIEL CARMEN: Thank you, Council, for the
11 opportunity to speak. My name is Yahel Carmen. I'm a
12 homeowner in Ridgewood, Queens, father of two
13 autistic public school children ages three and six.
14 I'm here because I think it's important for the
15 Council to hear from a wide range of voices, but it
16 is hard for parents of young children to show up for
17 Community Board meetings that start during bedtime or
18 hearings like this that run during school pickup. I
19 took a vacation day to be here today. I'm here
20 because I'm a parent who desperately wants to stay a
21 New Yorker, but as it stands, our City's zoning
22 regulations make that harder than it needs to be. I'm
23 here to speak in favor of the City of Yes Housing
24 Opportunity proposal. Many parents of young children
25 are fleeing to other states that are growing their

1 housing supply to meet demand. The city's supply of
2 housing has failed to meet their needs. The number of
3 children under four in the city has dropped 15
4 percent since 2020. When my children were born, the
5 zoning ban on accessory dwelling units meant that our
6 newborn childcare options were severely limited. I
7 didn't have room to have a grandparent or childcare
8 worker move to help when my wife and I returned to
9 work. I would happily jump at the opportunity to
10 convert my fully detached garage to an ADU to enable
11 me to expand the livable spaces on my property. We
12 need to make it easier for families to stay in the
13 city. City of Yes represents an opportunity to allow
14 families to continue to grow and thrive without being
15 forced to leave the city. More broadly, I'm fortunate
16 to be a homeowner, but if my son's public school
17 teacher can't afford to pay her rent, if we cannot
18 find a local speech therapist to support my son's
19 speech delay because none can afford to live in our
20 neighborhood, then we are failing to create a livable
21 community. We need more housing options in every
22 neighborhood to allow every neighborhood to thrive. I
23 encourage the council to support these zoning changes
24 in their entirety. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

3 Next, we'll hear from Isaac Adlerstein.

4 ISAAC ALDERSTEIN: Hi, good afternoon and
5 thanks so much for giving us all the opportunity to
6 speak. So, I'm Isaac Adlerstein, and I serve as the
7 Executive Director of Broadway Community. We are a
8 42-year-old human service agency in Morningside
9 Heights. We operate a soup kitchen, shelter, on-site
10 medical services in partnership with the Institute
11 for Family Health, case management services, and so
12 much more. Each week, hundreds of New Yorkers come to
13 us to find food, sanctuary, and community.

14 Approximately half of the people that we serve, whom
15 we call guests, are currently living in the streets
16 or in the shelter system. The other half is severely
17 rent burdened, necessitating reliance on emergency
18 services like those that we provide. New York City,
19 of course, is known worldwide as a place of
20 opportunity, but for far too many, that promise is
21 slipping away. We've heard the statistics already,
22 but last night 87,000 people slept in the shelter
23 system, including over 19,000 families with children.
24 And according to City Harvest, approximately 1.4
25 million New Yorkers have depended on emergency food

2 programs in 2023. Another point is that in Fiscal
3 Year 2023, the average single adult in the shelter
4 system spent 412 days in the system before being
5 placed into permanent housing. So, clearly there's
6 just a serious strain on the housing stock. Pathway
7 out of homelessness is not straightforward. When
8 someone gets a CityFHEPS voucher or is approved for a
9 2010E, it could take months or even years to find a
10 suitable place. I think the City of Yes has a lot of
11 really interesting and compelling ideas, but after
12 hearing some of the other testimonies today, I urge
13 the City Council to revisit the plan as a whole.
14 Again, I think there are lots of great ideas there,
15 but I don't think that it should be a hammer. I think
16 that it should be a more precise approach and do a
17 bit more education with the communities that will be
18 affected. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. And next
20 we'll hear from Guillermo Gomez. Sorry if I
21 mispronounced your name.

22 GUILLERMO GOMEZ: Good afternoon. My name
23 is Guillermo Gomez. I'm speaking today on behalf of
24 Urban Design Forum to express our support for City of
25 Yes for Housing Opportunity. New York City's housing

2 crisis demands bold action. Our current zoning laws
3 are outdated, restricting housing in areas with
4 excellent transit and job opportunities, and
5 perpetuate racial and economic segregation. Paired
6 with incentives and subsidy for deeply affordable
7 housing, City of Yes for Housing Opportunity has the
8 potential to address this crisis head-on. At Urban
9 Design Forum, a member-powered non-profit of over
10 1,000 civic leaders, we work to connect and inspire
11 New Yorkers design, build, and care for a better
12 city. We've consistently tackled issues like housing
13 affordability and homelessness, drawing on the
14 expertise of leaders in community planning, design,
15 and development. Several key proposals in City of Yes
16 plan align with our priorities. First, City of Yes
17 will allow easier conversions of underutilized office
18 buildings, boosting our housing stock, revitalizing
19 street-level activity, and promoting reuse of
20 existing structures to reduce construction waste.
21 Second, we can lift parking mandates and join cities
22 like Buffalo and San Francisco that have already
23 eliminated these requirements. Development projects
24 can prioritize much-needed housing units over
25 oftentimes unneeded extra parking on-site, which

could make projects more feasible and reduce rents.

Third, City of Yes could support the creation of many housing options for our most vulnerable New Yorkers.

It will legalize granny flats to help older adults age in place, create pathways for safer, regulated basement apartments, which are critical but often

very vulnerable housing options, and streamline the

development of supportive housing for those at risk

or experiencing homelessness. Finally, promoting

transit-oriented development will ensure that new

housing is built where people can access public

transit, reducing car dependency and supporting

climate-forward, healthier communities. While all

these proposals are important, they're also

incremental and modest, increasing housing numbers

citywide rather than concentrating in specific

neighborhoods. City of Yes cannot address this crisis

alone, so we encourage the City to also continue to

seek ways to fund deeply affordable housing, maintain

our public housing, and support tenant protections.

Urban Design Forum urges the City Council to adopt

City of Yes as a key step toward a more equitable and

fair New York City. Thanks so much.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
3 hear from Talya Schwartz-Neor.

4 TALYA SCHWARTZ: Good afternoon. My name
5 is Talya Schwartz, and I'm a Strategist at Open
6 Plans, and I'm speaking in support of City of Yes.
7 Specifically, I'm here to support lifting parking
8 mandates, which have been contributing to the rising
9 costs of housing development and increasing car
10 ownership all over the country and here in New York
11 City. Parking mandates contribute to the high cost of
12 living by requiring developers to build many, many
13 parking spots even when residents don't need it or
14 want it. One building in Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn
15 is being forced to build 193 parking spots, even
16 though it's one block from a subway station, and many
17 people who live in the building will have no use for
18 a car. Because of parking mandates, the City is
19 forcing developers, homeowners, and renters to pay
20 for those parking spots, and the cost is high, very
21 high. It currently costs 150,000 dollars per parking
22 spot. This adds an estimated 17 percent increase in
23 rental costs. This data comes from an Open Plans
24 report about parking mandates. I encourage people to
25 read it. Cities are full of lots of different

2 neighborhoods with different characteristics. Densely
3 packed neighborhoods near transit do not need the
4 same amount of parking as residential city
5 neighborhoods. We ask that you pass City of Yes and
6 allow people who want parking to seek housing with
7 parking instead of forcing it on everyone. In New
8 York City, 50 percent of people don't own a car, and
9 if you can believe it, some people don't want to own
10 a car. Some people would rather have affordable
11 housing. The current regulations are uniformly
12 prioritizing parking over housing. Land is a precious
13 resource in New York City, and with parking mandates
14 we are currently choosing to build two parking spots
15 instead of a studio apartment. Further, each new
16 parking spot built is another car driving on our
17 crowded streets. People here today have complained
18 about increased congestion and slow buses, yet the
19 population of New York City has not increased. So
20 what explains it? Simply put, people are driving more
21 than before.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
23 hear from Rachel Simpson.

24 RACHEL SIMPSON: Hi. Thank you. Good
25 afternoon. My name is Rachel Simpson, and I'm an

2 architect specializing in affordable housing. I'm
3 here to support the zoning changes in the City of Yes
4 for Housing Opportunity, but I want to specifically
5 address and also support the removal of minimum
6 parking requirements for new housing. Parking
7 mandates significantly drive up the cost of housing,
8 especially in affordable housing projects by forcing
9 developers to allocate their limited resources to
10 parking spaces instead of building more desperately
11 needed housing units. In some cases, these mandates
12 even lead to underdevelopment, where builders create
13 fewer housing units than they could just to avoid
14 triggering higher parking requirements or bigger and
15 costlier parking structures. The current parking
16 requirements were established generally in the '50s
17 and '60s and are not based on any current data or
18 studies regarding car ownership or car usage. They
19 are outdated. One-size-fits-all mandates that don't
20 reflect the diverse needs of New York City's many
21 neighborhoods. I want to address a common
22 misconception or fear that we've heard frequently
23 about these changes. These changes do not eliminate
24 our ability to build parking. They simply remove the
25 requirement to do so for new housing. This gives

2 developers and designers the freedom and flexibility
3 to provide parking where it is needed without
4 imposing unnecessary burdens where it's not, allowing
5 each neighborhood's unique needs to be met with
6 appropriate nuance. Today's regulations limit our
7 potential to build based on obsolete assumptions. Our
8 housing crisis and affordability crisis demand that
9 we address the issue from all sides. Zoning alone
10 can't solve this, but these changes are a critical
11 tool to unlock new housing opportunities and to lower
12 costs. We should not approach this problem from an
13 either-or, scarcity mentality, but with a yes-and
14 sense of practicality and possibility. I urge the
15 Council to approve the City of Yes for Housing
16 opportunity and put people before parking.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
18 hear from Margy Brown.

19 MARGY BROWN: Good afternoon. Thank you
20 for the opportunity to testify. My name is Margy
21 Brown, and I'm Executive Director of UHAB. For 50
22 years, UHAB has empowered low- and moderate-income
23 residents to take control of their housing and become
24 homeowners in the buildings where they already live.
25 While UHAB's mission is centered on preserving

1 existing housing and helping residents to remain in
2 their homes, we are keenly aware that adding to the
3 city's housing supply is a crucial pillar to
4 stabilize communities of color and bolster
5 homeownership opportunities. That's why I am here
6 today to support the City of Yes for Housing
7 opportunity. City of Yes creates more housing and
8 creates it more fairly. These reforms ensure that
9 communities that have historically benefited from
10 zoning restrictions support their fair share of
11 development, easing pressure on historically
12 disinvested communities of color, which are now
13 experiencing rapid gentrification and displacement of
14 longtime residents. What's more, City of Yes opens up
15 the opportunity to create more affordable
16 cooperatives, a proven source of stability for at-
17 risk residents and communities faced with rapid
18 change. We are also here to say yes-and. As we boldly
19 create new housing, we need to be just as bold in our
20 plans to preserve our aging housing stock. Zoning
21 alone cannot ameliorate New York City's dire housing
22 crisis. We would like to highlight a few measures and
23 initiatives that create more deeply affordable
24 housing, open up affordable homeownership
25

2 opportunities, protect tenants from displacement, and
3 preserve our existing housing stock. More robust
4 funding to restart the Neighborhood Pillars Program,
5 funding for HPD preservation pipelines like GHPP,
6 TPT, and ANCP, and adequate staffing in those
7 programs to ensure that those pipelines move forward.
8 More funding for affordable homeownership projects
9 through Open Door and others. We'll submit a fuller
10 statement. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Are there
12 any questions for this panel?

13 There being no questions, panel's
14 excused. Thank you for testifying.

15 The next panel I'm going to call up
16 consists of Jack Bolembach, Thomas Diana, Vienna
17 Levitan, Michelle Alleyne, and Migdalia Cortez. You
18 can sit at the dais.

19 The next group to come up after them will
20 consist of Austin Celestin, Ben Wetzler, Thomas
21 Lopez-Pierre, Pastor Paul Peart, Jim Wright, and
22 Dante Monroe. If you heard your name, please come to
23 the front seats.

24 Okay. We'll begin first with Jack
25 Bolembach.

2 JACK BOLEMBACH: Thanks for this
3 opportunity for coming here. My name is Jack
4 Bolembach. I belong to Civic Associations against the
5 City of Yes, particularly for residential, and I'm
6 here not as a paid person. I'm here just as a
7 resident of the City of New York. And there's a lot
8 of problems for residential neighborhoods with the
9 City of Yes, and I'll outline them quickly as I can.
10 I don't have any to read, but I'm just going to talk
11 about it. One is, zoning has been implemented to
12 protect neighborhoods. Since 1960s, it's improved the
13 quality of life of Staten Islanders tremendously and
14 most of the residential neighborhoods around the
15 city, and this doesn't matter where you live, who the
16 people are, ethnically or racially. Everybody who
17 owns homes is in the same situation. This is our
18 biggest investment. We want to protect it. There's
19 some dangers to having the City of Yes in residential
20 neighborhoods, and there should be some changes maybe
21 made to the zoning laws, like our Constitution. We
22 have changes. We have provisions that make changes
23 called amendments so it should be looked at
24 carefully, but nothing should be done, one shoe fits
25 all. Each neighborhood has a different character. And

2 one of the problems would be if you have garages,
3 attics, basements made into rentals. Who are the
4 people that are going to be renting in these
5 neighborhoods? You don't know. They could be addicts.
6 They could be people with criminal records. You could
7 have people with problems. You don't want to raise
8 children and grandchildren in neighborhoods like
9 that. You may get people selling their houses to try
10 to leave to go somewhere else. You're going to lose
11 the tax base. Since 2020, New York City lost 800,000
12 people already. So, we have spaces to build rental
13 housing. Our problem is affordability. That should be
14 addressed.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Jack. You
16 did a great job.

17 JACK BOLEMBACH: Electrical problems are a
18 problem, too. Circuits can be overloaded with houses.
19 Remember, that causes fires.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Jack.
21 Thomas Diana.

22 THOMAS DIANA: Yes, thank you. As a rental
23 property owner of 35 years, I see the history of
24 impulsive regulations that accomplish little at great
25 cost. With an underemployed squatter of eight years

2 like mine, owners and tenants alike are reluctant to
3 rent out apartments and spare rooms, which would
4 naturally increase inexpensive housing options for
5 single adults. Freeloaders have become one of my top
6 expenses, driving up rents for the real tenants.

7 Building more houses does not change my base costs
8 for fuel, maintenance, insurance, and yes,
9 transportation. You keep trying to create subsidized
10 housing instead of truly affordable housing.

11 Homeowners like me work for 40 years at two real jobs
12 to afford our homes, along with other people who did
13 the same. That should be respected. Eight- and
14 twelve-unit apartments on all corners of blocks, plus
15 garage, attic, and basement conversions will destroy
16 the parking we need, overwhelm the schools, and
17 increase the noise and crime. Just like Levittown and
18 Hicksville, you need to build small and naturally
19 inexpensive apartments in the correct commercial
20 areas with mass transit. Okay? Because nothing
21 changes my costs. My squatter has become one of the
22 largest costs of maintaining my building because she
23 has not paid rent in eight years. Yes, eight years,
24 all right, and unfortunately, some of the City
25 Council Members who know about that aren't here, Bob

2 Holden, Vicki, Linda Lee, okay, and this drives up
3 the costs of my other tenants, plus all the defensive
4 work I've had to do, plus paying my lawyer. And this
5 is driving up my tenants' costs.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Thomas.

7 Next, we're going to have Vienna Levitan.

8 VIENNA LEVITAN: Dear City Council, my
9 name is Vianna Leviton, and I'm here to testify as a
10 resident of Ridgewood on behalf of Ridgewood Property
11 Owners' Civic Association and thousands of others in
12 my community to oppose City of Yes. I have already
13 testified before this Council back in May and again
14 in August before Queens Borough President outlining
15 irreversible damage this agenda will cause to my
16 neighborhood and much of our city. The City of Yes
17 was crafted by developers for developers. You were
18 elected to represent us, the voters, not those driven
19 solely by profits. Over the years, many historic
20 structures in New York City have been demolished due
21 to rezoning, showing that cultural architectural
22 heritage is repeatedly sacrificed for profit. This
23 latest plan is being pushed by a Mayor under
24 indictment, seeking to repay his most powerful donors
25 in the development industry. Let's consider the

1 facts. Since the pandemic, New York City lost over
2 800,000 residents, bringing us back to the population
3 levels from the '60s. Many buildings across the city
4 have over a 30 percent vacancy rate. Why does my
5 neighborhood and others like it need 500 percent plus
6 increase in density? Our infrastructure is crumbling.
7 The City is already struggling to maintain it.
8 Developers have no interest in affordable housing
9 because it reduces their profits, and who will ensure
10 fire safety and compliance when we're already behind
11 on these issues? Our infrastructure is over 30 years
12 out of date, and moving forward with this plan will
13 drag us back to 19th century deplorable conditions.
14 The environmental impact will be disastrous. Since
15 the 1960s, more than 800,000 housing units have been
16 added, with another 150K approved this year. Current
17 zoning can already accommodate 16 to 20 million
18 people, so why are we handing over our neighborhoods
19 to developers on a silver platter? The problem is not
20 the number of housing, but affordability. Most new
21 developments are market rate luxury, pushing out
22 long-term residents and working families instead of
23 addressing the real need for affordability, housing,
24

2 developers, and private. We ask you to vote no,
3 please.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thanks, Ms. Levitan.
5 Next, we'll have Michelle Alleyne.

6 MICHELLE ALLEYNE: My name's Michelle
7 Alleyne. I was a 9/11 responder and survivor of 9/11,
8 and I want to talk about the World Trade Occupational
9 Health Center Social Work Department for 9/11
10 responders going from work to retirement and they
11 found themselves in a situation where they lost their
12 housing, waiting to get on their retirement, or
13 receive benefits through the 9/11 fund for their
14 resources. It's there, but it's not being publicly
15 administration or organizationally managed in a way
16 where they can find accommodative housing. They're
17 falling in the wrong safety net that doesn't receive
18 no 9/11 funding. Right? DHS and HRA doesn't receive
19 no 9/11 funding. And you'll find some people,
20 survivors and responders...

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Ms. Alleyne, is this
22 tied into the proposal?

23 MICHELLE ALLEYNE: Yes. Okay, let's put it
24 this way. Low-density zoning encourages homeownership
25 and American Dream. Low-density zoning remains the

2 best weapon for overdevelopment. A lot of these new
3 buildings are being placed around the city, and they
4 are on the edges of the city, and it could cause an
5 environmental problem if they don't look at the
6 situation because every year the water is rising and
7 New York is sinking, but yet they put in these big
8 buildings, and if we lose our zoning, we lose the
9 community input on what is built and how high some of
10 these buildings are being built, very high. Now
11 Fayetteville turned around, North Carolina turned
12 around and opened up their doors to receive some of
13 these homeless people to go to the State of North
14 Carolina because the shelters were overflowing here,
15 you know, and due to the hurricanes and stuff, a lot
16 of people nationally, because it's World Trade Center
17 Registry, is being displaced, and you'll find in the
18 South, they don't have shelters, but here they have
19 it, but they haven't..

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms.
21 Alleyne, and what you stated before is not going to
22 go unnoticed so you could submit your testimony, and
23 we could also discuss that issue as well.

24 MICHELLE ALLEYNE: Okay.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Last from this panel
3 is Migdalia Cortez.

4 MIGDALIA CORTEZ: There's enough room for
5 everyone so everyone make some room. I am 61, I just
6 turned, I love New York, I lived here all my life,
7 I'm at risk of getting evicted after 30 years, and
8 privatization sounds the same thing to me as
9 developers. They don't care about people like me. The
10 rent just keeps going up and up. This is about
11 affordability. This is about using what's there
12 already. There's so many vacant lots and vacant
13 spaces, and like someone testified before, apartments
14 that are empty, that's a crime. While people are in
15 the street laid out, how can we just walk over them
16 and ignore it? The problems are there if we're
17 willing to solve them, and it's not up to a
18 developer. It's up to the Council working together
19 with the Mayor and creating comprehensive things that
20 don't hurt people like me. I love my community, and I
21 love my neighbors, and I've worked all my life, and I
22 do not deserve this. They make investments and they
23 get something. I invested living in my building and I
24 get put out, so I emphatically say no to this so-

2 called plan. It needs to be well thought out so it
3 doesn't hurt people like me. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Cortez.
5 Council Member Hanif.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chair
7 Riley. I have a question, perhaps to the gentleman.
8 Could you describe what neighborhood character means
9 to you, and then your points on the need for more
10 affordability, which I think came across the entire
11 panel, is well-received, heard, loud, and clear.

12 MIGDALIA CORTEZ: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Where do you think
14 this affordable housing gets built?

15 JACK BOLEMBACH: Well, there are a lot of
16 vacant land in New York City. There are, and there is
17 a lot of... I'm not talking about parkland or
18 preservation land. I'm talking about actually lots
19 that have just been abandoned. There are homes that
20 you see boarded up. You should zoom in on those
21 areas. Target those areas. It will create jobs. It
22 will create affordable housing, not something that a
23 developer is going to build that are making a lot of
24 money and couldn't care less about this lady down
25 here. This is horrible hearing this. I think

2 character in neighborhoods is people moved into
3 neighborhoods. They invested a lot of their money,
4 their time, and they enjoyed living where they're
5 living. If the neighborhood changes, if your
6 neighborhood changes, and you get people in there
7 that's going to be criminals or whatever, people are
8 going to move away. You've got to think about this
9 very carefully, what you're going to do. You're going
10 to have what they call flop houses. That's why they
11 came up with zoning. Character in neighborhood is the
12 different neighborhoods. Each neighborhood in the
13 city is unique. All the boroughs are unique. What we
14 want to do is preserve that, but we need
15 affordability. I would look at all the areas that we
16 can build places, empty lots, abandoned houses.
17 Something I know, I don't know if I should say this
18 here, one more quick thing. We have rent
19 stabilization, which is good. People need that to
20 help afford houses. I know millionaires who are
21 living in rent-stabilized apartments with doormen.
22 They're worth two or three million, and they pay...

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Just going back to
24 the question...

2 JACK BOLEMBACH: They pay 950 dollars a
3 month.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: What is
5 neighborhood character? Where does affordable housing
6 get built? If there's specificity, we would really
7 love to hear it.

8 THOMAS DIANA: Can I give you an answer as
9 an engineer? I don't know if you saw this, but it was
10 such an egregious example. They built High Rise in
11 LA, 660,000 dollars per unit. Makes North Shore
12 Towers look like a slum. They are building, you
13 probably don't know the history of Levittown and
14 Hicksville. These houses were built that blue collar
15 workers could afford them. Instead, you're building
16 luxury apartments and having taxpayers pay for them.
17 That architect was right on cue when he said you need
18 small, micro apartments that a single person can live
19 in that are nice, not marble everything, and that
20 they can then afford them, and you make a target
21 price of something like 1,200 or 1,500 dollars for
22 them.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I'm sorry, Mr. Diane,
24 we have to wrap this up. We have a lot of people
25 signed up.

2 THOMAS DIANA: As an engineer, I was
3 trying to give her a straight answer.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: No, we appreciate it,
5 and I just want to add context before this panel
6 goes. I don't believe you meant that, Mr. Jack, but I
7 just wanted to make context. We are trying our best
8 to hear different feedback from the community and to
9 keep community character in place, but I just wanted
10 to denounce the notion that this proposal is going to
11 bring in undesirables. I think there's a lot of
12 people out there that need housing, no matter their
13 situation, and we're trying to make sure that they
14 have some form of housing. I don't want to say that
15 this proposal is going to bring in criminals and drug
16 addicts. I think that's unfair to say. I think this
17 proposal is trying to address a housing issue. Is it
18 the complete way to address it? No, it's not. We
19 totally understand that. That's why we're trying to
20 get feedback, but I just want to make that notion
21 that people that are coming in our communities aren't
22 undesirables. They're people that need housing and
23 health.

24 Ms. Alleyne, I would let you continue,
25 but I have over 400 people signed up, and I don't

2 want the Staff here until midnight so I'm just going
3 to ask you guys. Thank you.

4 I'm going to ask the next panel to come
5 up, please. Thank you.

6 The panel after that will consist of
7 Julio Herrera, Vito Labella, William Scarborough, and
8 Denisa Rodriguez.

9 Also, Sergeant, can you please get Ms.
10 Migdalia Cortez's information for me, please? Thank
11 you. Ms. Cortez, can you give the Sergeants your
12 information for me, please?

13 We're going to begin first with Austin
14 Celestin from this panel.

15 AUSTIN CELESTIN: Can you hear me? It is
16 9:40 in Hawaii, so good morning. My name is Austin
17 Celestin. I was born and raised on the Upper West
18 Side. I've lived here all my life. This is all I
19 know, and maybe I hope to live my days out here. I'm
20 privileged to have a loving family that has also been
21 here. My dad has had his Mitchell-Lama apartment
22 since 1976. That's a privilege that I have and that
23 I'm grateful for, and I recognize it's a privilege
24 that far too few of us in the city have. Everyone
25 here knows how bad our vacancy rates are, median

2 rents, homeless population, rent-burdened household,
3 build times, approval costs, delays. Everyone knows
4 that. You don't need to hear me regurgitate that.

5 Much like I could have filled the CPC's hearing with
6 stories of those close to me hurt by our housing
7 crisis, I could fill this hearing with reasons for my
8 support, but I only have 75 seconds. I'll be brief. I
9 support City of Yes because these ideas have
10 precedent and have been successfully implemented in
11 other cities. Because the South Bronx and downtown
12 Brooklyn can't solve this crisis alone, and we
13 shouldn't be celebrating the downzoning of the
14 Giuliani and Bloomberg Administration, because we
15 have a shortage of homes, not parking. Because legal
16 ADUs are safe ADUs. Because the air rights that
17 historic churches have can do wonders for themselves,
18 but also their communities. Because I like the San
19 Remo on Central Park West, and I think not only would
20 those high-density districts make it legal again, but
21 it would get around the concerns about UAP being
22 optional. Because New Yorkers' emissions are the
23 lowest in the country, because our refusal to build
24 housing cost us a congressional seat and, lastly, I
25 believe that landlords should be the ones begging for

2 renters, not the other way around, and I believe that
3 housing is a human right, but those words are
4 meaningless if we're not building housing. I will
5 leave with one stat. We need about half a million
6 homes. In the next decade, this plan gets us 108,015.
7 This plan is a small step, but that's what monumental
8 change needs, the first small step so I encourage the
9 City Council to take that first small step and vote
10 yes on City of Yes. Thank you.

11 AUSTIN CELESTIN: Thank you. Next, we have
12 from Ben Wetzler.

13 BEN WETZLER: Hello. My name is Ben
14 Wetzler. I live in Stuyvesant Town. I'm here
15 testifying on behalf of myself. I'm here to ask that
16 you support the Housing Opportunity proposal without
17 modifications or backsliding. The proposal will allow
18 for the creation of desperately needed housing while
19 improving existing City programs. These include
20 improving affordable housing programs by making all
21 affordable units created through inclusionary zoning
22 permanently affordable, it's got to be permanent, and
23 allowing affordable homeownership options as part of
24 those programs. Additionally, it would allow for the
25 conversion of empty office buildings into housing,

1 which is critical for the economic future and public
2 safety of the midtown Manhattan community. I say that
3 it would allow for more housing, because zoning does
4 not represent the full breadth of housing policy in
5 New York. Zoning is not rent regulation. It is not
6 housing vouchers. It is not the HPD or HDC capital
7 budget. All of those policies are critically
8 important to New Yorkers, including me and my family.
9 We've heard from others earlier who need subsidized
10 and stabilized housing, and our neighbors in
11 Stuyvesant Town fought in court for years to preserve
12 rent stabilization and tenant protections for the
13 entire community. I would have to leave Manhattan if
14 I didn't have those protections, and this Council has
15 taken historic steps to bolster those policies in
16 recent years. I hope that you will continue doing
17 that, but every one of those policies is improved by
18 a well-considered and comprehensive plan for housing
19 growth. The Biden Administration recently estimated
20 that New York's zoning and permitting processes add
21 50,000 dollars to the cost of every single home so if
22 you want to make homeownership affordable, as many
23 Council Members yesterday and today have said that
24 they want, those rules add roughly 10,000 dollars
25

2 just to the down payment on every single home that
3 can be bought in the city. In the past, policymakers
4 understood that. When the Mitchell-Lama co-op program
5 was created in the 1950s, the zoning resolution did
6 not require a single parking space anywhere in the
7 entire city. Those were added later in the 1960s. It
8 didn't require any limits on FAR. So, if you want to
9 make our affordable programs work for working
10 families, you need to address those unnecessary
11 costs. And you can start doing that today by
12 supporting this long overdue rewrite of the zoning
13 code.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ben. Next,
15 we're going to hear from Thomas Lopez-Pierre.

16 THOMAS LOPEZ-PIERRE: Good afternoon,
17 Chairman.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Mr. Lopez, just turn
19 the mic on, please.

20 THOMAS LOPEZ-PIERRE: There we go. Good
21 afternoon, Chairman Kevin Riley and Members of the
22 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises of the City
23 Council of New York City. Thank you for the
24 opportunity to testify in support of Mayor Eric
25 Adams' City of Yes for Housing Opportunity Plan. My

1 name is Thomas Lopez-Pierre. I was born in New York
2 City. I live on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I
3 serve as the President and CEO of the Black Real
4 Estate Forum LLC and the fund manager of BREF Fund
5 Number One LLC, a black-owned social impact private
6 equity real estate fund. I work with accredited black
7 investors that include medical doctors, lawyers, and
8 investment bankers that are committed to building
9 wealth and creating jobs for black people. We
10 currently own a two-family property in the Baychester
11 section of the Bronx, located in the Council District
12 of Chairman Kevin Riley. We love tenants with housing
13 vouchers. Learn more about us at
14 blackrealestateforum.com. We are in a housing crisis.
15 In 2023, the Community Service Society of New York
16 reported that a staggering 34 percent of the city's
17 tenants were classified as severely rent burdened,
18 spending at least half their income on monthly rent.
19 In 2023, 1.4 percent of the apartments were empty and
20 available to rent last year, according to the City's
21 most recent housing survey. I strongly believe that
22 building more housing is one of the best ways to help
23 end this housing crisis. For instance, zoning reforms
24 within City of Yes would permit the development of
25

2 small three- to five-story apartment buildings on
3 5,000-plus square foot lots near public transit and
4 allow accessory dwelling units to be built, like
5 backyard cottages and basement apartments. I urge the
6 City Council to pass Mayor Eric Adams' City of Yes
7 for Housing Opportunity Plan. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.
9 Pastor Paul Peart.

10 PASTOR PAUL PEART: Good afternoon,
11 Council Members, ladies and gentlemen. My name is
12 Paul Peart, Senior Pastor of New Testament Temple
13 Church of God in the Bronx. I am here to testify in
14 strong support of the City of Yes initiative, but
15 first I want to say thanks to New York City for
16 saying yes to my mother 54 years ago when she fled
17 hardship and abuse and sought refuge in the USA. She
18 worked as a live-in job caring for elderly. She saved
19 and was able to afford to purchase a single-family
20 home in the northeast Bronx in 1978 for 34,000
21 dollars, providing housing for her children. Because
22 New York said yes to my mother, when New York asked
23 churches to consider making their properties
24 available to build affordable housing, we said yes.
25 New Testament Temple is willing to build up to 150

2 dwelling units for seniors and families, but the way
3 is hindered by, among things, such things as the
4 length and time and expense it would require to apply
5 for a zoning change via ULURP. City of Yes would be a
6 remedy to enable churches to build more affordable
7 housing for seniors and families. I know personally
8 that many members of our community are moving away to
9 places like Connecticut, Poughkeepsie, Maryland,
10 etc., to find more affordable housing. To them, New
11 York has become a city of no. Our seniors have a hard
12 time finding affordable housing. They are forced to
13 move out of the community, and this presents many
14 difficulties. Representing the Church of God in New
15 York, I vote yes to the City of Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Pastor
17 Peart. Dante Monroe.

18 Dante Monroe, are you here?

19 Okay. John Woelfling.

20 JOHN WOELFLING: Thank you. Good
21 afternoon. My name is John Woelfling. I'm here to
22 speak in favor of the City of Yes's much-needed
23 reform for the future of our city to be more
24 equitable and to make room for the next generation of
25 New Yorkers. I'm an architect that specializes in

1 affordable housing at Dattner Architects. I work with
2 both for-profit and not-for-profit developers on
3 mixed-income and all-affordable projects throughout
4 the city. I've worked on projects that have been
5 limited by FAR, that have been limited by height, and
6 limited by parking requirements, but I'm also working
7 on a project that is going beyond what the current
8 zoning requires, because it's what the developer
9 knows needs to be done to make this project
10 successful. This is being built right now in Queens.
11 My firm has worked a great deal with HPD, and I am
12 very proud of the work that we've done to create all-
13 affordable projects within the city, but every time
14 one of our projects, one of our affordable housing
15 projects, goes on to the Housing Connect lottery, the
16 demand far outstrips the supply. I am also a Brooklyn
17 resident. I've lived in the same medium-density
18 district for the last 25 years. I've also served on
19 my community board, and I've heard many of my
20 neighbors' concerns about this proposal firsthand,
21 but I have real problems with the way they frame the
22 issues. We've seen middle-class families leave our
23 city. That number has been referenced multiple times
24 in today's testimony so it's clear to me that we have
25

2 a supply problem. City of Yes is a comprehensive
3 proposal that allows each neighborhood to help.
4 Pulling apart the proposal to exempt high-, medium-,
5 or low-density districts is going to undermine the
6 effectiveness, and it will not allow each community
7 to help solve this problem. I applaud the Council for
8 recognizing that zoning reform is not the only piece
9 to solve this, but a no vote on City of Yes will
10 allow the current inequities and current pressures to
11 exist. Thank you for your time.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I have a
13 question because I have two members from my community
14 here so I'll start with Pastor Peart first. Pastor
15 Peart, what type of housing are you seeing that we
16 need in the northeast Bronx that many constituents
17 are coming to your faith-based institution and asking
18 about?

19 PASTOR PAUL PEART: Thank you for the
20 question, Council Member. We need all kinds of
21 housing, but especially senior housing. Senior
22 housing is very short. A lot of our members that are
23 elderly have to move out of the community to find
24 housing, and that, again, creates a lot of
25

2 difficulties, but also housing for families is also
3 important.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. And Mr.
5 Lopez-Pierre, you stated that you have an office in
6 my District in the northeast Bronx.

7 THOMAS LOPEZ-PIERRE: (INAUDIBLE)

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You could use the mic.

9 THOMAS LOPEZ-PIERRE: No, we took an
10 abandoned two-family home that was in your District
11 where drug addicts were living and two-family
12 homeowners were in distress, and we acquired the
13 property, renovated it, and moving someone from a
14 homeless shelter into that property. That's what the
15 City of Yes will do in multiples, if approved.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: And who's going to own
17 the property?

18 THOMAS LOPEZ-PIERRE: The property will be
19 100 percent owned by black lawyers, doctors, and
20 investment bankers, creating wealth in our community,
21 for the community.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Are there
23 any more questions for this panel?

24

25

2 There being no more questions, thank you
3 for testifying today. Hold on, one second, one
4 second. Council Member Joseph.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you, Chair.
6 I have a quick question on the senior housing. How
7 much stock do we need to build because, as I know it,
8 by 2030, we'll have more older adults than we'll have
9 schoolchildren. How much are we looking to build in
10 the senior, in the older adult space?

11 BEN WETZLER: I'm not sure if this
12 question was directed towards me or anybody else.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Anybody on the
14 panel.

15 BEN WETZLER: I don't think that the City
16 Planning Commission does that demographic analysis
17 that far out. You should ask them. But I can speak
18 from personal experience, knowing older adults who
19 live in my community, that the need is tremendous,
20 and it's not really in conflict with other types of
21 housing. There was a very close friend of mine who
22 was an older adult, who was living in a rent-
23 stabilized walk-up apartment. His rent was low enough
24 that he could afford it on his pension and other
25 income that he had, but he couldn't get up the stairs

2 after a while, and so he had to move into assisted
3 living in a different state, and that really was
4 tragic to me, because it really shows that this is
5 not just a question of regulatory needs or even
6 necessarily of subsidy. It really is about the
7 physical structures that exist in our state, and we
8 shouldn't be limiting them in ways that aren't
9 focused on the needs of the population.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you. Thank
11 you, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much to
13 this panel.

14 All right, I'm going to be calling in one
15 more in-person panel before we go back to online
16 testimony. The last in-person panel for this hour
17 will consist of Julio Herrera, Vida Labela, William
18 Scarborough, and Denisa Rodriguez. You can come
19 straight to the panel.

20 And if anyone is listening online, you'll
21 be able to unmute after 4 p.m. when we go back to
22 online testimony. Okay? So if you're online, we will
23 start online testimony in about six minutes. Thank
24 you.

25 I will begin with Julio Herrera.

2 JULIO HERRERA: Can you hear me okay? Oh,
3 good evening. I'm just going to pretend it's 9:30.
4 I'm off of coffee. Good morning. So my name is Julio
5 Herrera. I'm the Executive Assistant to the Black
6 Institute. I'm also a longstanding tenant at a proud
7 South Brooklynite. This City of Mess falls into the
8 same formula that longstanding residents like in my
9 area have been all too familiar with. It's a planned
10 package with ambitious ideas, broad goals that claim
11 to address crucial needs that have afflicted the city
12 for years. Reinforced by arbitrary figures that poses
13 a veil to convince us that these measures are in our
14 best interest. As many people stated before, the
15 issue is not a housing crisis. It's an affordability
16 crisis. There are apartments that have been
17 warehoused, vacant for years. With this initiative, I
18 don't feel as reassured. Considering that the only
19 question I raised throughout this entire process is
20 who is this affordable for? With only 20 percent of
21 these units considered affordable and only for those
22 making 80 percent of area median income. Furthermore,
23 the number of units pledged for the next 15 years
24 range somewhere between 58,000 to 109,000 homes. And
25 to break that down into simpler terms, that's about

2 3,900 to 7,300 homes a year to 780 to 1,460 units per
3 borough per year. Of that number, how many do we
4 expect to be truly affordable? Second, the concerns I
5 have for ADU, specifically basement units,
6 considering this city's tumultuous history with them,
7 gives me great pause. Specifically, when it came with
8 Hurricane Ida, areas that weren't even considered
9 flood zones became sites of disaster, claiming the
10 lives of 11 people and displacing dozens more. Some I
11 personally know. As of this point, I haven't seen any
12 guarantees that any additional ADUs would be
13 reinforced. And if you'd like to see more, there's
14 some for you to take home with you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, thank you so
16 much. We definitely wanted to get your testimony, and
17 we're definitely going to be looking into it. Tell
18 Ms. Lewis we saw her early, and we appreciate her
19 coming by.

20 JULIO HERRERA: Of course. We'd be more
21 than happy to follow up as well.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I would love to. Thank
23 you.

24 Next, Vito Labella. Is Vito Labella here?
25 William Scarborough?

2 WILLIAM SCARBOROUGH: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: William?

4 WILLIAM SCARBOROUGH: Good afternoon,
5 Council Members. My name is William Scarborough, and
6 I'm the President of the Addisleigh Park Civic
7 Organization in Jamaica, Queens, and a former State
8 Assembly Member. I'm testifying in opposition to the
9 City of Yes because I believe this plan will be
10 devastating to areas in Queens such as Addisleigh
11 Park, which are one- and two-family home communities.
12 The proposal to allow accessory dwelling units will
13 have a negative impact on the character of our
14 community. That negative impact is multiplied by the
15 transit-oriented development initiative in this plan.
16 Southeast Queens is still designated as a transit
17 desert due to the lack of sufficient public
18 transportation. However, because the St. Albans Long
19 Island Railroad Station is next to the Addisleigh
20 Park community, all of our community would be subject
21 to having three- to five-story buildings constructed
22 on our residential streets, where there are currently
23 one- and two-family homes. On top of these impacts,
24 the City of Yes eliminates the requirement to provide
25 parking when building new homes. In an area such as

ours, where affordable public transportation is lacking, residents depend upon their cars to get around. This plan to eliminate parking requirements would create disastrous conditions on the residential streets of Addisleigh Park and other Queens communities. The combination of these initiatives would increase the density and change the character of our community in a very negative way, and it also exposes the dangers of trying to develop a cookie-cutter citywide proposal that does not factor in what may already be happening in a community. Jamaica is already undergoing a massive 300-block rezoning project called the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan. As stated by City Planning in June 2024, this plan is expected to create 12,000 new dwelling units in Jamaica, and will create seven- to nine-story buildings along our major residential corridors. To impose the density of the City of Yes, in addition to the 12,000 new dwelling units already planned for our community, is not, as the Mayor likes to say, a little more housing in every community, but would represent an unfair burden that would drastically overload our community, our infrastructure, and our streets. We urge you to reject this plan. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Is Denisa
3 Rodriguez here? Denisa Rodriguez?

4 Okay. Are there any questions for this
5 panel?

6 There being no questions, thank you two
7 for testifying.

8 So, we're going to go right to online
9 now. If you're in here and testifying in person,
10 please be back by 4:45. Thank you.

11 Our first online testimony will consist
12 of Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson.

13 Borough President, if you can hear me,
14 you can unmute and begin.

15 BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT GIBSON: Council
16 Member, yes, I can hear you. Good afternoon, everyone
17 at the New York City Council. Thank you so much,
18 Chair Riley and all the Members of the City Council's
19 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. I appreciate
20 the opportunity to testify today. I know it's been a
21 very long day so far, but I appreciate your
22 leadership. Chair, Council Member Kevin Riley, thank
23 you for leading this very important hearing. Let me
24 begin by thanking the Department of City Planning,
25 our Chair, Dan Garodnik, and the CPC, as well as the

entire City of Yes at City Planning, the entire team for their efforts to truly address critical housing challenges that are faced by many, many New Yorkers. Our city is currently experiencing a housing crisis. Too many of our residents are unable to afford their rents and are at risk of eviction and displacement. The construction of new housing over time has unfortunately not kept pace with rising rents that for many residents have truly reached unaffordable levels. The Zoning for Housing Opportunity proposal begins our city on a path to create the housing that is necessary to truly bring down the cost of rent throughout our city. In my full recommendation to the City Council and the City Planning Commission, we supported many parts of this proposal. However, there were some conditions that we outlined with several components in the proposal that really required greater thought of which should be considered for your implementation. I fully support the goal of creating a little more housing in every neighborhood of every community in our city. All communities in our city must do their fair share to truly create the housing that we need. And when we say affordable, it must be affordable for those at the lowest end of the

2 economic spectrum. There is a narrative that you've
3 heard today and you will continue to hear, and it is
4 that this proposal will be detrimental to lower-
5 density neighborhoods, and that is not true. The town
6 center zoning, transit-oriented development, and
7 district fixes, those proposals will provide
8 additional flexibility by allowing some additional
9 height and additional units, but it is still within a
10 very narrow scope and range of one to two stories in
11 many cases, which will not change the existing
12 character of our beautiful and vibrant neighborhoods.
13 By focusing on areas that are within a half mile of
14 transit, this proposal will allow for additional
15 density where it makes the most sense and is
16 reasonable to ensure that everyone can truly get
17 around our city without asking and adding more cars
18 to our already congested roads. In order to support
19 new housing development, the City also must look to
20 ensure that we support our existing residents by
21 providing a modernization of infrastructure within
22 our communities that will be needed as our city
23 continues to grow. Balancing new development with
24 support for existing neighborhoods is a common-sense
25 approach, and many have talked about investing in

1 existing infrastructures today. I am in favor of the
2 proposal to legalize the development of ADUs because
3 providing smart housing options that allow
4 flexibility is truly important. However, to safely
5 allow this new unit type, the City must also provide
6 additional Department of Buildings inspectors to
7 protect our residents' health and well-being and
8 safety. The City must engage with all of our
9 homeowners on this issue and ensure that they all
10 know what their rights, responsibilities, and the
11 guidelines of this program is when it comes to ADUs.
12 We need more inspectors at the Department of
13 Buildings as well as HPD. When it comes to the infill
14 development, particularly in New York City Housing
15 Authority on our NYCHA campuses, the City must
16 actively engage with residents and tenant association
17 leadership to ensure that their concerns are taken
18 into account. Infill development should have a focus
19 on providing housing for working families and older
20 adults and veterans, particularly those that already
21 live in NYCHA today. Let us lift up these families
22 that live in public housing right now. We must ensure
23 that all of our NYCHA residents still have access to
24 clean air, sufficient light, and open and green
25

2 spaces just like every resident in our city. I do not
3 support the proposals to increase small or shared
4 housing and to decrease the dwelling unit factor. The
5 Bronx has already seen an influx of many smaller
6 units, studio and small one-bedroom apartments in
7 many of our new developments and conversions to
8 smaller units in many of our existing buildings
9 today. Throughout my tenure as Borough President, I
10 have consistently, and will continue to do so,
11 advocated for building more family-style units,
12 large-scale apartments for many of our families,
13 including two- and three- and yes, sometimes four-
14 bedroom apartments. We need larger units that work
15 for families, not just single adults. Families are
16 growing, and right now they've doubled and tripled up
17 today..

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

19 BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT GIBSON: And,
20 Chair Riley, you know we have seen that. So, as I
21 close, I just want to say that I also am very
22 concerned about the park mandates. I think it can
23 work in some areas, but areas that are transit
24 deserts, we have to provide options to help families
25 get around, and so I'd like you in the City Council

2 to review all of my full recommendations, which go
3 into detail and, truly, Chair Riley and Council
4 Members, when everyone has stable housing in New York
5 City, it is beneficial to all of us so I thank you
6 for your time today and look forward to working with
7 you and the Members of the City Council. Thank you so
8 much, Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Borough
10 President Gibson.

11 I just want to state for the record we've
12 been joined by our speaker, Madam Adrienne Adams.

13 BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT GIBSON: Hi, Madam
14 Speaker.

15 SPEAKER ADAMS: Hi, Vanessa. Good to see
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So, the next panel I'm
18 going to call up consists of Jess Coleman, Kyle
19 Jeremiah, Lindsay McCormack, and Michael Kaess. The
20 following panel after that will consist of David
21 Mulkens, Corey Bearak, Suwen Cheong, and Stella
22 Grillo.

23 We're going to begin first with Jess
24 Coleman.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

2 JESS COLEMAN: Thank you, Chair Riley.
3 Thank you, Speaker Adams, Members of the
4 Subcommittee. My name is Jess Coleman. I'm a member
5 of Community Board 1. I'm a lifelong resident of
6 Lower Manhattan. This morning, I searched StreetEasy
7 for a two-bedroom apartment in Council District 1 at
8 6,000 dollars per month or less. There are five
9 options. To put that in perspective, that means that
10 a household has to earn around 240,000 per year just
11 to not be rent burdened in Lower Manhattan, and you
12 still only have five options. Some will tell you, as
13 we've heard here today, that this illustrates we need
14 less housing, that we simply have an affordability
15 crisis, not a housing crisis. That is simply not
16 credible. Anyone who has tried to rent an apartment
17 in this city knows that there is hardly an oversupply
18 of housing at any price point. To the contrary, there
19 are so little options out there that landlords are
20 literally celebrating the market dynamics that give
21 them all of the leverage and leave tenants powerless.
22 We are not talking here about eliminating smart,
23 progressive market interventions designed to protect
24 the most vulnerable. We're talking about archaic
25 restrictions that in many cases were designed, in

2 fact, to harm the most vulnerable, and all it's done
3 and will continue to do, if not changed, is
4 contribute to skyrocketing costs, reduce economic
5 growth, continue coughing up congressional seats to
6 Republican states, and so, so much more. City of Yes
7 will not solve all these problems on its own. We need
8 more social housing. We need more public housing. We
9 need much more robust tenant protections. But what
10 will we tell young people saddled with student debt,
11 seniors at risk of being booted from their
12 communities, families who can't imagine raising a
13 child while still covering their rent? What are we
14 going to tell them if we can't do something as basic
15 as build a three-story building near a train station
16 or get rid of antiquated parking mandates? City of
17 Yes is a modest proposal relative to the scale of the
18 problem, and it is the very least that we can do for
19 the millions of New Yorkers for whom this housing
20 crisis is literally an existential one. It is not
21 sufficient to solve this crisis, but it is necessary,
22 and I urge the Council to pass this text amendment
23 and stand up for the next generation of New Yorkers.
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

2 I just want to give an update to
3 everyone. We're trying our best to get through this
4 as fast as possible. We have about 200 more people
5 online to testify and about 120 people in person to
6 testify who have still signed up. All right, so the
7 team is getting ready to get through this as fast as
8 possible so we just appreciate everyone's patience.

9 The next person that will be testifying
10 is Kyle Jeremiah.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

12 KYLE JEREMIAH: Thank you so much. New
13 York City must act swiftly to relieve the constraints
14 that hinder the development of affordable housing. My
15 name is Kyle Jeremiah, and I'm the Director of
16 External Affairs at the Bowery Residents' Committee,
17 or BRC, one of New York City's largest housing and
18 social service non-profits. I see the urgent need for
19 more housing options to address the city's growing
20 crisis. While organizations like BRC are ready to
21 build and provide housing, we are held back by zoning
22 and other barriers that limit progress. The city's
23 homelessness and housing insecurity crisis continues
24 to escalate with tens of thousands relying on
25 shelters and thousands more living unsheltered.

2 Affordable housing is out of reach for far too many
3 New Yorkers. Last year, BRC helped over 1,000 people
4 transition into independent housing, but we could
5 have assisted even more if affordable housing supply
6 wasn't so limited. The City of Yes for Housing
7 Opportunity proposal is a crucial step forward. By
8 easing restrictions on smaller units and repurposing
9 underused spaces, this initiative will create much-
10 needed housing and help reduce homelessness. This is
11 about making real progress and building a more
12 livable, inclusive city. I urge you to support this
13 proposal and help move New York City in the right
14 direction. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
16 person I'm going to call to testify is Lindsey
17 McCormack.

18 LINDSEY MCCORMACK: Hi, good afternoon.
19 I'll be very brief. I live in Jackson Heights,
20 Queens, and I'm a mom of two kids in the public
21 schools. I'm here to express strong support for City
22 of Yes because I've seen many neighbors, including
23 friends of my kids and their families, struggle to
24 find housing that's family-sized and affordable.
25 Three years ago, an apartment building in our

2 neighborhood burned down, and despite the best
3 efforts of the Tenants Association, many residents
4 had to leave permanently because there were simply no
5 other apartments for them to find. This is the result
6 of decades of failure to build adequate multifamily
7 housing in the city, especially in the outer boroughs
8 like Queens, where I live. And finally, I
9 specifically want to ask our elected officials,
10 please don't give up on abolishing parking mandates.
11 Parking mandates are a holdover from the last
12 century. Keeping them in the zoning code stifles our
13 City's ability to build housing where it's needed
14 most, and I encourage our electors to reflect on the
15 best interests of current and future generations of
16 New Yorkers and give us City of Yes. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The last
18 person on this panel is Michael Kaess.

19 MICHAEL KAESS: Hi, my name is Michael
20 Kaess, and I'm a resident in Morris Park, the Bronx.
21 As a local advocate, I've been proud to support all
22 types of housing in my district, from supportive
23 housing projects like Just Home to rezonings like the
24 Bruckner Sites and the Bronx Metro-North Neighborhood
25 Plan. Getting these projects and applications passed

1 are no doubt critical to easing the housing shortage
2 in communities like mine. However, the majority of
3 housing built in New York City continues to be
4 through as-of-right development in existing zoning
5 districts, and it's because new housing hasn't kept
6 up with demand that it is imperative that we change
7 our zoning rules to create new opportunities for
8 housing. In particular, it's critical that the
9 residential parking mandate be eliminated. Now, to be
10 clear, eliminating the parking mandate will not
11 eliminate parking. Yesterday, my Council Member,
12 Marmorato, claimed that without the mandate,
13 developers won't give parking, but we already know
14 that's not the case. We even saw an example from our
15 district in the presentation yesterday. 2560 Boston
16 Road is due to include over 100 parking spaces when
17 none were required. During the Bronx Metro-North
18 Neighborhood Plan hearing, developers testified that
19 they were concluding ample parking in their projects
20 even when the parking mandate was proposed to be
21 eliminated in the Special District. Now, with the
22 Bronx Metro-North Plan, I was critical of the Council
23 for restoring the unnecessary parking mandate after
24 negotiations. However, with City of Yes, we have a
25

2 chance to correct that mistake so we don't end up
3 with underbuilt sites next to the transit we invested
4 billions of dollars in. I urge the Council to pass
5 the full City of Yes. Weakening this proposal
6 represents a far greater risk to our quality of life.
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Are there
9 any questions for this panel?

10 There being no questions, this panel is
11 excused.

12 The next panel I'll be calling up
13 consists of David Mulkins, Corey Bearak, Suwen
14 Cheong, and Stella Grillo.

15 The following panel will consist of Adam
16 Brodheim, Leo Guttman, Rohan Kalyani, and Gregory
17 Marvin.

18 We will begin first with David Mulkins.

19 David, if you can hear me, please unmute,
20 and you may begin.

21 Can you hear me? David, if you can hear
22 me, please unmute.

23 We can hear you.

24 DAVID MULKINS: I don't see a button for
25 that.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: We can hear you. You
3 can begin.

4 DAVID MULKINS: I'm the President of the
5 Bowery Alliance of Neighbors, and we support our
6 Council Member Chris Marte's great concerns about the
7 City of Yes. The premise of Mayor Adams' plan, which
8 suggests that building more market rate and luxury
9 housing will somehow bring down the cost of housing,
10 is false. Ironically, the Mayor's plan incentivizes
11 the demolition of existing affordable housing.

12 Because the building of affordable housing in the
13 Mayor's plan is voluntary, there's no incentive to
14 provide affordable housing. Affordable housing should
15 be mandatory. New developments on NYCHA and Mitchell-
16 Lama properties should be 100 percent affordable and
17 should have to go through the ULURP land use review
18 process that lets the public and their
19 representatives review it, and if necessary, revise
20 those proposals. We oppose increasing bulk and height
21 of purely market rate residential developments. We
22 oppose allowing air rights from landmark properties
23 to be transferred over much broader areas of our
24 neighborhoods with no public oversight. We oppose
25 allowing development on open spaces and rear yards

2 where building is currently prohibited. We oppose all
3 provisions that remove public oversight of
4 developments. Our Lower Manhattan neighborhoods are
5 diverse and economically vibrant, much-loved
6 destinations because of their predominantly low-rise
7 historic character, so it makes no sense to up-zone
8 them and strip them of the few provisions that
9 protect or provide public oversight. We need..

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

11 DAVID MULKINS: Works for the people, not
12 just big real estate. If these changes cannot be
13 made..

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr.
15 Mulkins.

16 DAVID MULKINS: The plan should be
17 rejected. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: We appreciate you.
19 Thank you, Mr. Mulkins.

20 Next, we're going to hear from Corey
21 Bearak.

22 I just want to remind everyone that we
23 have over, well, maybe 198 people signed up online
24 now so I'm going to stop everyone at two minutes, and
25 you can submit your testimony to

2 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov if you're not able
3 to complete it, all right?

4 Next, we're going to hear from Corey
5 Bearak. Corey, if you can hear me, please unmute, and
6 you may begin.

7 COREY BEARAK: Yes, I can. (INAUDIBLE)
8 Community Board 13, and the overwhelming majority of
9 Community Boards across the five boroughs represent
10 the true majority view of New Yorkers who give a very
11 firm thumbs-down to the misnamed City of Yes for
12 Housing Opportunity. It would permit greater scales
13 of development, increased density on blocks and in
14 neighborhoods, and with no community input and
15 without any guarantee of affordability, especially
16 for working families in the middle class. It's a
17 giveaway to those who seek to develop luxury housing,
18 thus remaking neighborhoods as unaffordable for their
19 current residents. It would eviscerate City Charter
20 community review that Council Members currently and
21 smartly use to ensure smart growth and affordability
22 where changing to zoning occur. The as-of-right
23 features of City of Yes removes from community review
24 development and density greater than permitted in
25 just about every neighborhood. This means increased

1 population before necessary infrastructure gets
2 built. It risks overcrowded classrooms, sewer
3 backups, increased traffic, insufficient parking, and
4 inadequate public transit options without any
5 guarantees of housing affordability. Community review
6 empowers communities, Community Boards, Borough
7 Presidents, Borough Boards, and you, our elected
8 Council Members, to protect neighborhoods, ensure
9 community affordability in any new zoning or project.
10 City of Yes guarantees opportunities for private
11 developers to rake in cash without any oversight on
12 how a project serves the public good. On Long Island,
13 community, government, private, and non-profit
14 collaborations successfully developed needed new
15 housing, including affordable and senior housing and
16 transit-oriented development. The Council should
17 rejig a City of Yes into a menu of tools to create
18 smart growth where it makes sense, rather than
19 measures that impose unwanted, sometimes unnecessary,
20 and inappropriate infusions of density on blocks with
21 no guarantee of affordability.
22

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
25 going to hear from Suwen Cheong.

2 SUWEN CHEONG: Hi. I'm a resident of
3 Prospect Lefferts Gardens in Brooklyn, and I strongly
4 oppose the City of Mess. If City of Yes is voted
5 down, every district still has the right to pass
6 those aspects of the amendments they like in their
7 own districts. The City Council can still require
8 housing targets for each district under the Fair
9 Housing framework, but allow every district to
10 achieve this in the way they think is best. In
11 particular, I ask you to oppose the R6 and R7 UAP
12 density increases, because homes, small business, and
13 even rent-stabilized apartment buildings in two-
14 thirds of my district and all over the city would be
15 in danger of demolition or significant additions that
16 would empty buildings. We don't want this destruction
17 and displacement. We want to preserve our community
18 and homes so that families and seniors can remain. If
19 City Planning is right that only a small percentage
20 of the possible development that could happen will
21 actually occur, why are they proposing to up-zone
22 every lot in our district and the entire city? At
23 best, they are pushing random development, the
24 opposite of why we have zoning and planning. At
25 worst, the entire city will be overwhelmed with

1 millions of new residents. Please oppose all other
2 zoning density increases for market-rate housing and
3 without height caps. For example, quality housing
4 density bonuses in R6 and R7 will be allowed without
5 affordable housing and without the current height
6 caps. In Brooklyn, the data is clear that the more
7 units a community district built in the last 10
8 years, the more the rents went up. Moreover, City
9 Planning's own research shows that in the last
10 century, New York City built more than enough
11 housing, about 2.45 million units, to accommodate
12 population growth, about 3.1 million people. We don't
13 have a housing supply crisis, we have a housing
14 affordability crisis. My community district has built
15 4,000 housing units since 2010 and we will continue
16 to build thousands of units, of which we know 800
17 will be low-income affordable. Council District 40
18 ranks 16th highest of all districts in terms of
19 affordable housing production, according to the New
20 York Housing Conference. Furthermore, over 25,000
21 units of buildable housing remain possible under the
22 current zoning. Therefore, there is no need for
23 further broad-based up-zoning to create housing or
24 affordable housing. There is a need for right-zoning
25

2 to preserve the stability and character of our
3 community...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

5 SUWEN CHEONG: And ensure that population
6 density does not overwhelm infrastructure.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Last, we'll
8 hear from Stella Grillo.

9 Stella, you can press star 9. If you can
10 hear me, you may begin.

11 Stella, if you can hear me, please press
12 star 9 and you may begin.

13 STELLA GRILLO: Can you hear me?

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

15 STELLA GRILLO: Okay, my name is Stella
16 Grillo. I'm a member of my local political club,
17 Civic Association, live in Community Board Number 8
18 in Queens, and a constituent. I'm asking the City
19 Council Members to vote no to the City of Yes.
20 Changing housing zones to replace one- and two-family
21 homes throughout the city with multiple dwellings is
22 not really the solution that will meet the need for
23 affordable housing. A bulk of the new housing will
24 actually be at market-grade apartments. Only the real
25 estate developers will actually benefit from this

2 disastrous change. Where will our present homeowners
3 go? My home, which is a single-family home, has
4 always housed at least two generations of family
5 members so, no, we can't rent out our basements or
6 build additional housing in our backyards. We are the
7 taxpayers who have built these communities, and it's
8 always been homeownership has been the American
9 dream. So, now, will we have to find an apartment we
10 can afford? What about infrastructure, electric and
11 gas use, and sewage, sanitation, and our overcrowded
12 schools? There will be no accommodations for cars and
13 parking. Most of these neighborhoods are in
14 transportation deserts. We require a car to get to
15 transportation, shopping, doctor's visits, whatever.
16 I notice that they have even made plans to construct
17 housing in church parking lots and in every green
18 space, kind of making us a concrete jungle. How well
19 thought out really is this plan? We are all your
20 constituents and ask that you vote no to the City of
21 Yes. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much to
23 this panel. Council Member Joseph has a question.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: For my constituent
25 in District 40, how do we plan on building more

2 housing and affordable housing in District 40? What's
3 the idea for you?

4 STELLA GRILLO: Where is District 40?

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: No, Ms. Grillo, that
6 question is for Ms. Suwen Cheong.

7 STELLA GRILLO: Oh, okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Ms. Cheong, you may
9 answer.

10 SUWEN CHEONG: Hi, Council Member Joseph.

11 We do have vacant lots. We do have underbuilt one-
12 story lots that are church-owned. I would be happy to
13 have the discussion with you at a later time, but we
14 even have lots that were up-zoned just prior to MIH
15 being announced, including church-owned lots that are
16 probably suitable for affordable housing. There are a
17 lot of options, but it's not like entire avenues.

18 It's certain lots in certain locations, depending on
19 what the height context is, what the shadow impact
20 might be. As you know, we have sensitive areas near
21 the parks, near the botanic gardens, near one-family
22 homes. We've got options. A lot of the affordable
23 housing that we're doing now is coming through Vital
24 Brooklyn, which is a State project. but I guess it's
25 just a matter of thinking lot by lot and just

2 thinking a little bit outside of the box sometimes,
3 is what I would say.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Would you agree
5 that we need a comprehensive housing plan for
6 District 40 and not a piecemeal?

7 SUWEN CHEONG: Absolutely. I've been
8 discussing this with the other members, that this is
9 something that we need to think about. I hope we can
10 count on your support.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
13 Member Joseph.

14 Thank you to this panel for testifying.

15 The next panel I'm going to call up
16 consists of Adam Brodheim, Leo Guttman, Rohan
17 Kalyani, and Gregory Marvin.

18 The following panel will consist of Dee
19 Vandenberg, Claudia Valentino, Colette Wong, and
20 Diane Viggiano.

21 The first panelist to speak will be Adam
22 Brodheim. Adam, if you can hear me, please unmute,
23 and you may begin.

24 ADAM BRODHEIM: Good afternoon, Council
25 Members. My name is Adam Brodheim, and I'm a proud

1 member of Open New York and a privileged member of
2 Manhattan Community Board 7's Housing and Land Use
3 Committee. Those are my extracurriculars, but my day
4 job is working as a historic preservationist, and so
5 when something big and important like City of Yes
6 appears, I try to contextualize it and its history.
7 101 years ago, the Committee on the Height, Size, and
8 Arrangement of Buildings released their report on the
9 need for zoning in New York City. They concluded
10 their introduction by saying that we strongly urge
11 that there be no delay in bringing a remedy to Fifth
12 Avenue, as otherwise an irreparable injury may be
13 done. To be clear, that harm was my ancestors, Jewish
14 garment workers congregating on Fifth Avenue during
15 their lunch break, and then in 1959, mere decades
16 after first enacting a zoning code, the City decided
17 to start over again from scratch. Caveating itself
18 only by noting that zoning is not a cure-all for
19 every municipal problem. By then, my family had moved
20 from the tenements of the Lower East Side to the six-
21 story apartment buildings in Brooklyn and the Bronx
22 that are illegal to build today. And now, in 2024,
23 (INAUDIBLE) it's time for another change. It's
24 embarrassing that our home, the most vibrant city in
25

2 America, is governed by a plan written for a time
3 when our city was shrinking in population. Earlier, I
4 mentioned that report from 101 years ago on the need
5 for zoning. The report's authors had their offices in
6 115 Broadway. As some of you in the room may know,
7 that's across the street from 120 Broadway, where DCP
8 has their offices today. Last weekend, I went to the
9 Statue of Liberty for the first time, proof that I
10 really am a New Yorker, and afterwards, walking up
11 Broadway stood between the two buildings. On the one
12 side, a vision of zoning that tried to hide
13 immigrants, and on the other, separated by 100 years,
14 one that seeks to bring them out of the shadows. We
15 have an opportunity to be remembered as a city that
16 prioritized people over parking, that understands a
17 neighborhood's character are its inhabitants, not its
18 structures, and that the opportunity to build a
19 little more housing everywhere is not a burden, but a
20 privilege. That's what DCP is proposing, a series of
21 sensible, practical changes to better our city.
22 Someday history will judge...

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

24 ADAM BRODHEIM: On this occasion. Thank
25 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Adam. Next,
3 we'll hear from Leo Guttman.

4 LEO GUTTMANN: Thanks for giving me the
5 chance to testify. I live in Long Island City, in
6 Julie Won's District, and I'm here to support the
7 City of Yes for Housing Opportunity. It's a proposal
8 that I think is modest and won't solve everything
9 about the housing affordability crisis, but it's a
10 really necessary first step that I hope we can build
11 off of in the future. I'm excited in particular for
12 the ability to build a variety of new housing options
13 that will give people more choices for living in
14 different types of neighborhoods and different stages
15 of life. I can imagine, as a fresh grad, wanting to
16 live in the small shared housing options that will be
17 opened up. As an aide, I can imagine myself wanting
18 to live in one of the accessory dwelling units that
19 might be enabled by this legislation. Overall, I
20 think the affordability crisis and the extremely low
21 vacancy rates, well under 2 percent, are sort of
22 choking the city's ability to thrive and the same
23 with people who live here. I think it's preventing a
24 lot of people from feeling like the economy is
25 strong. A lot of it has to do with rising rents. And

2 it's also threatening the city's ability to be what
3 it's represented for so many years to so many people,
4 the ability for people from all around the world to
5 come and find a home and make the city thrive. In
6 order to continue that, we need affordable housing,
7 and the way to do that is through these modest
8 proposals to increase housing supply gently
9 throughout the entire city. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
11 hear from Rohan Kalyani.

12 ROHAN KALYANI: Good afternoon, Council
13 Members. I'm here to voice my strong support for the
14 City of Yes (INAUDIBLE). I'm a resident of Crown
15 Heights, Brooklyn, and I'm 28 years old. So, as a
16 young New Yorker, I've experienced firsthand the
17 struggles of finding affordable rental housing in our
18 city, and this idea echoed by all of my peers who
19 could not take time off of work today to come and
20 testify. The facts and the evidence is very clear.
21 New York City faces a severe historic housing
22 shortage. The apartment vacancy rate is at its lowest
23 since 1968 at just 1.41 percent. Over half of people
24 are rent-burdened, spending more than 30 percent of
25 their income on rent. I myself spend more than 40

2 percent of my income just on rent, and this crisis
3 affects all of us, but it's particularly challenging
4 for young people, such as myself, trying to build our
5 lives and our careers in the city that we love. So
6 City of Yes, there ought to be a comprehensive
7 approach to address this crisis. By allowing a little
8 more housing in every neighborhood, which is the duty
9 of every neighborhood, we can make a significant
10 impact without any dramatic change to any single
11 area. This proposal will enable the creation of all
12 kinds of housing types, from accessible dwelling
13 units in low-density areas to affordable apartments
14 and high-intensity apartments near transit stations.
15 Importantly, City of Yes would end exclusionary
16 zoning practices that are racist and have limited
17 housing options that contribute to segregation all
18 over the city. It's also an important step for New
19 York City's climate movement as it promotes transit-
20 based development, which will allow our city to be
21 more sustainable and more accessible, and so for
22 young people like me, this change...

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

24 ROHAN KALYANI: Thank you.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
3 hear from Gregory Marvin.

4 GREGORY MARVIN: Thank you for hearing my
5 testimony. I want to start by addressing a little bit
6 of an elephant in the room here. It is 4 p.m. on a
7 Tuesday. The people who are hurt most by our dire
8 housing shortage, market-rate renters, are not
9 adequately represented in these "community input
10 processes" because they are busy with work and
11 childcare, and more importantly than this asymmetry
12 in representation is the asymmetry of the stakes. I
13 really don't know that opponents of this legislation,
14 who are homeowners or who are lucky enough to be
15 rent-stabilized, really appreciate just how bad it is
16 out there for a lot of renters right now. In the last
17 week, I've talked to friends who, in one case, are
18 deciding not to have a second child because of the
19 cost of housing, another who are commuting three
20 hours combined a day to and from Suffolk County, and
21 I encourage the Council to consider the trade-offs at
22 stake here in these terms and actually compare the
23 stakes against one another. You know, I know you want
24 to start a family, but have you considered the impact
25 of a few more tall buildings on the character of my

2 neighborhood? I know you want to get home from work
3 before your kids are asleep, but did we really gather
4 enough "community input" for this proposal? I know a
5 few thousand more people might lose the game of
6 housing musical chairs in our city and become
7 homeless, but what about developer profits? These
8 comparisons sound silly when you really consider the
9 stakes here for renters in our city in a housing
10 shortage. And, as for arguments about 100 percent
11 affordability, to state the obvious, building market-
12 rate housing does not somehow prevent us from
13 building subsidized housing as well. I look forward
14 to supporting more subsidies that might be enabled by
15 the property tax revenue that these new market-rate
16 units generate in the future.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
18 has expired.

19 GREGORY MARVIN: Watering down this much-
20 needed modernization of our zoning code is a bad
21 policy and, in my opinion, morally indefensible.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr.
23 Gregory.

24 Are there any questions for this panel?
25

2 There being no questions for this panel,
3 this panel is excused.

4 The next panel we're going to hear from
5 consists of Dee Vandenberg, Claudia Valentino,
6 Colette Wong, Diane Viggiano.

7 The following panel consists of Kevin
8 Wolfe, Dan Miller, Chloe Sarnoff, and Sunny Ng.

9 The first panelist we're going to hear
10 from is Dee Vandenberg. Dee, if you can hear me,
11 please unmute and you may begin.

12 Dee Vandenberg, if you can hear me,
13 please unmute.

14 Do we have Dee?

15 DEE VANDENBERG: Hello. Can you hear me?

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you,
17 Dee.

18 DEE VANDENBERG: Okay, I'm very sorry.
19 Thank you very much, Council Member, for having this
20 hearing and for hearing us all. My name is Dee Van
21 Berg. I am the President of the Staten Island
22 Taxpayer Association. We are also members of the
23 Staten Island Civic United. We are against the City
24 of Yes. I'm going to stick to what I know best, and
25 no one's going to like this answer, but the bottom

1 line is I'm going to need every City Councilman to do
2 themselves a favor and see if they can get a copy of
3 the New York City Department of Environmental
4 Protection's SPEEDE permit, S-P-E-E-D-E-S. That is a
5 permit that's issued by the State of New York for
6 every single sewer treatment plant in the City of New
7 York every month. What has happened here, and we came
8 about this accidentally. Actually, it was Hurricane
9 Sandy that started it. We reached out across the
10 lines of all the boroughs that had flooding and
11 damages and deaths, and what we found out is that 95
12 percent of the sewer treatment plants all failed
13 during the storm. We also had issues during Hurricane
14 Ida in 2021 where 10 people died in basement
15 apartments. We are extremely, extremely concerned.
16 Just so I can make it clear, this is not a NIMBY.
17 This is not politically motivated to go against this.
18 This has nothing to do with race, status, anything.
19 Staten Islanders, and myself being one of them, so I
20 know what I'm speaking of, are still on septic tanks.
21 We do not have the infrastructure to support this. We
22 are not getting the infrastructure to support this.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Time has
25 expired.

2 DEE VANDENBERG: Thank you very much.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
4 hear from Claudia Valentino.

5 CLAUDIA VALENTINO: Yes, hi. Can you hear
6 me?

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

8 CLAUDIA VALENTINO: Okay, thank you. I'm
9 Claudia Valentino, President of the Forest Hills
10 Community and Civic Association. I've been involved
11 in civic life for over 30 years. I represent an area
12 that we've down-zoned over 20 years ago, and if you
13 were to walk the perimeter, it would take you over an
14 hour to walk it. It's that large. The homes are old,
15 sit on small lots, many with poor cinderblock
16 foundations, all just a driveway apart. Our
17 infrastructure, electrical grid, sewer, ability to
18 clear rainfall is even more seriously challenged now
19 than it was when we originally undertook our down-
20 zoning. ADUs and apartment buildings situated among
21 our homes simply won't work. City of Yes type plans
22 have come to us from other cities and counties across
23 the country where properties are much, much larger
24 than our own. Urban planners have not taken this into
25 account. Regrettably, City of Yes does not address

2 affordability or homelessness over any kind of
3 reasonable timeline because the sources of these
4 problems are incorrectly called out. City of Yes has,
5 from the beginning, been framed as an accusation,
6 laying blame for affordability and homelessness at
7 the feet of one- or two-family homeowners. That
8 framing discredits homeowners so that our knowledge,
9 therefore, is automatically discounted. Homeowners
10 know their neighborhoods best, and that knowledge is
11 the foundation for competent community review,
12 including safety, quality of life, and availability
13 of City services, which City of Yes eliminates,
14 disenfranchising all New Yorkers. To conclude, I urge
15 the City Council to reject this plan and undertake
16 the necessary work of examining how developers have
17 now, and for decades, been able to pick and choose
18 the best properties to build what they like.
19 Developers are the true source of lack of
20 affordability, not homeowners. Take them on. We will
21 support you. Let's create a new plan, a New York City
22 plan, that builds homes fast, on fast tracks,
23 available land, and offers people...

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
25 has expired.

2 CLAUDIA VALENTINO: And more than a
3 garage. Thank you so much.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much, Ms.
5 Claudia. Next, we'll have Colette Wong.

6 Colette Wong, if you can hear me, please
7 unmute.

8 Yes, we can hear you.

9 COLETTE WONG: Hi. My name is Colette, and
10 I am against the City of Yes. My concern is, I live
11 next to a federal preserve property and wetlands, so
12 I need to worry about what would be built next to my
13 home. I can't understand how they could build on
14 federally protected property and on wetlands.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Is that it, Ms.
16 Colette?

17 COLETTE WONG: That's it.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Thank you
19 for your testimony. The last person on this panel is
20 Diane Viggiano.

21 Ms. Diane, if you can hear me, please
22 press star 9, and you may begin.

23 DIANE VIGGIANO: I don't need star 9.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Oh, no, you're all
25 right. Go ahead.

2 DIANE VIGGIANO: Do you hear me?

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes.

4 DIANE VIGGIANO: Can you hear me? Oh,
5 terrific. Well, first of all, good afternoon,
6 everyone. I'm Diane Viggiano, a Vice President of the
7 Old Town Civic Association of Staten Island. We are a
8 densely populated area, and I would like to speak for
9 many of the residents of my community, which was
10 estimated to be about 12,250 people. This is a very
11 primitive plan. It's as if the City Planning
12 Commission used a black crayon on its paper when
13 planning for the diverse communities in our city. No
14 colors, no appreciation of the different
15 characteristics of each neighborhood in each borough.
16 It is a simplistic, destructive plan that will
17 greatly harm the quality of life in many parts of our
18 city. Council Members, will you be a rubber stamp for
19 selfish entities who want to overdevelop our
20 neighborhoods? Vote no to this environmentally absurd
21 plan, which would build cottages in backyards and
22 five-story buildings without any parking requirements
23 in suburban neighborhoods with one- and two-family
24 homes. Vote no to removal of zoning and parking
25 protections. Vote no to the unbridled addition of

2 attic, basement, and garage living spaces. Vote no to
3 undermining the power of citizens, Community Boards,
4 and City Council Members to decide what is best for
5 their communities. Please vote no to this one-size-
6 fits-all, preposterous plan. Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you very much.
8 Are there any questions for this panel?

9 This panel is excused.

10 So, we're going to call one more online
11 panel, then we're going to transition back to in-
12 person. The last online panel we're going to call for
13 this hour consists of Kevin Wolfe, Dan Miller, Chloe
14 Sarnoff, and Sunny Ng.

15 The first person we'll hear from is Kevin
16 Wolfe.

17 KEVIN WOLFE: Thank you. Thank you, Chair
18 Riley. Can you hear me?

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we hear you,
20 Kevin.

21 KEVIN WOLFE: Great. Thank you so much,
22 Chair Riley, and good afternoon to you all. My name
23 is Kevin Wolfe, and I'm the Deputy Director of
24 Advocacy for the Center for New York City
25 Neighborhoods. The Center is one of the largest

1 homeowner service organizations in New York City and,
2 since 2008, we have worked with both public and
3 private partners to assist over 200,000 homeowners in
4 all five boroughs of New York City. We support the
5 City of Yes, but with some conditions, and I'm going
6 to focus today on just three critical areas of
7 homeownership that are touched by the proposal.
8 Opportunities for new homeownership, accessory
9 dwelling units, and preservation of existing
10 homeownership. The City of Yes proposal could greatly
11 enhance affordable homeownership, especially for
12 historically excluded communities. We think that by
13 investing 9 million dollars in affordable
14 homeownership and leveraging the zoning changes in
15 the City of Yes through programs like Neighborhood
16 Pillars and Open Doors, we estimate New York City
17 could create 120,000 new units of affordable
18 homeownership for 400,000 New Yorkers over the course
19 of a decade, and the initiative has the potential to
20 close the racial wealth gap and promote generational
21 wealth, which aligns with our mission of equitable
22 homeownership.

23
24 On accessory dwelling units, we think
25 that they can provide vital financial relief,

2 particularly to homeowners and senior citizens facing
3 high maintenance costs, and we think the City should
4 allocate funds for outreach, technical assistance,
5 construction financing to qualified community-based
6 organizations to help these homeowners rehabilitate
7 ADUs and help implement the program in order for it
8 to address inequities.

9 Finally, with 8 percent of existing
10 homeowners in New York being mortgage delinquent,
11 particularly in BIPOC communities, the Foreclosure
12 Prevention Program funded by the City Council assists
13 2,000 homeowners annually, and we ask the City to
14 continue to invest up to 8 million dollars in these
15 homeowner services to prevent foreclosures and to
16 support the estate planning initiative that was just
17 recently..

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

19 KEVIN WOLFE: I thank you for this
20 opportunity to testify, and I'll provide additional
21 details.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr. Wolfe.
23 Next, we'll hear from Dan Miller. Dan, if you can
24 hear me, please unmute, and you may begin.

1 DAN MILLER: Hi, my name's Dan Miller. I
2 live in Astoria, Queens, and I'm so blessed to call
3 this city home, but not everyone who wants to can,
4 and I think this is why we need the City of Yes. This
5 proposal is a great first step at building the
6 housing that we'll need for the next generation of
7 New Yorkers. In 1926, the building that I live in was
8 built in Astoria. It's just a simple, no-frills
9 building that holds six apartments, and it was built
10 as part of this burst of development in the 1910s and
11 especially the '20s that really like transformed
12 Queens and made it the borough that we know and love
13 today. The population exploded, and New York City
14 became more prosperous and more wealthy and more
15 hospitable, and now it's home to millions of people
16 from across the world. It's a triumph of American
17 life, and we should do that again. We've done it
18 once, and we can do it again. We can say yes to more
19 housing. We can build the infrastructure that we need
20 so that more generations of New Yorkers aren't left
21 where we're left today, struggling to find
22 apartments, looking and standing in line for hours at
23 an open house, fearing the next rent increase. We who
24 rent today, especially market-rate renters, we know
25

2 how bad it is out there, and we know who's
3 responsible for it. It's the City Council who has let
4 this languish for decades, underbuilding the housing
5 that we desperately need. We can start fixing that
6 problem today by City of Yes, so that 30 years from
7 now, our kids aren't facing the same economic...

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

9 DAN MILLER: Conditions that we do, trying
10 to rent.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, David.

12 DAN MILLER: (INAUDIBLE) City of Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I'm sorry. Thank you,
14 Dan. Appreciate it. Next, we'll hear from Chloe
15 Sarnoff.

16 CHLOE SARNOFF: Hi, everyone. My name is
17 Chloe Sarnoff, and I'm the Director of Policy
18 Research and Initiatives at Robin Hood, one of New
19 York City's largest poverty-fighting organizations.
20 On behalf of Robin Hood, I am here to express our
21 strong support for City of Yes and to urge the
22 Council to vote for the proposal as written. New York
23 City's housing crisis has reached its breaking point.
24 Nearly a third of low-income renters in the city
25 spend more than half of their income on rent, and

1 recent data from the poverty tracker finds that for
2 the typical rent-burdened New Yorker living in
3 poverty, rent amounts to 70 percent of their cash
4 income each month. With a vacancy rate of only 1.4
5 percent, the lowest in 56 years, our housing shortage
6 affects all New Yorkers, but it threatens the lives
7 of the city's most vulnerable families. These are the
8 New Yorkers who will be most harmed long-term if the
9 Council does not pass City of Yes. With so few
10 available affordable apartments, families currently
11 spend over 400 days in shelter before finding an
12 apartment they can afford. If City of Yes is passed
13 as written, it will add as many as 109,000 new units
14 to the city over the next decade, and in doing so
15 will create opportunities for low-income families
16 with rental assistance vouchers to access newer units
17 in higher-opportunity neighborhoods. Beyond just new
18 housing, a new report from the Regional Planning
19 Association estimates that City of Yes would create
20 up to 30,000 new jobs annually for 15 years,
21 generating 32 billion in total earnings and 83
22 billion in overall economic activity for New York
23 City. Some have questioned whether City of Yes for
24 housing does enough to create a production pipeline
25

2 for deeply affordable housing. This is an important
3 question for organizations like Robinhood, whose
4 partners are focused on meeting the needs of the
5 poorest New Yorkers. Our response is that citywide
6 zoning tax amendments can only do so much. On its
7 own, City of Yes for housing will not close our deep
8 affordable housing gap or completely solve the
9 housing crisis, which is why we are excited to see
10 what else the Council proposes as part of a broader
11 housing agenda and why we have to keep the pressure
12 on in Albany for statewide action. There is no silver
13 bullet that will solve New York's housing crisis.
14 Meeting the needs of low-income New Yorkers requires
15 increasing the supply of affordable housing and
16 providing more support for tenants today.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
18 has expired.

19 CHLOE SARNOFF: (INAUDIBLE) the
20 centerpiece of our policy agenda. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Last, we'll
22 hear from Sunny Ng.

23 SUNNY NG: Hello. Good afternoon. My name
24 is Sunny Ng, and I've been a renter in North Brooklyn
25 for over 10 years. For anyone my age or younger, we

2 know how expensive and how annoying it is to find
3 housing because rent is so expensive. The housing
4 crisis is very real, and I believe the City of Yes
5 will help, and this is why I'm really excited for it
6 to pass, and I really hope the Council approves this
7 proposal as is. While each of the proposals has their
8 own merits, the one I'm most excited about is lifting
9 parking minimums. For a city with the best world-
10 class public transit in the whole country, it's
11 pretty ridiculous that we have provisions that
12 require parking in the first place. This is
13 especially absurd in transit-rich neighborhoods like
14 the one I'm currently living in right now. Parking is
15 definitely not free, and it is a form of subsidy
16 provided to those less than half of all households in
17 the city that drive. That cost is passed on to
18 renters and owners who may not need the space.
19 Removing parking minimums doesn't mean the City
20 doesn't allow parking space to be built at all. It
21 just means that the market needs to figure out how
22 much parking is actually needed instead of us
23 mandating what needs to happen. The bottom line is
24 developers should not be forced to build on-site
25 parking if it doesn't make sense for the

2 neighborhood. Not to mention, we should be reducing
3 car dependency if it is the City's prerogative to
4 reduce our carbon footprint and to fight climate
5 change. This proposal moves us in the right direction
6 from its outdated policy, and I fully support it.
7 Thank you for your time, and I hope City of Yes
8 passes.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much,
10 Sunny.

11 Do we have any questions for this panel?

12 Thank you. All right. This panel is now
13 excused.

14 We will be transitioning back to in-
15 person. The first in-person panel I'm going to call
16 on consists of Cheyanne Deopersaud, Sharon Pope-
17 Marshall, Benjamin Ross, Tory Lyon, Megan Wiley, and
18 Michael Rivera.

19 The following panel after that will
20 consist of John Lynch, Laura Sewell, John Mudd, Edwin
21 Westley, and Roxanne Delgado. That will be the next
22 panel. If I just called your name, you can sit up
23 front until this panel has went already.

24 I'm going to call this panel one more
25 time. Michael Rivera, Megan Wiley, Tory Lyon,

2 Benjamin Ross, Sharon Pope-Marshall, and Cheyanne
3 Deopersaud.

4 We will begin first with Cheyanne.

5 CHEYANNE DEOPERSAUD: Hi, everyone. It's
6 good to see you, Chairperson and Speaker and City
7 Council Members. My name is Chayanne, and I'm here to
8 testify on behalf of the Center for Fair Futures and
9 Next 100, which are organizations dedicated to
10 improving outcomes for youth and young adults
11 transitioning out of the foster care system. Today,
12 we express our strong support for the City of Yes
13 Housing initiative and emphasize the urgent need for
14 affordable housing solutions to ensure that young
15 people in the foster care system can thrive. Young
16 adults in foster care are some of the most vulnerable
17 members of our community, and as they age out of
18 foster care, many face immense challenges, including
19 housing instability. In fact, an average of one out
20 of four youth in the foster care system will become
21 homeless within four years of aging out of foster
22 care. In New York City, the high cost of housing
23 makes it nearly impossible for many youth
24 transitioning out of foster care to find stable,
25 affordable places to live, leaving them at increased

2 risk of homelessness and other negative outcomes.
3 Without stable housing, these young people face an
4 uphill battle as they complete their education, try
5 to find employment, and build independent lives. We
6 urge the City Council to take additional steps to
7 prioritize affordable housing for young people in
8 foster care and young adults transitioning out of
9 care and setting aside units in new developments
10 offering targeted rental assistance and supportive
11 services for them. Doing so can help prevent
12 homelessness among this population and provide them
13 with the stability they need to succeed. As a youth
14 from the system since I was 15 years old, I
15 understand the firsthand experiences of how critical
16 stable housing is for young people in foster care.
17 With the right support, these young people can go on
18 to lead successful, independent lives. We believe
19 that the City of Yes initiative is vital to creating
20 a future where all young people, including those
21 aging out of foster care, have access to safe,
22 quality, affordable housing. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Cheyanne.

24 Next, we're going to have Sharon Pope-Marshall.

2 SHARON POPE-MARSHALL: Thank you. I am
3 here to ask the Council to modify the City of Yes
4 Housing Opportunity. My name is Sharon Pope-Marshall,
5 Executive Director of Civitas. Since 1981, Civitas,
6 as a community of citizens and residents, has
7 dedicated ourselves to improving the neighborhood
8 quality of life through sound, context-sensitive
9 urban planning and sound zoning policy for the
10 community districts on the Upper East Side as well as
11 El Barrio, East Harlem, arguably two of the densest
12 community districts in New York City. We thank the
13 Department of City Planning for its Herculean effort
14 to revamp New York City's antiquated zoning
15 resolution with proposals to incentivize and sustain
16 development throughout our city. We note that the
17 proposal recommends innovative, comprehensive
18 citywide zoning regulations that are meant to
19 alleviate the pressure felt by the highest density
20 neighborhoods and incentivize new residential
21 development in medium and low-density communities.
22 Although Civitas is in general support of the City of
23 Yes, we offer these modifications and we trust that
24 the Council will consider them. Expand off-site
25 affordable housing opportunities within our community

2 districts. Don't weaken Special Purpose Districts
3 with citywide changes proposed in the City of Yes
4 housing opportunity. Retain public input and public
5 review of the uniform plan use review process.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Sharon.

7 SHARON POPE-MARSHALL: I appreciate you
8 letting me speak today. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. You can go
10 ahead and present the rest of the your testimony at
11 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

12 SHARON POPE-MARSHALL: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Are there any
14 questions or statements for this panel? Sure. Go
15 ahead, Council Member Joseph.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: How long does it
17 take for foster youth that age out to find permanent
18 housing and affordable housing? What's the time
19 stamp?

20 CHEYANNE DEOPERSAUD: That's a good
21 question. Can I get my people to answer back to you
22 about that?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Of course.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
25 Member Joseph.

2 Thank you to this panel. You're excused.

3 Can we have the next panel come up to
4 that I called previously, please?

5 The following panel after that will
6 consist of Michael Savino, Julie Stein, Van Sundaro
7 Kalaspudi (phonetic), Chloe Phitoussi, I'm sorry, I
8 know I butchered that. Thank you. You can come to the
9 front. Elizabeth Denys and Reverend Dr. Terry Troia.
10 You will be the next panelists.

11 We will begin with this panel, and we can
12 start first with John Lynch.

13 JOHN LYNCH: Good afternoon, City Council
14 Members. My name is John Lynch, a retiree who has
15 lived all of my 71 years in Middle Village, Queens.
16 Today I am speaking not only for myself but as a
17 member of the Juniper Civic Association. Middle
18 Village in Maspeth right now is susceptible to
19 flooding and blackouts without additional building.
20 If there were any tall apartment buildings built, the
21 electrical grid could go out, causing further
22 blackouts. Community Boards have long spoke for the
23 people of the city, yet in Queens alone, 12 out of
24 the 14 boards voted no, or 85 percent in the
25 Community Boards. I'm willing to bet that the other

1
2 Boroughs' Community Boards also voted no, but City
3 Planning doesn't care. They still are pushing for
4 this. Is this the future of Community Boards where
5 the City doesn't care or listen to them? Yesterday
6 there was a rally in City Hall Park against City of
7 Yes. People from every borough were there. There were
8 black, brown, Asian, and white people there. After
9 the rally, I spoke to people from Jamaica, South
10 Ozone Park, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. They were very
11 worried about the possibility of this bill and what
12 could happen to their neighborhoods. In the last few
13 years, we have already lost tens of thousands of
14 middle-class New Yorkers due to crime and high taxes.
15 If the Council passes this bill, there is likely that
16 more middle-class citizens will flee the Big Apple.
17 Let's not forget that MTA is in the middle of doing
18 cuts, not only to bus routes and eliminating bus
19 stops. Any additional housing built on those lines
20 would cause problems for the people already riding
21 crowded buses. It's clear that only one business will
22 make money on this, and that would be the developers.
23 The question is, will Mayor Adams still be in office
24 to oversee this? Please, I urge the City Council to
25 vote no.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr. Lynch.

3 Next, we'll hear from Laura Sewell.

4 LAURA SEWELL: Good afternoon. My name is
5 Laura Sewell. I'm the Director of the East Village
6 Community Coalition. I'm a longtime resident of the
7 Lower East Side. I want to highlight today something
8 that I'm not hearing much about, which is the
9 residential building standards that would reduce the
10 distance between windows from 30 feet to 20 feet and
11 allow more building out into backyards. City Planning
12 said that we don't need the distance that we used to
13 have for the tenement buildings in my neighborhood
14 because we all have air conditioners now. I wish we
15 all had air conditioners, but we don't. We have a lot
16 of residents who live without them or can't afford to
17 keep them turned on 24/7 for six weeks in a row,
18 which is the way we're living these days. The way
19 those buildings, those tenement buildings, were
20 designed to bring light and air into the apartments
21 is really, really critical and important. I'm just
22 not really hearing anything about that from other
23 panelists, and I'm asking you to look into it,
24 please, and think carefully about what it means.
25 We're also concerned that adding height, the

2 potential to add height and depth to these lots will
3 encourage landlords who have buildings that are not
4 in great condition to begin with to knock them down
5 and further gentrify and displace what's going on in
6 the neighborhood already. I mean, I've lived in the
7 East Village for 40 years, and the change has been
8 enormous, but there are still a lot of residents
9 who've lived there for a very, very long time and
10 really have no place else to go if they're to be
11 displaced. When our rent-stabilized tenants are
12 displaced, they end up nowhere near where they grew
13 up and where they lived. So that's just something
14 that's very important to me. Thank you very much for
15 listening.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
17 going to hear from John Mudd.

18 JOHN MUDD: Hi. My name is John Mudd. I'm
19 with the Executive Director of Midtown South
20 Community Council, and I've been living in Midtown
21 since '84. The Council has been around just as long
22 working with agencies and elected officials and non-
23 profits activists, and we work on the housing,
24 health, and food needs. The City's development
25 policies are largely to blame for burdening rents,

1 poor health, and widening disparity and increasing
2 homelessness. To build it and let the free market fix
3 it gimmick was disproven a long time ago. The
4 continual commoditizing of homes will always have the
5 investor looking for more profits at the expenses of
6 the renter. The housing crisis is decades old. We
7 haven't made any real attempts to solve it. Our
8 infrastructure's archaic. Agencies of oversight are
9 understaffed. The responses are at a stale pace.
10 Things haven't changed. Rather than produce the kinds
11 of housing needed to protect our rent-controlled and
12 rent-stabilized stock and bring 64,000 warehoused
13 apartments onto the market, we're making deals with
14 developers and securing their investment by ensuring
15 development-friendly folks are in office, running the
16 Rent Guideline Boards, sitting on the Community
17 Boards to manufacture consent for their communities.
18 Our housing policy in general serves the developers'
19 best interest. It does little to ease the cost
20 burdens and to end homelessness, housing, and
21 unaffordable crisis. The plan disguises a tax
22 giveaway as incentive, uses a repackaged problematic
23 421A tax giveaway, and a problematic AMI to determine
24 what's affordable. It continues using the
25

2 dysfunctional voucher system to subsidize landlords
3 and it has no mandate for the right to housing. The
4 plan doesn't resolve the infrastructure problems.
5 Ooh, that's quick.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, John. You
7 can submit the rest of your testimony in the
8 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Next, we're going
9 to hear from Edwin Westley.

10 Sergeants, can you grab his testimony? I
11 think he was trying to give it to us.

12 Edwin, you may begin.

13 EDWIN WESTLEY: Thank you very much, Mr.
14 Speaker. My name is Ed Westley. I'm past President of
15 the Jackson Heights Beautification Group and a 20-
16 plus member of the Community Board 3. I am here today
17 to give testimony in opposition to Mayor Adams' plan.
18 Most of the Queen's Community Boards in a vote of 12
19 out of 14 recommended a no vote. Unfortunately, our
20 Borough President was not paying attention to the
21 people. He supports the plan with conditions. Anybody
22 that sat on a Community Board realizes that we know
23 that conditions are meaningless, especially when the
24 City Council approves this or disapproves it so I'm
25 surprised he made it with conditions. It would permit

2 building apartment houses where single-family homes
3 are now without any requirements for parking, and it
4 would also permit widespread garage and basement
5 conversions under cover of the law. It seems the new
6 rules will not trump, pardon the profanity, will not
7 trump our covenants or our historic district. Of
8 course, the main target is the one-story taxpayers.
9 It will be easier to buy your tenants out of their
10 leases than build residential on top of the building.
11 They will still have to go to the historic district
12 council the developer, that is, for aesthetic
13 approval from LPC but, outside it, anything goes.
14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you for your
16 testimony. Next, we'll hear from Roxanne Delgado.

17 ROXANNE DELGADO: Hello, City Council. My
18 name is Roxanne Delgado. I'm an activist. I noticed
19 that not one real estate person has spoken against
20 the City of Yes. Not one of them. In fact, they came
21 out in support of City of Yes, they said they funded
22 non-profits in support of City of Yes, but not one of
23 them came out to speak against City of Yes, as they
24 do when we do proposed rent freezes, so actually real
25 estate benefits from this City of Yes. That itself

2 tells you that it does not benefit from this
3 Committee that did not initiate this plan. It was
4 initiated by a corrupt Administration behind closed
5 doors with real estate and a political operative
6 Department of City Planning. This will be
7 environmental injustice because community input will
8 be annihilated. How can you expect people to vote
9 when they have no input in the process? Secondly,
10 environmental injustice. The Bronx is the poorest,
11 the unhealthiest, the most low quality of life, yet
12 we're the greenest. Adding more asphalt to the Bronx
13 will make us worse than we are now. And building more
14 housing does not mean more homes, it means building
15 more affordable housing. Because in the Bronx, when I
16 had to move after I lost my apartment. I found
17 apartments, but I couldn't afford them, and that's
18 the story of most of our people. It's not that we
19 can't find apartments, we can't afford them. And not
20 one non-profit person that supports City of Yes came
21 out to comfort this lady, and I listened in tears.
22 This is the story of the Bronx residents. People
23 living in their apartments for decades and then
24 having to lose their community and their homes, and
25 not one of them even offered her comfort or offered

2 her any assistance besides yourself. That says a lot
3 about those people. Who are they here for? Because
4 they're definitely not for people of color, which
5 they like to use. Community of colors, community of
6 colors, but they're not even part of that community
7 of colors, but they love to use us. This plan does
8 not help community of colors. We're being exploited
9 to justify this plan that will actually harm us. City
10 Council, we have political, bought and paid for
11 politicians pushing this rally, pushing this
12 initiative that will harm us, and they will have
13 blood in their hands so do the right thing, because
14 otherwise you should be voted out. Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

16 Just want to state for the record that I did take
17 that lady's information.

18 ROXANNE DELGADO: Thank you for that, I
19 know. That says a lot about you.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right, no problem.

21 Are there any questions for this panel?

22 If there's no questions, thank you so
23 much. I really appreciate it.

24

25

2 The next panel that I'm going to call up,
3 if I called you up and you're sitting in the front
4 row, please step to the dais.

5 The following panel after that will
6 consist of Pilar DeJesus, David Lawrence, Santis
7 Gardillo, and Allie Ryan. If you heard your name,
8 please come up to the front row. You will be the next
9 panel to go up.

10 This panel, we're going to start with
11 Michael Savino. Is Michael Savino on the dais?
12 Michael Savino's not on the dais.

13 Julie Stein.

14 If I just recently called you, you could
15 step to the front row. I'll call you from the next
16 panel, okay? Thank you.

17 We'll start first with Julie Stein.

18 JULIE STEIN: Hi, good afternoon. My name
19 is Julie Stein. I'm the Executive Director of the
20 Union Square Partnership, the Business Improvement
21 District in Union Square, and 14th Street. I'm here
22 today in support of City of Yes for Housing
23 Opportunity because what's good for New York City's
24 housing is good for its business districts. Housing
25 production in New York City has not kept pace with

1 the job growth we've achieved over the past 40 years,
2 creating a housing supply shortage that has triggered
3 an affordability crisis. If we don't build more
4 housing, it will handicap the economic vitality now
5 and in the future. As we described in the New York
6 Action Plan, the Post-Pandemic Recovery Plan for
7 Business Districts, in addition to hurting New
8 Yorkers, the housing affordability crisis has also
9 become a key challenge in attracting companies to New
10 York City and preserving the relevance and viability
11 of New York City's business districts. Employers need
12 to know that they can attract and retain talent in
13 New York City and that this talent will be stable and
14 secure. The precarious housing situation of New
15 York's workforce weakens this confidence. The City of
16 Yes proposal will allow for much-needed housing
17 production to create more abundant, stable, and
18 affordable housing for New Yorkers, in turn
19 bolstering employers' confidence that locating in New
20 York City and our business districts is a smart and
21 safe investment. Furthermore, business districts
22 throughout New York City will be bolstered by
23 updating rules for residential conversion of vacant
24 office and other non-residential space. This smart
25

2 reuse of existing spaces addresses both housing
3 shortage and the need to adapt our commercial
4 landscape for today's realities. We need to ensure
5 that New York remains a place where people want to
6 live and work, and expanding housing is fundamental
7 to this goal. I support the approval of City of Yes
8 for Housing Opportunity. Thank you for your time and
9 consideration.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. Do
11 we have Vassun Hara on the dais? No?

12 We'll go with Chloe. Chloe, how do you
13 pronounce your last name? Sorry.

14 CHLOE PHITOUSSI: Phitoussi.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Phitoussi. Thank you.

16 CHLOE PHITOUSSI: Thank you, Mr. Riley.
17 You've been heroic today. My name is Chloe Phitoussi,
18 and I'm a native New Yorker and a mother of two. I am
19 here because unaffordable housing does not just mean
20 unaffordable housing. It means everything else
21 becomes unaffordable, too, from coffee to childcare.
22 I urge you to support the City of Yes in full because
23 we need bold leadership to address this crisis. City
24 of Yes brings back the type of housing that helped
25 get New York the character that some here today are

2 defending, like small and shared housing that I know
3 some other folks are supportive of, while also
4 addressing some new problems that we are facing as a
5 city like the glut of office space. Brooklyn Borough
6 President Reynoso said it well. Two things can be
7 true at once. We can say yes to new housing and yes
8 to solving some of the problems that other folks have
9 mentioned today, like modernizing infrastructure and
10 transit. The status quo is what got us here. I urge
11 the City Council to show the bold leadership that we
12 need. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. We'll go
14 next to Elizabeth Denys.

15 ELIZABETH DENYS: Hello. My name is
16 Elizabeth Denys, and I'm a 13-year New York City
17 resident and a Board Member of Open New York, a
18 grassroots pro-housing organization. I'm here today
19 because I'm worried my family, friends, and neighbors
20 will be forced to leave our neighborhood of Flatbush
21 or even the city due to skyrocketing rents. We need
22 to build enough housing to ensure everyone has a home
23 they can afford. In Flatbush, we've seen some
24 construction in the less-white parts of the
25 neighborhood, while whiter areas aren't building as

1 many new homes, and there aren't nearly enough to
2 meet demand. I strongly support all of the proposals
3 in City of Yes for Housing Opportunity because they
4 will make it so more New Yorkers throughout the city
5 can find affordable housing options in their own
6 neighborhoods. Transit-oriented development will
7 bring my neighborhood of Flatbush modest three- to
8 five-story apartment buildings sitting next to three-
9 story one- and two-family homes. I'm a homeowner in
10 the area who thinks these new apartment buildings are
11 more than contextually appropriate. Many decades-old
12 apartment buildings already make up a significant
13 share of the homes in Victorian Flatbush. Buildings
14 like 1409 Albemarle, 405 Westminster, 1710 Avenue H,
15 and too many for this two minutes. Most six- to
16 seven-story apartment buildings like these can't be
17 built under today's zoning code, but City of Yes
18 isn't even proposing buildings that tall, but it
19 still ensures that additional more affordable homes
20 can be built in practical, transit-connected
21 locations. These homes will help those most at risk
22 of being displaced from my neighborhood and the city.
23 Some of my neighbors, mostly homeowners like me who
24 already have stable housing, will point to the 2009
25

2 Flatbush rezoning as sufficient. That rezoning was
3 never about creating opportunity for housing, and you
4 don't have to take my word for it. I will quote the
5 person who started the push for the rezoning. A six-
6 story building was going up within sight of my
7 backyard so I decided I wanted to do something about
8 it so I started a whole process of downzoning the
9 area. Fifteen years later, our housing crisis has
10 only gotten more dire. Half of my neighbors pay over
11 30 percent of their income towards housing, and 30
12 percent of my neighbors are still paying over half of
13 their paychecks towards rent. City of Yes would
14 finally allow us to start building more homes
15 equitably within our area. That's why I hope all
16 Council Members will do their part to create homes
17 everywhere by supporting all the proposals in City of
18 Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
20 hear from Reverend Dr. Terry Troia.

21 REVEREND DR. TERRY TROIA: My name is
22 Terry Troia, and I'm a native Staten Islander. I'm a
23 Staten Island homeowner, as are my siblings, my
24 parents, my grandparents, and my great-grandparents
25 were all Staten Island homeowners. I'm a pastor who

1 has worked for the last 40 years with unhoused
2 people, and today I represent myself. Last year,
3 about 1,500 Staten Islanders lost their housing and
4 ended up in a shelter or sleeping in a chair in our
5 drop-in center. What's not counted are the numbers of
6 Staten Island families doubled, tripled up,
7 quadrupled up. People living in illegal basement
8 apartments or just renting a mattress in someone's
9 basement. Families living in campers and in cars on
10 back roads or tenting under our beach boardwalks in
11 the winter. Last Monday night, October 14th, a 71-
12 year-old disabled senior citizen was found sleeping
13 in a shack on our island's north shore. There are
14 homeless Staten Islanders living in encampments, in
15 abandoned cemeteries, under train tracks, in
16 abandoned buildings, and every day I receive phone
17 calls about native Staten Islanders who can't afford
18 a room or a studio apartment on their disability or
19 social security check. Rooms are renting for upwards
20 of 1,700 a month, just a room. Staten Island has
21 hundreds of families doubled up and tripled up in
22 overcrowding apartments because one family can't pay
23 the rising rent. And Staten Island families are
24 burdened with rents and utilities that suck up 50,
25

2 60, 70 percent of their wages. We have a serious
3 affordable housing crisis on Staten Island and we
4 need a serious plan to make more affordable housing
5 available on Staten Island. Whether it's the City of
6 Yes or some other initiative that develops more
7 affordable housing, that is what we need and we need
8 to create units now. Staten Islanders die on the
9 streets of Staten Island because they can't afford a
10 place suitable for human habitation. No one should
11 die because they don't have a safe place to live.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Amen. Thank you,
14 Reverend. Council Member Joseph has a question for
15 us.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: I have a quick
17 question for Liz. Hi Liz. Do you think UAP goes far
18 enough in delivering affordability?

19 ELIZABETH DENYS: So, I think that UAP is
20 a really good start and I think that we're going to
21 also see additional affordability hopefully through
22 other initiatives like rezoning Coney Island Avenue
23 for additional housing. I want to note that UAP
24 provides lower AMI for affordability than the
25 existing voluntary programs, and I also want to note

2 that another proposal in this offering, another MIH
3 option for a lower income, you know, within MIH
4 rezoning would provide more options for it, but I
5 also, you know, I think that it's a good start. I
6 know that the people in our district who are most
7 vulnerable are below this income. But I also want to
8 note that if housing is built through UAP, the amount
9 of money that someone would need for a voucher to be
10 able to get one of those units through UAP would be
11 less than the amount of money if we don't have
12 programs like UAP that help mandate lower
13 affordability. So, I'm thinking of this as one
14 component of many, many, many things we can do to do
15 housing. Like this is kind of the zoning component
16 and I'd love to see an expansion of vouchers. I'd
17 love to see, you know, all of the things in this
18 proposal are trying to chip away at some of the
19 affordability issues, and I think that plus more will
20 help those most vulnerable in our area with expansion
21 of vouchers and other such programs.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: You mentioned that
23 the rezoning in 2009 didn't go far enough. Could you
24 give me an example?

2 ELIZABETH DENYS: Specifically, I would
3 note that the rezoning pushed all housing opportunity
4 away from what we consider to be Victorian Flatbush
5 and onto a few specific streets. Those streets
6 include places like Coney Island Avenue, which you
7 know, there's so much more potential than even what's
8 there, and just overall we haven't seen a huge growth
9 in housing like many of my neighbors will have said.
10 I think that we need to make it easier to get
11 additional homes throughout all of these spots. You
12 know, like ADUs within Victorian Flatbush wouldn't
13 change the physical character of the neighborhood and
14 it would even help what I consider character of the
15 neighborhood, which is all the people there, be able
16 to continue to stay and to have more options to live
17 in the neighborhood that they know and love, and so I
18 think that just, you know, not having more
19 opportunity within certain pockets, you know, since
20 it's all about not every opportunity is going to be
21 taken, we need to have as many opportunities as
22 possible while still making sure that we're
23 protecting existing residents.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Thank you
3 to this panel.

4 Just a reminder, the front section is for
5 those who are going to speak on the panel, so if
6 you're not speaking on the panel, if you could keep
7 the front section clear. That's that front row right
8 there.

9 The next panel we're going to hear from
10 is Pilar DeJesus, David Lawrence, Santa Scardillo,
11 and Allie Ryan.

12 The following panel we'll have to add
13 after that is Stephen Crim, Matthew Denys, Kurtis
14 Weatherford, Vishnu Reddy, Luke Lavanway, and Toby
15 Hyde.

16 We'll begin first with Ms. Pilar DeJesus.

17 PILAR DEJESUS: Hello. All right. Good
18 afternoon, almost good evening, everyone. We held out
19 really long. I'm Pilar DeJesus. I am a Latina born
20 and raised in El Barrio. I'm an eviction prevention
21 specialist. I'm an advocate. I'm an organizer. I sit
22 on a few coalitions. I sit on a few boards. I'm the
23 Vice President of East Harlem Preservation. I've been
24 in this Chambers a few times to talk about rezoning,
25 to talk about warehousing, to talk about housing in

1 general. I spend a lot of time in housing court as a
2 paralegal for a legal service provider. Many of you
3 depend on us for your constituents to give them legal
4 advice and to represent them in housing court when
5 they're being faced with eviction. I ran for office
6 twice. I ran against Melissa Margarito at one point.
7 I also have been in central bookings a few times and
8 I spent some time on Rikers Island. I'm saying all
9 that to say because I'm here to say that I'm a New
10 Yorker born and raised and I've experienced a lot of
11 different types of harms by policies, different
12 legislators, policies and agencies. I'm also here to
13 tell you that to say no to the City of Yes, and I
14 have a few points to say why I say that. One, I would
15 also like to ask the legislators and the agencies to
16 stop acting as if you are business partners with the
17 real estate industry. Stop acting like you're the
18 silent investors because you're using a lot of our
19 money to help them make profit in a business. The
20 real estate industry is a business, and I don't think
21 we talk about that enough. I'm also really tired of
22 the word manipulation used in these hearings,
23 especially by Dan with his little bit of housing
24 because it conditions brains to think a certain way,
25

2 including the word affordable because I don't know
3 how you guys revise the definition of affordable in
4 your packet. I'm here to say what that PowerPoint did
5 not say. That 79-page PowerPoint did not address the
6 hundreds of thousands vacant rent-stabilized units
7 and I took a lot of time, rent-stabilized units that
8 are currently vacant. I know this because I work in a
9 building where there's 150 units and there's only
10 seven units being utilized and the landlord's lawyer
11 literally told me they're not going to rent them out.
12 They have great lawyers to continue violating the
13 laws in a predatory way with loopholes and all these.
14 You're not counting all the vacant units that are
15 still vacant from the last rezoning in these
16 affordable buildings. We don't need more units. We
17 have 160 eviction cases pending right now. Those are
18 people who currently have homes but are at risk. So
19 what are developers and what is Council...

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Pilar.
21 Thank you.

22 PILAR DEJESUS: Doing to protect that? I
23 think we need to stop talking about building more
24 housing. I'm an advocate. I want housing, but I want
25 us to protect and preserve the housing we have now.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Pilar.
3 We want to make sure everyone else could testify.

4 PILAR DEJESUS: And also, really quickly,
5 the real estate industry is also violating the law
6 with illicit cannabis.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: [GAVEL] Thank you. We
8 want to make sure everyone can be able to testify.
9 You can put all of that in testimony and submit it to
10 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you.

11 Next, we're going to ask David Lawrence
12 to go.

13 DAVID LAWRENCE: Okay, great. Chairman
14 Riley, Council Members, thank you so much for having
15 me here. My name's David Lawrence. I represent
16 Ironclad Artists. We're an artist co-op in SoHo, and
17 we've been there since 1974.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: David, can you please
19 speak up a little bit? Thank you.

20 DAVID LAWRENCE: I'm so sorry. My throat's
21 a little sore. I'm sorry about that. Would you like
22 me to start over?

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You can start over.
24 You can start his time over.

2 DAVID LAWRENCE: Of course. My name is
3 David Lawrence, and I represent Ironclad Artists, an
4 artist co-op in SoHo, and we've been there since
5 1974. My neighbors are painters, sculptors,
6 photographers, filmmakers, many of whom are very well
7 known internationally and nationally. All of us do
8 what artists do best. We take humble materials, and
9 using our imagination, we create value, both in our
10 own art and our neighborhood, which at an earlier
11 time was known as Hell's Hundred Acres. Because of
12 artists, SoHo is what it is today, a premier
13 destination for visitors, and one of the most unique
14 neighborhoods in the world that we can all be very
15 proud of. In fact, artists have been leading the way
16 in the spirit of City of Yes for over 50 years,
17 converting commercial and industrial spaces into
18 living and work spaces. Yet we, you'd think, we would
19 support City of Yes, but we cannot for a simple
20 reason, and that's because the plan includes Section
21 15-01 of the Zoning Code, and it singles us out for
22 exorbitant taxes. I personally will have to pay
23 hundreds of thousands of dollars to the City. This
24 was alluded to for an earlier speaker. Chris Marte is
25 very aware of this situation. This discrimination is

2 going to cost our building alone millions of dollars
3 for a slush fund, which is known as the Arts Fund, an
4 ill-defined fund that will spread money all over the
5 city and take it out of SoHo. This will bankrupt
6 artists and drive the remaining artists out of SoHo,
7 and so unless section 15-01 is eliminated, we ask you
8 to please and respectfully vote no for the City of
9 Yes. We feel this is incredibly unfair, but I
10 appreciate your time very much today. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
12 going to hear from Santa Scardillo. Santa Scardillo.

13 Next, we'll hear from Allie Ryan.

14 ALLIE RYAN: Hello. My name is Allie Ryan.
15 I am a long-time East Village resident, raising my
16 family. I'm active in my community. I ran for City
17 Council twice. I'm a parent leader in my daughter's
18 school. I'm a member of at least seven grassroots
19 groups that have filed lawsuits to stop rezonings and
20 bad policies in the city. I'm a Board Member of an
21 affordable homeownership condo association that was
22 created during the Giuliani Administration. Seventy-
23 five percent of the original owners still live there,
24 and they're actually in many cases three generations
25 living in their unit. Today I am speaking as myself.

2 It seems like every Mayor and City Council create
3 their own version of a plan to address housing. My
4 institutional knowledge only goes back to the de
5 Blasio Administration, although my home goes back to
6 the Giuliani Administration, and Mayor Adams' City of
7 Yes plan is the newest plan. Speaker Adams, you've
8 actually talked about creating your own plan, and I
9 would like to give some ideas for that plan. So,
10 affordable homeownership and Mitchell-Lamas-type
11 housing is desperately needed. Right now, when I
12 moved to the city in the early 2000s, an apartment on
13 Avenue C was 2,000 dollars a month. Now, in my
14 neighborhood, it's 3,800 dollars a month. Mortgages
15 are cheaper. People who've testified throughout
16 today, your constituents, they want to live in their
17 homes for the long term. They don't want to be
18 transient so I encourage you to build opportunities
19 for homeownership than rental property. Thank you for
20 your time, and I'm going to send the rest.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Ryan.

22 Yes, we would love to hear that presentation. Speaker
23 Adams wants to address you.

24

25

2 SPEAKER ADAMS: Ms. Ryan, as a matter of
3 fact, I have to leave, ironically. I'm getting an
4 award from Habitat for Humanity tonight. Thank you.

5 You struck a nerve when you spoke about
6 Mitchell-Lama because a lot of people don't talk
7 about Mitchell-Lama and the significance of Mitchell-
8 Lama and homeownership, and some folks in this room
9 know how significant speaking about homeownership and
10 now building homeownership means to me. We don't
11 speak about that elongation of housing and creating,
12 not just for renters, even though we know that the
13 predominance of those that want housing will be
14 renters, but we need to extend the thought of
15 homeownership out, and Mitchell-Lama certainly is one
16 of those components. Can you just, they cut you off.
17 I want you to continue your testimony just before I
18 leave, because I'd like to hear you out.

19 ALLIE RYAN: Thank you. In regard to the
20 Mitchell-Lama, so in East Village, we have right
21 across the street from me, Village East Towers, and
22 we have Village View. We also have East Midtown
23 Plaza, north of me on 23rd Street, and I have friends
24 who grew up in their apartments that were their
25 parents', and they inherited them, and they're

2 raising their children there, and so I see firsthand
3 how they wouldn't be able to live in this
4 neighborhood if it wasn't for that. The next thing
5 that I want to talk about, which was initially what I
6 wanted to talk about, I chose to talk about my
7 personal situation based on what people were saying I
8 was inspired. But as you are well aware, right now we
9 have Elizabeth Street Garden that's about to be
10 destroyed to make way for housing. I think it's a
11 crime to pit green space against housing. So, one
12 thing I would like to ask, I actually campaigned on
13 this, is to make community gardens permanent. One
14 thing I have learned, we have a lot of community
15 gardens in my neighborhood, and because of COVID,
16 they became outdoor community spaces, and I recognize
17 with mental illness, homelessness, and addiction
18 number one top issues in my District, and I think
19 this is across the board, if we have more green space
20 and giving people opportunities to engage with
21 nature, we have medical research that shows that
22 mental illness, depression especially, will go down,
23 and so that is why I'm calling for, like to preserve
24 the green spaces we have as opposed to like right
25 now, I'm coming next week for a rally to save the

2 community gardens because of the Mayoral Executive
3 Order for every agency to come up with City land to
4 build housing.

5 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay, and we're going to
6 let you do that next week. I wanted to expand on the
7 homeownership stuff, and you took us into the garden,
8 so I'm going to cut you right there, because I really
9 do have to go. Your time has expired.

10 ALLIE RYAN: Thank you.

11 SPEAKER ADAMS: But I'm going to thank you
12 so much for your testimony and everybody that's
13 testified tonight. Thank you so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Madam
15 Speaker, and yes, you can present the rest of your
16 suggestions to us.

17 Before this panel, I just want to address
18 Mr. Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence, we did have a full panel
19 today from NoHo, SoHo that spoke about the rezoning
20 provisions. I just wanted to make it clear, I didn't
21 address it earlier because we wanted to give the
22 space for everyone to speak about the issue, while
23 Council Member Marte was here, but this provision is
24 not currently in this zoning proposal. No, it's
25 outside the scope of the zoning proposal. Council

2 Member Marte is very familiar with it, and we are
3 discussing it as well. Okay? All right. No problem.
4 Yeah, it's outside the scope, but we can go more into
5 depth with that. Thank you.

6 This panel is excused.

7 The following panel in front, you can
8 step in.

9 The panel after that will consist of
10 Professor Joseph Kleinplatz, Christopher Leon
11 Johnson, Susanna Landa, David Holowka, and Joelle
12 Kupferman. Sorry if I mispronounced your name. If I
13 just stated your name, please come to the front row,
14 and you'll be the next panel to go up.

15 We'll start this panel with Stephen Crim.

16 STEPHEN CRIM: Good afternoon or good
17 evening. My name is Stephen Crim, and I live in a
18 nice R8A zoning district on East 15th Street in
19 Manhattan, where Council Member Rivera represents me.
20 I am here because while I am blessed to be able to
21 afford my rent and rent in various neighborhoods
22 around the city, too many of my fellow New Yorkers
23 cannot afford their housing. Meanwhile, an untold
24 number of others living around our nation would love
25 to live here and contribute to this wonderful, ever-

1 changing place but cannot because of housing costs. I
2 ask that Council Member Rivera and all the Members of
3 the Council vote in favor of the zoning amendments
4 being discussed. City of Yes, on its own, will not
5 solve our housing crisis, but it is a major step
6 forward that we should take while also working on
7 complementary solutions discussed today that we can
8 address in the future. Many zoning regulations passed
9 over decades have contributed to our housing crisis,
10 and the City of Yes initiative appropriately responds
11 with a multifaceted approach for all parts of the
12 city. I'll focus on one, the re-legalization of SROs,
13 or Small and Shared Housing. This is housing that
14 could be crucial to keep people who are in danger of
15 falling into homelessness, housing that could help my
16 neighbors who are unhoused in the middle of luxury.
17 Allowing more housing to be built is a moral issue
18 for me. The faith in which I grew up taught me to
19 love my neighbors and to share my blessings with
20 others. The right thing to do is to share the city
21 that I love with even more neighbors, which the City
22 of Yes will allow. Thank you for the opportunity to
23 speak, and please support this essential set of
24 zoning reforms.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
3 going to hear from Matthew Denys.

4 MATTHEW DENYS: Hi. I'm Matt Denys, and I
5 am lucky to be a homeowner in Flatbush, Brooklyn.
6 Shout out to my Council Member, Rita Joseph. And I'm
7 also lucky to have the flexibility to take off work
8 today so I could be here. And so I'd like to start by
9 reminding all of you that we aren't hearing from many
10 of those who are most affected by our housing
11 shortage and affordability crisis. Because even with
12 all of the support that you've seen here today, this
13 hearing represents the 81 percent of New York City
14 voters who support this proposal, including 77
15 percent support in central Brooklyn. To touch on
16 something that is a part of this proposal that will
17 affect my neighborhood in Flatbush, we currently have
18 a mix of single and two-family homes that are mostly
19 three stories tall and apartment buildings that are
20 usually six stories tall. Most of them have been
21 there for going on 100 years. And we have excellent
22 transit access. So, the transit-oriented development
23 portion of this would apply to a lot of the
24 neighborhood. So, like today, all of those existing
25 apartments, the vast majority of them would be

1 illegal to build. And as a homeowner, I think we have
2 a responsibility to welcome new neighbors and to
3 allow new housing to be built. And when new buildings
4 have gone up on the edges of the neighborhood,
5 including just down the block from where I live, it's
6 a little less restrictively zoned there so we
7 actually have a new building. It's actually been a
8 really nice change so I don't think it's really an
9 imposition to add new housing to a neighborhood. And
10 so given the current crisis, it seems like the least
11 we could do is to allow these modest, contextual
12 apartment buildings that we already have, to allow a
13 few more of them to be built again. And the current
14 proposal, the transit-oriented development component,
15 doesn't quite get us there, because it would only
16 really allow three-ish story buildings, and on
17 specific types of lots, and various other
18 restrictions, but it would still be a good step in
19 the right direction, as much of a compromise as it
20 is. And beyond that, we also need all the other parts
21 of City of Yes as well, because they all work
22 together to make new homes possible so I strongly
23 encourage the Council to pass this proposal in its
24

2 full form, because New York should never be a city of
3 less.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. That's very
5 creative. Next, we're going to hear from Kurtis
6 Weatherford.

7 KURTIS WEATHERFORD: Hi there. My name is
8 Kurtis Weatherford, and I live in Crown Heights,
9 Brooklyn. I'm here partially because I, like more
10 than half of New Yorkers, am rent-burdened as a
11 result of the massive housing shortage in this city,
12 but I also want to talk about how the state of
13 housing in New York has affected my family. My
14 grandfather moved here in 1941, before the City-
15 imposed parking minimums, ADU bans, and other anti-
16 housing measures. He was 14 years old. He and his
17 mother were Jewish. They were fleeing the Holocaust
18 in their home country of Germany, and they were the
19 only two members of my extended family to survive.
20 Upon arrival, they were able to rent a small
21 apartment on the Upper West Side on my great-
22 grandmother's salary sorting rags. New York City was
23 a refuge for them. Housing abundance and
24 affordability in this city may have literally saved
25 their lives. Unfortunately, we all know that a story

1 like this would be impossible in the city today.

2 Separately, my sister's job is based in New York, but

3 she lives in Missouri. She's visited me many times

4 and loves it here. She also hates having to work

5 remotely, spending all day on Zoom and struggling to

6 connect with coworkers she seldom sees. When I talk

7 to her on the phone, I always tell her she should

8 move here, hang out with her coworkers after work,

9 and start to build a life in this great city. Every

10 time, her reply is the same. I'd love to, but there's

11 no way I can afford the rent. I try to convince her

12 otherwise, but I know she's right. She and many

13 others like her must remain far from the city in

14 states where their reproductive rights are curtailed

15 and they may face discrimination on account of their

16 sexuality because New York City has gone from a city

17 of welcome to a city of welcome as long as you can

18 pay 4,000 dollars a month in rent. The City of Yes

19 proposal takes a step towards returning New York to

20 what it should be, a diverse, tolerant, and inclusive

21 city that we can all be proud to call home. I hope

22 the Council Members approve this proposal, allow a

23 little more housing in each neighborhood, and get to

2 work on more measures to increase affordability in
3 this city. We don't have time to waste. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

5 Next, we're going to hear from Vishnu Reddy. Sorry if
6 I mispronounced your name.

7 VISHNU REDDY: Hi. My name is Vishnu
8 Reddy, and I live in Sunnyside, Queens. I'm here to
9 express my unequivocal support for the City of Yes
10 for Housing Opportunity with as few changes to the
11 proposed plan as possible. In my neighborhood of
12 Sunnyside, asking rents have skyrocketed over the
13 last few years, and this story has repeated itself
14 all over the city because our region is facing a dire
15 housing shortage that is decades in the making. The
16 runaway increases in housing costs this shortage has
17 caused has harmed all but the most wealthy New
18 Yorkers, and especially the most vulnerable. We don't
19 have to live like this, and it's time we do something
20 about it. I want our city to welcome people seeking
21 reproductive healthcare in the post-Roe era. I want
22 our city to be a refuge for queer folks to find
23 safety and community at a time when the rights of
24 gender and sexual minorities are under attack all
25 across the country. I want our city to be a beacon of

2 hope for immigrants seeking opportunity and a better
3 life in the face of some truly evil and vile rhetoric
4 towards our immigrant neighbors. We can't have that
5 city if only the wealthy can afford to live here. New
6 York has long had a reputation as a safe harbor for
7 the most vulnerable, but we are quickly losing that
8 reputation. We're displacing people to states like
9 Texas and Florida that constantly attack the rights
10 of others because those states build housing, and we
11 don't. I also want to emphasize that City of Yes is
12 just a start. It's a step in the right direction, but
13 it's not nearly enough to make up for decades of
14 underbuilding. We need the City to continue to pursue
15 pro-housing zoning reforms beyond City of Yes. We
16 also need help from Albany to help fund affordable
17 housing and ensure the suburbs are pulling their
18 weight in housing creation. I can't wait to see what
19 more we can do to get us out of this mess. Thank you
20 for your time and for listening to why I support the
21 City of Yes for housing opportunity, and I also want
22 to commend Mr. Riley here for sticking it out for so
23 long and being so excellent on this. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

25 Next, we're going to have Luke Lavanway.

2 LUKE LAVANWAY: Good evening. Thank you
3 for the opportunity to testify today. Thank you for
4 being here. My name is Luke Lavanway. I'm an 11-year
5 resident of New York City, and I currently live in
6 Fort Green on the edge of downtown Brooklyn, which is
7 one of the neighborhoods currently doing the most to
8 help the city meet its housing needs. I'd like to
9 address my testimony to Council Members who feel
10 pressure from constituents who object to City of Yes,
11 and there are three points I'd like to offer.

12 Firstly, I think we should do more to communicate the
13 truth that everyone, even homeowners, has an interest
14 in a healthy housing market. Everyone should want
15 reasonable, stable growth in home values, not
16 skyrocketing costs which threaten to upset the entire
17 apple cart of our city. Renters and homeowners alike
18 have a lot to lose from the destabilizing influence
19 the housing crisis is having on our city. We truly
20 are all in this together, and that is why every
21 neighborhood is being asked to do its part to add to
22 the housing supply. Secondly, I believe that your job
23 as Council Members will get harder for every day we
24 fail to act on the housing crisis. With each passing
25 day, I see New Yorkers learning about the causes of

2 our lack of housing supply, many of which we have
3 seen on display in this very hearing. We are watching
4 to see which of our elected representatives are
5 working toward real housing solutions and which are
6 not and, crucially, we understand that there will
7 never be a perfect housing policy and that urgent
8 action is required. Thirdly, City of Yes for Housing
9 Opportunity is truly a moderate step to address the
10 housing crisis. In fact, it arguably doesn't do
11 enough. The slogan of this initiative is, a little
12 more housing in every neighborhood. No neighborhood
13 can object in good conscience to doing a little more
14 to help our city address its housing needs. To
15 conclude, I urge the City Council to approve City of
16 Yes in its entirety. New Yorkers deserve abundant
17 housing. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
19 going to have Toby Hyde.

20 TOBY HYDE: Thank you, Chair. Hi, my name
21 is Toby Hyde. I'm a born and bred New Yorker. I've
22 been here for 25 years. Grew up in Manhattan and
23 these days call Brooklyn home. I'm here because I
24 firmly believe that New York City needs to build more
25 housing, a lot more housing so I support the full

2 City of Yes package. I'm sick of seeing my friends
3 leave New York City for New Jersey or other suburbs
4 or other states because of the scary cost of raising
5 a family in New York City. This is more personal than
6 ever for me today. In August, my wife gave birth to
7 our first child. Between the morning session and the
8 afternoon, I went home and the baby spit up on me. I
9 cannot afford to live in the neighborhood I grew up
10 on. I'm lucky Nana's only a subway ride away. City of
11 Yes is a small step in the direction to avoid that
12 happening to my son. Just last night, my wife and I
13 were joking about what kind of overbearing Brooklyn
14 parents we'd be. We may differ about it. We agreed
15 that we can actually force our son to live next door,
16 but we want him to have the opportunity to live close
17 to his parents when he grows up. As a New Yorker
18 without a car, I do want to specifically applaud City
19 of Yes for proposing to remove parking minimums for
20 new housing construction. This is really important.
21 Today's parking requirements lower the amount of new
22 housing we produce, make it longer to build new
23 housing, and thus make that housing more expensive.
24 Removing parking minimums is hardly radical. Almost
25 100 American cities have done so, from Spokane,

2 Washington, liberal places like Birmingham, Alabama,
3 and Lexington, Kentucky, Austin, Texas, and
4 Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Buffalo and Bridgeport,
5 Connecticut, closer to home. And you know what? That
6 change is working to make those cities more
7 affordable. In Buffalo and Minneapolis, less parking
8 is being built and rents are falling. Among year over
9 year in the ten submarkets that have seen rent
10 decreases, eight of the ten are in Austin, Texas.
11 Why? Because they're relaxing requirements and
12 letting people build housing. New York City made the
13 mistake to add parking requirements in the '50s. That
14 was a 75-year-old mistake. We're not going to raise
15 our kid like it 75 years ago. We shouldn't have a
16 zoning code that acts like it's 75 years ago. So
17 again, I support the full City of Yes package and
18 encourage City Council to pass it.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Toby, and
20 congratulations.

21 TOBY HYDE: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: With that being said,
23 there's no questions for this panel. Council Member
24 Banks, do you have any questions? This panel's
25 excused. Thank you.

2 The next panel I'm going to call up
3 consists of Professor Joseph Kleinplatz, sorry if I
4 butchered your name, Christopher Leon Johnson,
5 Susanna Landa, David Halowka, and Joelle Kupferman,
6 and we will begin first with Professor Joseph
7 Kleinplatz.

8 PROFESSOR JOSEPH KLEINPLATZ: Speaking.
9 I'm here on a very personal basis. I maintained
10 excellent relationships with all the previous
11 Administrations, including directly with the Mayor
12 and the former Speaker. I am going to present this
13 from my own experience. I am a survivor of a 9/11
14 cancer. I was a rescuer that day looking for bodies.
15 I have since, because of the conditions in my
16 building, suffered a heart attack, open-heart
17 surgery, hand surgery, and knee surgery. We cannot
18 proceed with what you're proposing at this point.
19 It's the city of maybe because you don't have enough
20 HPD people in place, you don't have enough DOB people
21 in place. We have spent many, many, many, many
22 winters nearly dying because the heat was off.
23 Speaker Johnson isn't here today because he's no
24 longer the Speaker, but I'm going to say this, if it
25 wasn't for Speaker Johnson, yes Lynn, if it wasn't

1 for Speaker Johnson, we would have been dead. Some of
2 us stayed in our beds and froze to death on West 16th
3 Street. It took Brad Hoylman to make sure that the
4 elevator was finally fixed because the seniors on the
5 sixth floor were trapped. (INAUDIBLE) specifically
6 offered to carry the seniors down physically because
7 HPD and DOB had not followed up on either one. Now,
8 there are other issues that the City has to address.
9 I've addressed them with Lynn privately and other
10 Council people, there are other problems. But the way
11 it's written in the current situation is really not
12 where it needs to be. You have to have the proper
13 agencies in place and HPD and DOB failed on many,
14 many instances. If you'd like, I'll present you all
15 of the 3-1-1 calls, I'll print every single one, and
16 you know how many HPD and DOB phone calls there are?
17 453. So, if there's an alternative plan where you
18 have these things in place, which I don't think are
19 in place anyway, then it should be tabled, completely
20 tabled, and there should be enough accountability,
21 enough people to come forward, and all of you involve
22 more engagement. There are people that are very smart
23 in this city, you have to also include them. Thank
24 you.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Professor.
3 Appreciate it. Next, we're going to have Christopher
4 Leon Johnson.

5 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, hello. My
6 name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I am a 33-year-old
7 resident of Crown Heights, Brooklyn, lived there all
8 my life. I am a former 32BJ member, the shop steward
9 for MTA Eastside Access. I oppose the City of Yes,
10 and I'll explain why. Because let me keep this real,
11 right? I know we have back here Annemarie Grey, she's
12 paid off by the developers to recruit all these guys
13 and gals here to speak on behalf of the City of Yes.
14 These guys and gals here are getting paid off by
15 Annemarie Grey to speak on behalf of the City of Yes.
16 All these people that are here to speak on behalf of
17 YMBI, COY, are all getting paid to be here. I'm not
18 getting paid to be here. The unions too, 32BJ, my
19 former union, Manny Pastreich, I respect the guy, but
20 he's getting paid off too by the developers to
21 recruit all the members, including HEC and DC-37, to
22 speak on behalf of COY. COY is nothing but a paid-off
23 plan by developers to get rid of all the undesirables
24 and bring all the YMBI friends in. Yeah, there's a
25 housing crisis in New York City, but you cannot solve

2 the housing crisis by making the minimum rent in
3 Crown Heights 5,000 dollars a month, and that's what
4 they want. That's what Annemarie Grey wants. All the
5 units in Crown Heights to be 5,000 dollars a month
6 minimum, where the AMI has to be, you have to make
7 between 80 percent, 90 percent, and 100 percent AMI
8 to live in those units. This is all it's about. The
9 people that is speaking, especially the black ones
10 like Austin Celestin, who.. I can go back to Austin
11 Celestin. He knows what is going on, and the sad
12 thing about it, you got your own people like Austin
13 Celestin, black guy, selling out his own people for
14 Annemarie Grey and Rachel Fee, and this is
15 disgusting. We say no to the City of Yes. The City of
16 Yes is a scam. This is nothing but quid pro quo by
17 the unions and all these organizations like Open New
18 York for All, Open Plans, TransAlt, and the New York
19 Housing Conference to push this, to get all these
20 people here to speak on behalf of COY. The people
21 that's against COY are not getting paid. The people
22 that's for COY, they're all getting paid here, and
23 I'm going to say this one now before I go. If you
24 Council Members vote for this bill, we won't forget.
25 I know this is going through. This is going through,

2 but we won't forget all the Council Members that vote
3 yes for this bill, and we make sure that a number of
4 you guys are going to get voted out so thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Chris.

6 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, can we have
8 Suzanne Alanda.

9 Chris, you can sit down, please. Chris.

10 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You can sit down right
12 there.

13 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Oh.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thanks. Next, we're
15 going to have Suzanne Alanda. Suzanne Alanda, are you
16 still here?

17 Okay. Next, we're going to have David
18 Holowka. I'm sorry. Can you help me pronounce your
19 name?

20 DAVID HOLOWKA: Holowka.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Holowka. Thank you.
22 You can press the button, David.

23 DAVID HOLOWKA: I'm David Holowka, a
24 Chelsea resident, Community Board Member, and
25 architect. I first heard the term tear down years ago

1 in reference to Fairfield County ranch houses that
2 were being bought for replacement with mansions. The
3 practice increases bulk and housing costs without
4 adding housing. City of Yes will do just that for New
5 York to the extent that it makes existing apartment
6 buildings more profitable to tear down. We'll get
7 less housing, not more, as older apartments built for
8 ordinary people are bulldozed to make way for much
9 larger apartments for the rich aimed at international
10 secondary home and investor markets. That's already
11 happening in neighborhoods like the Upper East Side,
12 which has been losing housing units even as new
13 apartment buildings are added. The poster child for
14 this effect may be 220 West 57th Street, the
15 billionaire's road near Supertall that replaced a
16 mere 20-story building that had about the same number
17 of apartments, a third of them rent-stabilized. In
18 the absence of vacant lots, developers will
19 profitably vacate buildings with buyouts. City of Yes
20 will throw gasoline on an ongoing bonfire of
21 affordable housing. In most of Manhattan and much of
22 Brooklyn, market rate means luxury. That's why even
23 City of Yes's optional affordability preference is a
24 losing proposition. A new building that's 80 percent
25

2 luxury and only 20 percent affordable, and affordable
3 as dubiously defined by AMI at that, would have a far
4 higher median apartment cost than almost any building
5 it would replace. That doesn't even factor in the
6 cost in light, air, climate impact and quality of
7 life. The self-defeating and dangerously naive parts
8 of City of Yes that put a target on the back of
9 existing affordable housing deserve a thumbs down.
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. Are
12 there any questions for this panel? There's no
13 questions.

14 I do have a statement, though. This
15 proposal is a proposal from the Administration. It's
16 not a proposal from the Council. We are deliberating.
17 We are hearing it. We're trying to make
18 modifications. We're trying to get feedback. But I do
19 want to make a notion that this sentiment that this
20 proposal will promote undesirables within our
21 community, I would stray away from that. This should
22 only present opportunity for houseless individuals
23 who are looking for somewhere to call home. So that
24 terminology, undesirable, I just respectfully ask
25 those who come up after this panel if we could please

2 refrain from using that and use houseless individuals
3 if that's possible.

4 With that said, thank you so much to this
5 panel. Appreciate it.

6 The next panel I'm going to call up
7 consists of Olivia Killingsworth, Gabriel Dougherty,
8 Alex Armlovich, Dan Kent, Puneet Lath, and Bill
9 Cryer.

10 We are trying to accommodate everyone in
11 here in person before we go back to online because
12 it's getting really late so we're going to try to
13 accommodate as much in-person testimony as possible.

14 The following panel that we're going to
15 call after this panel I just called will consist of
16 Kara Romeo, Mary Ruan, and Rochelle Thompson.

17 And thank you to everyone who took the
18 time out. A lot of you came here at 9 and still are
19 here to testify. I truly, truly appreciate you. Thank
20 you.

21 We'll begin first with Olivia
22 Killingsworth.

23 OLIVIA KILLINGSWORTH: Hi. Good evening.
24 Thank you for having me. My name is Olivia
25 Killingsworth, and I'm a resident of Kensington in

2 South Brooklyn where I am a homeowner and a childless
3 cat lady, and I want to say I don't often agree with
4 Eric Adams, but this is a broken clock situation.
5 Right twice a day, he's right now. And I want to say
6 that I urge the Council to pass City of Yes in its
7 entirety. Specifically, in South Brooklyn, we really
8 need transit-oriented development, town center
9 zoning, and I want to talk specifically about parking
10 minimums because there seems to be a lot of confusion
11 about that. So here's how parking minimums work.
12 Let's pretend that there was a law right now
13 requiring a two-cat minimum for every household. Two
14 cats. Everybody has to have two cats. Okay? Yeah. I
15 would be in the clear. I already have two. They're
16 jerks. Curtis Sliwa would be in the clear. He has 17.
17 Right? But those of you who have zero or one, you're
18 SOL, you've got to get more. Do you have allergies?
19 Forget it. Sorry. Right? This doesn't make any sense.
20 If the Mayor came to you and said, we're going to
21 pass two-cat minimum, you would rightly block him.
22 Right? But that's the status quo now with parking
23 minimums. We're requiring parking where it doesn't
24 make sense. We're requiring cats where it doesn't
25 make sense. So that's my silly way of trying to wake

2 y'all up and argue that we do not need parking
3 minimums. And the last thing I'll say is in Auckland,
4 New Zealand, when they up-zoned, it also ended up
5 resulting in more social housing so, when we do this,
6 we can build more social housing. Thanks.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Olivia.

8 Next, we'll have Gabriel Dougherty.

9 GABRIEL DOUGHERTY: Hi. My name is Gabriel
10 Dougherty, and I live in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.
11 Today, I will be speaking in favor of City of Yes for
12 Housing Opportunity, specifically the provision to
13 relax the dwelling unit factor. That's more commonly
14 known as the provision that enables single-room
15 occupancy units, but I'll refer to it here as, like,
16 the dwelling unit factor thing. This change to the
17 zoning text would allow for more flexible housing,
18 such as units where you pay for the room but have
19 shared kitchen and bathrooms. This can provide a
20 cheaper, more accessible option for shared housing.
21 So, to put this in context, two years ago I used to
22 live in a three-bedroom in Brooklyn with roommates.
23 That roommate situation quickly turned sour, it
24 didn't work out, and I had to leave on short notice
25 because I was subletting. It was too short notice for

1 me to find another set of roommates, so I ended up
2 moving to a studio that I didn't like and I could
3 barely afford. I've since left that studio for a two-
4 bedroom with a roommate, but it leaves me thinking,
5 had this proposed solution been implemented, this
6 proposed relaxation of the dwelling factor would have
7 helped me out. First, it would have allowed me to
8 find similar housing on short notice with a shared
9 kitchen and bathroom, just like I had with the
10 strangers in my three-bedroom. Second, this flexible
11 kind of housing likely would have been a better
12 option for me in the first place than shacking up
13 with two other roommates, like I said, that I met on
14 the internet and didn't really know, and this is a
15 common situation nowadays. Lastly, folks have been
16 talking about building families in New York. Me
17 living in a three-bedroom with roommates as I did
18 then or a two-bedroom with a roommate as I do now
19 puts pressure on the price of these apartments that
20 are so very needed by families. Flexible housing
21 provides a real alternative that could relieve this
22 pressure. In conclusion, I thank you for giving me
23 the opportunity to speak today, and I encourage you

2 to support the City of Yes for Housing opportunity in
3 full. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Gabriel.

5 Next, we're going to have Alex Armlovich.

6 ALEX ARMLOVICH: Hi, I'm Alex Armlovich,
7 Housing Policy Manager at the Niskanen Center, a
8 think tank that advocates for strong markets, strong
9 social insurance, and a liberalism that builds.

10 Though I lead a DC-based housing team, I'm also a co-
11 op owner in the Jackson Heights Historic District.

12 I'm here to endorse every component of the City of
13 Yes for all the reasons that you've heard today from
14 affordability, climate, income, and growth, ably
15 summarized by DCP staff and my four commenters. But I
16 wanted to explain, you've heard today from many
17 constituents that the whole city, it's already a
18 construction site, and aren't we already building a
19 lot? Now the tragedy of that is that it's not wrong
20 in the way that you might think. Under current rules,
21 there's a huge incentive for remodeling that doesn't
22 add housing. You don't need to go through ULURP to
23 gut rehab a three-unit brownstone to turn it into a
24 mansion in Brooklyn. You don't need ULURP to buy and
25 merge your neighbor's unit to enlarge your co-op. You

2 can just do that all by right. And so we have
3 contractors swinging hammers everywhere, fooling many
4 people into believing that there's construction
5 everywhere, even that we're building a lot, but in
6 many, many cases, it's for gut rehabs that don't add
7 housing so I don't want to say that your other
8 constituents' lived experience is wrong about what
9 they're hearing. It's just that they're not counting
10 the permitting stats for the construction that they
11 see. They see the scaffolding, they see the
12 equipment, but they don't realize that these are gut
13 rehabs that don't add housing. You can ask City
14 Planning for stats on how many blocks in your
15 Districts have actually lost units since 1961
16 downzoning. So, it's an unfortunate misunderstanding.
17 Now, zoning is not a silver bullet. I agree with
18 that, but zoning is the gun, if you will. It's the
19 tool that you need to do everything else. So if you
20 want to do vouchers, if you want to do LIHTC, you've
21 got to have the zoning, so not a silver bullet, but
22 it is the tool on which you build everything else.
23 Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Thank you. Dan
25 Kent.

2 DAN KENT: Good evening. My name is Dan
3 Kent. I'm the CEO of Lantern Organization. We're a
4 non-profit affordable housing and supportive housing
5 developer with the mission to end homelessness in New
6 York City, and that is why I am here in strong
7 support of the City of Yes for Housing. Now, the
8 reason that New York City has the highest rate of
9 homelessness in the country, five times higher than
10 other cities like Austin, Texas, is because we don't
11 build enough market rate housing. We do not produce
12 enough housing, especially in the low-density
13 districts in New York City. In our low-density
14 districts, even after City of Yes is approved, hoping
15 it comes through, even after it's approved, they will
16 still barely produce more housing than Detroit. They
17 will still produce housing at a rate that is one-
18 third of Los Angeles, and I don't know about you, but
19 I hate when New York loses to Los Angeles so the plan
20 is actually quite modest. We're only talking about
21 100,000 additional units across the city over 15
22 years. There are 120,000 city blocks in New York
23 City. That works out to one unit of housing per block
24 across the city. That's not going to overwhelm our
25 sewers. That is not going to cause a parking crisis

2 or a traffic crisis. What it will do is help end the
3 homelessness crisis, it will increase tax revenue so
4 that we can make infrastructure investments in things
5 like our sewers and in our traffic infrastructure,
6 and it will help bring down rents for everyone in
7 this city, so I urge you, help end homelessness, help
8 improve our infrastructure, help make rents more
9 affordable, approve the City of Yes. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
11 going to hear from Puneet Lath.

12 PUNEET LATH: Hello. My name is Puneet.
13 I'm here to testify in favor of City of Yes. I live
14 in Lower Manhattan in the Bowery, right between
15 Chinatown and the Lower East Side, two important,
16 unique, historic neighborhoods in New York City. I'm
17 here because I'm worried about the continued rising
18 cost of housing in the neighborhoods around where I
19 live and in the city as a whole. Neighborhoods like
20 mine continue to feel the crunch of rising costs and
21 gentrification. I live near, very close to two
22 homeless shelters, and I frequently walk through Sara
23 D. Roosevelt Park. Every day I see many people who
24 are suffering due to the effects of high housing
25 costs. I understand that there are many

2 considerations in how we go about creating new
3 housing, but to a large degree, it seems to me like
4 this is a problem of clear supply and demand issue,
5 where the reason for such unaffordable rent costs is
6 because the demand for apartments is so high compared
7 to the supply. Even though some neighborhoods build a
8 lot of housing, most do not, which can be seen in the
9 citywide vacancy rate being below 2 percent, which is
10 the lowest it's been since the 1960s. This is why I'm
11 very excited about the City of Yes proposal. What I'm
12 most excited about is that it will cause more housing
13 to be built in more neighborhoods rather than just a
14 few of them, which will help spread the housing
15 burden across the city and benefit all neighborhoods
16 by decreasing rent prices and making New York City
17 more livable. I hope the City Council Members will
18 approve it in its strongest form. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. And the
20 last person in this panel is Bill Cryer.

21 BILL CRYER: Hi. Thank you for the
22 opportunity to speak. My name is Bill Cryer, and I
23 strongly support the City of Yes for Housing
24 Opportunity. I live in Inwood with my wife and two
25 young children. We just spent months looking for an

1 apartment for my growing family so we don't all have
2 to sleep in the same room. Vacancy rates are at an
3 historic low right now, which means landlords have
4 the upper hand to neglect tenants and to raise market
5 rents. Many families have left our neighborhood due
6 to the cost and condition of housing, things like
7 mold and lack of heat. Families with children under
8 six are twice as likely to leave New York City as
9 families without children. To help fix this, I
10 support shared housing. Families are often outbid for
11 family-sized apartments by single adults living as
12 roommates. Shared housing can serve as an alternative
13 for single adults, which will free up family-sized
14 apartments. New housing can reduce competition for
15 existing housing. My art teacher in high school lived
16 in shared housing, and it was the only way he could
17 afford to live near his job in the neighborhood where
18 he wanted to live. Shared housing is small, but it's
19 more affordable than studios and obviously better
20 than homelessness. I also support ADUs so
21 intergenerational families can live together. My
22 mother often cares for my children, and my father
23 needs more and more care himself. ADUs allow
24 intergenerational families to stay close. Finally, I
25

2 support lifting parking mandates. Cities around the
3 country with far worse transit are lifting parking
4 mandates. Housing development in my neighborhood is
5 being forced to build expensive parking around the
6 corner from the subway and multiple bus stops. These
7 mandates increase car ownership and traffic. If you
8 want to fix parking, we should look at reforming
9 street parking. City of Yes for Housing Opportunity
10 only addresses a fraction of the housing shortage. I
11 urge the Council to vote yes and continue to do more.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

14 There being no questions for this panel, this panel
15 is excused.

16 We've been joined by Council Member
17 Abreu, who is going to take over as Chair while I
18 take a break.

19 The next panel that we're going to call
20 up consists of Karen Romeo, Mary Ruan, and Rochelle
21 Thompson. If you're here, please come to the dais.

22 The panel after that will consist of
23 Kevin Kierproski (phonetic), Daniel Arnow, Geoffrey
24 Thomas, Daniel Golliher, Jorge Romero, and Cassandra
25 O'Hearn.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Hello. Can you
3 please state your name?

4 ROCHELLE THOMPSON: Hi. My name is
5 Rochelle Thompson, and I'm known as the First Lady of
6 Jazz in Harlem, USA, the continent that I love. And
7 I'm here today to testify to say I feel this is a
8 city of no. And I heard all of the testimonies
9 before, particularly of the senior citizen who is
10 about to be evicted so my issue is with the court. We
11 are going to court forever. We are paying our rent by
12 certified mail return receipt requested. The
13 landlords are not in court. The judges are ignoring
14 our evidence. And there is not a cap on how many
15 times that you can go to court. I've won two Supreme
16 Court cases. One I wrote on my own. I've done 18 HP
17 actions. I've lived in my building for 40 years. And
18 I'm wondering why we, as taxpaying citizens, are
19 going through all of that. That is my main issue. And
20 I hope that we can look into that. And I hope that
21 the Mayor's Office and the new First Deputy will look
22 into this and change this because it is wearing us
23 out as people. We just want to live in our homes. I
24 did a children's jazz festival on my block. I did a
25 children's newsletter sent to the White House. I

2 worked on Obama's campaign and I'm working on Kamala
3 Harris' campaign. I don't want to be in court. I want
4 to have a life. Thank you very much.

5 ACTING CHAIR ABREU: Thank you so much for
6 your testimony.

7 As part of this panel, we have Mary Ruan
8 or Karen Romeo. Another opportunity to come if you're
9 here.

10 All right. Seeing that you are not here,
11 I'm going to move to the next panel. This next panel
12 includes Kevin Kierproski, Daniel Arnow, Geoffrey
13 Thomas, Daniel Golliher, Jorge Romero, and Cassandra
14 O'Hearn.

15 Kevin Kierproski. Kevin not here?

16 Daniel Arnow.

17 DANIEL ARNOW: Good evening. Thank you. My
18 name is Daniel Arnow. I'm here on behalf of the
19 Entertainment Community Fund and our Housing
20 Development Corporation. We are a national human
21 services organization that provides support,
22 including housing, for everyone in the performing
23 arts and entertainment community. We are here to
24 express our strong support for the Administration's
25 City of Yes housing initiative. New York is the

1 cultural capital of the world, and its commitment to
2 the arts is essential to the city's health. Arts
3 workers are a major driver of economic activity, and
4 in lower-income neighborhoods, cultural resources,
5 including artists living there, are linked to
6 positive outcomes in education, safety, and health.
7 However, the high cost of living has put this
8 community at risk. As a result of high rents, we have
9 witnessed an outward migration of artists from the
10 city with creatives leaving for more affordable
11 cities. The City of Yes housing initiative is an
12 important step to addressing this affordability
13 crisis. It will help create more housing options for
14 all New Yorkers, including artists. Additionally, the
15 focus on mixed-use development provides an
16 opportunity to integrate affordable housing, arts and
17 cultural commercial uses, which create more vibrant
18 communities. While we strongly support this proposal,
19 we urge the City to go even further in its commitment
20 to ensure that cultural workers can continue to live
21 and work here. Low-income artists are one of the
22 city's most financially vulnerable groups and need
23 more affordable housing targeted explicitly at arts
24 workers. In the first months of the pandemic, arts
25

2 employment dropped by 60 percent, and employment
3 remains 13 percent below pre-pandemic levels. To
4 ensure that New York remains the global arts hub, we
5 need to expand affordable artist housing and ensure
6 that artists have affordable workspaces that allow
7 them to thrive in this city. In closing, we strongly
8 support City of Yes and urge the Council to embrace
9 policies that make our cultural community stronger.
10 Thank you.

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
12 Daniel. And now we have Geoffrey Thomas.

13 GEOFFREY THOMAS: Hi. My name is Geoffrey
14 Thomas. I'm a homeowner in Flatbush-Ditmas Park, and
15 I'd like to encourage City Council to pass the City
16 of Yes for Housing Opportunity Proposal in its
17 entirety, but I don't want you to take my word for
18 it. Two weeks ago, I was at a ULURP hearing at
19 Brooklyn Borough Hall about a rezoning project in
20 Windsor Terrace. The site is pretty close to me. It
21 is right next to my church, and I know we badly need
22 more housing in that area so I spoke up in favor of
23 the project. There were, of course, some folks
24 speaking against it. They said, we love the idea of
25 more housing, but this particular site in my

2 backyard, there's a reason why we don't think it
3 should happen. So, this group has organized. They've
4 got a website. They're running some fundraisers. I'd
5 like to quote directly from their website, "we
6 support changes to zoning policy through a
7 comprehensive, considerate process like City of Yes.
8 We're urging our neighbors and elected officials to
9 support sustainable, contextual, affordable housing."
10 Let me emphasize that. These are folks literally
11 saying, not in my backyard. These are landlords.
12 These are people who publicly say they're worried
13 about the view from their front porch. They say that
14 City of Yes is a great idea. That's because it is.
15 There's nothing radical there. It's for iconic,
16 normal New York City buildings, like we were doing
17 for a very long time. When you hear support and
18 opposition, you're not hearing the, quote, normal
19 YIMBY/NIMBY divide here. The YIMBYs and the NIMBYs,
20 we both like this proposal. You're hearing opposition
21 from a well-organized and well-funded tiny minority
22 that wants you to think they speak for a larger
23 group. They don't. I'm sure you've all heard about
24 the poll this weekend that 80 percent of New Yorkers
25 support City of Yes once they know what's in it.

2 Ordinary working New Yorkers, many of whom who can't
3 take a day off of work to sit here all day and take a
4 day off their family responsibilities and still be
5 here, ordinary people who don't know what the word
6 ULURP even means, they want you to pass this
7 proposal. They elected you to do what's right for
8 their community. They entrusted you with that. It's a
9 common-sense policy, and the city badly needs it, so
10 I urge you to vote yes.

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
12 Geoffrey. We now have Daniel Golliher.

13 DANIEL GOLLIHER: Hello, my name is Daniel
14 Golliher. By day I teach classes on New York City
15 government, but today I'm here to speak as a happy
16 advocate of the city's future. I'm also an adopted
17 New Yorker, what E.B. White once called the third New
18 York. I originally grew up on a farm in Indiana, and
19 I'm one of millions who've come here to live life on
20 their own terms, seek opportunity, and contribute to
21 the greatest city in the world. Members of the
22 Council, thank you for having me, and Council Member
23 Hanif, who isn't here at the moment, thank you for
24 your earlier remarks welcoming people to this city,
25 regardless of their point of origin. New York City

1 has a housing crisis fundamentally driven by lack of
2 supply. To meet current demand, the city needs
3 hundreds of thousands of new units of all kinds. To
4 achieve this, the Council should pass City of Yes in
5 its entirety as the first of many actions. I'm quite
6 hopeful it's changing, but if the prevailing
7 political attitudes of the modern era were projected
8 into the past, we never would have gotten the
9 original subways, the Brooklyn Bridge, or almost any
10 of the great public improvements for which the city
11 is now known, that it often funded unilaterally, and
12 upon which it relies today. As you can imagine in the
13 case of the subway, digging trenches up and down
14 Manhattan along major thoroughfares wasn't popular
15 with abutting landowners, several of whom launched
16 lawsuits to stop the subway construction. And yet, we
17 have subways. And so, can't we have housing today?
18 Many Council Members have concerns about the impact
19 of this text amendment on infrastructure, especially
20 sewers, concerns that many people at the dawn of the
21 20th century had about subway construction, which
22 required a reconstruction of sewers, steam pipes,
23 pipe galleries generally, and other critical
24 infrastructure. Whatever reservations you feel today
25

2 about allowing the city to build needed housing, your
3 counterparts in the past have felt similarly, and
4 they chose to move forward at many crucial junctures
5 to our great benefit today. The City government of
6 the past met fear and complication with action, bold
7 action that birthed the subway between 1900 and 1940,
8 and bold action that accommodated population growth
9 from 3.5 million in 1900 to 7 million by 1930. They
10 did all this with far less wealth, technology, and
11 benefit of hindsight than we have today. My hope for
12 this Council is that it will meet the ambition and
13 energy of the government's past, the one that largely
14 built the city the present inherited.

15 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
16 Daniel. We have to move on. My apologies. Cassandra
17 O'Hearn.

18 CASSANDRA O'HEARN: Thank you, Council
19 Member, for hearing our testimony today. I am
20 speaking as an advocate of city investment. I had the
21 opportunity, as a resident of Fulton in Brooklyn,
22 having completed a master's degree from the
23 University of (INAUDIBLE) Urban Planning. I strongly
24 support this proposal. The fact is that we are facing
25 a 1.4 rating survey. It is the lowest in 56 years.

2 New York City proudly defines itself as a city of
3 immigrants, built on a strong working class, and the
4 ability of new generations to bring new ideas and
5 skillsets from all over the country and the world.
6 These same residents are being pushed out of
7 neighborhoods and are unable to build that
8 generational wealth. Now, City of Yes will enable our
9 city to continue to grow and will be welcoming to
10 future generations of New Yorkers who will continue
11 to bring innovation and creativity. Additionally, by
12 taking a citywide approach, the plan works towards
13 equitable development across neighborhoods as opposed
14 to overburdening a few neighborhoods in excessive
15 development. This will enable (INAUDIBLE) future
16 generations to continue to enjoy them. I urge the
17 City Council to vote Yes.

18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Now
19 we have Jorge Romero.

20 JORGE ROMERO: Hi. How's it going? I'm on
21 this panel so obviously I support City of Yes. I'm
22 not getting paid as people got accused earlier. I
23 gave up a day of work. I gave a day to be next to my
24 daughter, my newborn daughter, to be here today to
25 speak up for the City of Yes, and I think everybody

1 that spoke so far on both sides are here because they
2 care a lot about this great city. I don't question
3 that. The reason I'm here today is because I think
4 some of us are loving this city so much that we're
5 stumping its growth. We're not letting the city
6 flourish like it used to. As many of the buildings we
7 so cherish would be illegal today with the current
8 zoning laws. I think the New York Times said 40
9 percent of the buildings in Manhattan would be
10 illegal today. City of Yes can start to change this.
11 It is not a solution for infrastructure. Some of you
12 and your Colleagues can solve infrastructure if you
13 make that a priority. It is not a solution for
14 affordability. You and your Colleagues as well can
15 put emphasis into subsidizing that or funding that.
16 But this is a small step in the right direction that
17 will, you know, in 10, 15 years lead a modest growth
18 of housing. I'm a new parent and just how I know I
19 need to let my daughter grow on her own, I think we
20 should let New York grow. In some areas there has
21 been growth, 1.2 million jobs in the last decade, but
22 only 400,000 houses. Instead, we have pushed people
23 into illegal basement apartments, pushed people into
24 shelter systems, made people leave, and made adults

2 and families roommates in the city. We can change
3 this, and I ask you guys to put emphasis into
4 approving the City of Yes.

5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: All right, this
6 panel is hereby excused. Do my Colleagues have any
7 questions?

8 Thank you. After this next group, we will
9 be pivoting back to online testimony.

10 In this next panel, we have Dasha
11 Gonzalez, Isabel Brown, Barbara Blair, Shabri Doshi
12 (phonetic), Ralph Yozo (phonetic), and Farron Henry
13 (phonetic).

14 Can you please identify your first name
15 before you speak? Thank you.

16 BARBARA BLAIR: Hello. Good evening and
17 good evening, Members of the Council that are with us
18 now. My name is Barbara Blair. I'm the President of
19 the Garment District Alliance, and I'm here to
20 support the City of Yes for Housing proposal. New
21 York City is in desperate need of additional housing.
22 Allowing more commercial to residential conversions
23 is an obvious and important step towards addressing
24 our crucial shortage of housing. The City of Yes for
25 Housing is a lifeline for the Garment District in

West Midtown Manhattan because it is imperative that we find new uses to occupy vacant space in our neighborhood's commercial buildings and to create a safer 24/7 mixed-use community. Many property owners in the Garment District are seeing 20 to 25 percent vacancies with post-pandemic changes in work models including working from home and reduced days in the Central Business District. Many tenants are not renewing leases or have plans to downsize their spaces. Others have even left the district mid-lease due to dire social conditions on our streets including drug dealing, drug use, and mentally ill individuals in need of services. Without residence, ground floor retail is not viable in many cases because of the limited hours that office tenants keep. These current conditions are untenable. For the Garment District easing restrictions on commercial to residential conversions will activate our streets and create a safer 24/7 environment, provide new users to absorb vacant space, increase our consumer base to support ground floor retail, expand opportunities for restaurants to operate during dinner time and on weekends, and allow for the adaptive reuse of Class B and C buildings that are threatened by both office

2 tenants downsizing and the flight to quality. For all
3 these reasons we're fully supportive of this
4 proposal. For the Garment District to fully realize
5 the opportunity this zoning change presents, we
6 recommend that the plan include capital improvements.

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very
8 much for your testimony.

9 Before we move to the next panel online,
10 I just want to make sure that folks who are part of
11 this panel, if you're here, please come up. Dasha
12 Gonzalez, Isabel Brown, Shabrie Doshi, Ralph Yozo,
13 Farron Henry.

14 Not seeing you here, the panel is
15 excused.

16 BARBARA BLAIR: Thank you.

17 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: All right, I'm
18 going to call the next panel.

19 If you're online and you haven't signed
20 up, make sure you consult the Council's Land Use
21 page.

22 The next panel will include Elaine Young,
23 Dena Winter, Arlene Schlesinger and Deborah Wright.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

25 ELAINE YOUNG: Can you hear me?

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, I can.

3 ELAINE YOUNG: Elaine Young, thank you.

4 Sorry about the delay. So, I'm sorry, this was so
5 sudden that I was called. Give me one second here.

6 Okay, hi, my name is Elaine Young, and I'm President
7 of the West Cunningham Park Civic Association

8 representing over 5,000 residents in Fresh Meadows,

9 Queens. We are a low-density community of mainly one-
10 family homes and we say a resounding no to the City

11 of Yes. In this community, we have worked long and

12 hard to maintain a lower density, working closely

13 with our Community Board and local elected officials

14 in a back-and-forth dialogue that truly valued

15 community input. The City of Yes plans to eliminate

16 this community input when it comes to zoning. It

17 removes ULURP from Community Boards and Council

18 Members, eliminating any meaningful dialogue with the

19 community. I also have to say, on behalf of the low-

20 density communities in listening to testimonies, it

21 is incredibly insulting to hear speakers vilify low-

22 density areas that make up only 50 percent of New

23 York City with implying or outright saying that low-

24 density areas are responsible for the housing and

25 affordability crisis. In the City's one size fits all

1 plan, our communities are threatened. We choose to
2 live in a low-density district, and that is our
3 right. The City of Yes is a financial boon to the
4 developers and real estate interests. Very few people
5 I heard brought this up, but in light of the fact
6 that Mayor Adams, who has pushed this plan heavily,
7 is under indictment for bribery and corruption, it
8 begs the question, is the Mayor benefiting just as
9 developers and real estate interests are? It's
10 something to think about. In conclusion, the City of
11 Yes must not go forward. The West Cunningham Park
12 Civic Association's 5,000 residents will remember who
13 voted in favor of this, and we will not vote for you
14 in the future for whatever office you run for. We
15 advise you to listen to the community and truly
16 represent us.

17
18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
19 Elaine. We now have Dena, next.

20 DENA TASSE-WINTER: Good evening. I'm
21 testifying on behalf of Village Preservation, a
22 community organization working in Greenwich Village,
23 the East Village, and NoHo. We strongly oppose
24 multiple provisions in City of Yes for housing
25 opportunity and urge the Council to remove these

1 provisions or vote it down. One particularly
2 pernicious aspect of this plan is the proposed
3 changes in voluntary inclusionary zones where City of
4 Yes would actually eliminate existing incentives for
5 including affordable housing in new development.
6 Currently, in these zones, developers can only build
7 90 percent of the allowable residential FAR if they
8 do not include any affordable housing. To incentivize
9 developments including affordable housing, developers
10 can build the full 100 percent of residential FAR
11 only if they also add an additional 20 percent of
12 affordable housing on top of it, resulting in a
13 building with 120 percent of the allowable
14 residential floor area. City of Yes would throw this
15 away and allow developers to build the full 100
16 percent of allowable FAR without having to include
17 any affordable housing whatsoever. Why, when we have
18 an affordable housing crisis, would we eliminate a
19 strong incentive to include new affordable housing in
20 new developments and simply give away floor area to
21 developers to build more luxury condos? In attempting
22 to justify this, the City has said that in these
23 zones, the new "Universal Affordability Preference"
24 would apply, in which developers could choose to add
25

2 20 percent or more additional affordable housing on
3 top of the market rate development. But under this
4 plan, there is absolutely no requirement that they do
5 so, and the existing incentive for including
6 affordable housing, holding back 10 percent of the
7 allowable market rate FAR would disappear. This is
8 simply a gift to developers with nothing in return
9 for the public. This provision must be rethought. We
10 adamantly oppose raising the allowable FAR for purely
11 market rate developments in voluntary inclusionary
12 zones, and so should you. Thank you very much.

13 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
14 Dena. We now have Arlene Schlesinger.

15 ARLENE SCHLESINGER: Good evening. As a
16 representative of Hollis Hills Civic Association, I
17 firmly oppose the City of Yes initiative. We must ask
18 ourselves, who stands to gain from this text
19 amendment? The initiative is fraught with
20 controversy, and I am deeply troubled by the
21 potential for corruption, especially within the City
22 Planning Commission, which is appointed, not elected,
23 by Mayor Adams and his Administration. Their apparent
24 objective is to dismantle the ULURP process, which
25 currently promotes balanced zoning decisions.

1 Instead, centralize future zoning authority into
2 their hands. This would significantly weaken the
3 influence of local Community Boards, City Council
4 Members, who play a crucial role in shaping our
5 neighborhoods as they are. Who really benefits? It's
6 certainly not the residents who are being ignored in
7 favor of developers. This initiative poses direct
8 threat to single-family and two-family homes owned by
9 middle-class, hard-working individuals. The idea of
10 transforming residential homes into business spaces,
11 whether for stores, barbershops, labs, adding ADUs in
12 our backyards and driveways, is fundamentally
13 misguided. The lack of parking mandates within our
14 proposal only proves how out of tune the City of Yes
15 is for our city. Why should commercial areas be
16 neglected while businesses encroach into our private
17 homes? Who would harm our neighborhood (INAUDIBLE)
18 that would drastically change the character of our
19 communities? Do we really want large-scale buildings
20 popping up on residential streets? Is that the future
21 for eastern Queens? Additionally, the environmental
22 and infrastructure concerns are varying. We live in
23 flood-prone zones, and the infrastructure is already
24 under such strain. This initiative seems to ignore
25

2 these crucial issues. Our environment is in danger,
3 and all you think about is expensive housing as this
4 has nothing to do with affordable housing. It's for-
5 profit, and if you're a developer, not the residents.
6 It feels like those who have values are not welcome.

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We now have
8 Deborah Wright next to testify.

9 ARLENE SCHLESINGER: That wasn't two
10 minutes.

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Deborah Wright?
12 Deborah Wright, if you're on Zoom, please unmute.
13 Going once, going twice.

14 If you are unable to testify at this
15 moment due to technical difficulties, you may submit
16 your testimony online in writing.

17 Do my Colleagues have any questions?

18 Seeing no questions, this panel is now
19 excused.

20 All right, for the next panel online, we
21 have Grace Marrero, Susan Lunn, Tyler Lewis, and
22 Roland Nimis.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: Sorry, is this for me?

25

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: This is for
3 Grace Marrero.

4 All right, I just want to give Grace
5 another opportunity if she's on the panel to speak or
6 to try to unmute yourself to speak. And a reminder,
7 if you're unable to testify due to technical
8 difficulties, you may submit testimony online.

9 Grace, you need to accept your promotion.

10 GRACE MARRERO: Hello.

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: All right. Non-
12 profit.

13 GRACE MARRERO: Okay, sorry. I got bumped
14 off right there at the last minute.

15 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No problem.

16 GRACE MARRERO: I'm going to cut through
17 the chase. I am against the City of Yes. I am a
18 community advocate and activist here in the Allentown
19 section of the Bronx. This City of Yes is not
20 affordable. The housing is not affordable. It's going
21 to displace. We are mostly people of color here and
22 low-income people here. This is going to push us
23 further into Westchester. We keep getting pushed into
24 Westchester. The housing is not affordable. We don't
25 have a housing crisis like everybody wants to say.

2 It's an affordability crisis is what we have. So,
3 unless you're going to fix that portion, this City of
4 Yes is a city killer and I'm just going to say to the
5 City Council Members that whoever votes for this
6 project, you will be primaried. Guaranteed. You're
7 out. So, enjoy your time in City Council because
8 you'll be primaried and you'll be voted out. We will
9 make a mission. This will be a mission of ours to all
10 the communities here. We're going to make a mission
11 to make sure each and every one who votes yes gets
12 out and then we're going to revisit it when we have
13 the right people in there. You're not representing
14 the communities. You guys should be brought up on
15 charges of treason, whoever votes yes, because you
16 are abdicating your oath of office to protect and the
17 Constitution of the United States and this is what
18 you're doing. You're going against the people that
19 you are supposed to be representing so enjoy your
20 time while you can because, if this City of Yes goes
21 through, you guys are out and then we're going to
22 revisit it again. And the developers, they better
23 think again and people who, these young people that
24 think it's a great idea, when you live long enough
25 like I have, I'm a senior citizen, I'm disabled,

2 you'll understand I've been through many of these
3 things before. They don't care about you. They're
4 getting money in their pocket. The Mayor, whoever is
5 pushing this, the developers are going to love this.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
7 Grace.

8 GRACE MARRERO: It's not about how
9 affordable...

10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
11 Grace.

12 GRACE MARRERO: So enjoy your time.

13 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Have a good
14 evening. Next is Susan Lunn.

15 SUSAN LUNN: Hello, everybody. I live in
16 the wonderful and vibrant neighborhood of Park Slope,
17 a place I'm lucky to call home. There's been a lot of
18 discussion on the preservation of character in the
19 community, and this is why I urge the Council to vote
20 yes in favor of City of Yes. I've been lucky to meet
21 and make friends within Park Slope and many of whom
22 have worked and lived in this neighborhood for 10,
23 15, 20 years. However, they can no longer afford to
24 live here and have had to make the difficult decision
25 to move far away and make it no longer tenable to

1 commute in and work in this neighborhood. This leads
2 to a loss of community, a loss of people who are
3 pillars to Park Slope. Despite what others have said,
4 we have a current vacancy rate of 1.4 percent, which
5 is dire. City of Yes will result in permanent
6 affordable housing in this high-cost neighborhood.
7 This is a step in the correct direction of preserving
8 and allowing community members of Park Slope to stay
9 here. The community of Park Slope is not just wealthy
10 homeowners, but the working-class people who are the
11 vibrant members who are serving you coffee, making
12 you fancy drinks, and cutting your delicious meats.
13 They should be allowed and encouraged to stay here in
14 this neighborhood. I encourage the Council to listen
15 to the many, many people who have voiced support and
16 excitement for this proposal. The people of New York
17 overwhelmingly support City of Yes. Over 80 percent
18 of residents. We have literal polling data for this.
19 We urge the Council to pass it in full. Thank you.

20
21 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so
22 much, Susan. We now have Tyler Lewis.

23 TYLER LEWIS: Hi. Can you hear me?

24 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, I can.
25

2 TYLER LEWIS: Hi, everyone. Thanks for
3 having me. My name is Tyler Lewis. I don't work for
4 anybody or represent anybody except myself. I'm a
5 native New Yorker and a resident of Brooklyn. I want
6 to just voice my strong, strong support for City of
7 Yes, and I hope that the Council passes it in its
8 strongest measures. I am so excited by many of the
9 propositions within it, and I don't think I could
10 speak more articulately or vehemently than many
11 people who have come before you today, but I wanted
12 to add my voice as an excited citizen and a positive
13 voice and also just express gratitude to all of you
14 for sustaining this process. I also just want to
15 voice support specifically for lifting parking
16 mandates, which are silly and outdated, and I say
17 that as a car owner. Thank you very much.

18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. Now
19 we have Roland Nimis.

20 ROLAND NIMIS: Good evening. My name is
21 Roland Nimis. I'm the Acting Director of Housing Unit
22 at Bronx Legal Services, which, as part of Legal
23 Services NYC, defends and uplifts tenants through
24 Right-to-Counsel eviction defense work and anti-
25 harassment work for low-income New Yorkers. As one of

1 the largest providers of eviction defense in this
2 city, we witness up close every day the consequences
3 of New York City's housing crisis for low-income
4 tenants. Many of our clients are trapped in housing
5 situations that are unsafe and unaffordable. Tenants
6 we defend are afraid to ask for repairs or assert
7 their rights because they know that any dispute could
8 land them in housing court and at threat of eviction.
9 Even tenants who secure housing vouchers can't use
10 their vouchers because the city lacks available
11 apartments within the payment limits. As tenant
12 lawyers, we know that building more affordable
13 housing is essential for low-income New Yorkers. The
14 City of Yes includes necessary zoning changes to
15 create housing that will benefit those we serve. This
16 includes re-legalizing and regulating shared housing
17 and smaller apartments, which can be transformative
18 for low-income tenants, particularly those who rely
19 on vouchers to find housing. Likewise, legalizing and
20 regulating accessory dwelling units is crucial to
21 increase access to safe and affordable housing.
22 Today, many low-income tenants are forced into
23 illegal units in basements and subdivided apartments
24 where they are powerless, with few defenses to
25

2 evictions if their landlords decide they want them
3 out. Creating a legal pathway for these types of
4 units would bring these tenants into the formal
5 housing market where they are protected from
6 arbitrary evictions. As many before me have said,
7 these proposals and others within the City of Yes
8 package are not sufficient to end our housing crisis.
9 Nevertheless, our clients are in desperate need of
10 more affordable housing. Together with stronger,
11 fully funded and enforced tenant protections and
12 legal services aimed at preserving existing
13 tenancies, increasing the amount and variety of
14 affordable housing stock is crucial to low-income
15 communities and our clients. Thank you.

16 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
17 your testimony and your Right-to-Counsel work.

18 Do my colleagues have any questions?

19 Seeing none, this panel is now excused.

20 We're now moving to the next panel, which
21 includes Sally Ann Sinisgalli, Latonia Harris, Ed
22 Goydas, Cliff Bruckenstein, and Paul Graziano.
23 Starting with Sally.

24 SALLY ANN SINISGALLI: Hello?

25 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I can hear you.

2 SALLY ANN SINISGALLI: Okay. Good evening,
3 and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak
4 to all of you today. My name is Sally Ann Sinisgalli.
5 I'm a lifelong resident of Howard Beach. I grew up
6 here, went to school here, and I raised my kids here.
7 I speak for you today to discuss the City of Yes
8 Housing proposal. I want to cite multiple grievances
9 that I have with this plan, including an
10 overgeneralized plan, lack of community discourse,
11 and the overcrowding of schools and other
12 municipalities. Starting with the problem of the
13 overgeneralized plan, the City of Yes Housing
14 proposal makes a wrongful assumption that since every
15 neighborhood is within New York City, they will be
16 equally affected, and one general plan will work for
17 the whole city. I can assure you this assumption is
18 not only incorrect, but is absurd. Each borough has a
19 specific layout and makeup, and this plan will have
20 greater adverse effects on Queens and my
21 neighborhood, Howard Beach. If this plan passes, the
22 streets will become packed with cars, and we don't
23 have adequate public transportation in Queens, and
24 the whole reason why many, like me, live in Queens or
25 Staten Island and not one of the more urban boroughs

2 like Manhattan or Brooklyn is because I don't want to
3 live in a neighborhood full of multiple-family homes.
4 I've chosen to buy a house in Howard Beach, Queens,
5 because I want to stay in the city that I love
6 without living in a building. In my neighborhood,
7 like so many others, we enjoy the luxury of easy
8 parking, lower density, and single-family housing.
9 This is why I bought a home here. To pass this plan
10 and implement the City of Yes is to upend and ruin
11 the dreams of many families like mine. The second
12 problem I want to address is the lack of community
13 discourse while creating this plan. Mayor Adams and
14 his heretical Administration have decided they know
15 what's best for us instead of hearing the voices of
16 the communities and the people. The Adams'
17 Administration has gone ahead and created this plan
18 that just moves to further an agenda that I, among
19 many others, do not get behind. As someone who is
20 elected to be representative, Adams and his plan does
21 not represent the interests of so many New Yorkers. I
22 ask that this Committee start to consider our
23 community's complaints before they let this plan go
24 forward as it stands today. The final problem I want
25 to address and possibly the most important is the

2 effect of this plan will have on our schools and
3 municipalities. This plan is detrimental to our
4 public safety... (INAUDIBLE)

5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Sally, thank
6 you very much for your testimony. We're now moving to
7 Latonia Harris.

8 Latonia, please unmute yourself. Thank
9 you.

10 LATONIA HARRIS: Hello.

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I can hear you.

12 LATONIA HARRIS: Yes, can you hear me?

13 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, I can.

14 LATONIA HARRIS: Good. Hello, my name is
15 Latonia. I'm from St. Albans, Queens. I say no to the
16 City of Yes. I hope this is not a performative check-
17 the-box hearing and the concerns heard today on this
18 issue of making a decision to vote against the City
19 of Yes. The so-called narrative that is exaggerated
20 regarding less housing, the issue is affordable
21 housing. I ask you to consider the four following
22 factors when you consider your vote. Ask who will
23 benefit from the overhaul of low-density areas in
24 Queens. Is it homeowners who already pay the highest
25 taxes in Queens or developers who will receive tax

benefits for 10 years or more? Basements have been deemed unsafe for years. All of a sudden, the City is open to modifying the Building Code, knowing how costly it is to offer the unit into a safe dwelling. This would suggest that the City is willing to risk the safety of communities to get new streams of revenue. To sell this as a benefit to homeowners is a farce. Furthermore, the City Planning Commission suggests that other dwelling units such as backyards and cottages and garage apartments will benefit family members. I submit to you not to use this (INAUDIBLE) segment of population. Not all the segments of population live the same. We don't all live in multi-generational homes with one family per bedroom or in another part of the house. Politicians should never use their assumptions or their personal experience and/or observations of some cultures to implement an overhaul of an entire borough. Some young people want to move out from their parents, and older aging generations like their independents. Carefully review the City Planning Infrastructure Report. Ask them how long did it take them to compile the data. Invest in an independent audit to review their findings. Queens communities cannot support the

2 overdevelopment that will take place under the City
3 of Yes. Lastly, consider the quality-of-life factors
4 that exist in Queens as-of-right. School (INAUDIBLE)
5 saturation of migrant shelters causes school
6 overcrowding as an issue. Shortage of quality food..

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
8 Latonia.

9 LATONIA HARRIS: Migrants cooking in the
10 streets. I ask you to vote against the City of Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you very much.

12 LATONIA HARRIS: Thank you for allowing me
13 to go.

14 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We're now
15 proceeding to Ed Goydas.

16 LATONIA HARRIS: Thank you.

17 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Ed Goydas,
18 please unmute yourself.

19 ED GOYDAS: Can you hear me?

20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I can.

21 ED GOYDAS: Great. Should the City of Yes
22 one-size-fits-all package of proposals become law,
23 the resulting development free-for-all will
24 cannibalize all of our communities, lowering our
25 quality of life and affecting property values and

1 exacerbating the strain on neighborhoods without any
2 increase in infrastructure or agency staffing. It
3 will not create more affordable housing. Instead, it
4 will replace homeownership, owner-occupied housing,
5 and what's left of the middle class in New York with
6 market-rate rental units, exponentially increasing
7 the unaffordability of our housing stock. The City of
8 Yes Housing Opportunity proposal would throw all of
9 that away in order to, one, create massive and
10 unsustainable increases in density across the board
11 in every lower-density neighborhood; two, utterly
12 ignore transportation needs and trends, particularly
13 in lower-density neighborhoods, often transit linking
14 to Manhattan; three, exponentially increase the
15 stress on infrastructure and public resources, of
16 which it makes no mention; four, deny actual housing
17 affordability of any kind despite constant buzzwords
18 and meaningless rhetoric; five, severely compromise
19 the democratic process in future land use decisions
20 by communities and their elected officials through
21 the massive expansion of as-of-right development and
22 limiting of ULURP. My fellow neighbors, business
23 owners, and tax-paying citizens are vehemently
24 opposed to the City of Yes. Thank you.
25

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Ed
3 Goydas. We now have Cliff Bruckenstein.

4 Cliff, if you're here, please unmute.

5 CLIFF BRUCKENSTEIN: Yes, I am. Can you
6 hear me?

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes.

8 CLIFF BRUCKENSTEIN: Okay. I'm a long-
9 time, actually lifelong resident of Sheepshead Bay
10 Brooklyn, third generation. I have fought zoning
11 issues for many, many years on many different
12 projects. I'm on the Zoning Board of the Community
13 Board. I have voted on hundreds of zoning
14 resolutions. Some yes, some no. I really pick and
15 choose. My neighborhood has doubled in size in the
16 last five years. This zoning, one-size-fits-all, is
17 insane. It would be the elimination of a lot of
18 people in this city, and no (INAUDIBLE) for
19 affordable living, affordable rates. If you want to
20 make a true reasonable way to make affordable rent,
21 you have to make room for homeownership of all sorts,
22 large and small, and it would be very difficult in my
23 neighborhood, which is basically all over Brooklyn.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: (INAUDIBLE)

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Please mute
3 yourself if you're not Cliff.

4 CLIFF BRUCKENSTEIN: It would be difficult
5 to do that unless the City Council does a lot of
6 thinking without developers, because all they want to
7 do is fill their pockets. Thank you.

8 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
9 Cliff. We now have Paul Graziano.

10 PAUL GRAZIANO: Can you hear me?

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes.

12 PAUL GRAZIANO: Thank you. Good evening.
13 I'm Paul Graziano. I'm an urban planner working with
14 over 200 organizations representing the interests of
15 close to a million residents of every ethnicity and
16 income level all over the city who say no to the City
17 of Yes. Most speakers in favor are lobbyists or paid
18 representatives of organizations that have skin in
19 the game, those who will financially or otherwise
20 benefit from the City of Yes should it be adopted.
21 Most speakers in opposition are residents of the
22 city, homeowners, tenants, civic associations who are
23 merely fighting for their homes and the survival of
24 their neighborhoods. A few statistics. Right now, we
25 have the same population as we did in 1960 and

1 800,000 more units than we did then. We have 150,000
2 units approved to be built in the next four years, a
3 record number. In fact, according to experts, we have
4 more housing in New York City than we've had during
5 the past century. Our current zoning capacity can
6 accommodate another 5 to 6 million units for another
7 8 to 12 million people as-of-right. This is if the
8 zoning never changed again. This is all without the
9 City of Yes. Yesterday, Chair Garodnik went out of
10 his way to dismiss the concerns of many of the
11 Council Members during Q and A. He stated that
12 neighborhoods that were contextually rezoned had put
13 up walls to keep people out and were racist and
14 segregationist. I would remind the Council Members
15 that Garodnik voted in favor of these rezonings when
16 he was a Council Member and currently lives in a 2.4-
17 million-dollar co-op on Central Park West in a
18 historic district. He also showed a slide of an area
19 in Eastern Queens where he said the town center
20 zoning proposal would allow for multifamily
21 development where it cannot happen today. The slide
22 he showed is in my neighborhood, and the property is
23 already zoned for multifamily development. The
24 theoretical neighborhood models that DCP created are
25

2 completely bogus and purposefully so. I've done deep
3 analysis of over two dozen real neighborhoods. The
4 outcomes are simply staggering with 300 to 500
5 percent minimum increases in potential development if
6 the City of Yes becomes law.

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
8 Paul.

9 PAUL GRAZIANO: A single-family house with
10 a 10 or 20 apartment building will devastate a block
11 and neighborhood immediately.

12 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. I
13 believe my Colleagues have questions.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yes, you said,
15 Mr. Graziano, you said you did some studies. Can you
16 just tell us a little bit in a couple of minutes like
17 what kind of studies you've done?

18 PAUL GRAZIANO: So, what I did was I did
19 the work, in my opinion, I did the work that City
20 Planning didn't do because all they did was create
21 these theoretical models, and we have 500
22 neighborhoods around the city and they're all very
23 different from each other so what I did was I went, I
24 took a neighborhood, some are low density, some are
25 mid density, Ridgewood is a middle density

1 neighborhood, areas in the Bronx that I worked in, I
2 looked at over two dozen neighborhoods, and I looked
3 at what the outcomes could be based on what the
4 actual proposals are promoting and, again, I did it
5 property by property and I saw what the outcomes
6 could be. You know, this whole idea that it would
7 only be a little bit more housing, the EIS, the
8 Environmental Impact Statement, it is the most
9 efficient EIS I've read in 30 years. It describes a
10 drop in the ocean theory, which is to say, well, it's
11 only going to happen here, here, here, here, here,
12 here, here, here, so it'll never have any effect on
13 neighborhood character whatsoever, but what we know
14 from development is that when you rezone an area, if
15 you rezone it, they will build. And now if you're
16 creating a situation where it's not a ULURP process,
17 right, you don't have a situation where someone says,
18 okay, developer A says I want to rezone this from R4
19 to R7 to build X number of units and you're going
20 through that whole process. Now it's as-of-right and
21 you're replacing a corner house in a single-family
22 neighborhood and you can build a 10-unit apartment
23 building or even a 20-unit apartment building,
24 depending on the size of the property, and it could
25

2 be a two-family house, it could even be a lower
3 density multi-family apartment building. This is
4 going to be extremely difficult and the outcomes have
5 been the same in the low-density neighborhoods, in
6 the middle-density neighborhoods and even in some of
7 the higher-density neighborhoods.

8 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
9 Paul.

10 PAUL GRAZIANO: I hope that answers your
11 question.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you. Yeah,
13 it did. Thank you very much.

14 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: All right.
15 Thank you. Mr. Banks, you have a question? This panel
16 is now excused. Thank you very much.

17 PAUL GRAZIANO: Thank you.

18 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We're now
19 moving to the next online panel. It includes Marc
20 Pittsley, Jessica Rothkuo, Ernie Smith, and Craig
21 Gurian. Marc, you may begin.

22 MARC PITTSLEY: Good evening. Can you hear
23 me?

24 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, I can.

2 MARC PITTSLEY: Great. Thank you so much.

3 My name is Marc Pittsley, and I'm an architect with

4 23 years' experience working here in the city, mostly

5 on apartment buildings, most of which are

6 (INAUDIBLE). I'm testifying today in favor of the

7 City of Yes proposal because we desperately need

8 every tool to incentivize the construction of more

9 housing in the city. Specifically, I want to say a

10 few words regarding mandatory parking requirements.

11 As a designer, I've seen firsthand how these

12 requirements place costly constraints on a new

13 building. For example, structural column locations

14 that are necessary for maneuvering cars are never as

15 workable for the apartments for the apartments above

16 and require expensive transfer beams, and the limits

17 on where parking can be placed without accounting as

18 floor area mean that deep excavation is often the

19 only option because of hefty costs in waterproofing

20 and ensuring the vulnerable neighboring buildings.

21 But I am also speaking to you today as a homeowner,

22 who has now seen firsthand the consequences of these

23 parking mandates for building residents. I live in

24 Crown Heights in a 160-unit building where the

25 developer had to accommodate parking requirements for

2 66 cars. To avoid excavating two stories below-grade,
3 the developer provided a single level of parking in
4 the cellar using double-height car stackers and tight
5 clearances. The assumption was that an attendant
6 would be hired since less than half the spaces can be
7 reached without moving the cars, but there was never
8 enough demand to sell spaces to make the cost of
9 hiring an attendant feasible. Now this amenity has
10 become an albatross for the owners of the building,
11 including myself. We are unable to hire an attendant,
12 we are unable to sell more spaces without an
13 attendant, and we are unable to rent spaces to
14 outside neighbors because of the zoning, so years
15 after completion, the garage sits more than half-
16 empty, empty, expensive waste space in a city where
17 every inch is precious. I'm asking the Council to
18 approve the City of Yes to prevent this kind of
19 waste. Parking mandates can cause headaches for
20 homeowners and residents long after the developer and
21 the architect have left the scene, but parking can be
22 determined by market forces...

23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you so
24 much, Marc.

25 MARC PITTSLEY: (INAUDIBLE) Thank you.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you.

3 We'll now move to Jessica.

4 Please unmute, Jessica, if you're online,
5 and if you can't testify due to technical
6 difficulties, you may submit your testimony online
7 through written testimony.

8 JESSICA ROTHKUO: Hello. Hi. Sorry, I'm
9 here.

10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: No problem. Go
11 ahead.

12 JESSICA ROTHKUO: Good evening, Council
13 and fellow New Yorkers, and thank you for this
14 opportunity. My name is Jessica Rothkuo. This is my
15 wife, Hannah, and we're Queens homeowners. We want to
16 urge you to support the entire City of Yes proposal
17 and especially the accessory dwelling unit
18 provisions. We own a single-family bungalow in the
19 Arbor neighborhood of Far Rockaway in Council
20 District 31. We love this neighborhood for its
21 economic and housing diversity. We have a two-car
22 garage that is completely unused because neither of
23 us have a driver's license, and we don't own a car,
24 and our current R4 zoning requires us to maintain our
25 garage, which takes up a large portion of our lot. We

2 currently house a stray cat in our garage, and we
3 really love her, but we hope you'll pass the City of
4 Yes and allow us to house one of our human neighbors
5 instead. Thank you.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
7 your testimony. Ernie Smith.

8 ERNIE SMITH: Good evening. My name is
9 Ernie Smith, and I work for a small embroidery
10 company in the Garment District. Twenty-five years
11 ago, we were forced out of Manhattan by the dot-com
12 craze, and two years ago, we were forced out of Long
13 Island City by changes to zoning. It became mixed-
14 use, and within moments of being determined as mixed-
15 use, 31 hotels moved into our manufacturing district.
16 While I very much would like to see mixed-use in the
17 Garment District for residential and small businesses
18 in the lower floors of the same building, I have
19 learned through the meetings that I've had in Long
20 Island City 10 years ago, the Treasurer of the City
21 had a business meeting that I attended, and he said
22 that they were working on affordable housing. When
23 asked what affordable housing was, he said it's
24 120,000 and up. We asked, what about those people who
25 don't make 120,000? He said, well, that's workforce

2 housing, and we don't consider that important right
3 now. When I hear the word affordable housing from a
4 City agency, I'm suspect. I don't believe it is
5 servicing those people who are today making 50,000.
6 It is a sham, and I am unhappy about that, and would
7 like to see it be more specific in what that word
8 means. Thank you very much for letting me share.

9 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
10 Ernie. We'll now move to Craig Gurian.

11 CRAIG GURIAN: Good evening, Council
12 Member Abreu. My name is Craig Gurian. I'm the
13 Executive Director of the Anti-Discrimination Center.
14 I've been a civil rights attorney for more than 35
15 years. Some of you may even be familiar with a couple
16 of my cases. I have a message for opponents of City
17 of Yes. A longer version of this is in a piece that's
18 just been published in Vital City today. Opponents,
19 be careful what you wish for. City of Yes made the
20 usual but understandable mistake of compromising in
21 advance. It is, compared to what is needed to solve
22 our twin crises of housing affordability and housing
23 segregation, a modest measure. New York City, one of
24 the most segregated major cities in the country, is
25 already vulnerable to a perpetuation of segregation

2 lawsuit under the Federal Fair Housing Act and our
3 local Human Rights Law because of its zoning and
4 other pro-segregation conduct. If City of Yes were to
5 be rejected or watered down, that vulnerability will
6 be heightened. And when a lawsuit is resolved and a
7 remedy determined, it's not a matter of a little
8 housing everywhere. Addressing decades of disparities
9 would mean focusing on building mixed-income housing,
10 especially where it has been resisted. I'll leave you
11 with Borough President Reynoso's advice to City
12 Planning. Do not back down, do not scale back, do not
13 shy away. If you're going to do anything, do more.
14 Nothing is more important than ensuring every New
15 Yorker and every family has a place to call home for
16 generations to come. Thank you.

17 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
18 Craig. Do my Colleagues have any questions?

19 This panel is now excused.

20 I'm now moving to the next online panel,
21 which includes Gui Marques, James Dill, Saaif Alam,
22 Sherida Paulsen. We'll begin with Gui Marques.

23 Gui Marques, now is your moment to unmute
24 if you're online and, if you're having technical

2 difficulties, you may submit written testimony
3 online.

4 All right. We'll now move to James Dill.
5 If you're online, please unmute.

6 JAMES DILL: I'm James Dill, Executive
7 Director of the Housing and Services Team. We are a
8 not-for-profit dedicated solely to permanent
9 supportive housing, which is the most cost-effective
10 and humane way of ending chronic homelessness. We are
11 members of the Supportive Housing Network in New York
12 and fully support the network's advocacy points to
13 this meeting. We are also very grateful for the Yes
14 to Housing Coalition's advocacy and analysis work. We
15 fully support City of Yes as a means to easing the
16 affordable and homeless housing crisis in our city.
17 The proposed Universal Affordability Preference will
18 give supportive housing providers the critical mass
19 to provide the enhanced security and maintenance
20 necessary to keep our projects clean and safe. We
21 thank the Council for its support for the
22 reallocation of NYC 15/15 resources from the scatter
23 site model to the creation and preservation of
24 concrete supportive housing. We operate a 100-unit
25 scatter site program which we believe is a crucial

2 component in the continuing of care to end
3 homelessness. However, the less than 2 percent
4 vacancy rate in housing units make the scatter site
5 model unfeasible, and we have no plans to attempt to
6 use a 15/15 scatter site program. We owe the
7 development of our most recent concrete project to
8 15/15 congregate resources and are eager to use them
9 again for our next project. We share the concerns
10 about those who fear that City of Yes will be
11 exploited by for-profit developers who will not
12 provide truly affordable housing. In consideration of
13 the City of Yes, we urge the Council to provide
14 sufficient resources to HBD and HRA so that not-for-
15 profits are preferred and competitive, thereby
16 ensuring that City of Yes-enabled projects remain
17 truly affordable in perpetuity. 90 percent of our
18 congregate tenants are on the HUD's definition of
19 low-income or extremely low-income. We will provide
20 written testimony, and we thank you for this
21 opportunity.

22 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
23 James. I believe Gui Marques is online. If you are,
24 please unmute, and you have two minutes to testify.

25 GUI MARQUES: Hello. Can you hear me?

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, I can. All
3 right.

4 GUI MARQUES: Thank you so, so much.
5 Sorry, I didn't get a chance to unmute fast enough.
6 My name is Gui Marques. I'm a homeowner in Staten
7 Island. I wanted to echo what a lot of folks have
8 said. What I personally, I'll say that I do agree
9 with a lot of what is in the City of Yes proposal,
10 but there are many things that I personally as a
11 member of this community here cannot get past. I'm
12 echoing the sentiment from this community that we
13 feel we are not being brought to the table in this
14 discussion. Too much power is being ceded to
15 developers. The sentiment in this community, which I
16 also feel, is that there won't be just a little bit
17 of development in our one or two areas because
18 there's no safeguard against developers coming in and
19 building willy nilly in every single garage in the
20 area, garage, basement, attic, and so forth. Already
21 now in our area, and I'm sure it happens in Queens
22 and in the Bronx and in these R1, R2 areas, anytime a
23 home goes on the market, developers are swarming with
24 cash offers to outbid families. I don't see anything
25 in City of Yes that's going to stop that from even

2 getting worse and driving up prices in these areas
3 just for the development property. Again, I echo that
4 absent something like that to prevent the escalation
5 of costs due to developer overbidding, safeguards
6 against every single garage in R1, R2 areas becoming
7 an apartment and doubling the housing capacity of
8 this neighborhood. Again, doubling housing capacity
9 sounds good, but this neighborhood cannot support
10 doubling the density. It just won't happen. This is
11 not an area served by transit. Again, I urge the
12 Council to potentially revisit some of these ADU,
13 these R1 and R2 impacts in order to, as they say,
14 make small...

15 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very
16 much, Gui.

17 GUI MARQUES: Incremental amounts. Thank
18 you, everybody.

19 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You got it.
20 Saaif Alam is next.

21 SAAIF ALAM: Yes, good afternoon. Good
22 evening, Council Member Abreu and everyone else. My
23 name is Saaif Alam, and I'm a resident in Jamaica
24 Hills, Queens. I'm part of multiple organizations,
25 but I'm testifying on my behalf as just only a

1 resident today. I lived in the neighborhood for 22
2 years. Our neighborhood is mostly residential, and
3 it's peaceful. Our community leaders for years
4 advocated to keep it residential. As an example, in
5 2004, our community and civic leaders advocated for
6 the zoning laws to prevent residents from converting
7 it to R2 or R4 to prevent people from building
8 buildings. This plan prevented overcrowding
9 neighborhoods in Jamaica Hills, Queens. In 2024, as
10 of this year, our City government wants to implement
11 the City of Yes, which enables homeowners to build
12 buildings in residential neighborhoods, including
13 Jamaica Hills. The City of Yes can ruin the character
14 of the neighborhood with overcrowding of residents
15 occupying the neighborhood. Queens Community Board 8
16 unanimously voted against the City of Yes since this
17 plan does not reflect the desire of our fellow
18 residents in the area, including Jamaica Hills. So, I
19 ask the City Council to vote against the City of Yes,
20 since this proposal needs a revision, the City of Yes
21 being reconsidered for approval, and one of my
22 suggestions I will suggest is once, you know, for the
23 City Council to consider creating a taskforce of City
24 of Yes with Community Board members, civic leaders,
25

2 non-profit organizations, community leaders, elected
3 leaders, and possibly very active residents. Create a
4 taskforce where there will be input from various
5 stakeholders and put this into play, then that can be
6 voted again in the future. That will make more sense.

7 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
8 your testimony, Saaif. We will now move to Sherida
9 Paulsen.

10 SHERIDA PAULSEN: Thank you. My name is
11 Sherida Paulsen. I'm the Senior Principal of PKSB
12 Architects. We're based in Midtown, and I'm Chair of
13 the Riverdale Nature Preservancy and former Chair of
14 the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.
15 I am an architect, and I do appreciate the City
16 Planning Commission and the Department of City
17 Planning for tackling the challenge of modernizing
18 our zoning resolution, and I have supported many of
19 the text changes as they streamline the language and
20 allow for more commonsense solutions for sustainable
21 elements of building design. However, I do not
22 support adoption of the proposal as proposed. The
23 text changes do nothing to increase affordability as
24 they do not tackle any of the policy issues, as
25 Speaker Adams has rightly pointed out, that create

1 the opportunity for affordable housing. More than
2 that, the main components of the building changes
3 increasing the footprints by reducing yard sizes,
4 overriding special district regulations in many
5 contexts, opening up historic districts to
6 potentially inappropriate development, and
7 introducing increased density in neighborhoods that
8 truly lack the infrastructure to support that
9 density. All of those specifics drive negative
10 developments, and increasing density requires water
11 management, transit connections, schools, and open
12 space for recreation and light lighting. issues that
13 are important there. It is important to note that our
14 Community Board, Board 8 in the Bronx, did vote this
15 down on many of these same issues, but the biggest
16 issue is we need to look to the past sometimes. And
17 if you look at Frederick Law Olmstead's report to the
18 Commissioners in 1876, he said that this area, our
19 specific area, should never be a place for
20 multifamily development simply because it would be
21 too expensive to build. So, it is very important to
22 maintain community input into these zoning decisions
23 and City Council decisions.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very
3 much for your testimony, Ms. Paulsen.

4 SHERIDA PAULSEN: Thank you very much.

5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Do my
6 Colleagues have any questions?

7 Seeing none, this panel is excused.

8 We're now moving to the next panel,
9 online panel. Judine Johnson-Harriot, Shams DeBaron,
10 Emilia Decaudin, Elizabeth Adams, and Carolyn Iodice.
11 Beginning with Judine, please.

12 Judine, if you're online, please unmute,
13 and if you're having technical difficulties, you may
14 submit written testimony online.

15 All right. Is Judine on?

16 All right. Next up is Shams DeBaron.
17 Please unmute yourself.

18 SHAMS DEBARON: I say today that we're at
19 a crossroads with the most significant housing
20 initiative in nearly 50 years, the City of Yes for
21 Housing Opportunity proposal. As someone who has
22 experienced housing insecurity and homelessness
23 throughout my life, I know firsthand what's at stake.
24 I know what it's like to be homeless as a child,
25 homeless as a single parent, and homeless as a single

2 adult. I know what it's like to have to sleep on the
3 subways, on park benches, in the streets, and on
4 people's couches because I had no place to call home.
5 I believe that without this proposal going through,
6 the future for a lot of people, and in particular
7 black and brown people in New York City, is bleak.
8 Reality is, in my humble opinion, that our zoning
9 laws are rooted in racist policies. Today, you have
10 an opportunity to reverse these racist zoning laws.
11 You know that they have codified, in my opinion, the
12 oppression of black and brown people by restricting
13 access to decent housing and, if you don't seize this
14 moment, I fear that we who are black and brown will
15 have to flee the city because, quite frankly, the
16 rent is too damn high. And a shelter is not the best
17 alternative to permanent housing. While it is easy to
18 build shelters, housing takes years due to the long
19 ULURP process, financing challenges, and those racist
20 zoning laws. The shelter industrial complex thrives,
21 making millions, while housing development is held
22 back so the choice is yours, housing or shelters.

23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
24 Shams. Appreciate your work, Housing Hero. Next up,
25 we have Emilia Decaudin.

2 EMILIA DECAUDIN: Hello, my name is Emilia
3 Decaudin. I'm a Queens resident, a proud Mets fan,
4 and a member of New York City DSA, although I'm
5 speaking in my own capacity. I think that we've heard
6 a lot of talk about what needs to happen alongside
7 City of Yes, but I'm gonna flip this around a little
8 bit. Yes, we need social housing. Yes, we need more
9 tenant protections. Yes, we need more money for
10 vouchers, for CityFHEPS, etc. But while we're here
11 now, we need to build as much housing as we can so
12 that 10 years from now, we don't find ourselves in
13 the same boat that we are today. It's only because of
14 decades and decades of downzoning, failure to build
15 enough housing, and policies that prefer and promote
16 landlords over tenants that we have a housing crisis
17 today with our vacancy rates so low. My rent is high
18 enough, and I live in "affordable housing," and it's
19 still a significant portion of my rent, and I'm
20 probably one of the lucky ones. I have friends who
21 can't afford their rent, and they're going to have to
22 move out of the city or they can't afford to come
23 here and, as a trans person, that's very personal to
24 me because being able to live in New York City is in
25 some cases a matter of life and death. When you think

2 about the anti-trans policies, they're taking hold in
3 so many states across the country so I really urge
4 the City Council to pass City of Yes. You don't have
5 to finish the work, but you're required to start it.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
7 Emilia. I'm gonna go back now to Judine Johnson-
8 Harriott. I believe you're online. If you are, please
9 unmute yourself.

10 JUDINE JOHNSON-HARRIOTT: Am I unmuted?

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I can hear you
12 now.

13 JUDINE JOHNSON-HARRIOTT: Okay. Thank you
14 for giving me the opportunity to testify. The City of
15 Yes proposal for ADUs came at a critical time for me.
16 By next month, I have to adhere to a DOB requirement
17 for me to get a permit to rebuild my garage that I
18 never used and was in disrepair before I purchased
19 the home 11 years ago. I'd rather spend the 7,500
20 that architects are quoting me for on an ADU that
21 would be beneficial to me and my family and another
22 family in need of housing. My one family home was
23 built in 1915, so it's always in need of costly
24 repairs. An ADU rental will offset those maintenance
25 costs and high mortgage. Where I live on Albany

2 Avenue, the houses are practically empty because most
3 of the homeowners are retirees so my neighbors don't
4 really, we don't have an issue with parking, so I
5 urge the Council to pass the proposal because it will
6 benefit a lot of us young people who are homeowners
7 and also taking into consideration the people who are
8 against it, their income status and the background of
9 the people who are against it. Those are people who
10 already have high incomes, so for those of us who are
11 struggling, having ADUs, it would be very beneficial.
12 Thank you.

13 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
14 your testimony, Judine. We will now move to Elizabeth
15 Adams.

16 Elizabeth Adams, if you're online, please
17 unmute, and if you're having technical difficulties,
18 you may submit online written testimony.

19 I'm going to move now to Carolyn from
20 this panel.

21 CAROLYN IODICE: Hi, my name is Carolyn
22 Iodice, and I'm speaking in my personal capacity. I
23 urge you to support City of Yes in full without any
24 changes because it'll allow more homes to be built
25 across the city. I live with two other people in a

2 three-bedroom apartment in Crown Heights, and I love
3 my roommates, but it's telling that the apartment is
4 currently housing three unrelated adults over 30
5 instead of, say, a family. The reason that this is
6 happening is that the rent is over 4,000 dollars a
7 month without utilities, up from about 3,500 only two
8 years ago, and it's not a luxury building. It was
9 built a while ago and it's nothing fancy, but it's
10 home. Our rent is going up sharply because there are
11 too few homes across the city giving our landlord
12 leverage to raise the rent. More homes will give more
13 leverage back to renters, so please support City of
14 Yes for Housing Opportunity without any changes.
15 Thank you.

16 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very
17 much for your testimony, Carolyn.

18 We'll now go back to Elizabeth Adams. Are
19 you here to testify online? Going once, going twice.

20 All right, this panel is now excused.

21 We're now moving to the next panel. Jane
22 Buchanan, Carlene Thorbs, Andrew Berman, Maria
23 Deinnocentiis, my apologies if I'm butchering your
24 name, and Joseph McAllister.

2 After this panel, we will go back to one
3 to two in-person panels.

4 Beginning with Jane, you may go first.

5 JANE BUCHANAN: Hello, can you hear me?

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, I can.

7 JANE BUCHANAN: Hi. Hi, am I here?

8 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Yes, I can hear
9 you.

10 JANE BUCHANAN: Okay, great. Hi, my name's
11 Jane Buchanan, and I'm a longtime resident of Chelsea
12 in the Borough of Manhattan. I live in Penn South,
13 also known as Mutual Redevelopment Houses, a limited
14 equity cooperative. I am speaking on my own behalf. I
15 am here to urge you to vote no on the City of Yes. I
16 have concerns for my own housing complex, for my
17 neighborhood as a whole, and not the least for
18 neighborhoods all over the city. A particular concern
19 is the City of Yes putting forward special provisions
20 for expanded market rate housing and other
21 developments with no guarantee of 100 percent
22 affordability on what are referred to as campuses.
23 There is no clarity on how such infill developments
24 would affect the character and livability of our
25 neighborhoods, including taking away much needed open

2 space and intensifying gentrification. An additional
3 concern is that in the City of Yes, there is a woeful
4 lack of provision for community input and
5 participation as the plan would go forward. Indeed,
6 yes, there is a profound need for affordable housing
7 throughout the city. However, the City of Yes, with
8 its reliance on adding more market rate housing, will
9 not solve the problem. Vote no on the City of Yes.
10 Thank you.

11 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
12 Jane. Carlene is next.

13 REVEREND CARLENE THORBS: Good evening.
14 I'm Reverend Carlene Thorbs. I am the Chairperson of
15 Community Board 12, and thank you for this
16 opportunity. I cover the areas of Jamaica, Hollis,
17 St. Albans, South Ozone Park, and Springfield
18 Gardens. After listening to everyone today,
19 everything that can be said has been said, but there
20 was one thing that has been left out. When the
21 conversation came up with the churches and they want
22 to, the Scripture was quoted about rebuild and the
23 whole nine yards, rebuild the city. You're absolutely
24 correct. That Scripture by the clergy was absolutely
25 correct. We need to rebuild the city. We need to

1 rebuild our infrastructure, take care of our schools,
2 take care of our streets and our sewers before we
3 continue to build. Our Jamaica area in Community
4 Board 12 has already been rezoned, 580 streets.
5 That's why the building in downtown Jamaica can be
6 the way that it is. It is not our fault. City
7 Planning has come to our meetings and have accused us
8 as one- and two-family homeowners that it is our
9 fault that the rent has gone up the rate that it has,
10 but the reality is it's the greedy builders. And all
11 of this building that they're talking about, what
12 they fail to tell the applicants, what they fail to
13 tell the churches, this is by lottery. Getting into
14 these apartments is by lottery, so you tear up your
15 community and then someone else moves in. You help
16 gentrify your own community. This is something that
17 everyone needs to think about. Community Board 12
18 voted no unanimously to the City of Yes. We voted
19 absolutely not. It was shoved down our throats. It
20 was presented to us on a tight schedule knowing that
21 in the month of June, we would be going out on
22 vacation. Deadlines were for August and things of
23 that nature. So, this has not been transparent.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you very
3 much for your testimony, Carlene. We're now moving to
4 Andrew Berman.

5 REVEREND CARLENE THORBS: Thank you.

6 ANDREW BERMAN: Hi, I'm Andrew Berman and
7 I'm testifying on behalf of Village Preservation, a
8 community organization working in Greenwich Village,
9 the East Village, and NoHo. We strongly oppose
10 multiple provisions in City of Yes for Housing
11 Opportunity and urge the Council to remove them or
12 vote it down. These include, in Manhattan Community
13 Boards 1 through 8, City of Yes would increase the
14 allowable size of purely market rate residential
15 developments in contextual zoning districts, which
16 would mean nothing more than bigger, taller luxury
17 condo developments in areas where zoning was designed
18 to ensure harmonious relationship between new and
19 existing development. We oppose this. City of Yes
20 would also allow transfers of air rights from
21 individual landmarks over much broader geographic
22 areas with little or no public oversight or input.
23 This would result in nothing other than larger luxury
24 condo, commercial office, and hotel development in
25 our neighborhoods. It's being billed as helping to

2 maintain individual landmarks, but would take an
3 overly broad route to doing so while removing
4 oversight to ensure such benefits are accrued. In
5 neighborhoods like ours with scores of individual
6 landmarks, this would have incredibly far-reaching
7 impacts. City of Yes would allow increased
8 encroachments on rear yards and other precious open
9 space in high-density districts like ours, where it
10 is extremely limited and essential to quality of
11 life. Worse, the encroachments would be allowed for
12 purely market rate luxury condo developments. And
13 finally, City of Yes would increase allowances for
14 construction on open spaces in what it calls
15 campuses, which includes religious institutions,
16 university super block developments, and potentially
17 NYCHA complexes. The City has refused to provide more
18 information on the impact of these allowances, but in
19 many cases, sandwiching more large buildings into
20 these spaces, particularly just for luxury and condo
21 development would not justify erasing these precious
22 open spaces, which were all...

23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
24 Andrew.

2 ANDREW BERMAN: For the large towers
3 around them. Thank you.

4 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You got it.
5 We'll now move to Maria Deinnocentiis.

6 MARIA DEINNOCENTIIS: Hi, good evening. My
7 name is Maria Deinnocentiis, President of the Utopia
8 Estates Civic Association in Fresh Meadows, Queens,
9 and Area 6 Chair of Community Board 8 where I
10 represent over 18,000 residents who live in private
11 homes, garden apartments, co-ops, and condos in the
12 23rd and 24th Council Districts. Our community is
13 opposed to the City of Yes, and the Board voted
14 unanimously against it. New York City is 30 years
15 behind in infrastructure planning. There is no plan
16 for infrastructure in this proposal and parts of our
17 area flood regularly. ZHO takes ULURP processes away
18 from our elected Council Members and Community Boards
19 and hands our rights over to developers. This one
20 size fits all sledgehammer solution destroys
21 residential contextual zoning communities by allowing
22 ADUs, (INAUDIBLE) construction, transit-oriented
23 construction, but not affordable housing. We have an
24 affordability crisis in New York City, not a housing
25 crisis. The City of Yes market rate and luxury

2 rentals are not the answer. New York City has lost
3 about 800,000 residents in six years. Working
4 families can't afford rent. How does a family making
5 under 100,000 a year before taxes pay 4,000 or more a
6 month for an apartment? The media reports the Mayor
7 is under scrutiny. Voters know that his dictates have
8 sold us out to corporate interests in his own game.
9 This proposal was created by the Mayor to enrich
10 developers. You need to look at his motives.
11 Destroying residential Queens neighborhoods is not
12 the right answer. Many pro speakers are developers or
13 organizations that get funding from the City. We who
14 vote for you and who pay taxes are telling you this
15 is not the way. The City of Yes proposal can't be
16 fixed. It needs to be voted down. Please focus on
17 finding affordable housing, such as the Mitchell-Lama
18 housing where families pay income-based rent. This
19 vision is needed to focus on..

20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
21 Maria. Really appreciate your testimony tonight.

22 MARIA DEINNOCENTIIS: Okay. Just saying
23 vote no for the City of Yes.

24 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We're now
25 moving to Joseph McAllister.

2 JOSEPH MCALLISTER: Okay. Good evening.
3 Sorry? Good evening. My name is Joseph McAllister,
4 President of South Beach Civic Association,
5 representing the South Beach community and working
6 with all of Staten Island. I am also president of
7 Staten Island Civics United. We oppose the City of
8 Yes Housing Opportunity plan with all of its entire
9 content. We know this plan would totally disseminate
10 our communities and living conditions. Before you
11 execute any zoning changes, our infrastructure needs
12 to be addressed first before you start this
13 disastrous plan. Number one, we need adequate
14 roadways to accommodate the tremendous amount of
15 traffic we have here already. Number two, we need
16 more hospitals, doctors, nurses to help alleviate in-
17 rush of people here already. People are in hallways
18 on their bed for two days. We need more police in the
19 areas of enforcement. Number four, we need traffic
20 agents to manage all the intersections. One-lane
21 roadways are bumper to bumper due to too many
22 vehicles. Example, Rockland Avenue from Richmond Road
23 to Richmond Avenue. Number five, we need more New
24 York City services, DOB, DOT, DOH, DPDC. Six, we need
25 services to repair the damages already existing and

2 caused by the cost-cutting services from this
3 Administration and past Administrations. Number
4 seven, we need more schools. Our school classrooms
5 are oversized. How are our children supposed to learn
6 with so many other students in an oversized packed
7 classroom? And finally, number eight, City Planning
8 must sit down with the homeowners and residents to
9 discuss these issues before any type of zoning
10 changes are executed. The current infrastructure is
11 not handling the current situation with
12 overdevelopment and is not able to add any other type
13 of additional ADUs or a new development. City
14 Planning only met with Staten Island Economic
15 Development Corp and Staten Island Chambers of
16 Commerce. These two entities are for businesses, not
17 for homeowners or for the residents. We, the people
18 who work and live here each day, we know what we want
19 and need. By having an...

20 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
21 your testimony, Mr. McAllister.

22 JOSEPH MCALLISTER: Maybe we can all come
23 together to make New York City the best city of the
24 future.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
3 your testimony, Joseph McAllister.

4 JOSEPH MCALLISTER: I also have additional
5 written testimony I will submit.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: This panel is
7 now excused.

8 We will now move to an in-person panel,
9 beginning with Virginia Crawford, Amy Gross, Kayt
10 Tiskus, and Michael Zoorob. Please come up to the
11 table.

12 We will begin with Virginia Crawford. Hi
13 there. Are you ready to speak? You may turn on the
14 mic.

15 VIRGINIA CRAWFORD: My name is Virginia
16 Crawford. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant in City
17 Council District 3 in the West Village. I'm concerned
18 that there is nothing in the City of Yes Housing plan
19 that even acknowledges the need to preserve existing
20 rent-stabilized units, strengthen tenant protections,
21 or ensures renovations are done safely in tenant-
22 occupied buildings. There is nothing in the plan to
23 address landlord warehousing of apartments and
24 renting out of units on Airbnb, and there is no
25 mention of fully funding Right-to-Counsel for tenants

1 targeted by private equity real estate investors. I
2 don't understand how a comprehensive housing plan
3 could proceed this far without addressing how our
4 current affordable housing is lost. The City of Yes
5 plan reduces red tape and increases financial
6 incentives for affordable housing developers. I'm
7 concerned that these opportunities will reward the
8 very same real estate investors who have grown
9 wealthy by undermining affordable housing. Here are a
10 few ideas. One, City of Yes should require real
11 estate investor background checks to weed out
12 developers with a history of anti-tenant practices in
13 any and all of their properties. The plan should
14 encourage homeownership. Why not implement a tax
15 policy that helps New York renters save for a first-
16 time home? Three, why not consider the creation of a
17 citywide apartment lease buyout program? The City and
18 New York landlords could share the cost of buying out
19 tenants in aging, distressed buildings. Such a
20 program could end warehousing and allow for major
21 renovations to be completed and property values to
22 increase, all without exposing tenants to the
23 asbestos and lead health risks that come with years
24 of dangerous renovations inside these old buildings.
25

2 Finally, I just want to say incentivizing affordable
3 housing alone will not solve the crisis unless we
4 disincentivize predatory investors. Thank you for
5 your time.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. We
7 now have Amy Gross up next.

8 AMY GROSS: Hi, good evening. I am Amy
9 Gross, President of Amy Gross Architects. We have
10 designed affordable housing in large part funded by
11 HPD for over three decades. Our firm has deeply
12 studied the details of City of Yes and know not only
13 will it address the deep housing shortage we have,
14 but also the affordability crisis, and we are certain
15 it will help those with low and middle income to stay
16 in this great city of ours. We strongly support this
17 legislation. One of the main attributes of the City
18 of Yes that has not been discussed much is that it
19 makes the cost of construction and renovation of
20 housing more affordable. Simply put, construction of
21 even slightly larger buildings on the same piece of
22 land means more apartments can be created and more
23 people housed. It is simply well said that there is
24 an economy of scale. Cost per square foot decrease
25 when more is built. And one of the reasons this is,

2 is because of infrastructure, because bringing
3 services to a building is the same cost whether we
4 have 100 units or whether we have 50 units. If we can
5 reduce the cost per square foot, it could result in
6 lower rents. And there is a lot of data that supports
7 this supposition. Another point I want to make is
8 that in listening to today's testimony and at City
9 Planning, I hear this resolution being described as
10 one size fits all. As architects, we do not at all
11 see this as the case. It is important to note that
12 this will be the first major update to the entire
13 zoning resolution in over 60 years. That's over two
14 generations. The time has come for a change that
15 honors the growth of our entire city. The amount of
16 square footage that can be built now varies much by
17 each neighborhood. That variance will continue and
18 actually become more nuanced with the City of Yes.

19 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
20 your testimony. We'll now move to Kayt Tiskus.

21 KAYT TISKUS: Hello, and thank you for
22 your time today, an extensive amount of time. My name
23 is Kayt Tiscus. I am a queer New Yorker. I live just
24 down the street in the Financial District, and I
25 dedicate most of my professional life working with

2 other queer New Yorkers, especially folks who are in
3 pretty vulnerable states and fragile transition
4 points in life, and I'm here to testify strongly in
5 support of the City of Yes for many reasons, but
6 among them that these folks who I work with and worry
7 about slipping into houselessness every day would be
8 really benefited by a couple of specific provisions.
9 First, it's great that the plan will re-legalize
10 small and shared housing types that allow people who
11 are just launching into adulthood or who just lost a
12 job or who are having a point of fragility to still
13 have some housing and to get into a stable situation
14 that really is not possible under current and
15 existing zoning laws. And one thing that I'm really
16 delighted about is the change of the definition of
17 family, which as one of my fellow panel members
18 testified, is 60 years old and includes only people
19 who are related to you by blood or who you're married
20 to, which is a specific definition of what
21 constitutes a family that really complicates housing,
22 especially for youth who might not be very welcome
23 with their blood family and who need to live with a
24 trusted adult so the City of Yes is a City of Yes for
25 me and thank you for taking all this time today.

2 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
3 testifying. Michael Zoorob.

4 MICHAEL ZOOROB: Thank you very much. My
5 name is Michael Zoorob. I'm a resident of Sunnyside,
6 Queens, and I'm grateful to share why I hope that you
7 will support the city of Yes. I've been reflecting on
8 what to say that you haven't heard already. Over the
9 last several hours or several years, you've heard
10 about affordability crises, the unprecedentedly low
11 vacancy rate in New York, overcrowding, displacement,
12 homelessness, all of that. So here's where I've
13 landed. I want to tell you about my neighborhood of
14 Sunnyside and how it's the current zoning and not the
15 City of Yes that threatens it. Most of Sunnyside was
16 built in the 1920s, immediately following the
17 extension of the 7 train. This was the original TOD,
18 or transit-oriented development. Courtyard
19 apartments, attached three-story walk-ups on small
20 lots centered around the subway. Under current
21 zoning, my neighborhood cannot be built. I live in a
22 five-story courtyard apartment with 113 apartment
23 units and 10 businesses. The building has zero
24 parking spaces, where zoning now requires one parking
25 spot for two apartments plus spaces for the

2 businesses. You can't fit 60 parking spaces, even if
3 you paved over the courtyard. And it's not just my
4 building, it's the entire neighborhood. The
5 walkability and density that already exists in my
6 neighborhood simply could not be built with the
7 current requirements. But there's a more subtle way
8 the current zoning threatens Sunnyside. In my
9 building, permits to combine apartments are pulled
10 every year. The building looks the same from the
11 outside, but fewer people can live there. And when I
12 walk around the neighborhood, I see six-unit
13 buildings that have been got renovated. The buildings
14 look the same, but the rents are not. Until our city
15 has enough housing, these pressures will impact my
16 neighborhood and others. Sustainable growth
17 everywhere, facilitated by housing abundance, is how
18 we keep neighborhoods thriving. While City of Yes is
19 not the whole solution, it's a necessary part of it.
20 Thank you.

21 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
22 your testimony. This panel is now excused.

23 We will now go back to online panel. And
24 we'll begin with Jenny Dubnau, Karen Argenti, Laura

2 Spalter, Pamela Wolf, and Joseph Vaini. We'll begin
3 with Jenny Dubnau.

4 You may unmute yourself.

5 JENNY DUBNAU: Yes, hi, Jenny Dubnau here.

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: My apologies.

7 JENNY DUBNAU: No problem. Some of you may
8 know my mother, Jeanie Dubnau. My name is Jenny
9 Dubnau. I'm a member of the Western Queens Community
10 Land Trust. I live in Jackson Heights, Queens. I
11 lived my whole life in New York City and have been
12 priced out of neighborhoods from Manhattan, Brooklyn,
13 and Queens. My community organizing work is all about
14 ending displacement and working for deeper
15 affordability in all neighborhoods. From what I've
16 seen over and over again, adding more mostly market
17 rate building with essentially zero units at the
18 lowest AMI only causes an increase in local rents and
19 displaces and gentrifies working class, middle class,
20 black, and immigrant New Yorkers. We have an
21 affordability crisis, and increasing supply simply
22 won't address this. The vacancy rate for apartments
23 with rents above 2,400 dollars is 3.39 percent. The
24 vacancy rate for apartments under 1,100 dollars is
25 0.39 percent. City of Yes would allow massive as-of-

2 right building almost completely for the top of the
3 market, but the greatest need for most New Yorkers
4 isn't being built for. This leaves us depending on
5 the disproven trickle-down theory, also called
6 filtering, in which supposedly wealthier New Yorkers
7 will vacate their old affordable units in favor of
8 newer pricier ones. This market-based solution has
9 never worked. It's extraordinary to see City policy
10 being built on this basis. In Vancouver, the rate of
11 building is through the roof, yet rents continue to
12 rise. Upzoning increases land value in speculation,
13 which spirals rents ever higher. Until we devote more
14 public funds to actually subsidizing rents and
15 building public, municipal, and de-commodified
16 housing and tightening rent regulations and demanding
17 massive value capture from upzonings, which is a gift
18 to developers, New York City's affordability and
19 homelessness crises will continue to worsen. If we
20 really care about deeply affordable housing,
21 immediately we should bring 5,000 vacant NYCHA units
22 back online.

23 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
24 your testimony.

2 JENNY DUBNAU: (INAUDIBLE) not going to
3 give us 5,000 units that's affordable to people who
4 need 30 percent of AMI.

5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You got it.
6 Next up is Karen.

7 Karen, are you online? Karen Argenti? All
8 right.

9 KAREN ARGENTI: Yes, I'm here. I'm sorry.
10 Consider that environmental injustice occurs when
11 certain communities are disproportionately affected
12 by pollution, unhealthy land uses, climate change,
13 flooding, and lack of connections to decision makers.
14 With 72 percent imperviousness in New York City, this
15 means land is limited. The Census Bureau did the
16 Housing Vacancy Survey for HPD, and their quote was,
17 this was the largest housing stock for New York City
18 in the 58 years since the survey was first conducted
19 in 1965 and continued the trend of growth shown over
20 the past few cycles. If you build luxury buildings,
21 the remaining areas will be polluted ground fields,
22 near trains and highways, and in risky floodplains,
23 exasperating severe health outcomes for affordable
24 housing. In 1989, the City Charter was revised to
25 replace the Board of Estimate, which did not

2 represent us equally. In its place, the public was
3 given the opportunity to participate through
4 Community Boards and ULURP, which is now being
5 diminished. Environmental justice works to ensure
6 that everyone has meaningful participation and
7 transparent decision-making. These are some of the
8 environmental justice issues that specifically affect
9 the Bronx, but are not addressed in this initiative.
10 I urge you to vote no on the ZHO. We need greener,
11 not concrete. Ask for a fiscal cost analysis for the
12 potential housing subsidies available to developers.
13 Tell the Mayor and City Planning to come back with a
14 plan that will meet the Bronx need. What's good for
15 the Bronx is good for the city too. Thank you.

16 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you,
17 Karen. We now have Laura Spalter.

18 LAURA SPALTER: Good evening. My name is
19 Laura Spalter. I am speaking for Protect Bronx
20 Neighborhoods from Overdevelopment. Clearly, we have
21 an affordable housing crisis in New York City.
22 However, it is a false narrative that City of Yes
23 contains any real proposal to solve this crisis,
24 despite the oft repeated platitudes of City
25 officials. CPC's website states that the proposal

will incentivize developers to produce between 58,000 and 109,000 new homes over 15 years. Of that, only 20,000 units are projected to be affordable.

Meanwhile, City agencies under current zoning have

financed the creation or preservation of nearly

30,000 income restricted units in Fiscal Year 2024

alone. The City of Yes was crafted by the Mayor's

Building and Land Use Approval Streamlining Task

Force, BLAST, comprised largely of lobbyists and

special interest groups in the real estate and

housing industries. These proposals are a gift to

them. Every Bronx Community Board is more than 50

percent rent-burdened. However, City of Yes proposals

promote luxury and market rate housing, where

developers may voluntarily elect to build a small

number of affordable units in exchange for 20 percent

FAR bonus. These so-called affordable units will be

rented for many times more than the 25 percent of

annual wages of most Bronx sites. The City of Yes has

removed ULURP by substituting as-of-right

development, reducing the impact of the public,

Community Boards, and elected Council Members to

intervene on important land use actions. Please, City

2 Council Members, tell the Mayor and City Planning to
3 come back with a plan that meets the city's needs.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

5 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you. We
6 now have Pamela.

7 LAURA SPALTER: And also investigate the
8 approximate 300,000 vacant apartments being
9 warehoused.

10 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: We now have
11 Pamela Wolf.

12 PAMELA WOLF: Thank you. I am Pamela Wolf,
13 President of Save Chelsea. While City of Yes for
14 Housing Opportunity has some laudable provisions, it
15 fails to mandate new affordable housing and
16 encourages the destruction of existing affordable
17 housing. Even the sole City of Yes initiative for
18 affordable housing, the Universal Affordability
19 Preference, could be counterproductive in
20 neighborhoods like ours. For example, take the three
21 older buildings between the High Line and 10th
22 Avenue, just north of 22nd Street in the Special West
23 Chelsea Zoning District. Their 29 apartments fall a
24 bit below Chelsea's median rents for apartments of
25 the same size. Under City of Yes, they could be

demolished and replaced by a building containing far fewer, astronomically more expensive, and sprawling new apartments with High Line views and only the handful of affordable apartments needed to satisfy the program's 20 percent affordability requirement. The result would be a dramatic net increase in housing costs. The new building could be 45 feet taller than now permitted under an 80-foot height limit that was designed to respect the low-rise Chelsea Historic District across 10th Avenue and one and one-half times that height, or 125 feet. On one side, it would dwarf the Historic District, and on the other, it would rob the High Line of light and open space that the Special Zoning District was specifically crafted to preserve. The profit motive to build taller in this view-rich area would be irresistible, with deeply unfortunate consequences for both housing costs and neighborhood character. The Universal Affordability Preference could very well yield a net loss in affordability on any..

ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you, Pamela. We're now moving now to Joseph.

Joseph, you may unmute yourself.

2 Joseph, if you're having technical
3 difficulties, you may submit your written testimony
4 online.

5 JOSEPH VAINI: Can you hear me?

6 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: I can hear you
7 now, Joseph.

8 JOSEPH VAINI: Okay, great, great, great.
9 Thank you for allowing me to speak. It's been a
10 while. The only thing I have to say is the sales
11 pitch for this entire City of Yes for Housing
12 Opportunity Program is ludicrous. Basically, what's
13 being argued is trickle-down economics for
14 developers. Give developers free reign and decades-
15 long tax abatements from the State that no private
16 individual could ever dream of obtaining, and maybe,
17 just maybe, housing might become more affordable. No
18 industry deliberately oversaturates the market to the
19 point that their profit margins would materially be
20 impacted. Real estate will be no exception. You just
21 got to take a look at past upzonings like Bill de
22 Blasio's Housing 2.0 for evidence of that. My
23 understanding, rents on average rose in those sector
24 areas. In my opinion, this is nothing more than a
25 generous payback by Mayor Adams and City Planning

2 Chairman Garodnick to the real estate interest which
3 financed their political careers. It's an in-the-
4 money stock option with no expiration date. Also, my
5 opinion, the only new developments that are going to
6 come out of this proposal will be either more
7 overpriced "luxury apartments" or subsidized housing
8 like the Rikers Island former inmate permanent
9 housing facility planned to the Jacoby campus
10 (INAUDIBLE). It's not going to be affordable housing
11 for working New Yorkers the way it was marketed. Now,
12 I currently live in Throgs Neck. It's considered a
13 low-density community, not as much as it used to be.
14 Low-density communities like Throgs Neck, Morris
15 Park, Ellen Bay, Van Nest, others like it, I think
16 they're at particular risk. These communities don't
17 have the infrastructure to support this development,
18 and real estate is cheaper here than areas like
19 Manhattan or Long Island City. This will directly
20 (INAUDIBLE) of these developers.

21 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: Thank you for
22 your time.

23 JOSEPH VAINI: I mean...

24 ACTING CHAIRPERSON ABREU: You have
25 another 10 seconds.

2 JOSEPH VAINI: I don't think that hard-
3 working New Yorkers should be asked to risk
4 overcrowding, sewer and power issues, increased
5 litter, increased crime, slower emergency or part-
6 time, lack of public parking, a whole host of other
7 deteriorations...

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Joseph.
9 Thank you so much for your testimony.

10 This panel is now excused.

11 JOSEPH VAINI: All right. Goodbye.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much to
13 Council Member Abreu.

14 The next panel we're going to hear from
15 consists of Valerie Mason, Jonathan Ortiz, Marieke
16 Thomas, Lana Irons, and Jason Stahl. I will start
17 first with Valerie Mason.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Valerie Mason, if you
20 hear me, please unmute and you may begin.

21 VALERIE MASON: Can you just give me one
22 second? I'm just trying to find my script for one
23 second because I've been waiting all this time. Just
24 give me one second. Sorry.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: No problem. I'll come
3 right back to you.

4 VALERIE MASON: Okay, thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: No problem. Jonathan
6 Ortiz.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

8 JONATHAN ORTIZ: Thank you. My name is
9 Jonathan Ortiz, and I grew up in Whitestone, Queens,
10 District 19, Council Member Paladino's District where
11 you need a car, where I took the Q16 to see my
12 friends and the 7 train to see the city. Not a single
13 one of my friends still lives in that neighborhood
14 because none of us can afford it. I currently live in
15 Flatlands, District 45, and I still do not own a car.
16 I'm not a transplant. I'm here today because I live
17 in NYC and I know the cost of housing is what is
18 driving homelessness. I'm not homeless, but I'm aware
19 that myself and many others are just one financial
20 issue away from being housing insecure, a situation
21 anybody could find themselves in that goes for every
22 single person who spoke today and everyone who will
23 speak after me. This is ultimately a factor of luck.
24 I'm lucky. To mitigate this problem in NYC, the city
25 with the largest homeless population in the country,

2 we need to address the relationship between the cost
3 of rent and housing insecurity. The City of Yes
4 Housing Opportunity Initiative will increase the
5 housing supply, bring more competition, more
6 apartments and help to reduce the price of rent. This
7 is the single biggest factor in preventing
8 homelessness aside from just straight up providing
9 housing. That's more of a conversation for the
10 future. I hope City Council approves this proposal in
11 its strongest form. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
13 here from Marieke Thomas.

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

15 MARIEKE THOMAS: Hi, my name is Marieke
16 Thomas. I'm a high school teacher in the New York
17 City DOE. I'm currently in my 13th year teaching. I
18 live in a market rate studio apartment on the Upper
19 East Side. I strongly support City of Yes. I urge you
20 to pass it in its entirety. In my 13 years working
21 for the Department of Education, I've noticed a
22 really common pattern, which is that a lot of the
23 most amazing, dedicated, and inspiring teachers that
24 I've worked with leave the city after about like
25 five, six, seven years of teaching, and the number

2 one reason is the cost of housing, especially the
3 cost of housing for families. So just as an example,
4 one of the most incredible chemistry teachers at my
5 school, after she had a baby, she and her husband
6 moved from an apartment in Harlem to a two-bedroom
7 apartment in Stamford, Connecticut, where she
8 commuted over an hour to get to school and, after two
9 years of doing that, she left the New York City
10 Department of Education and got a teaching job in
11 another district where she would have a shorter
12 commute. This has happened many times for some of my
13 most passionate former co-workers, which has led to a
14 constant churn of teachers. It's harmful for
15 students. It's harmful for newer teachers who need
16 experienced mentors. Teachers shouldn't have to
17 choose between staying at the schools they love with
18 the children they care about and being able to raise
19 their own kids in an apartment where they can afford
20 rent. Our city desperately needs housing of all
21 types. We need affordable housing for our students,
22 right? This is incredibly important for them as well.
23 We've been losing students over the last decade as
24 their families get priced out of the city so we need
25 affordable housing for them. We also need market rate

2 housing for teachers, right? Teachers mostly live in
3 market rate apartments. We need to build more housing
4 of all types. I strongly encourage you to vote yes
5 for all of the City of Yes proposals.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Thomas.
7 Next, we'll hear from Lana Irons.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

9 LANA IRONS: Hello there. My name is Lana
10 Irons, and I'm a psychiatrist who works in the
11 domestic violence shelter system of Brooklyn and
12 Queens. The reason why I'm coming on here to speak
13 today is because as a psychiatrist, I believe it's an
14 ethical duty to speak up for the patients I work
15 with, many of whom are mothers with small children
16 who find themselves in some of the most terrible
17 circumstances you can imagine, and homeless, some of
18 them many never been homeless before, and one of
19 their primary concern being trying to find housing. A
20 couple years ago and over the past couple years, this
21 City Council has increased CityFHEPS eligibility as
22 well as increased the amount of subsidy that is
23 provided for these people, including my patients, to
24 be able to use them to afford housing. The issue is
25 that many of them find themselves competing for very

2 little, for a very small amount of housing stock,
3 leading them to stay in the shelter system, many of
4 them not able to find permanent housing, and in some
5 statistics, less than 10 percent of those in the
6 domestic violence shelter system end up in permanent
7 housing after they're removed from the domestic
8 violence shelter system. So, the reason why I'm
9 coming on is to say yes, I completely support the
10 City of Yes. It is a rezoning package, so of course
11 there's many different other parts of housing policy
12 that need to be addressed, but this part helps
13 facilitate so many of those other parts that will
14 help out so many of my patients and so many people in
15 this city who are in dire straits who really need
16 housing and really can't find it because there is not
17 enough housing, so I highly encourage all the City
18 Council Members to support this housing proposal in
19 order to build more housing to help out those who are
20 in need in this city. Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
22 hear from Valerie Mason.

23 VALERIE MASON: Thank you very much,
24 Chairman. I am Valerie Mason, Chair of Manhattan
25 Community Board 8. COYHO's Housing Market Study

1 showed that Community District 8 is unfortunately
2 first among all Community Districts in housing units
3 lost during the period 2010 to 2024. We have at least
4 nine luxury developments underway with even more in
5 the pipeline. The combination of construction of such
6 massive buildings with almost no additional housing,
7 the conversion of small tenements to single-family
8 homes, and the combination of units in condos and co-
9 ops has left our District with little affordable
10 housing in some of the largest, most expensive
11 housing units in the world. We voted in favor of UAP
12 because we are desperate for affordable housing.
13 However, we fear that because this program will be
14 voluntary, it will lead to, at best, just a
15 spattering of affordable housing in our District. In
16 the last four months, within a two-block radius, more
17 than seven walk-up buildings will be demolished with
18 more luxury housing to take its place. We also voted
19 against the lifting of the parking mandate. We don't
20 want the City to make the same mistake twice.
21 Manhattan exemplifies the failure of the removal of
22 minimum parking requirements. The minimums for
23 Manhattan below 96th Street were removed more than 40
24 years ago. Does anyone see more affordable housing in
25

2 Manhattan? Street parking is used for rental cars
3 because there is little in-building parking, and we
4 have more car ownership than ever in Manhattan. We
5 can make our streets safer for all modes of
6 transportation if we move car parking in-building.
7 Rather than eliminating parking mandates, why not
8 subsidize them and commit to build municipal parking
9 garages? The rich will always have parking. We need
10 to think about the disabled and middle class having
11 affordable parking. This is not an either-or choice.
12 There is no infrastructure proposed that will appear
13 in the next 20 years that will make public
14 transportation within the outer boroughs more robust.
15 We want our fair share of affordable housing..

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

17 VALERIE MASON: But it seems no one wants
18 the UAS to have it, and we are skeptical that COYHO,
19 as proposed, will do it.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

21 VALERIE MASON: Please make the UAP
22 mandatory.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, we'll hear from
24 Jason Stahl.

25 Jason, if you can hear me, please unmute.

2 JASON STAHL: I believe I'm unmuted. Can
3 you hear me?

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

5 JASON STAHL: Great. Thank you very much,
6 Chairman Riley, for your endurance. My name is Jason
7 Stahl. I live in Sunnyside Gardens, Queens. I am a
8 renter in a market rate apartment, and I am urging
9 the City Council to approve the City of Yes proposal
10 in its entirety. I have zero love for the Adams'
11 Administration, but a broken clock is right at least
12 twice a day, and I think that adding more units
13 everywhere is good, even for folks who live in low-
14 density neighborhoods. Single-family houses are good
15 for what you need at a specific point in time, but I
16 think for anyone who wants to live in their
17 neighborhood for their entire life, once housing
18 needs change, and I think having a variety and
19 diversity of housing options as you proceed in the
20 life curve, the family curve, it's beneficial for
21 them, too. Just a note about parking requirements and
22 minimum parking, I think it's good to remove that.
23 It's not the same as saying parking is banned
24 forever. It just gives the option to have less if
25 it's not wanted. I think in transit deserts, I think

2 there'll be plenty of parking in new developments.

3 And then the last point I just want to make, because

4 I think a lot of folks have talked about Community

5 Board approvals or lack thereof, I think it's

6 important to note that Community Boards are not

7 elected legislative bodies or elected bodies of any

8 sort. They are appointed by Borough Presidents after

9 an application process so the idea that they are

10 represented in the community..

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Jason.

13 JASON STAHL: Thank you very much, sir.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next panel we'll

15 hear from consists of Amanda Agoglia, Mark Anderson,

16 Kirsti Jutila, Lo van der Valk, and Margo Margolis. I

17 will call on Amanda Agoglia. Excuse me if I butchered

18 your name. You may begin.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Amanda Agoglia, if you

21 can hear me, please begin.

22 AMANDA AGOGLIA: Hi, can you hear me?

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

24 AMANDA AGOGLIA: Okay, great. I'm asking

25 you to vote no. Let me shut off my own machine. I'm

2 asking you to vote no for the City of Yes proposal. I
3 am the President of the Neponsit Property Owners
4 Association in Queens. We were incorporated in 1919.
5 I represent approximately 2,500 residents in our
6 community. We are opposed to the City of Yes proposal
7 for many reasons. We are in a flood zone and we are a
8 transit desert. It is sure to destroy our city, our
9 environment, our green spaces. It will produce a city
10 that's overcrowded and overpopulated and cause
11 dangerous living conditions. This plan does not
12 include any new hospitals, which we are desperate
13 for, any new parking spaces, schools, money for
14 infrastructure. This plan will only benefit the
15 developers. We have many empty apartments, vacant
16 buildings, warehouses, underutilized areas, which
17 could be developed without changing the character,
18 look, and feel of our city and the outer boroughs.
19 Please vote no for this proposal. Please don't let
20 your fellow New Yorkers down and destroy this city.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Amanda.

23 Next, we'll hear from Mark Anderson.

24 MARK ANDERSON: Yes, can you hear me?

25 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can.

2 MARK ANDERSON: Very good. Hi, I'm Mark
3 Anderson. I'm the President of the Westerleigh
4 Improvement Society, and I represent about 10,000
5 people in the North Shore of Staten Island. We are
6 already living with the careless planning and peril
7 of the City of Yes for Carbon Neutrality. We're
8 powerless to stop the environmental hazardous mass
9 battery storage facilities from being built in our
10 residential neighborhoods. Our Borough wound up with
11 over a dozen of these, and we only need one. The City
12 of Yes will not provide affordable housing, so come
13 back with another proposal to address these concerns.
14 We say no to the City of Yes. The American dream is
15 under attack. Why is the single-family housing being
16 eliminated and blamed for an affordability of
17 housing? Our existing lack of infrastructure isn't
18 even understood by the Department of City Planning.
19 When they came to our Community Board about this
20 proposal, they first asked the entire room, how many
21 of you took the subway to this meeting? We looked at
22 each other in bewilderment because the nearest train
23 is miles from the meeting site. They had no idea.
24 Basements and garages are not for people. They can't
25 be made safe. People will die in the flood water and

2 sewage backups. Who do we hold accountable for this
3 when people do die? The City Council? We have some
4 residents who've been forced to pay as much as 10,000
5 dollars and more to put in a valve to shut off their
6 sewer when it rains so they don't get these backups.
7 They can't even have people over for a party when
8 they think it's going to rain because they can't use
9 their bathroom. Keep gardens and garden apartments.
10 Keep residents and our representatives in the land
11 use process, as we are already living..

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time is
13 expired.

14 MARK ANDERSON: Of having our input taken
15 away.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
17 going to hear from Kirsti Jutila.

18 Kirsti, if you can hear me, please unmute
19 and you may begin.

20 KIRSTI JUTILA: Hi, my name is Kirsti
21 Jutila. I don't see myself on camera, but good
22 evening. Thank you, Chair and this Council. I'm a
23 Flatbush, Brooklyn, homeowner since 2000. Okay, I'm
24 going to start my video. There we go. Hi, my name is
25 Kirsti Jutila. I'm a Flatbush, Brooklyn homeowner

1 since 2003 and a retired New York City planner. I
2 used to work at the Department of City Planning. I
3 oppose the entire generic citywide City of Yes, but
4 will speak against three lower density items,
5 transit-oriented development, district fixes, and
6 ADUs. Other City of Yes elements can create housing
7 without these lower density items, which produce a
8 very small increment of new housing over 15 years,
9 according to the EIS. Yet, they deregulate and upzone
10 all low-density districts citywide, and Flatbush will
11 continue to produce housing without them. Flatbush
12 has produced a fair share, 1,600 units of housing in
13 the 10 years after our rezoning, and our zoning has
14 been updated since 1961. Our 2009 Flatbush rezoning
15 preserved low-density blocks and, while producing
16 those 1,600 units in 10 years, we have R6A and R7A
17 along with R1 through R3 districts, but TOD would
18 allow small apartment buildings again in low-density
19 blocks where we had disallowed them some years ago.
20 They're 99 percent build-up with no vacant lots. Why
21 destabilize them when there's untapped housing
22 opportunity two blocks away in our R6 and our R7?
23 It's not outside our district, it's in our district.
24 Yes, so next is district fixes. I support only two,
25

2 to increase FAR to 0.75 and drop the attic allowance
3 and sky exposure plane. Everything else should be off
4 the table. Get Flatbush out of all the other district
5 fixes.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time is
7 expired.

8 KIRSTI JUTILA: In disguise. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
10 going to hear from Lo van der Valk. Lo van, if you
11 can hear me, please unmute and you may begin.

12 LO VAN DER VALK: Yes, my name is Lo van
13 der Valk, and I represent Carnegie Hill Neighbors, a
14 civic organization in the Upper East Side. We support
15 the goals of COY Housing Opportunities, but we have
16 several reservations. One, we would like to keep the
17 bulk and setback provisions of the Madison Avenue
18 Special Preservation District created in 1973. This
19 allows for a pyramid-shaped tapering at the top three
20 or four floors. It is unique to Madison Avenue and
21 worth keeping, especially because Madison Avenue is
22 the premier shopping avenue of New York City. Two, we
23 oppose the proposed height increases for the narrow
24 street mid-blocks. These apply mainly to the
25 contextual R8B mid-block zoning, whose allowed height

1 limit currently is 75 feet and will be raised to 105
2 feet if affordable housing is provided. This is a
3 height increase of 40 percent and out of bounds with
4 the allowed 20 percent FAR increase for affordable
5 housing. A major understanding going back more than
6 100 years is that the avenues can be tall, but the
7 mid-blocks must be short. Three, we oppose the
8 proposed reduction of the required rear yards from 30
9 to 20 feet. Smaller rear yards will result in less
10 light and air in the valued green internal donut
11 space. Four, we oppose provisions that further
12 diminish the rear yard open donut space, including
13 accessory dwelling units and accessory residential
14 space. Five, we oppose the expansions of the City
15 Planning Commission's authorizations. These grant the
16 CPC the authority to permit applications to break
17 zoning laws without any public review by Community
18 Boards or the City Council. Six, and finally, we
19 oppose the vast expansion of the landmark transfer
20 development rights, TDRs. This provision will vastly
21 expand the reach of the receiving lots from the
22 current two or three blocks to potentially eight
23 blocks.
24

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr. Lo van.
3 Next, we'll hear from Margo Margolis. Margo, if you
4 can hear me, please unmute and you may begin.

5 MARGO MARGOLIS: Sure. I'm a certified
6 artist living in a building that was converted from
7 commercial to joint live/work quarters for artists in
8 1976. Residents of SoHo and NoHo are pioneers in
9 adaptive reuse and joint live/work. We created the
10 model that the City now wants to adopt under Section
11 15-01. Ironically, all neighborhoods can convert from
12 commercial to residential free of charge, except for
13 SoHo and NoHo, which must pay an exorbitant fee to an
14 Arts Fund to do so. This is discriminatory tax that
15 unjustifiably targets two neighborhoods and will cost
16 the residents of SoHo and NoHo millions of dollars.
17 Many of these residents are the original pioneers who
18 are now senior citizens and living on fixed income.
19 This is an impossible expense. Please do not support
20 this unless the City abolishes this punitive tax and
21 treats all New Yorkers equally. Unless it's fully
22 inclusive, do not vote to support provisions in
23 Section 15-01. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. This
25 panel's excused.

2 The next panel I'm going to call up
3 consists of Hien Piotrowski, Kate Van Tassel, Sanford
4 Miller, and Samir Lavingia. We'll begin first with
5 Hien Petrovsky.

6 HIEN PIOTROWSKI: Yes, good evening. My
7 name is Hien. I'm a born and raised New Yorker,
8 speaking on behalf of myself in support of the City
9 of Yes. My parents were broke first-generation
10 college students who took a chance on New York, and
11 for that, I've always been grateful. They settled in
12 Hell's Kitchen, and they most certainly would not
13 have been able to do that now, given how expensive
14 the neighborhood is, and now you have to make like
15 250,000 in order to afford a market rate unit. We
16 can't function as a City that has accepted immigrants
17 for generations and centuries unless we build more
18 affordable housing. We can't be a City of Yes without
19 more housing. For far too long, our housing
20 discussion has been dominated by people who claim to
21 be against developers when not building affordable
22 housing or any housing emboldens developers to drive
23 up rents and monopolize housing. Talking about
24 upzoning removing housing is interesting given that
25 downzoning encourages converting multifamily

2 brownstones into urban McMansions without ULURP
3 approval. These are a tiny minority, with 80 percent
4 of New Yorkers supporting this plan. We can't build
5 the next-generation Mitchell-Lama if the zoning code
6 only allows for single-family homes. We need to
7 listen to our church leaders, union members, and
8 working families and build much more affordable
9 housing, incorporate Borough President Reynoso's
10 recommendations for the City of Yes, increase renter
11 protections, and streamline permitting. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much,
13 Hien.

14 I just want to stay for record we've been
15 joined back by Council Member Marte.

16 Next person I'm going to call up is Kate
17 Van Tassel. Kate, if you can hear me..

18 KATE VAN TASSEL: Hello.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, go ahead.

20 KATE VAN TASSEL: Yes, can you hear me?

21 I'm on my separate camera. Hi, good morning. I was
22 going to say good morning and we are well past the
23 morning, so I thank City Council Members for the
24 opportunity. I am speaking for myself. I want to make
25 that clear. I am also a resident of Sunnyside. I've

2 worked for the city and state local government for
3 over 15 years. I wanted to start by saying the reason
4 I start with saying I worked for the city and state
5 is that I got yelled at at a lot of Community Board
6 meetings and so I have empathy for (INAUDIBLE) who
7 are in this position of hearing the fear in people's
8 voices. It's really hard to be in front of a room and
9 to be taking on that fear, and that is because
10 reality is less scary than the theoretical, and right
11 now City of Yes is theoretical and it's really scary,
12 and it's really hard for people, which we've heard in
13 all the testimony to take that on. I encourage our
14 Council Members to be leaders and not just give in to
15 that fear. I've been there. And the reason I say that
16 is that I've been at these ribbon cuttings for the
17 same things I got yelled at publicly was people like
18 turning back around and like, can you believe this,
19 this is so amazing, I love it. That is what will
20 happen in the future for City of Yes things. It
21 doesn't have to be scary, and I encourage you to be
22 bold. You know, I refuse to let the people from the
23 1960s be the bold leaders when we could be the bold
24 leaders today. The last point I want to make is,
25 again, I have a co-op in Queens. I do want to say

2 that not all Queens people are against City of Yes.
3 I'm very pro City of Yes. And also when people are
4 concerned about the cost, what often happens that is
5 less seen is that without the Long Island City
6 rezoning that happened a number of years ago, I
7 absolutely would not have been able to afford my co-
8 op in Queens in Sunnyside. And so...

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time has expired. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Kate.

12 KATE VAN TASSEL: Allowed me to be able to
13 take that step up into homeownership.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next person we're
15 going... I'm sorry.

16 KATE VAN TASSEL: That's okay. No, thank
17 you very much. I appreciate your time. Vote yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next person we're
19 going to hear from is Sanford Miller.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Mr. Miller, if you can
22 hear me, please unmute and you may begin.

23 SANFORD MILLER: Hello?

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes.

25

2 SANFORD MILLER: Okay. Hi. Hello, Council
3 Member.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Hello. Yeah, you may
5 begin.

6 SANFORD MILLER: I'm Sanford. I am a
7 resident of Hell's Kitchen and also on Manhattan
8 Community Board 4, although the opinions I expressed
9 today are my own and not those of the Board. I'm
10 deeply concerned about the cost of housing in the
11 city and how quickly it's been going up for how long.
12 Many people I know are highly burdened by their rent
13 and/or they live far away from their job because they
14 cannot afford to live closer. I strongly encourage
15 the City Council to pass City of Yes as it is today
16 or even stronger. Hell's Kitchen and Community Board
17 4 have seen a large amount of new housing units in
18 the last two decades, which I am proud of, and I
19 welcome my new neighbors, and I think they have
20 enriched the neighborhood. However, the citywide
21 housing shortage is not something that, by its
22 nature, Hell's Kitchen or even Manhattan can solve on
23 its own. I'm very happy to see in City of Yes it's
24 going to affect the whole city, and things like ADUs,
25 lifting parking mandates, town center zoning, all the

2 neighborhoods across the city will, in a sustainable,
3 balanced way, contribute to providing more homes for
4 New Yorkers to live in, which is what we need to do
5 in order for to actually get into a situation where
6 landlords have less leverage and renters have more.
7 So, with that in mind, I encourage the City Council
8 very strongly to pass City of Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much, Mr.
10 Miller. Next, we'll hear from Samir Lavingia. Samir,
11 if you can hear me, yes, go ahead.

12 SAMIR LAVINGIA: Perfect. Hi, my name is
13 Samir Lavingia. I've met some of you in many
14 different capacities, but I wanted to be clear that
15 I'm speaking in my personal capacity as a resident.
16 First, I wanted to thank Manhattan Community Board 5,
17 which is where I live, for supporting City of Yes
18 with some certain conditions. Some people have said,
19 no one supports this or no Community Boards support
20 this, but there are ones that do, including the one
21 where I live in. I live in Midtown on 55th and
22 Broadway, and I'm severely cost burdened, paying over
23 50 percent of my income in rent. I live in a market
24 rate building, and my rents keep going up. My parents
25 live a block away in a market rate building, and

2 their rents keep going up. My brother and his wife
3 live in a market rate building in Dumbo, and their
4 rents keep going up. You may see a pattern here. We
5 are a family of renters who are constantly at risk of
6 displacement. That's why I'm here, because I want
7 myself and my family to be able to stay in our
8 communities. As a millennial in this high-cost
9 market, I'm all but assured to never have
10 homeownership within reach. Thankfully, Good Cause,
11 which was passed recently, will help with stability.
12 However, it won't help me if I have kids and want to
13 find a new apartment. It won't help my parents if
14 they want to live somewhere closer to my brother in
15 Dumbo if his wife and him have kids. What will help
16 is a little more housing in every single
17 neighborhood, which is what the City of Yes for
18 Housing Opportunity does. At broad strokes, I wanted
19 to say that I'm thrilled about how many homes and
20 affordable homes this will bring for the people who
21 the market will not provide homes at affordable
22 levels. We will have income-restricted units for
23 them, and that's also great. For the average person
24 moving to New York, they can hop on StreetEasy, and
25 they can find a home that way. We will simply never

2 subsidize our way out of a demand problem, and right
3 now, there is simply not enough supply for how many
4 people want to live here. We need to build more homes
5 or our rents will keep going up. We simply cannot end
6 up in a world where we need income-restricted housing
7 for single people making 200,000 dollars a year, and
8 the only way to do that is by building more housing
9 and push rents down. I look longingly at cities like
10 Austin, where they met and beat the demand, and rents
11 are falling, and I'm certain it can happen to us,
12 too, if we pass City of Yes. I support every single
13 proposal in this package..

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
15 has expired.

16 SAMIR LAVINGIA: Impact me and my family...

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Samir.

18 There being no questions for this panel, this panel
19 is excused.

20 We're going to call two more online
21 panels, and then we're going to transition back to
22 in-person. The next online panel we're going to call
23 consists of Michael Plottel, Marie Marsina, Lucy
24 Koteen, Richard Gibbs, and Julie Reyes.

2 The panel after that will consist of
3 Elisa Koenderman, Jacqueline Dolly, Renee Monroe,
4 and Leigh Behnke.

5 We'll begin first with Michael Plottel.
6 Michael, if you can hear me, please unmute, and you
7 may begin.

8 MICHAEL PLOTTEL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
9 and good evening to everybody. My name is Michael
10 Plottel. I'm an architect and a fellow of the
11 American Institute of Architects. My professional
12 experience includes developing public megaprojects
13 within the five boroughs. I'm now a member of
14 NYSERDA's retirement system. I'm speaking today as a
15 lifelong resident of New York City and a 50-year
16 resident of the Upper East Side of Manhattan,
17 Community Board 8. City of Yes is a big zoning. It
18 touches every single block in every single
19 neighborhood in our city. Although the proposal has
20 many sensible and desirable components, I am
21 testifying in opposition to the proposed increases in
22 bulk and density for high-density neighborhoods.
23 These high-density proposals will facilitate and
24 normalize the trend of big-footing, where developers
25 tear down assemblages of low-rise, mostly affordable

1 tenements in favor of very tall speculative towers
2 that block sunlight while also causing a net loss of
3 housing units. City of Yes Housing Opportunity will
4 exacerbate the situation. It adds to and expands
5 current loopholes, exclusions, and carve-outs for
6 maximizing bulk and height. As one example, consider
7 1454 3rd Avenue at 82nd and 83rd Street, where a site
8 containing a mid-rise elevator apartment building was
9 divided into two zoning lots. The south half was then
10 torn down for a 450-foot-tall luxury apartment tower
11 with a net loss of dwelling units, while the north
12 half remains as affordable, thanks to a zoning bonus
13 transfer from Roosevelt Island. Yes, they've deployed
14 bulk across the East River to facilitate and develop
15 projects with a rich door and a poor door, and we
16 lost a supermarket in the process. We do need more
17 housing. The provisions within City of Yes that
18 codify and re-legalize smaller dwelling units, shared
19 housing, and converting office buildings to
20 residential use will increase the supply of
21 affordable and market-rate units in an economical and
22 sustainable way, a better green footprint that
23 doesn't drastically increase the bulk and the shade
24 cast by new oversized and underoccupied speculative
25

2 housing blocks. I request that the City Council amend
3 the text of the proposal to remove all special
4 bonuses...

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

6 MICHAEL PLOTTEL: For FAR. Thank you for
7 the opportunity.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
9 hear from Marie Marsina. Marie, if you can hear me,
10 please unmute and you may begin.

11 MARIE MARSINA: Good evening. My name is
12 Marie Marsina. I am a one-family homeowner living in
13 Douglaston, Queens for the past 30 years. I'm also a
14 Board Member with the Douglaston Civic Association. I
15 am 100 percent opposed to the entire City of Yes for
16 Housing Opportunity proposal. This proposal will not
17 foster positive change in our neighborhoods but will
18 instead destroy our one-family owner-occupied
19 communities along with impacting our light, air, and
20 green space. It will not create mandatory affordable
21 housing because it is not mandatory. I repeat, it is
22 not mandatory, but it will increase density without
23 any meaningful infrastructure. Infrastructure is
24 extremely important in every neighborhood, and it is
25 not fully addressed in your proposal. What is the

2 plan? What financial investments are you making for
3 more schools, social services, EMS workers,
4 hospitals, sewers, drainage, etc.? You've heard from
5 numerous communities that this is important. And what
6 are the resources for ADU oversight? More research
7 and financial support is needed to address these
8 questions before any affordable housing proposal is
9 approved. I agree the City is in need of affordable
10 housing. I have been listening on this Zoom call
11 since 10 o'clock this morning. I'm not deaf. But this
12 proposal does not truly address these needs and
13 should not come at the expense of the one-family
14 homeowners, their communities, and their safety. We
15 need to take a step back and not use a one-size-fits-
16 all approach. There are other alternatives that the
17 City can explore by utilizing the numerous vacant
18 lots and buildings already in existence and mandating
19 that these buildings provide permanent affordable
20 housing that does not start at 3,500 dollars a month.
21 This proposal is not the solution in its current
22 form. A one-size-fits-all plan for every district
23 doesn't work for the diverse neighborhoods in New
24 York City..

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

2 MARIE MARSINA: Vote no. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Marie.

4 Next, we'll hear from Lucy Koteen. Lucy, if you can
5 hear me, please unmute and you may begin.

6 LUCY KOTEEN: Hi, good evening. My name is
7 Lucy Koteen. I live in Brooklyn. And I ask, how real
8 is the vacancy number of 1.4 percent? Is it the big
9 lie that keeps getting repeated? There are over 5,000
10 NYCHA units unavailable. A priority of repairs needs
11 to be made to make them available. There are around
12 80,000 rent control units in the warehouse. Those
13 landlords should be given whatever help they need to
14 bring those units online. The City must work to keep
15 people in their homes where landlords are pushing
16 them out. It is said that around 600,000 to 800,000
17 people have left the City in recent years. How is
18 there a shortage of units? Anyone with eyes sees new
19 high-rises going up and recently built ones with
20 thousands of units. New buildings sit half empty. Why
21 not fill them with low-income people by using City
22 subsidies rather than continue to pay exploitive
23 rents for homeless shelters with subhuman conditions?
24 Fill the current vacant units rather than pushing for
25 all this new construction. Massive buildings are

1 under construction, employing thousands of workers in
2 Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. There are thousands
3 of new units built in the Gowanus area in Long Island
4 City. In Flushing, so many cranes dot the skies. What
5 is the count of empty units sitting in all the
6 buildings that have gone up in the last few years?
7 Clearly, it is a lie that there's a need for more
8 market and luxury housing. It is low-income housing
9 that is needed and only low-income housing needed.
10 Further, there's no mention of environmental
11 enhancements for new construction that must be
12 included and no requirements of infrastructure
13 upgrades. Who is going to monitor the build-a-little-
14 everywhere model? It is not even mandatory to have
15 affordable or low-rent housing. If you want cars off
16 the street, you need to have parking mandates. Do you
17 think that everyone who lives in a transit-rich area
18 has the same need? People can choose to live by
19 subways and also have a job that demands a car...

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

22 LUCY KOTEEN: Have a disability, that
23 needs a car. Sorry?

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Lucy.

3 You could send the rest of your testimony to
4 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. We appreciate your
5 time and testimony.

6 Next, I'm going to call on Richard Gibbs
7 followed by Julie Reyes.

8 Richard, if you can hear me, please
9 unmute. If you're using the phone, you can press star
10 9. Well, I just was told it's star 6. Excuse me.

11 Richard Gibbs, if you can hear me, please unmute. If
12 you're using the phone, you can press star 6.

13 RICHARD GIBBS: Can you hear me?

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we hear you.

15 RICHARD GIBBS: Hello. Good evening, this
16 is Richard Gibbs. First of all, let me say I am a
17 real estate broker. I've been doing real estate for
18 over 50 years, mostly in St. Albans, Queens. I moved
19 out to St. Albans in 1976, and when I went out to St.
20 Albans, I looked at Addisleigh Park. That's really
21 where I wanted to move into. However, I couldn't
22 afford Addisleigh Park so what I did was look around
23 the neighborhood and an area that's close to
24 Addisleigh Park and a place that was nice and I could
25 afford, so I moved to St. Albans. That's what all of

2 my buyers do. For over 50 years, I take my buyers to
3 whatever they want to go to, but if they can't afford
4 what they see, they buy in the area close to it that
5 they can afford so I'm saying that to say is that
6 this is what all buyers do. This is what you do. To
7 say that we should get down value, sub-value our
8 property is really what it amounts to, when you say
9 that we should start turning our, that they can turn
10 a garage into an apartment, to legalize the basement,
11 put a bungalow in your backyard, what kind of
12 property is that? I mean, when we moved out to St.
13 Albans, I know when I did, it was moving out to the
14 country living inside a city living, and I moved from
15 an apartment building in Brooklyn where I had to deal
16 with parking and side-street parking for myself and
17 my wife. Many times, I had to park four or five
18 blocks from the apartment building. Out here, no. I
19 have a driveway and a garage. The City of Yes has no
20 accommodations about parking, and I'm not sure if
21 they even cared about parking (INAUDIBLE)
22 intentional, because they're forcing these Citi Bikes
23 on us so maybe we're supposed to use that instead of
24 the car. I guess the other thing I wanted to say is

2 when you start over-building a neighborhood, it
3 becomes crowded...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
5 expired.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mr. Gibbs.
7 Next, we're going to hear from Julie Reyes.

8 JULIE REYES: Hi, this is Julie Reyes. Can
9 you hear me?

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you,
11 Ms. Reyes.

12 JULIE REYES: Okay, great. Great. Thank
13 you. My name is Julie Reyes. I'm Chairperson for
14 Bronx Community Board 8, and we overwhelmingly reject
15 the City of Yes proposal, the City of Yes housing
16 proposal. As you know, and for those who don't know,
17 Community Boards consist of dedicated volunteer
18 community members who are committed to their
19 community's well-being, all are appointed by their
20 borough president. The Community Boards have a broad
21 advisory role to agencies and elected officials with
22 respect to any matter affecting their District. This
23 proposal, which greatly affects all New Yorkers,
24 regretfully was put together without community input,
25 let alone Community Board input. The zoning changes

2 may eliminate ULURP on certain cases, thus taking
3 away input from the City Council Members. New Yorkers
4 rely on the City Council Members to look after their
5 best interests. Please do not let this proposal strip
6 away any of your current duties. This proposal has no
7 built-in structure in the proposal to guarantee
8 affordable housing will actually be built. There is
9 no assurance that the developers who receive any
10 benefit will commit to use it to provide permanent
11 affordable housing. Then there is the question of
12 what is affordable housing. That's what you should be
13 spending the evening on. But what is affordable
14 housing in one area is not affordable in a
15 neighboring community, and then there is no true area
16 median income. This proposal will eliminate green
17 space from tenants in the New York City Housing
18 Authority's development complexes, and this proposal
19 will devastate sensitive environmental areas by
20 promising a (INAUDIBLE) of the natural area in
21 Special Districts such as the Special Natural Area
22 District. Community Board 8 has submitted...

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
24 expired.

25 JULIE REYES: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

3 This panel is excused. Thank you.

4 The next panel we're going to hear from
5 consists of Elisa Koenderman, Jacqueline Dolly, Renee
6 Monroe, and Leigh Behnke. I will hear first from
7 Elisa Koenderman.

8 Elisa, can you hear me?

9 ELISA KOENDERMAN: Yes. Can you hear me?

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, I can.

11 ELISA KOENDERMAN: Okay. Thank you. I am a
12 lifelong resident of Forest Hills, Queens, where I've
13 owned a single-family home for more than 30 years. I
14 am testifying on behalf of myself and my like-minded
15 neighbors. This ill-conceived one-size-fits-all
16 proposal would destroy our neighborhood. The
17 overdevelopment guaranteed by this proposal would
18 subsume our light, air, and space, including precious
19 green space, strain the already overburdened
20 infrastructure, and increase crowding, traffic
21 congestion, pollution, and garbage on our streets.
22 Ultimately, the proposal will displace our current
23 residents and merchants who will be forced out of
24 their homes and businesses in a neighborhood which
25 has become unrecognizable. Tragically, this

1 extinction of our neighborhood as we know it will be
2 for naught, since it will do nothing to deliver
3 affordable housing. Rather, the proposal will operate
4 as a boon for developers who will exploit it for
5 profit from market rate and luxury housing. Further,
6 the proposal would rob us of the power to control
7 future development projects by transferring local
8 authority to a City agency with no knowledge of or
9 connection to our neighborhood and no accountability
10 to us. The City Council should unanimously reject
11 this radical and unwarranted proposal, devised by a
12 Mayor currently under indictment for corruption,
13 which their constituencies overwhelmingly oppose. We
14 say no to the destruction of our neighborhoods
15 purportedly to create affordable housing, which this
16 proposal will not deliver. New York City must find
17 other means to achieve affordable housing without
18 asking us to sacrifice our single-family homes and
19 low-density neighborhoods. We are tired of our
20 elected officials ignoring our wishes in favor of
21 their own interests and agendas. Here, our quality of
22 life is at stake. Simply put, those Council Members
23 who approve this proposal should expect to be voted
24 out of office..
25

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time is
3 expired.

4 ELISA KOENDERMAN: And to fail in any
5 effort to succeed to higher office. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
7 hear from Jacqueline Dolly.

8 JACQUELINE DOLLY: Hello, good evening,
9 everyone.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Good evening.

11 JACQUELINE DOLLY: I'd like to start by
12 saying that all communities are not created equal. In
13 my Southeast Queens community, many single and two-
14 family homes have what you call hidden density. Now,
15 these are homes that are occupied by multiple
16 generations because they simply cannot afford to buy
17 or rent in the neighborhood. Now, our City government
18 has not been as aggressive with going after predatory
19 lending and discriminatory real estate development
20 that creates and maintains housing inequity along
21 racial lines. Historically, Black neighborhoods
22 across this country have been devastated by urban
23 renewal under the guise of addressing economic
24 inequity. Not enough research has been done on long-
25 term impact of upzoning in BIPOC communities. Where

2 are the racial equity analysis as well as
3 comprehensive environmental impact statements with
4 minimum to maximum outcomes? Studies find that
5 upzoning makes gentrification and displacement easier
6 and harmful in BIPOC communities. You can't take a
7 blanket approach to development in a city where
8 nuanced historical racial and economic disparities
9 exist. We live in a city of immoral wealth disparity
10 where the top 20 percent of earners make nearly six
11 times more than the bottom 20 percent. When will we
12 stop green-lighting luxury real estate developments
13 where half the units remain empty while the other
14 half are owned by billionaires with multiple
15 residences? When will we address the 27,000 rent-
16 stabilized apartments that remain off-market? What
17 are the plans for the empty retail spaces that blight
18 our commercial areas? Why are we continuing to give
19 generous subsidies to wealthy developers in return
20 for so little? The 421A exemption gives developers up
21 to 100 percent of property tax erasure in return for
22 only one-fifth of units considered affordable.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
25 going to hear from Renee Monroe.

2 RENEÉ MONROSE: Hi, can you hear me?

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you,
4 Ms. Monroe.

5 RENEÉ MONROSE: Hi, good evening, Chairman
6 Riley and Committee Members. Thank you for being here
7 this late. It has been a very long day. My name is
8 Renee Monroe. I'm an artist and have lived in my
9 loft in SoHo since 1988. I want to thank my Council
10 Member, Chris Marte, for supporting his constituents
11 on this matter. With him and many of my neighbors who
12 have testified here today, I ask the Committee to
13 reject the City of Yes Housing plan unless the
14 discriminatory provisions in Section 15-01 are
15 removed. The City of Yes plan aims to reduce housing
16 barriers and costs by allowing commercial buildings
17 to be converted to residential. Yet in Section 15-01
18 of the Zoning Code, DCP made a flagrant exception
19 that targeted Soho and NoHo. In the very text
20 amendment, City Planning imposed a punitive tax of
21 millions of dollars per building in order to create
22 the so-called Arts Fund. This massive tax punishes me
23 and my neighbors, many of whom are senior citizens
24 based solely on geography. In spite of fierce
25 opposition by residents of these neighborhoods, the

2 tax was forced on us and no one else. This is just
3 glaringly discriminatory. Nowhere else in the city
4 will such a tax on residential conversion exist. All
5 other commercial buildings will have the right to
6 convert for free, while I and some of my neighbors
7 will owe hundreds of thousands of dollars for the
8 same right. I ask you, Chairman Riley and the rest of
9 the Committee, how is this fair? Why should a small
10 number of buildings be punished with a tax that will
11 cost some huge amounts of money for no other reason
12 than they are lucky to be in a certain zip code? How
13 is this kind of discrimination even legal? I urge you
14 to reject the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity
15 Plan unless the discriminatory provisions in Section
16 15-01 against SoHo and NoHo are removed. Please vote
17 against this plan unless it treats all New Yorkers
18 equally. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, we will hear
20 from Leigh Behnke.

21 LEIGH BEHNKE: Can you hear me?

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can.

23 LEIGH BEHNKE: Okay, great. Thank you for
24 the opportunity to speak. I support most of the City
25 of Yes Plan in theory, but I want to register my

1 distress that the bill may not rectify the injustice
2 done to the elderly SoHo residents who will be
3 treated differently than all other groups in New York
4 City. Section 15-01 of the Zoning Amendment includes
5 a glaring exception, which Renee just talked about,
6 which targets the only M1/B5 districts, namely my
7 neighborhood of SoHo and NoHo. The DCP buried this
8 exception in the text amendment so they could charge
9 a discriminatory tax of millions of dollars per
10 building in a so-called Arts Fund fee from my
11 community. I beg you to fix Section 15-01 of the
12 Zoning Amendment, which includes a glaring exception,
13 which targets only the M1/B5 districts, namely my
14 neighborhood. The DCP buried this exception in the
15 text so that they could charge a discriminatory tax
16 of millions per building. I think in my building at
17 one point it was projected at four million dollars
18 for all of us in a so-called Arts Fund fee from me
19 and my neighbors. Many of us will be deprived of
20 necessary retirement funds and faced with
21 impoverishment that we did not expect to going
22 forward, and it is not being required of any other
23 residents in the city. It is unfair and must be
24

2 rectified as you move forward with this plan, and I
3 thank you for the opportunity to talk.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you for
5 testifying. Council Member Marte, do you have any
6 questions?

7 There being no questions, this panel is
8 excused.

9 We're going to switch back to in-person.
10 The first in-person panel I'm going to call consists
11 of Emily Eisner, Jesse Lang, Eustacia Smith, Sean
12 Scott, Stan Liao, and Phil Wong.

13 If anyone else is here to testify, please
14 just check in with the back so they can get your name
15 so we can call you on the next panel. If you're here
16 to testify, just go to the back, give them your name
17 so we can get you on the next panel. Thank you.

18 We'll begin first with Emily Eisner.

19 EMILY EISNER: Hi, my name is Emily
20 Eisner, and I'm a Ph.D. economist that works at the
21 Fiscal Policy Institute, a non-profit policy research
22 organization committed to sound and equitable fiscal
23 policy that strengthens the state and city economy.
24 I'm testifying in support of the City of Yes plan and
25 in support of increased investment in affordable

housing. These two sets of policies, zoning reform and fiscal support for housing affordability work together. In our research, the Fiscal Policy Institute found that 36 percent of the households leaving the State of New York are moving in search of more affordable housing. The highest rates of outmigration are seen by those making between 30,000 and 100,000 in annual household income, not by the wealthy. The economic literature is clear that we must build more housing to be able to support these households and allow them to stay and thrive.

Affordability policies are important complementary policies alongside the zoning reforms in City of Yes.

We need both, and the city can afford these investments. The Fiscal Year 2023 adopted budget projected a 4.2-billion-dollar gap in Fiscal Year 2024. However, the year ended with a 4.4-billion-dollar surplus. That's an example of the money that we have and are not measuring. The Independent Budget Office expects out-year revenue to exceed projections by an average of 1.7 billion dollars each year.

Moreover, the City includes 1.5 billion a year in in-year reserves. This funding is available to support investments in affordability. City of Yes paired with

2 deep fiscal investments in affordability will
3 contribute to ending the affordability crisis and
4 will spark new economic activity. It will make it
5 possible for people who want to live in New York to
6 continue thriving and contributing to the city. Thank
7 you for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we
9 will hear from Jesse Lang.

10 JESSE LANG: Hi, thank you so much, and
11 thank you all for sticking out this marathon day and
12 for giving us all the opportunity to speak. My name
13 is Jesse Lang. I wear a lot of hats, but I just want
14 to be clear that I'm here in my personal capacity
15 today, and I strongly support City of Yes. I've lived
16 in New York City for about a decade, almost 10 years
17 coming up this winter, and like so many other people
18 who came to New York before me and have come after
19 me, I came here because I wanted greater economic
20 opportunity and the many promises that New York City
21 has to offer for young people and really people of
22 all ages looking for looking for something bigger. It
23 was actually in similar circumstances that my great-
24 grandfather came here at the end of the 1800s,
25 literally riding on the bottom of a freight rail

2 train where he almost died, but similarly because he
3 was looking for more opportunity, he came here. In
4 the decade that I've been here, I have lived in about
5 five, I've moved a lot of different times, and one
6 thing that I've seen in my time here and that I've
7 really grown to appreciate is how much more housing
8 we need and how people who are looking for housing in
9 New York City really just don't have enough options.
10 There are a lot of things that are making that true.
11 Parking minimums are really a big problem that I
12 think City of Yes will address, but really I think we
13 need this to pass as a package and I'm really looking
14 forward to seeing it done. For the people that are
15 saying that this isn't enough, that we need to do
16 more, that there are problems with this, that it
17 doesn't go far enough in terms of affordability, I
18 ask you to consider that right now we need to build a
19 quarter million apartments just to catch up with the
20 lack of the lost productivity and we have so much
21 further to go in the future so I urge you to say yes.
22 Thank you so much.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, we're going to
24 hear from Eustacia Smith. Sorry if I mispronounced
25 your name.

2 EUSTACIA SMITH: Good evening, I'm Estacia
3 Smith from West Side Federation for Senior and
4 Supportive Housing, or WSFSH. Thank you to the City
5 Council for the opportunity to testify. WSFSH
6 develops and operates and provides services for low-
7 income senior and supportive housing in New York City
8 as we have done for nearly 50 years. New York City's
9 housing crisis weighs disproportionately on older New
10 Yorkers. Older New Yorkers are more prevalently low-
11 income than other groups. They are the fastest
12 growing group of homeless people. Older New Yorkers
13 are more likely to be extremely low-income and need
14 deeply affordable housing as recent data has shown.
15 Our staff are themselves suffering in the housing
16 crisis. A growing number have experienced
17 homelessness or have to commute several hours daily
18 because they cannot afford to live in New York City.
19 New York City must take all possible measures to
20 increase the supply of affordable housing. WSFSH
21 strongly supports the zoning changes outlined in City
22 of Yes for Housing. We support universal
23 affordability preference which will mean additional
24 affordable supportive housing could be built by
25 giving developments a density bonus, but we would

1 like to see a deep affordability band. We support
2 changing outdated zoning regulations that would allow
3 for the creation of affordable housing in all
4 neighborhoods and areas of the city, rather than the
5 situation we are in now, where some neighborhoods
6 have developed a lot of affordable housing and in
7 other areas there's been none. However, zoning
8 changes alone will not solve New York City's housing
9 crisis. New York City must take additional measures
10 to dramatically expand affordable senior and
11 supportive housing production. The development of
12 senior housing has long depended on AIRS incentives.
13 While we support incentives being applied more
14 generally through the provisions of City of Yes, we
15 will need additional incentives specifically for
16 senior housing development. The City must set annual
17 production and preservation goals for affordable
18 senior housing, including at least 1,000 new units of
19 deeply affordable senior housing with fully funded
20 services per year. Again, we say yes to City of Yes,
21 and New York City must also protect and prioritize
22 the production of deeply affordable senior housing
23 with services. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we
3 will hear from Sean Scott.

4 SEAN SCOTT: Good evening and thank you
5 for taking comment. My name is Sean Scott. I'm a
6 resident of Council District 1 here, and I'm here
7 only on behalf of myself and as a renter and an
8 eight-year resident of this amazing city. I strongly
9 support all elements of the City of Yes for Housing
10 Opportunity proposal. I wanted to give two examples
11 that I've experienced personally. I've seen many
12 friends leave the city that are priced out. They move
13 to the suburbs. They move far away because it's just
14 so expensive to live here. I also see a lot of
15 unhoused members of our community every day, as I'm
16 sure all of you do as well, and I know the fact that
17 housing unaffordability and scarcity lead to
18 homelessness. More homes mean more New Yorkers, more
19 taxpayers, a newer housing stock, and more choice for
20 everyone when looking for a place to live. I'm super
21 excited about the ability of this proposal to make a
22 small dent in this massive housing crisis, and I
23 hope, as others have said, it will be approved with
24 at least everything proposed. It's time to legalize
25 housing. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
3 going to hear from Stan Liao.

4 STAN LIAO: Good evening. Thank you for
5 your time. I really appreciate it. My name is Stan
6 Liao. I've been a renter. I've lived in New York for
7 around six or seven years, and as long as I've lived
8 here, we've just been experiencing a terrible housing
9 crisis. I've seen people share tiny 100-foot rooms,
10 two twin beds with barely a foot in between. I've had
11 friends who didn't even get bed frames so they could
12 put their mattresses up during the day for some extra
13 space when they weren't sleeping. I've lived next to
14 families in one-bedrooms. This isn't just anecdotes.
15 Over half of New York renters, as you guys know, are
16 rent-burdened. This is because we just don't build
17 housing in New York City. In the past decade, three
18 times as many jobs were created than homes were
19 built, so that's 1.2 million jobs versus only 400,000
20 homes. Significantly fewer units were approved per
21 capita than in comparable other dense cities. For
22 instance, 40 percent less in San Francisco, half as
23 many as Boston, and we don't like losing to Boston in
24 anything, and two-thirds less than D.C. This is even
25 getting into fast-growing cities like Austin,

2 Seattle, etc. The commonsense reforms in City of Yes
3 have worked in the past and they will work in New
4 York. Other cities like Minneapolis, Austin, and
5 Auckland in New Zealand have passed similar reforms
6 and seen slowed rent growth and sometimes even rent
7 decreases. The overwhelming majority of New Yorkers,
8 80 percent as a recent poll shows, understand this
9 and they support the proposals in the City of Yes.
10 So, I urge the Members of the City Council to pass
11 City of Yes in its entirety and to improve the lives
12 of everyday New Yorkers and bring rent and the cost
13 of living down. Thank you so much for your time.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we
15 will hear from Phil Wong.

16 PHIL WONG: Hi, good evening. Thank you
17 for giving me the opportunity to speak. Thank you for
18 being here listening to us. My name is Phil Wong.
19 I've been a resident of Elmhurst, Queens, right at
20 the border with Maspeth since 1976. I'm here to
21 represent myself, to talk about my community and why
22 City of Yes is such a bad idea or such a bad one-
23 size-fits-all solution to transportation deserts such
24 as my district. First, I would like to start by
25 saying our power lines, our sewer lines, and our

2 water lines have been in place since the 1950s and
3 there have been very little upgrades. We're still
4 dealing with problems with that given the one- and
5 two-family homes that are there right now. The
6 problems are simple. Every time when the wind gusts
7 of 30 miles per hour or higher, we lose power in some
8 parts of our district. Number two, every time when
9 the temperature hits 100 degrees, we see transformer
10 fires, transformers hanging on poles. They're on fire
11 and very little of that has been fixed. We're still
12 dealing with it this past summer. And finally, every
13 time there's a major storm, we have basements that
14 are flooded. And I know that because I see my
15 neighborhood neighbors bringing out their stuff from
16 the basement, storage boxes, furniture, and even
17 water heaters that were damaged and had to be thrown
18 out. This is what we're dealing with right now, and
19 the City of Yes fails to address these infrastructure
20 problems and is giving the green lights to
21 developers, telling them to come in and build, and
22 that is wrong. That is wrong, right? And other than
23 that, we have a transportation desert. We're dealing
24 with MTA right now. They're saying they want to
25 eliminate bus lines because of some overlapping of

2 the green bus line or the Triboro bus line that was
3 merged into MTA many years ago so we're losing bus
4 lines. We're not near bus, and so therefore, the City
5 Council should vote no to the City of Yes. Vote no.
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you to this
8 panel for testifying, waiting to testify. You're now
9 excused. Thank you.

10 The next panel we're going to hear from
11 consists of Nick Felker, Salvatore Franchino, Igor
12 Nikitenko, Eddie Siegel, and Andy Zhang.

13 What's your name?

14 THEO CHINO: (INAUDIBLE)

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Just come up. You
16 could go first, sir. Yeah, go first.

17 THEO CHINO: Thank you, Chairman. Well,
18 Jane Jacob had a villain when she was fighting
19 (INAUDIBLE)

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Can you state your
21 name and spell it real quick?

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, I will say. My
23 name is Theo Chino, and I serve as the First National
24 Secretary of the...

25 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Spell it real quick.

2 THEO CHINO: Theo, T-H-E-O, C-H-I-N-O.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

4 THEO CHINO: Thank you. Well, as I was
5 saying, my name is Theo Chino, and I serve as the
6 First Secretary of the Social Democrat of America,
7 also known internationally as the Committee of the
8 Second International. We are the socialist faction
9 within the Democratic Party. The City of Yes is
10 another racist concoction of the real estate industry
11 and forced the City Council to perpetuate systematic
12 governmental racism. No matter how you spin it, a yes
13 vote is simply perpetuating racism. Mayor Adam's gift
14 to the real estate industry should be known as Aunt
15 Jane or Uncle Tom City of Yes. In 1920, the real
16 estate industry launched a red scare against our
17 socialist camarade by making sure five duly elected
18 socialists were thrown out of the assembly for siding
19 with tenent. It took 96 years for Julia Salazar to
20 become the first socialist elected official. What did
21 the landlord agree in counterpart? For the freedom to
22 scare America, the landlord agreed to issue leases,
23 the first-time leases were issued in New York. Karl
24 Marx and Adam Smith are two authors that can explain
25 commodity and the danger of commodifying things,

2 including housing. City of Yes is a project that
3 wants to solve a problem created by the market, and
4 the proponents want to find a solution by only
5 tackling the supply side, which only benefits those
6 that provide the supply stock, and has nothing to do
7 with the demand side, hence changing nothing. We
8 socialists have managed growth all over the world, in
9 cities like Paris, London, and Vienna. Vienna is a
10 great example. There is the Vienna Project. They have
11 managed affordable housing for more than a hundred
12 years. On a practical note, how do I know the City of
13 Yes is garbage? Because all the people that make my
14 personal life misery are the criminal organizations
15 that support it. This bill, if allowed to pass as is
16 would only perpetuate the legacy of racial redlining
17 initially set up by banks to prevent black and brown
18 communities from building wealth. We social democrats
19 are committed to educating the public into running
20 and getting elected in City Council until all these
21 racist and liberal policies are eradicated.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Mr. Chino, if you
23 could wrap it up.

24 THEO CHINO: Yes, our position is clear.
25 We are against the City of Yes, and we will train any

2 Democratic registered voter to challenge anyone that
3 pushes for liberal supply-only market policy. I'm
4 available to answer any questions. Thank you for your
5 time and thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
7 going to hear from Nick Felker.

8 NICK FELKER: Hello. My name is Nick
9 Felker, a resident of the Upper West Side, and I'm
10 currently a renter. The term housing crisis can feel
11 very abstract. There's stats like a 1.4 percent
12 vacancy rate, but what does that actually mean? It
13 means that many of us have come here throughout the
14 whole day in support of the City of Yes because we
15 feel the crisis firsthand. The economic theory is
16 very clear on the benefits of zoning reform to reduce
17 rents. For example, one paper, Do New Housing Units
18 in Your Neighborhood Raise Your Rents, by Xiaodi Li,
19 found that even market-rate housing in New York City
20 can push down rents for those living nearby. ADUs,
21 SROs, UAP, and TOD are all great policies that will
22 help many neighborhoods do their part to add more
23 affordable housing. But going beyond theory and
24 economics, we can see this working with our own eyes.
25 Austin, Texas, Minneapolis, even Auckland, New

2 Zealand, have had successful rezonings that have
3 caused real rents to fall even as more people are
4 able to live there. What makes New York City the
5 greatest city in the world is not the buildings, it's
6 not the parks, it's you, it's me, and it's everyone
7 here in this room. We need more homes for the middle
8 class, and we need more affordable homes, and we
9 can't let every affordable housing project turn into
10 a 10-year debacle like what's happening in Elizabeth
11 Street. This crisis is getting worse. We don't have
12 time for all these delays. It's time for a new
13 approach involving every neighborhood that is people
14 first, not parking first, which is why I support the
15 City of Yes in full and hope that you do the same.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, and next
18 we'll hear from Salvatore Franchino.

19 SALVATORE FRANCHINO: Hello. I'm Salvatore
20 Franchino of East Williamsburg, and I support the
21 City of Yes full stop. Status quo is 100,000 people
22 in our shelter system, so why don't we just build
23 100,000 homes instead as projected by City of Yes? I
24 hear those of you that have some resistance to
25 change, but keep in mind that without change, our

2 homelessness problem is just going to persist, and
3 we're all going to continue to live in an obscenely
4 expensive city. I know parking mandates make
5 buildings more expensive, especially in my
6 neighborhood, and it's reflected in the rents. A
7 parking space can cost as much as 150 grand to build,
8 and also in my Community Board 1 in Brooklyn, people
9 have actually complained that there are mostly empty
10 parking lots in these new buildings, and Community
11 Board 1 will be delighted if we can get rid of
12 parking mandates so let's lift parking mandates and
13 make building cheaper. I'm also rent-stabilized, and
14 I want everyone to have the same protections that I
15 have, and Universal Affordability Preference will
16 help create more income-restricted, rent-regulated
17 homes that come with a rent-stabilized lease like I
18 have. My rent went up by 2 percent this year, which
19 is, it's a beautiful thing, and I wish more people
20 could have it so I do believe that Universal
21 Affordability Preference will give people the
22 stability and the security that I currently enjoy.
23 And if you do want more affordability than what the
24 Universal Affordability Preference provides, I
25 absolutely hear you, and I absolutely agree, and I

2 would love it if you could help find more city
3 subsidy. Use a different tool in the arsenal to help,
4 you know, bolster and increase the efficacy of
5 universal affordability preference so let's say yes
6 to Universal Affordability Preference too. So yes to
7 lifting parking mandates, yes to more neighbors, yes
8 to affordability, yes to stability. Let's say yes to
9 City of Yes. Yes, please.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you for the
11 energy. Need it. Next, I'm going to ask for Igor
12 Nikitenko to go.

13 IGOR NIKITENKO: Hello. My name is Igor
14 Nikitenko. Thank you for giving me a chance to speak
15 here. I would like to voice my support for the City
16 of Yes. I was born in Russia, where my parents
17 foresaw the rise of authoritarianism and seized the
18 opportunity to move to the United States. Since
19 arriving in Brooklyn in '98, not a day passes by
20 without me not being grateful for being here. I
21 believe our city has a moral obligation to welcome
22 those fleeing hostility, including many places in the
23 United States, as symbolized by the Statue of
24 Liberty. I've been a Brooklynite for 26 years. I
25 lived in Midwood, Gravesend, Bensonhurst, and for the

2 past six, I've called Flatbush my home. At the
3 moment, I share a modest two-bedroom apartment with
4 my brother and my wife. My brother has a disability,
5 and I take care of him. He requires a space that
6 suits his needs. I also have a mother who lives just
7 a few blocks away from me, and she also has a
8 disability, and she went through a nightmare to find
9 her own housing. She had a Section 8 voucher, but no
10 broker would return the call once they got wind of
11 that. We were fortunate, very fortunate, to secure
12 something close by, and she lives not too far from
13 me, like I said. And as far as my wife, well, she's
14 expecting our first child. We are, to put it mildly,
15 in desperate need of a bigger place. Now, I've been
16 trying to find a larger apartment to rent for my own
17 growing family, preferably not too far from my
18 mother, but it seems every time we show up for a
19 viewing for a decent, suitable place, there are
20 dozens or more people waiting in line, all competing
21 for the same space, and the price sometimes is just
22 beyond our reach. I'd love to stay close to my
23 mother, to my friends, to the life we've built here,
24 but without additional housing, we'll be forced to
25 pack up and leave the city that I love. Please

2 consider supporting the City of Yes so we can have
3 more housing of all types. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
5 going to hear from Eddie Siegel.

6 EDDIE SIEGEL: Hi, my name is Eddie
7 Siegel. I live in Nolita in a rent-stabilized
8 apartment. I'm a member of Manhattan Community Board
9 2, speaking in my personal capacity and not on behalf
10 of the Board, and I'm in strong support of City of
11 Yes. I thank you all, especially City Hall Staff, for
12 your patience and stamina today. I personally just
13 got off work an hour ago and have listened to almost
14 none of this hearing because I was at work. I want
15 you to think about the millions of New Yorkers who
16 have no idea that this hearing is happening, or they
17 wanted to come but they're parents with young kids,
18 they're working a normal job like me, and they're not
19 able to, you know, chime in on this stuff, but those
20 people have different ways of telling you what they
21 want. The day job I came from was as a political
22 pollster. We've had a lot of polling on City of Yes,
23 and it's continually shown overwhelming support. When
24 we poll issue polling nationally on housing
25 abundance, people are clearly in strong support of

2 building more housing. For the first time in my life,
3 housing is a major piece of a presidential campaign
4 because we are in a housing crisis and people are
5 desperate for housing affordability. Vice President
6 Harris is making building three million new homes a
7 centerpiece of her presidential campaign because the
8 evidence is overwhelming that it is both an effective
9 strategy and is what voters want. City of Yes will
10 help us build some of those units in the greatest
11 city in the world where 98 percent of our housing is
12 full. I hope you support it. Thank you.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Thank you,
14 Eddie. Lastly, we'll hear from Andy Zhang.

15 If you are here and I did not call you up
16 and you want to testify, please go to the back.

17 Andy, you may begin.

18 ANDY ZHANG: Hello, Members of City
19 Council. My name is Andy Zhang, and I am a renter who
20 lives in Williamsburg and this year marks a decade of
21 living in this city. I'm here today to testify in
22 support of City of Yes with no modifications. The
23 shortage in housing is one of, if not the most
24 significant contributors to elevated cost of living
25 and quality of life. I want to focus on one aspect I

1 am particularly interested in, TOD, aka transit-
2 oriented development. I live off the train and like
3 my family, friends, and neighbors, I consistently
4 rely on the proximity to transit that makes for
5 easier commutes to work, job training, school, and
6 more. We see the same up and down, left and right
7 across the entire transit network, be it the subway,
8 the bus, the ferry, the LIRR, Metro North networks,
9 and more. Unbanning and re-legalizing perfectly
10 normal and regular homes near transit connects New
11 Yorkers to the centers of opportunity and mobility
12 that our communities and neighborhoods deserve. We as
13 New Yorkers and Americans desire and deserve the
14 freedom to live, the freedom to start families, the
15 freedom to study, the freedom to work, to even start
16 businesses. None of these freedoms mean anything
17 without the freedom to build. City of Yes may only be
18 the first step to addressing our housing crisis and
19 our ability to build, but as many others have said,
20 first steps are important. We are a city, not a
21 collection of mere districts. We live in connected
22 neighborhoods, not scattered HOAs. We cannot have
23 local yet vocal minorities dictate one-size-fits-all
24 solutions for any and all land use in their immediate
25

2 vicinity. A City of Yes is the first step towards a
3 city for all. I'm a first-generation Chinese-American
4 whose family arrived in America in the 1990s seeking
5 a better life. I, like Igor here, am proud to be one
6 of the many generations of new residents and
7 immigrants who embody the story of New York City and
8 the American Dream. Let's stop shooting ourselves in
9 the foot by legalizing the housing we deserve and
10 building the housing we deserve for a greater New
11 York City that we all deserve. Thank you for your
12 time.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 Just one question for Mr. Chino. Mr.
16 Chino, you stated that you don't like the proposal.
17 Is there anything a part of this proposal that you
18 think is positive?

19 THEO CHINO: There are a lot of positive
20 things in this proposal, but when you build a cake
21 and you put garbage inside and you sprinkle a lot of
22 very good things, like removing maybe the parking
23 rules or modifying things, it doesn't mean that the
24 cake is still good to eat. It looks good, but it's
25 still garbage. Knowing where this proposal came from,

2 the real estate industry, and seeing my own landlord,
3 who is a criminal non-profit called UHAB, on the list
4 of proponents, and seeing my manager of my building
5 in the list of proponents and knowing how they work,
6 I say this is garbage by every way you say it so it
7 needs to go back to the Community Boards. It needs to
8 go back to the various communities to work it out and
9 to come out with a good, better solution. We are the
10 City of New York. We are a city of hundreds of
11 different ideology, background, and things like that,
12 and the Community Board, if you give them the City of
13 Yes as a starting document, let's see what comes out
14 as an exit document that you can look at and say,
15 this is our new City of Yes.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you for your
17 testimony, Mr. Chino.

18 Thank you, fellows, for your testimony as
19 well and for being patient.

20 We're going to transition back to online
21 testimony.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next panel we're
23 going to call on is Henry Euler, Zishun Ning, Daisy
24 Colon, and Roberta Gelb.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

2 UNIDENTIFIED: Hi there. Can you hear me?

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we hear you,
4 Henry. Are you Henry? Hello? Henry Euler? Henry, if
5 you can hear me, please unmute.

6 HENRY EULER: Can you hear me?

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.
8 Go ahead.

9 HENRY EULER: I'll show you my picture
10 too.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Henry. Go
12 ahead.

13 HENRY EULER: My name is Henry Euler. I'm
14 the President of the Auburndale Improvement
15 Association in Flushing, Queens. (INAUDIBLE) to
16 Western Bayside. We are against the City of Yes, and
17 we're very upset about the transit-oriented
18 development part. We have the Long Island Railroad
19 going through our community, and it goes from
20 Broadway, Flushing to Auburndale to Bayside to
21 Douglaston to Little Neck. It's a big, long stretch,
22 and each station goes a half a mile radius around
23 where there would be extra development because of
24 TODs. We wouldn't mind if the construction was
25 contextual. I don't think people would mind that, but

2 this is where they're going to build up and closer
3 together, and it's totally out of character with the
4 community, so we're against that. Now, you know, the
5 City of Yes for Housing Opportunity was developed by
6 the people in the real estate industry and the ones
7 that are pro-development, and these people are not
8 going to do anything about affordable housing, I'm
9 afraid. I think they don't want to do it because it's
10 not that profitable. They like to do market rate and
11 luxury rate development much better, so the people
12 who want affordable housing, they're going to have to
13 work very hard to change the way things are done in
14 the city. Of course, the real estate people are major
15 contributors to the different campaigns, and they
16 work closely with the elected officials...

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

18 HENRY EULER: Expired?

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes. Thank you, Henry.

20 Next, we're going to hear from Zishun Ning, and
21 Henry, you're also able to submit your testimony to
22 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Next, we'll hear
23 from Zishun Ning.

24 ZISHUN NING: Hi, can you hear me?

25 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

2 ZISHUN NING: Oh, thank you. Mayor Adams'
3 City of Yes Housing Opportunity worsened the city's
4 displacement crisis. It follows the logic that you
5 have to let the developers build luxury high-rises
6 that drive up the rent and the real estate tax of the
7 surrounding area in order for them to give you a
8 little bit of so-called affordable housing. In other
9 words, you have to let high rents and massive
10 displacement across the city happen first so that the
11 developers can throw in some so-called affordable
12 units that you and other community members compete to
13 get. Specifically, the City of Yes upzoning will
14 encourage luxury real estate speculators and
15 developers to build the maximum amount of market rate
16 units allowed in the current zoning so that they can
17 build additional heights for the affordable housing.
18 That's not the solution. Our communities of Chinatown
19 and the Lower East Side have been fighting for a
20 better solution, the Chinatown Working Group Rezoning
21 Plan, that will protect existing affordable housing
22 and increase supply of truly affordable housing
23 without massive construction of luxury high-rises. It
24 will discourage real estate speculation by capping
25 the heights of any new developments and mandate a

2 high percentage of truly affordable housing at local
3 income level for new developments. This is not a
4 NIMBY plan or YIMBY plan. This is the LIHMBY plan,
5 low-income housing in my backyard. Any developer who
6 prioritizes people over profit would agree to this
7 plan. Members of City Council, if you really care
8 about stopping displacement, we ask that you reject
9 the City of Yes Housing Opportunity and pass
10 community-led plans like the Chinatown Working Group
11 Plan to protect communities from displacement and
12 real estate speculation. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.
14 Next, we'll hear from Daisy Colon. Daisy, if you can
15 hear me, please unmute and you may begin.

16 DAISY COLON: Hi, how are you? Hi, my name
17 is Daisy Colon. I am a Bronx resident. I am located
18 in the R4 Dome area. It is mostly three families,
19 four families, and some one- and two-family homes,
20 and also we are sprinkled with a couple of
21 residential buildings, you know, in the avenues and
22 in the area. I'm actually against this plan. I think
23 I am blessed to live in a very diverse community. I
24 have Ecuadorians, Argentinians, Italians, Irish,
25 Bangladesh, Asian, South Asian homeowners near me.

2 This plan, what it would do is get developers to come
3 in here, which we've been seeing a lot of. This area
4 is considered a low management area. We're considered
5 like we're not building enough housing for low
6 income, and I'm here to tell you the residents and
7 the homeowners here are, we have a diverse
8 homeownership where we have homes that have rental
9 units and that is what's sustaining us. We have
10 equity. I think that this housing crisis is because
11 we do not have enough homes with equity. We need to
12 give our black and brown brothers and sisters an
13 opportunity to own equity and to afford their homes.
14 We keep giving developers tax breaks and all
15 incentives to build, but what about our homeowners?
16 What about our New York City partnership programs,
17 our Mitchell-Lamas, our co-ops and condos? What's
18 going on with that? We need to start building equity
19 in our areas. We need our neighborhoods to stay for
20 our generation.

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

22 DAISY COLON: I am a first generation...

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Colon.

24 Next, we're going to hear from Roberta Gelb.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

2 ROBERTA GELB: Hi there, it's Roberta
3 Gelb, and I'm speaking as the President of the
4 Chelsea Reform Democratic Club in Chelsea, Manhattan.
5 Although I feel akin to so many of the people who
6 spoke from the outer boroughs and I feel like we have
7 so many issues in common, and for those things that
8 we don't have in common, we're on the same page. I
9 think the emperor is naked. Somebody has to really
10 say that. The emperor is naked. Tomorrow, I could
11 have 26,000 affordable apartments. How? Because we
12 need to make a penalty for the landlords who are
13 warehousing affordable rent-stabilized apartments. I
14 know we have some in my building. Is anybody going
15 out and finding out how many of those apartments are
16 there? Is anybody being penalized for that? City
17 Limits estimates that there's 26,000 rent-regulated
18 units that are being warehoused. We know that there
19 are apartments being warehoused in NYCHA. Now, let's
20 talk about the conversion of commercial buildings.
21 Greenwich Village got a lot of additional housing
22 when St. Vincent's Hospital, the only level one
23 trauma center on the west side, was replaced with
24 housing. I checked today, and there are two condo
25 apartments available in that complex, one for 6.75

2 million and the other for 8.25 million. Go past there
3 any night and notice how few lights are on.
4 Residential conversion, this new opportunity to
5 convert office towers will be no benefit to the
6 public, no affordable housing. Do we really need 6-
7 million-dollar condos? And why does anybody think
8 that developers, out of the goodness of their hearts,
9 are going to provide affordable housing? They are
10 asking people. There is no mandated affordability in
11 this plan. If you think that the developers are going
12 to do it, you are on another planet.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

14 ROBERTA GELB: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I have a
16 question for Ms. Colon and Ms. Gelb. What part of the
17 Bronx do you live in, Ms. Gelb? Can someone unmute
18 Ms. Gelb? Ms. Colon?

19 DAISY COLON: Hi, yes, I live in the
20 Schuylerville, 104 East Tremont, LaSalle area.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. And Ms.
22 Gelb? Ms. Roberta Gelb? Can someone unmute Ms. Gelb?

23 ROBERTA GELB: Hello? Yeah, I'm sorry.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Oh, Ms. Gelb, what
25 part of the Bronx do you live in?

2 ROBERTA GELB: I'm not in the Bronx. I'm
3 in Chelsea.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Oh, you're in Chelsea.
5 All right, thank you.

6 ROBERTA GELB: You're welcome.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay, the next panel
8 we're going to call on is Abigail Cliche, Ayaz
9 Lavingia, Shamina Lavingia, and Erik Nilsen. We'll
10 hear first from Abigail Cliché.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Abigail? Abigail, if
13 you can hear me, please unmute, and you may begin.

14 ABIGAIL CLICHE: Hello?

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, there we go. Go
16 ahead, Abigail.

17 ABIGAIL CLICHE: Sorry, I had some
18 trouble. Hi, my name is Abigail Cliche. I am a
19 current resident of City Council District 5, and...

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Abigail?

21 ABIGAIL CLICHE: Apologies. I am a current
22 resident of City Council District 5, and I would like
23 to voice my support for City of Yes. As I said, I
24 currently live in District 5, which is the Upper East
25 Side, and I would like to continue to do so. I

2 graduated from university about four years ago. Me
3 and a group of my peers from my university came to
4 the city all together. Most of us lived in Midtown
5 Manhattan for the first year that we were here. The
6 second year that we were here, I moved to the Upper
7 East Side and sacrificed the luxury of a dishwasher,
8 and most of my friends moved to Brooklyn and Queens,
9 inflating the price of housing in those boroughs.

10 While I love my home and I am really attached to my
11 neighborhood, I'm looking to purchase a home in the
12 next few years, and I am afraid that I won't be able
13 to afford to do so here. My only other options, if
14 I'd like to stay in the city, which I intend to do,
15 are to look in the outer boroughs, and in particular,
16 I'm eyeing District 19, which is Council Member
17 Paladino's District. It looks quite nice, and I, you
18 know, see that as a more affordable alternative. Were
19 my economic choices not as constrained, then I would
20 like to stay put where I am. I realize that in moving
21 to a district like District 19, I would potentially
22 be putting extra pressure on its current residents
23 and competing with them for housing so I would like
24 to once again voice my support for City of Yes and
25 increase the overall supply of housing in the city in

2 the interest of all of us being able to live where we
3 would like.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much,
5 Abigail. Next, we're going to hear from Ayaz
6 Lavingia.

7 AYAZ LAVINGIA: Yes, hello. I'm Ayaz
8 Lavingia. I moved to Queens 40-plus years ago, and
9 the housing shortage is a perennial problem in New
10 York. It's an issue that is purely based on supply
11 and demand economics, and if there is a supply, that
12 is the solution, and the supply will only get done if
13 it's built. More housing is needed, period. Let me
14 try and put it simply. When people are hungry, the
15 solution is to provide more food. When people are
16 sick, you supply medicine. So logically, when people
17 need housing, the solution is to build and provide
18 more housing. Therefore, you've got to change the
19 zoning, and you've got to build up. Infrastructure
20 spend over more people is more efficient and more
21 effective. Trying to build less density housing is
22 difficult to support. New York City should continue
23 to be the city of tall buildings across all five
24 boroughs. Staten Island is severely short of tall
25 buildings. Others, in pockets of Manhattan, you have

2 completely unregulated small houses, some big
3 buildings, etc. Uniformity would help, and
4 infrastructure will be built to adjust for them.
5 Therefore, I am completely for Yes. Build, build,
6 build. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
8 going to hear from Shamina Lavingia.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

10 SHAMINA LAVINGIA: Hi, my name is Shamina
11 Lavingia. Thank you for letting me speak tonight. I
12 support the City of Yes proposal. We moved to Queens
13 over 40 years ago as a young couple while we worked
14 and attended college in New York City. We now live in
15 Manhattan close to one of our children, whereas the
16 other one lives in Brooklyn. We will be retiring in a
17 few years. We have been renters for a long, long
18 time, but the rents have been going up continuously.
19 Looks like we won't be able to afford the rents once
20 we retire in a few years. It's really tough finding
21 units at an affordable rate. I hope there will be
22 enough supply to meet the demand in the coming
23 future. We would like to remain in Manhattan or move
24 to Brooklyn, but who knows? Time will tell. Hence, I

2 support the City of Yes proposal. Thank you. Good
3 night.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
5 hear from Erik Nilsen.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

7 ERIK NILSEN: Good evening, everyone, and
8 thank you for letting me speak, and thank you for
9 sticking this out. My name is Erik Nilsen. I'm born
10 and raised in New York City. I'm from St. Allen, and
11 now I live in Bushwick, and I unequivocally support
12 everything in City of Yes. It feels like for most of
13 my adult life, the city has been in a perpetual
14 housing crisis because we don't build enough. I'm
15 tired of seeing friends of mine leave the city
16 because they can't afford it, afford to either stay
17 here themselves, or afford to raise children here,
18 and this all comes down because how expensive real
19 estate is. If it wasn't for new developments that is
20 being disparaged on this call, I wouldn't have been
21 able to become a homeowner two years ago in Bushwick,
22 and I want other people to have the same
23 opportunities that I have. I also really want to
24 speak in favor of ending parking mandates because the
25 city is congested with enough cars as it is, and

2 people should be more important than cars. Space for
3 people to live should be more important than to let
4 cars out of space. It should be more important for
5 homeless people to be in housing than for people to
6 have spaces to put their cars in. Thank you for your
7 time and have a great night.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. This panel
9 is excused.

10 The next panel I'm going to call up
11 consists of Alyssa Mayopinonia, Juan Rivero, Joanne
12 Sullivan, and Yiatin Chu.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I'm going to call on
15 Alyssa Mayopinonia to begin. Alyssa, can you hear me?

16 ALYSSA MAYOPINONIA: Can you hear me?

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, I can.

18 ALYSSA MAYOPINONIA: Good evening. My name
19 is Alyssa Mayopinonia. I am here this evening
20 speaking as a registered New York State architect as
21 well as a lifelong resident of City Island in the
22 Bronx. It's easy to say that City Island and
23 Manhattan are two different worlds. City Island is
24 predominantly a residential community with a suburban
25 way of life. While the boating industry is not the

1 same as it has been years ago, we can say our
2 community has been one of the very few places left in
3 New York that holds a quaint, nautical, suburban
4 character. It maintains the title of the Seaport in
5 the Bronx and we would like to keep it that way. The
6 City of Yes would open the doors for this to be
7 destroyed. City Island, as well as other Special
8 District Areas, need an abundance of special district
9 zoning to prevent overdevelopment that our
10 infrastructures, land, and public resources cannot
11 physically sustain. The City of Yes would destroy the
12 concept of one- and two-family zones and return low-
13 density areas into mini-Manhattans. The borderlines
14 of permitted zoning, increase in permitted bulk, as
15 well as changes in housing types would not work in
16 such areas. The City of Yes is pushing more
17 affordable housing with no promise of affordability.
18 Our Building Department takes weeks and months for
19 approval, is understaffed as well as inadequately
20 trained to support these changes of spaces that will
21 need to meet life and safety standards. Deteriorated
22 infrastructure exists, and introducing such housing
23 would not be sustainable. These zoning codes paint a
24 picture of harmony, but yet they are jeopardizing
25

2 health, safety, and welfare of society. Our
3 communities should not have to suffer or sacrifice
4 our character, safety, and our neighborhoods due to
5 the poor decisions made by our politicians. We should
6 be focusing on revitalizing our existing conditions
7 of our community and truly fixing current
8 infrastructure, bettering our schools, properly
9 training our municipality departments, and reusing
10 existing space and not permitting development.

11 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

12 ALYSSA MAYOPINONIA: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
14 hear from Juan Rivero.

15 JUAN RIVERO: Good evening. I'm testifying
16 on behalf of Village Preservation, a community
17 organization working in Greenwich Village, East
18 Village, and NoHo. We strongly oppose multiple
19 provisions in City of Yes for Housing Opportunity.
20 This plan is based on the notion that building more
21 unaffordable housing will have a trickle-down effect
22 on the entire housing market and benefit everyone.
23 This is doubling down on the failed policies of the
24 past and a misguided approach to that posits that
25 deregulation and a build-baby-build approach will

2 solve our problems. It will not. Currently, New York
3 City builds more expensive housing than any city in
4 the country, and our existing zoning allows for
5 hundreds of millions of additional square feet of
6 residential development which could accommodate
7 millions of more households. The problem isn't that
8 we're not building enough housing. Housing
9 construction in New York City has actually outpaced
10 population growth. The problem is we're building the
11 wrong kind of housing, expensive housing that too few
12 New Yorkers can afford, and in the process, we're
13 actually encouraging the loss of affordable housing
14 we do have by incentivizing the demolition of
15 existing older buildings that contain affordable
16 units. And don't just take my word for it. Look at
17 the numerous studies done across the country on this
18 topic and look at our own city where areas with the
19 most new housing construction also see the most
20 displacement and steepest increases in housing
21 prices. The other thing you should not do is trust
22 the City's figures on this or on any other zoning
23 proposal. City of Yes is premised on the expectation
24 that copious amounts of housing will be produced and
25 much of it affordable, but look at the City's track

2 record on predictions of impacts of its rezonings,
3 especially as it relates to housing. They are
4 consistently wildly inaccurate, offering rosy
5 predictions of what their plans will do that never
6 approach reality. Don't continue to make the same
7 mistakes that each City Council and Administration
8 before you has. New Yorkers deserve better than that
9 and better than this plan. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
11 hear from Joanne Sullivan.

12 JOANNE SULLIVAN: Okay, can you hear me?

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can.

14 JOANNE SULLIVAN: Great, thanks. City
15 Planners blame the lack of affordable housing on
16 limited housing production. I'd hardly call the
17 recent rate of housing production limited. New
18 apartment buildings have transformed the skylines of
19 Downtown Brooklyn, Long Island City, and other
20 neighborhoods. Queens Boulevard alone has enough new
21 apartments to house the population of a whole town.
22 Rents increased despite the building sprees because
23 developers cater to wealthy buyers. I'm afraid the
24 City of Yes will do more harm than good. It might
25 destroy low-density neighborhoods without making

2 housing more affordable. The Director of City
3 Planning, Dan Garodnik, predicts that City of Yes
4 would add just a little more housing in every
5 neighborhood, but there's no guarantee that it
6 wouldn't overwhelm some neighborhoods. It might be
7 easy for people who live in buildings that wouldn't
8 be drastically affected by the plan to preach that
9 every district must be part of the solution. If the
10 owners of luxury apartments aren't part of the
11 solution, why are residents of some middle-class
12 neighborhoods being asked to bear the brunt of the
13 changes? Many New Yorkers wonder if the main
14 architects of the City of Yes are real estate
15 developers who paid off Mayor Adams and his cronies.
16 In light of Mayor Adams' indictments and the flood of
17 resignations in his Administration, we want
18 authorities to investigate possible corrupt motives
19 behind this massive proposal. To restore faith in our
20 City's government, please listen to the majority of
21 Community Boards that voted against the City of Yes
22 and reject it, or at least pause it while a cloud of
23 corruption overhangs City Hall. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The last
25 person on this panel is Yiatin Chu.

2 YIATIN CHU: Good evening. My name is
3 Yiatin Chu. I'm a homeowner in Whitestone, Eastern
4 Queens, and I'm the President of Asian Wave Alliance.
5 AWA represents the interests of thousands of
6 residents, property owners, and voters throughout New
7 York City. Asian New Yorkers have the highest rate of
8 homeownership and were settled in outer boroughs of
9 Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. Many of us are
10 immigrants who poured our life savings into our home
11 to put down roots in our communities, a nest egg for
12 retirement, and maybe pass it down to our children,
13 the American dream, and building generational wealth.
14 This aggressive plan will replace homeownership with
15 market-rate rental properties, making developers
16 richer. Building more does not necessarily make
17 housing more affordable for New Yorkers. Property
18 owners have to pay mortgages, property taxes, utility
19 and water bills, energy costs, maintenance, aka labor
20 costs, which all factor into the high cost of
21 housing. Building more will not lower these costs.
22 Instead, the City of Yes will destroy our
23 neighborhoods and degrade our quality of life. It's
24 absurd that the City of Yes will eliminate parking
25 requirements for new residential housing. We are

2 already stressed with the lack of parking everywhere
3 in Queens and Brooklyn. These areas lack efficient
4 public transportation and rely on cars to get around.
5 In Queens, we cannot support more development around
6 our LIR stations. The parking is near impossible to
7 find now. Many people drive and park near the
8 stations but still need to drive to pick up their
9 kids from schools and do our food shopping. We oppose
10 the dangerous legalization of ADUs. Illegal ADUs are
11 already a huge problem for many residential areas.
12 There are thousands of unchecked illegal dwellings
13 already, and the passing of City of Yes will further
14 make this problem worse. Asian Wave Alliance opposes
15 the City of Yes. We urge the City Council to reject
16 the entirety of this harmful package of proposals
17 from Mayor Adams.

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
19 has expired.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Can someone
21 please unmute Ms. Alyssa Mayopinonia? Ms. Alyssa?

22 ALYSSA MAYOPINONIA: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Your opposition was
24 because you felt that City Island would be affected
25 from this proposal?

2 ALYSSA MAYOPINONIA: So, I think any low-
3 density area, I mean, I speak strictly of City Island
4 due to the fact that I'm very familiar with the
5 zoning based on me living here as well as my career.
6 All of the low-zoning areas would be affected because
7 one of the things that the City of Yes proposal is
8 doing is they're adding verbiage that makes things
9 as-of-right and, for example, like in an R3A zone
10 that currently zoning states one- and two-family
11 residents only, they add a small sentence in there
12 that says and multi-families in certain locations so
13 you're adding these small things that might not
14 necessarily be seen as something that looks like a
15 mega development. Or when you say you're going to
16 permit ADUs, if you have a one- and two-family zone,
17 you have the option to have a two-family and have the
18 opening for maybe some type of opportunity to rent it
19 or for your family member but, once you throw an ADU
20 in there, you're a three-family house so you're
21 actually making it a multi-family without making it a
22 multi-family, which there's different codes,
23 different requirements for that so I just think it's
24 a lot on these small areas that can't necessarily be
25 controlled.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms.
3 Mayopinonia, and just want to let you know that City
4 Island is considered a Special District.

5 ALYSSA MAYOPINONIA: Correct. I know the
6 Special District will not..

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So yeah, you wouldn't
8 have to worry about those issues.

9 ALYSSA MAYOPINONIA: Well, that really
10 would protect our height requirement, but it not
11 necessarily would protect things with the A3A and the
12 zoning code being, the zones itself being revised
13 with language because it still would make things that
14 aren't necessarily as-of-right now become as-of-
15 right. You know, typically now they go through
16 certain processes and there are some multi-families
17 on the City Islands and they work, but to have things
18 as-of-right could be really detrimental to the
19 community.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Thank you,
21 Ms. Alyssa.

22 ALYSSA MAYOPINONIA: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: No problem. The next
24 panel we're going to hear from is William Meehan,
25

2 Alan Gerber, Felix Stetsenko, and Robert Jeffrey.

3 We'll hear first from William Meehan.

4 WILLIAM MEEHAN: Hi, my name is William
5 Meehan. I am a member of Brooklyn's CB8 speaking in
6 my personal capacity in support of the City of Yes
7 for Housing Opportunity. New York has historically
8 welcomed many immigrants and refugees. Throughout the
9 centuries, people have escaped famine, violence, and
10 persecution and made New York their home. However, as
11 we've seen with the migrant crisis over the last two
12 years, this is no longer possible, and we are unable
13 to accommodate domestic migration for women seeking
14 reproductive rights or, personally to me as a gay
15 man, queer youth escaping homophobic and transphobic
16 laws in other states and other countries. If we are
17 to move from makeshift tents in a field to a housing
18 first model, we must first build enough housing for
19 everyone. By lifting outdated and classist
20 regulations, the City of Yes for housing opportunity
21 can help tilt the scales back towards housing
22 affordability and abundance. An important aspect of
23 City of Yes is it will allow for new housing in all
24 neighborhoods. Too many community districts have
25 effectively banned new housing through downzonings,

1 including so-called contextual downzonings, lot size
2 and setback requirements, and parking mandates. I
3 would like to narrow in on parking mandates because I
4 believe they are the key to unlocking more affordable
5 housing near the subway. I live in a pre-war building
6 without any off-street parking. Due to parking
7 mandates, my home would be illegal to build today
8 right where it is and in most of the city. That's
9 absurd. Parking mandates stifle affordable housing
10 production by requiring significant space for
11 parking, which often ends up underground at great
12 costs, and the numbers are capricious. It's better to
13 let the market decide. Parking mandates have already
14 been eliminated in all of Manhattan and parts of
15 Brooklyn and Queens due to the Clean Air Act, so
16 there's obviously health and climate benefits as
17 well. City of Yes actually does not go far enough in
18 eliminating parking mandates. Cities like Buffalo,
19 Minneapolis, St. Paul, Portland, Oregon, and recently
20 Austin have eliminated all parking mandates for all
21 uses. If these relatively car-friendly cities can do
22 it, then New York, with the best transit in the
23 country, can certainly do it. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
3 going to hear from Alan Gerber.

4 ALAN GERBER: Hello. I'm Alan Gerber. I'm
5 a resident of Crown Heights. I'm a member of CBA's
6 Environment, Sanitation, and Transportation Committee
7 as a public member, but speaking in my personal
8 capacity. So, I've been a resident of a rent-
9 stabilized apartment in this neighborhood for
10 something like 12 years. It's been very good as a
11 stable and affordable home for me, but my upstairs
12 neighbor, it's been a very good affordable home for
13 her as well, but the building is a walkup and she's
14 getting older. There's down the street 100 percent
15 affordable housing being built on State-owned land.
16 It's five stories tall under so-called contextual
17 zoning, even though there's a 14-story building from
18 50 years ago across the street and a 12-story
19 building from 100 years ago a block away, and because
20 of downzonings like this, we don't have enough
21 affordable housing for my upstairs neighbor to move
22 to an apartment with an elevator that would make her
23 life easier in her age, and that's true of a lot of
24 people as they go through life. There's just not
25 homes available that meet their needs, and so we need

2 to pass City of Yes so we get more housing so people
3 can find housing that meets their needs as they go
4 through life. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
6 going to hear from Felix Stetsenko.

7 Felix, if you can hear me, please unmute.

8 FELIX STETSENKO: Thank you, Mr. Riley.

9 Can you hear me?

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

11 FELIX STETSENKO: Hi, everyone. Good
12 evening. My name is Felix Stetsenko. I'm a renter
13 living on the Upper West Side, Community District 7.
14 I'm really excited about the City of Yes for Housing
15 Opportunity Initiative, and I hope that Council
16 Members approve this proposal in as strong as
17 possible form. Why? Because I'm a transplant to the
18 city. I moved here from Florida with a stop in
19 Washington, D.C. because living in New York was my
20 lifelong dream. The skyscrapers, the culture, the
21 diversity. I moved here because I could also afford
22 it. I already had a well-paid white-collar job and a
23 brother who was willing to let me live with him for a
24 year while I gathered up savings and confidence to
25 strike out on my own, but I don't want to be

2 surrounded by only people with well-paid white-collar
3 jobs or those with very nice brothers to let them
4 crash for a full year. I want to be surrounded by the
5 artists, the dreamers, the immigrants who come here
6 looking for the American dream. I want to live in the
7 city that first welcomed my parents 40 years ago,
8 immigrants from the Soviet Union who came without a
9 penny in the bank account. I want to live in a city
10 that's affordable for all who make New York, New
11 York. And what does City of Yes do for all of us? It
12 allows our city to build more housing to grow. It
13 would open up lots next to subway stations that today
14 are filled by single-story big box stores to instead
15 be filled by apartments and ground floor retail. It
16 would incentivize the construction of thousands of
17 new units of permanently affordable housing in every
18 single neighborhood. Ours is a beautifully vibrant,
19 diverse, magnificent city, and by adding a little
20 more housing in every neighborhood, I strongly
21 believe City of Yes will make New York greater and
22 even more vibrant. Thank you for your time and the
23 opportunity to give testimony this evening.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

25 Next, we're going to hear from Robert Jeffrey.

2 Robert, if you can hear me, please unmute and you may
3 begin.

4 ROBERT JEFFREY: Thank you. Thank you,
5 everyone, for taking the time out to address these
6 issues and listening to the community. I am a sitting
7 member on my Community Board here in Community Board
8 One, Williamsburg and Greenpoint, and I am coming on
9 tonight to say I am for City of Yes. I really am
10 looking forward to the hundreds of thousands of
11 housing we're going to get potentially over the next
12 10 years and the income that's going to bring in. I'm
13 really looking forward to being able to find housing
14 that doesn't require parking mandates because that's
15 going to really lower the cost of housing for a lot
16 of people and also just give more people opportunity
17 to move into the city and be able to enjoy everything
18 that we enjoy in the city ourselves right now, and I
19 would like for you all to vote yes on City of Yes.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. This panel
22 is now excused.

23 The next panel I'll call up consists of
24 George Tormo, Doris Hughes, Maria Fiocca, and Steve
25

2 Barrison. I will call on George Tormo to begin.

3 George, if you're on...

4 GEORGE TORMO: Hello.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, go ahead, George.

6 GEORGE TORMO: You hear me?

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes.

8 GEORGE TORMO: Hi, how are you?

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I'm doing well.

10 GEORGE TORMO: I'm glad you picked me. I
11 didn't think I was going to make it. I'm from the
12 Midland Beach Civic Association. I'm a Co-President,
13 and this happened to fall on the anniversary of
14 Superstorm Sandy, which we lost 24 lives here on
15 Staten Island 12 years ago. If Superstorm Sandy
16 taught us anything, it taught us that natural
17 drainage is one of the most important factors for
18 many communities. After the storm, many damaged and
19 destroyed homes were purchased by State. All
20 buildings were removed and the land was allowed to go
21 back to nature, never to be built on again. That gave
22 us back some of our natural drainage. The Bluebelt
23 project has begun and some areas are working already,
24 helping to protect our community. Common sense would
25 show you that the City of Yes will destroy what we

2 have gained, will destroy our beachfront homes and
3 low-lying communities should a large storm happen
4 again. In Governor Hochul's Understanding and
5 Preparing for Changing Climate Study, it was stated
6 that water runs off concrete and asphalt almost
7 immediately and could exceed the design limit of
8 sewers quickly draining rain. Retaining the creating
9 green and unpaved spaces around your home can help
10 reduce flows into the sewer by reducing the amount of
11 storm water runoff your properties send to the sewer.
12 It also stated that New York City faces a heightened
13 risk of flooding..

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time's expired.

15 GEORGE TORMO: Hello.

16 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Expired.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, George. The
18 next person we'll hear from is Doris Hughes.

19 DORIS HUGHES: Hello, can you hear me?

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you,
21 Doris.

22 DORIS HUGHES: Hi, good evening. My name
23 is Doris Hughes. I'm a lifelong Queens resident
24 currently living in Little Neck, and Little Neck is
25 vehemently opposed to the City of Yes for Housing

2 Opportunity. It will destroy the fabric of our
3 communities and the way of life we work so hard to
4 achieve. One size does not fit all. It's kind of
5 arrogant of our elected officials to push this
6 through without community involvement and proper
7 input. The City of Yes will have an adverse
8 environmental impact, taking away green space. It
9 will overburden the infrastructure and increase crime
10 in our neighborhoods. Little Neck is already parking
11 challenged as most units have multiple cars. If this
12 is past, it will cause taxpaying residents to leave.
13 Hundreds of thousands have already left the city due
14 to affordability. There are currently thousands of
15 vacant NYCHA units in New York City as well as vacant
16 office buildings that can be converted to residential
17 units. Why isn't that being done? This is a power
18 grab. The City of Yes will take away the review and
19 approval process from Community Boards and Council
20 Members. New York City has affordability crisis the
21 City of Yes will not solve. This is a land grab that
22 only benefits the developers. As an employee of a
23 national real estate lender, I've seen developers
24 withdraw their affordable units even if they incur
25 penalties just so they can charge market rents. The

2 City of Yes will not produce affordable units. And in
3 light of the corruption scandal the current
4 Administration is mired in, the City of Yes must be
5 rejected. The City must work with local communities
6 for solutions that will benefit all residents. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
9 person we hear from is Maria Fiocca.

10 MARIA FIOCCA: Fiocca. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Fiocca.

12 MARIA FIOCCA: Good evening. My name is
13 Maria Fiocca. As a lifelong resident of Flushing,
14 Queens, I am deeply concerned about the City of Yes
15 legislation and its potential impact on my community.
16 The Broadway North Flushing neighborhood, which is
17 listed on the National Register of Historic Places,
18 is a source of immense pride for many of us who have
19 called this area home for decades. The provisions
20 within the City of Yes pose a serious threat to the
21 character and integrity of our historic neighborhood.
22 The transit zone provision will lead to the
23 demolition of cherished homes, including my own 100-
24 year-old residence in favor of multifamily units with
25 minimal green space and zero parking mandates. ADUs

2 will further encroach on our already limited
3 backyards, depriving us of sunlight and privacy.
4 Moreover, our community's infrastructure is not
5 equipped to handle the influx of new housing that the
6 City of Yes will bring. We already struggle with
7 flooded basements and streets during major storms and
8 are asked to limit our appliance usage during hot
9 summer days because of the strain on our resources.
10 Increasing the housing without the necessary
11 improvements in sewage, police, fire, schools, and
12 sanitation services will only exacerbate these
13 issues. I have closely followed the testimony
14 presented to the City Planning Commission and the
15 Queens Borough President, and it is clear that the
16 primary supporters of this legislation are land
17 developers, officials who reside in landmarked
18 buildings, non-profit and for-profit organizations
19 that use scripted narratives to demonstrate their
20 backing. This raises concern about the true
21 motivations behind the City of Yes plan and its
22 potential to benefit certain groups at the expense of
23 the long-standing residents like myself and my
24 family. While I understand the need for affordable
25 housing because everybody deserves a home...

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
3 expired.

4 DORIS HUGHS: Thank you, and I just want
5 to say you should vote no, just...

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next person
7 we'll hear from is Steve Barrison.

8 STEVE BARRISON: How about now? Can you
9 hear me now?

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you,
11 Steve.

12 STEVE BARRISON: All right. Hey, Kevin and
13 Speaker Adams who isn't here. I don't know you,
14 Kevin, but I've been testifying since 1983 in front
15 of the City Council. I wish I was there today.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: That was before I was
17 born.

18 STEVE BARRISON: I'm a land use real
19 estate attorney, Kevin. I've studied this all over
20 the whole city. I've listened to every testimony
21 today. This is giving up your power as a
22 Councilperson to represent your constituents. All the
23 people that spoke, the previous speaker, Maria, hit
24 it right on the head. I never knew, I guess I'm old.
25 I looked up at four different websites, and most of

2 the testimony of the younger people today in their
3 20s and 30s was right out of those websites giving
4 you suggested transcripts to pull from and speak so
5 it's incredible. It's as if they don't know the facts
6 so here's the bottom line. It is a big lie, and I
7 live here. My family's been here since 1898 in sunny
8 Sheepshead Bay, and I will tell you, you can build
9 five to six million new units right now without
10 changing one word of the zone so the whole idea of
11 you've got to change it to build is a lie. So do not
12 hitch your wagon to the sinking Mayor. Do it for your
13 constituents in the City of New York. Affordability
14 is what's lacking. We've heard that a thousand times.
15 What else can I possibly tell you? You've got to vote
16 no because it's about you and me and us in the City
17 of New York, a big fat no. The 81 percent is a lie.
18 It's just that fake Open New York and there's three
19 other organizations that say the same thing. It's a
20 two to one vote in this city. We literally went
21 around to over 225 organizations in 175 communities.
22 Most of the people are opposed to this. Why? Because
23 you have the ability now to build as much housing as
24 you could ever want. You want to build affordable
25 housing? Say no to this. Kevin, please contact me. I

2 will bring experienced planners like some others that
3 spoke and we'll help you put together...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time's expired.

5 Thank you.

6 STEVE BARRISON: Vote no.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Steve. This
8 panel is excused.

9 The next panel I'm calling on this Cara
10 Eckholm, Isabel Kirsch, Sam Zimmerman, and Mollye
11 Liu. I will begin first with Cara Eckholm. Cara, if
12 you can hear me, please unmute and you may begin.

13 CARA ECKHOLM: Hello. Thank you so much
14 for having me today. I am a fourth generation New
15 Yorker coming out strongly in favor of City of Yes.
16 My great grandparents moved here as garment workers
17 in the early 1900s. Unfortunately, my family was not
18 so lucky so as to buy and then hold those properties
19 so primarily throughout the course of my family's
20 history, we've been renters, and that means that
21 we've been pushed to different neighborhoods as the
22 cost of housing has increased over time. And I just
23 want to respond to the comment made by the previous
24 speaker that there's sort of a concerted organized
25 effort to get young people out to speak today in

2 favor of City of Yes, and I think you're hearing so
3 many voices from the next generation of New Yorkers
4 because people are upset and they're desperate and
5 they want to be able to continue to live in New York.
6 There is a preponderance of evidence to suggest that
7 increasing supply does in fact increase
8 affordability. That means building all types of
9 housing. To deny that evidence at this point is
10 comparable to denying basic science like around
11 climate change. We really need to treat this as a
12 crisis that is of that magnitude and is not just a
13 crisis that is going to be occurring in the future
14 but something that is happening today and is pushing
15 people out who have had long family histories in the
16 City of New York yet can no longer afford to live
17 here so I just wanted to really emphasize that all
18 aspects of the City of Yes proposal are important to
19 getting more housing built and that there are many
20 people in my generation, a 32-year-old renter living
21 in Brooklyn but previously lived in Manhattan, who
22 really care about seeing this getting passed, and
23 it's not some kind of organized effort but rather a
24 byproduct of true...

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.
3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next we're going to
5 hear from Isabel Kirsch.

6 ISABEL KIRSCH: Hi. My name is Isabel
7 Kirsch and I live in Sunnyside. Thank you all for
8 your time. I know it's been a very long day and I'm
9 really appreciative of you being here and taking my
10 input. And I'm here because I unequivocally support
11 City of Yes and I hope that you will pass it
12 resoundingly and in the strongest possible form. I am
13 a very new New Yorker. I moved here recently for a
14 new job that I was very excited about and it's really
15 been the most challenging apartment search and
16 transition to a new city that that I've experienced
17 and it's really been even more daunting than what I
18 was expecting. I'm incredibly lucky to have an aunt
19 who lives here in Sunnyside and to be able to stay
20 with her while I get settled, and I really don't know
21 how my move would have been possible to pursue this
22 professional opportunity without this landing pad.
23 And I know that I'm obviously in a really select
24 minority of lucky people who have a landing pad when
25 they get here. So, you really feel that 1.4 percent

2 vacancy rate. I feel it at open houses. I feel it
3 when I'm rushing to respond to an apartment listing,
4 when I'm spending money on application fees over and
5 over and over again, and of course just seeing the
6 people who are experiencing homelessness on our
7 streets every day. We need all kinds of housing for
8 all kinds of people so that means market rate, that
9 means low income, that means subsidized, that means
10 affordable housing, and in the strongest possible
11 terms, City of Yes is what we need to help us get
12 there. My grandmother arrived in New York as a
13 refugee after the Holocaust, and I strongly believe
14 that this city is and still should be a beacon of
15 opportunity and of hope and, unfortunately, our
16 current housing crisis makes that vision feel pretty
17 far away so I'm incredibly enthusiastic about City of
18 Yes as a one step in the right direction to make New
19 York to continue to be a welcoming place for
20 immigrants, for new arrivals, for people who are
21 seeking, you know, following a dream of being in New
22 York for whatever that reason may be. And I'm so
23 appreciative of all of the thought and care that has
24 been put into this project...

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
3 expired.

4 ISABEL KIRSCH: Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you and
6 congratulations on your new job.

7 Next, we're going to call on Sam
8 Zimmerman.

9 SAM ZIMMERMAN: Hi, my name is Sam. I know
10 it's been a really long day, so thank you to the
11 Members and Staff for sticking with us. I just got
12 home from work and wouldn't have been able to testify
13 if this meeting wasn't in its 12th hour, so I
14 appreciate it. I'm a resident of the Lower East Side
15 where I own a unit in a co-op that would potentially
16 be significantly impacted by City of Yes, and I
17 enthusiastically support each and every provision of
18 City of Yes because making New York housing more
19 affordable and accessible to all is the most
20 important thing we can do. City of Yes came out of
21 the City's Fair Housing Report to address the legal
22 and practical segregation that has existed in our
23 city for decades. Contrary to the misinformation I've
24 heard here in the short time I've been on from
25 organizations like Village Preservation, the

2 overwhelming evidence shows that new housing
3 production makes housing more affordable. The pro-
4 segregationists claim that upzoning and producing
5 more housing has been tried and failed, but the
6 reality is we've been restricting housing production
7 since at least the 1961 zoning resolution. Just near
8 me in Downtown Manhattan in 2008, we downzoned the
9 East Village at the behest of organizations like
10 Village Preservation, and it's done nothing to help
11 affordability. People see big shiny buildings in the
12 Williamsburg waterfront and they think that means
13 we're producing enough housing, but it's just a drop
14 in the bucket of the hundreds of thousands of units
15 we need to make the city more affordable and
16 accessible to all so thank you again for your time
17 and please pass City of Yes in its strongest form.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
20 going to hear from Mollye Liu.

21 Mollye, if you can, please unmute and you
22 may begin.

23 MOLLYE LIU: Hi. Thank you for the
24 opportunity of speaking. I'm here to show my support
25 to the City of Yes. I'm a member of Manhattan

1 Community Board 3 as a Housing Committee, and also
2 I've worked for Bronx Pro. It's a 100 percent
3 mission-driven affordable housing developer. We build
4 100 percent affordable housing in the Bronx and in
5 Harlem, and as a new immigrant to the city, I'm also
6 a renter, and also I was born in affordable housing
7 back in China. So, I suffered a lot of issues looking
8 for affordable apartment in the city, I've been
9 through housing court and everything, and under this
10 situation, I can say City of Yes is a really good
11 opportunity to provide more affordable housing to the
12 people in need and to the people who cannot afford,
13 like, the increasing housing price in the city, and
14 as a developer side, I can see the operation expense
15 is getting higher, the tenant's arrear extremely
16 high, and the insurance price are going higher and
17 higher, so all these things make it harder to operate
18 a mission-driven organization like us, and I can see,
19 like, City of Yes have a lot of good part, like, to
20 make the, like, Mandatory Inclusive Housing
21 procedure, like, easier, and that can make the
22 housing project happening sooner, and we can have
23 more people to move into our project as soon as
24 possible. Based on lots of research data, I can say,
25

2 like, New York is really need more type of housing,
3 and that can lower the housing price in the future,
4 so I hope this can be passed, and this can support
5 organizations like us and also can support the young
6 professionals who want to contribute to the city
7 more...

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
9 expired.

10 MOLLYE LIU: Thanks.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Mollye.

12 This panel is excused.

13 The next panel I'm going to call up
14 consists of Theresa Westerdahl, Felicia Johnson, Rob
15 Mazzuchin, and Sadie Kol. We'll begin with Ms.
16 Theresa Westerdahl. Theresa, if you can hear me,
17 please unmute, and you may begin.

18 THERESA WESTERDAHL: Can you hear me?

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

20 THERESA WESTERDAHL: Hi, my name is
21 Theresa Westerdahl. I live in Crown Heights next to
22 Ebbets Field, which was a Mitchell-Lama housing
23 project. I serve on Community Board 9's Land Use
24 Committee, and I'm a member of the Sullivan-Ledlam-
25 Stoddard Neighborhood Association. I represent myself

1 in this testimony. I am here to testify in opposition
2 of COY, City of Yes, text amendment changes. City of
3 Yes lacks visions and lessons we have learned from
4 history and the pandemic. It is Robert Moses all over
5 again. In my district, one of the densest in the
6 city, the current zoning is working. Within a few
7 blocks of my home, there are over 3,000 units being
8 built in large developmental projects, which are
9 continually creating hazards and violations of
10 environmental protection, OSHA, and DOB regulations.
11 The City has failed to conduct environmental and
12 racial impact studies and assessments in our
13 district. CB9 is overburdened and yet fails to
14 acknowledge that what we have done can and will do in
15 our district in the way of housing development. We
16 want housing development that is truly affordable
17 while maintaining our rights to clean air and water.
18 Our current zoning allows for over 25,000 units of
19 new development. That's our current zoning, which is
20 underway, and we could see it every day in the
21 buildings going up around us. The new COY zoning
22 would allow for an additional 25,000 units, meaning
23 our density would double. No, we do not have the
24 infrastructure for that, and we are barely surviving
25

2 the development that's happening now. In the current
3 climate of indictments and investigations, City of
4 Yes needs to be put on hold. Housing scarcity is a
5 fallacy, which City Planning perpetuates. Population...

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
7 expired.

8 THERESA WESTERDAHL: A look at Zillow will
9 show 4,000 units...

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
11 hear from Felicia Johnson.

12 FELICIA JOHNSON: Good evening. Can you
13 hear me?

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you,
15 Ms. Johnson.

16 FELICIA JOHNSON: Good evening. Thank you
17 for listening to my testimony. My name is Felicia
18 Johnson, and I'm the recently appointed District
19 Manager representing Community Board 14 in Queens,
20 which encompasses the entire Rockaway Peninsula, from
21 Breezy Point all the way to Bayswater and Broad
22 Channel, and Community Board 14 voted overwhelmingly
23 no to the City of Yes housing opportunity in the
24 current form that it is in. I am covering an 11-mile
25 sandbar that is ranked number 9 out of 10 in the city

1 for already having developed affordable housing.

2 Affordability is not the issue. It is the warehousing

3 and the AMIs that is what's keeping renters from

4 renting apartments that are available and vacant. We

5 have new development that they're filling up slowly,

6 but they are filling up, but I feel that this

7 peninsula, that the paintbrush cannot be painted the

8 same across the city. There are reasons why people

9 move to the outer boroughs, and that is to have some

10 space, to have land, to have water, to have sea. This

11 was basically a seaside community. It was a resort

12 community, and now we have over 5,000 nursing home

13 beds, adult home beds, several shelters, and one

14 safety net hospital. We're still waiting for an

15 evacuation plan from the City for the people we have

16 on this peninsula. Community Board 14 voted

17 overwhelmingly no. We do not have the infrastructure,

18 and we are still considered a transportation desert.

19 I ask that the City Council take the City of Yes

20 proposition as it is, go back and rework it, because

21 I know a no just can't be a no, but we're giving you

22 valid reason as to why a small 11-mile sandbar

23 peninsula cannot accommodate any more housing, and

24
25

2 the area that the housing would happen would be on
3 the eastern end of the...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
5 expired.

6 FELICIA JOHNSON: Peninsula because that's
7 the only transportation hub. Thank you so much.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
9 hear from Rob Mazzuchin.

10 ROB MAZZUCHIN: Thank you, Chairperson. A
11 little more. It's Rob Mazzuchin. I am President of
12 the Marine Park Community Association, 20,000 homes,
13 50,000 residents. I've heard people say that 80
14 percent of the people are in favor of this, 80
15 percent of the citizens of New York are in favor of
16 this. I don't see 80 percent of the people voicing
17 approval for today. We move into these neighborhoods,
18 as Ms. Johnson just said, we live in a one- and a
19 two-family home, because that's where we choose to
20 live. The City of Yes is a broad stroke, which allows
21 for drastic changes in a neighborhood without input
22 from the people in the community who reside in the
23 neighborhood. Now, the City Council, the most
24 important function of City Council is land use. This
25 bill takes land use away from the community council

2 and from the Community Boards. It can happen. Now,
3 I've heard some people complain about what their
4 Council Members do and don't do. You know, each
5 member, each Community Board is different, and each
6 Community Board has different needs, and it should
7 stay with the Council Members and the Community
8 Boards to decide what goes on in their neighborhood.
9 This bill does not provide affordable housing. If you
10 want to address affordable housing, address
11 affordable housing. This bill allows for developers
12 to build whatever they want, wherever they want. It's
13 1,383 pages, and I'd like to know how many people who
14 testified today and how many Council Members read the
15 entire 1,383 pages. I'm an attorney, and I know what
16 I can do with 1,383 pages. If I want to build
17 something, I can build it. The bottom line is, at the
18 end of the day, the developers are going to make a
19 fortune. They're going to turn properties that should
20 be for affordable housing into market rent areas, and
21 all these young people voting in favor of City of Yes
22 are not going to have a place to live or an apartment
23 to afford. And the city, it's going to cost the city
24 a fortune more, because this is not about...

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time's expired.

2 ROB MAZZUCHIN: Schools, police, all
3 infrastructure. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Rob. Next,
5 we're going to have Sadie Kol.

6 SADIE KOL: Thank you. Dear City Council,
7 my name is Sadie, and I am here to testify against
8 the City of Yes proposal on behalf of myself, many
9 other residents of Ridgewood, Queens, and the
10 Ridgewood Property Association. Ridgewood is a unique
11 neighborhood as are many other New York City
12 neighborhoods throughout New York City. Adding more
13 dwelling units as part of the City of Yes proposal
14 would drastically change quality of life for every
15 single New Yorker, mainly those who already struggle
16 to keep up in this economy. I am a landlord myself. I
17 will say that we do not have a housing problem. We
18 have an affordability problem. New York City should
19 be focusing on providing affordable housing for our
20 tenants, not making their dwelling spaces smaller in
21 an already full neighborhood. We are not against
22 tenants, and we are not against the homeless. We are
23 looking to call a spade a spade. Developers are
24 advertising this plan as building out market-rate
25 apartments, but on the contrary, these apartments

2 will not be affordable to the everyday New Yorker,
3 but would rather further the gap of the great divide
4 and make New Yorkers poorer. Stop punishing the
5 population and our tenants. Unlike in the past, this
6 plan was not put together by City Planners or from
7 neighborhood or civic group input, but rather by big
8 developers alone as part of Mayor Adams'
9 uncomfortably close relationship with these groups.
10 Those same big developers here today, earlier today,
11 as I was here since this morning, have claimed that
12 no drastic changes would occur. That is completely
13 inaccurate, and in fact, for Ridgewood, for example,
14 this would allow for additional units upwards of
15 between 300 to 500 percent, so it could go from our
16 current 10,000 units to up to 60,000. This has been
17 confirmed by a seasoned City Planner who spoke
18 earlier today. The City of Yes proposal will be the
19 catalyst to ushering in Agenda 2030 and ultimately
20 15-minute cities, which will allow government to
21 unconstitutionally control New Yorkers' everyday
22 movements. I am here today to voice my neighborhood's
23 opposition to this proposed land use and to urge
24 undecided representatives such as Selvena Brooks-
25 Powers, Nantasha Williams, and Adrienne Adams to not

2 violate their oaths of office and to support their
3 constituents' voices instead and vote against this
4 measure. This measure..

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
6 expired.

7 SADIE KOL: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. The
9 next panel we're going to call on is Nancy Kong,
10 Elena Sytcheva, Yehuda Pollack, and Clayton Sanford.
11 We'll begin with Nancy Kong.

12 NANCY KONG: Thank you very much for your
13 time, and I know it's late, so I will be very brief.
14 I live in District 1, one of the most densely
15 populated communities in the city. I grew up in a
16 tenement and a Mitchell-Lama. I implore the City
17 Council to vote yes. I am clearly not one of the 20-
18 or 30-year-olds testifying in favor of the City of
19 Yes, but I do agree with them. I have not seen our
20 city in such a state since the '70s. We are in dire
21 need of housing. We have multi-generational families
22 living together. We have immigrant families all piled
23 (INAUDIBLE) not able to afford housing. We need bold,
24 brave, and dramatic change, and this is the time.
25 Thank you for your time.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Nancy.
3 You're the best. Next, we're going to have Elena
4 Sytcheva.

5 ELENA SYTCHEVA: Hi. Can you hear me?

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, I can hear you.

7 ELENA SYTCHEVA: Good evening, Chair Riley
8 and Members of the Subcommittee and Council. Thank
9 you for the opportunity to testify in favor of the
10 City of Yes initiative. My name is Elena Sytcheva,
11 and I'm a lifelong Brooklyn resident of over 30
12 years. I also grew up in Mitchell-Lama housing in
13 Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn, and I currently rent in
14 Greenpoint in Brooklyn Community Board 1, and it
15 would be my preference to stay permanently in the
16 great Borough of Brooklyn. My parents immigrated from
17 the former Soviet Union, and we were able to remain
18 in New York, and they were able to work in public
19 service because of their access to affordable
20 homeownership. This allowed me to have a wonderful
21 cultural, educational, and career opportunities in
22 New York City, and I'm concerned that this is no
23 longer a possibility for my generation or future
24 generations. My friends and colleagues are being
25 forced to leave the neighborhoods they love because

2 of the significant cost of living increases. This is
3 especially true for young working-class families and
4 their children. We're all well aware that there is a
5 severe housing crisis in New York City with
6 historically low vacancy rates and skyrocketing
7 rents. I'm here because I really believe in this
8 proposal, and I believe it will provide much-needed
9 affordable housing for New York City by creating
10 permanent affordable housing through UAP, making
11 costly parking optional instead of mandatory, and the
12 commonsense solution of transit-oriented development.
13 All these solutions will help New Yorkers remain in
14 the communities they love and will allow our great
15 city to continue in welcoming new residents. I urge
16 the City Council to approve this proposal in the
17 strongest form. We can't afford to wait. We need to
18 be bold. Thank you so much for your time and for
19 staying this late.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
21 going to hear from Yehuda Pollack.

22 YEHUDA POLLACK: Hi. Can you hear me?

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, I can hear you.

24 YEHUDA POLLACK: Okay. Hi. I'm Yehuda
25 Pollack. My family's been in New York City since we

1 came to the Western Hemisphere. I grew up in Kew
2 Gardens Hills in Queens. I'm 27 years old. I just
3 moved out of my parents' house. It is not a secret to
4 anyone that there is not enough housing and there are
5 not enough places to live in New York City that are
6 affordable to young adults. My brother just had twins
7 earlier this year, and he needed to move out of his
8 apartment because he needed more space, and he was
9 living with his in-laws because he was just taking a
10 really long time to find a place with enough space
11 for his family. Now, it's six people, and he was able
12 to do that because he's lucky because he had people
13 in the city to fall back on to live with while he was
14 looking for an apartment. It is just impossible to
15 find a home, and we need more of it. Right now, I'm
16 in a two-bedroom that I live in with a roommate. If
17 there were more studio apartments, then this could be
18 used for a family of just a couple and a kid, but
19 right now, it's two adults taking up a two-bedroom
20 apartment on their own living in separate rooms
21 because there just aren't enough studio apartments.
22 There just needs to be more housing of every kind in
23 New York City because there are not enough places to
24

2 live, and it is not affordable enough, so I'm in
3 favor of the City of Yes. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
5 going to hear from Clayton Sanford. Clayton, if you
6 can hear me, please unmute, and you may begin.

7 CLAYTON SANFORD: Good evening. My name is
8 Clayton, and I'm a resident of Hamilton Heights. I
9 want to thank everyone for taking the time to do
10 this. I'm an enthusiastic supporter of City of Yes
11 for all the reasons that have been mentioned ahead of
12 now. For most people my age, just like Yehuda, we all
13 know people who are living with their parents and
14 don't want to be, people who are living in smaller
15 accommodations than they are or not living in the
16 neighborhood or even the city that they want to be
17 in, and this housing shortage has enacted a huge toll
18 on so many people, so many people who are near and
19 dear to me. I wanted to speak in particular about the
20 UAP provision. In my district, which is Community
21 District 9, Manhattan, we've built only at most about
22 300 affordable units in the past decade, and really
23 anything we have to increase the capacity and to
24 encourage people to build more units in general and
25 more affordable units in particular would be critical

2 so I'll keep it brief because it's so late, but thank
3 you everyone for being here, and please, I urge
4 everyone to support the City of Yes in its purest and
5 fullest form. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. This panel
7 is excused.

8 The next panel I'm going to call on
9 consists of Jeremy Kaplan, Bill Matheson, Linda
10 Cohen, and Nichola Cox. I'll first call on Jeremy
11 Kaplan.

12 JEREMY KAPLAN: Hi, how you doing? Thanks.
13 It's very late. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant. I'm in
14 Sunset Park, Brooklyn. I think that we've heard a lot
15 of disinformation. I think the whole thing about
16 supply, supply, supply, we need to keep building and
17 building, and then I look at throughout, they talk
18 about data, and then I look at the data, and I see
19 that Long Island City has a 60 percent rent increase,
20 and it's one of the fastest growing neighborhoods in
21 the United States. I hear all this stuff about
22 Minneapolis. I hear all this stuff about Austin. I
23 hear all this stuff about these cities that keep
24 building and building, and I look at the data, and
25 their rents are going up, and their rents are super

2 high, and I ask you, why do we keep doing the same
3 thing over and over again and pretending like it
4 works? This is the problem, is that we've given up
5 our ability to build truly affordable housing to
6 developers, and so we're constantly incentivizing it,
7 and this incentivizing doesn't work and doesn't
8 create affordable housing. The UAP is woefully
9 inefficient and woefully ineffective and doesn't meet
10 the needs of people. Right now, the real housing
11 crisis is at rents 1,500 and below. The UAP will not
12 produce any of that at all. It'll produce a few
13 units, so let's please spare me this whole thing
14 about, oh, we need to be housing migrants. You're not
15 housing migrants with that price. You're not. You
16 don't. I work. I go outside and work with homeless
17 people. You're not housing people for 3,000-dollar
18 single bedrooms. That's what you're producing, 4,000-
19 dollar market rate, one bedroom. sI live in a rent-
20 stabilized apartment. I...

21 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time's expired.
22 Thank you.

23 JEREMY KAPLAN: I stay in the city because
24 of rent stabilization and...

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
3 person we're going to hear from is Bill Matheson, and
4 Mr. Kaplan, you can always submit your testimony to
5 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

6 Bill Matheson, you're next. Bill
7 Matheson, are you next?

8 While we wait for Mr. Matheson, I just
9 want to give a shout out to the DCP team that's still
10 in here today. Thank you for sticking by. We really
11 appreciate it.

12 Bill Matheson.

13 Okay. We're going to move to Linda Cohen.

14 LINDA COHEN: Hello. My name is Linda
15 Cohen. I'd like to speak about two issues. Hello? Can
16 you hear me?

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you,
18 Ms. Cohen.

19 LINDA COHEN: Okay. First, I keep hearing
20 today that there are thousands of vacant apartments
21 that are available. Rent-stabilized apartments that
22 are vacant, boarded-up houses that are available,
23 commercial buildings that can also be used for
24 housing. What are the real numbers? Is CPC being
25 transparent about these numbers? Is CPC doing

2 something to make these unoccupied apartments readily
3 available for housing? Why aren't we using what we
4 already have before we disrupt existing
5 neighborhoods? Chair Riley, please help to provide
6 transparency about the numbers by asking CPC, DCP to
7 provide more about these numbers. Also, I understand
8 that the zoning change does not require new buildings
9 to provide affordable housing. I find that bizarre
10 and it feels like we are being swindled. Without
11 mandates for affordability, City of Yes will just be
12 helping the real estate industry and the rich. It
13 will not filter down to those in need. The second
14 issue that I'd like to bring up is the climate
15 crisis. We have seen increased destruction and
16 drownings here from climate change, and according to
17 climate scientists, including those from the New York
18 City Panel on Climate Change, there will be increased
19 flooding in the future. The FEIS for City of Yes
20 states that there is no significant impact for
21 climate change. How is it that this plan, which will
22 allow us to place concrete over so much permeable
23 space, will have no significant effects? Can we
24 please hear from our DEP Commissioner, Aggarwala, who
25 is also the City's Chief Climate Officer? Does he

2 approve of this plan in terms of resiliency? Chair
3 Riley..

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time is
5 expired.

6 LINDA COHEN: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms. Cohen.
8 You can go ahead and submit your testimony to
9 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

10 We will hear from Bill Matheson. Bill?

11 WILLIAM MATHESON: Can you hear me now?

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can.

13 WILLIAM MATHESON: I'm sorry. I had some
14 technical issues. Good evening. How are you doing?
15 Thank you for hanging in there. I'm a third-
16 generation resident of Garrison Beach. I'm the
17 President of Garrison Beach property owners,
18 representing over 5,000 people in our neighborhood.
19 I'm also a Board Member of Community Board 15. The
20 City of Yes program was presented to us in a 10-page
21 little pamphlet, but they didn't go over all the
22 little hidden stuff that was in the 13-page document.
23 This is a land grab, and it doesn't help the
24 residents. You want to help the affordability? Put
25 restrictions on building all these new locations.

2 Make them put in 60 percent affordable housing. It's
3 all about these guys want to become millionaires and
4 billionaires. Anybody tells you that the developers
5 care about the city, it's all about the money. We
6 have building codes that are in place that work very
7 fine and well, and we should maintain it. It's a big
8 no to City of Yes because it's just a land grab, and
9 nobody's going to get any benefit of it other than
10 the builders and the developers. They're holding real
11 estate now until this goes into effect, and then
12 they're going to be ripping houses down, and they're
13 going to be displacing people, which is going to
14 increase the homeless problem because the people they
15 displace are not going to be able to afford the
16 building units they're putting up. It's unfair to the
17 city because a lot of people think that they're going
18 to get affordable housing on it, and it's not going
19 to happen. We have a 400-plus unit proposed close to
20 our neighborhood, and only about 15 or 20 apartments
21 are really going to be affordable to anybody.
22 Everything else is market value, and nobody's going
23 to be able to afford the market value...

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you very much.

25 Your time's expired.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we
3 hear from Nichola Cox. Nichola, if you can hear me,
4 please unmute.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

6 NICHOLA COX: Okay. Good evening. My name
7 is Nichola Cox. I'm a resident of Brooklyn's
8 Community Board 9 in Crown Heights South. I am also
9 on the Land Use Committee. We voted no on City of Yes
10 because of a number of concerns, including about a
11 UAP. Tonight, I'm speaking for myself, and I've
12 agreed with many of the concerns expressed today. It
13 reassures me that there are other people that have
14 read between the lines. While City of Yes is marketed
15 as developing a little bit of housing everywhere, the
16 bulk of development, especially affordable housing
17 development, focuses on UAP, which currently targets
18 medium to high density areas defined as R6 and
19 higher. Many of these areas already have high levels
20 of development, gentrification, and displacement. I'm
21 specifically concerned about the one- and two-family
22 homes on lots zoned R6 and R7 during the 1961
23 rezoning. These were mostly in areas targeted for
24 people of color. As a result of this zoning, our one-
25 and two-family blocks are now deemed to be underbuilt

2 and are being targeted for UAP. UAP is giving a 77
3 percent zoning density increase to R6 lots on narrow
4 streets, compared to the zoning increases on
5 contextually zoned communities, which are much lower.
6 This will increase the tear down and rebuild
7 speculation in areas like mine, which are already
8 overwhelmed by development. As we have said in CB9,
9 we've done our fair share. Does a 77 percent FAR
10 increase sound like it's a modest contextual
11 development? No. When I reviewed DCP's Pluto data, I
12 noticed a few things. Approximately 80 percent...

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
14 expired.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
16 panel we're going to call up consists of David
17 Pecoraro, Mark Young...

18 DAVID PECORARO: That's Pecoraro.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you for
20 correcting me. Joe Enright and John Sheridan. First,
21 we'll begin with you, David.

22 DAVID PECORARO: Good evening. My name is
23 David Pecoraro. I'm a member of Community Board 13
24 Queens and a secretary of the Rosedale Civic
25 Association, but I speak as a 58-year resident of

2 Rosedale Queens. First, I'd like to paraphrase
3 Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota, who said to, and I'm
4 speaking to those who wish to impose the City of Yes
5 upon our Community Board and our neighborhood, and
6 what he said was, mind your own darn business. If
7 it's right for your neighborhood, fine. It's not
8 right for our neighborhood. And I want to thank
9 Council Members and the Staff present today for their
10 (INAUDIBLE) I hope that you have listened to your
11 civic associations, the homeowners who have voted for
12 you and paid your salaries with their hard-earned tax
13 dollars as our Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers
14 has done. I hope you also listen to the unpaid
15 members of the Community Boards like me, who joined
16 with our unanimous Board 13 of Queens to reject this
17 ill-advised proposal, as opposed to the paid
18 representatives of the real estate industry and their
19 allies who will benefit from the destruction of the
20 middle class in our city. The fairest way to deal
21 with the City of Yes would be to listen to the
22 community volunteers appointed by the Borough
23 Presidents to the Community Boards of this city.
24 Simply target the plan to those Board areas in those
25 communities who have approved this plan. Those Boards

2 who have thus far voted down this plan that we see as
3 an existential threat to our lives, that we pay for
4 with high taxes and mortgages, can then observe the
5 implementation of the plan in the target areas. If,
6 as the paid real estate representatives claim, the
7 plan works well, then we as a Board should be trusted
8 to do what is right for our neighbors in eastern
9 Queens. If it is the disaster that we foresee...

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
11 expired.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
13 going to hear from Mark Young. Mark, if you can hear
14 me, please unmute, and you may begin.

15 MARK YOUNG: Okay, good evening. My name
16 is Mark Young. I'm the President of the South Midwood
17 Residents' Association in Brooklyn. In our
18 neighborhood, over 15 years ago, the Administration
19 at the time negotiated a rezoning agreement for
20 Flatbush, which upzoned the neighborhood to allow for
21 the creation of new residential units and protect the
22 fabric of the community and, by all accounts, it was
23 a big success. Just in a brief period of time, in
24 this small neighborhood, over 2,000 new apartments
25 and housing units were created. Many of our neighbors

2 feel that this new proposal is a complete betrayal of
3 that agreement. There's two particular areas that our
4 neighborhood association is concerned about and
5 proposes. One is the transit-oriented development
6 proposal because it would allow for the creation and
7 building of three- to five-story apartment buildings
8 on streets that are less than 230 feet long. This
9 proposal seems to be based on a cookie-cutter model
10 based on Manhattan, where the short ends of blocks
11 are multi-use types of thoroughfares. This is not the
12 case in our neighborhood, and it would really destroy
13 the fabric of our neighborhood. The second proposal
14 that's being considered that we oppose would increase
15 the authorized FAR in our neighborhood from 0.5 to 1
16 and, while this might seem to be great for building
17 new affordable housing, in fact, the opposite is
18 true. What it's done in our neighborhood, in the
19 neighboring areas, is allow for single-family wealthy
20 residents to just build large McMansions on their
21 properties, which is completely the opposite of the
22 goal of the City of Yes so I urge you and the other
23 Council Members to oppose those two pieces of the
24 proposal. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
3 going to hear from Joe Enright.

4 JOE ENRIGHT: (INAUDIBLE)

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Can someone please
6 unmute Joe?

7 JOE ENRIGHT: Okay, I'm unmuted?

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, go ahead.

9 JOE ENRIGHT: Okay, thank you. I'm from
10 West Midwood in Victorian Flatbush. We have a mall
11 here on Glenwood Road that's been the town square of
12 this neighborhood for 120 years. It's a 10-foot-wide
13 strip of trees and grass that separates the single
14 east and westbound lanes of Glenwood Road, lanes so
15 narrow that no parking or even standing is permitted.
16 It's four short blocks with dead ends that the Q
17 train cut. It's not a through street, very serene,
18 one of the few public green spaces in our district.
19 It's also the site of our Halloween parade for the
20 past 40 years, and 500 Flatbush kids and their
21 parents will have a ball there next week. Transit-
22 oriented development threatens all that because it's
23 a wide street under City of Yes's definition, and
24 we're told there's no exceptions. Mall or no mall. So
25 at least 20 of the 29 beautiful old homes facing the

2 mall, or all 29 if lots are combined, some with
3 absentee owners who might be open to deals ASAP, will
4 qualify for teardowns by developers to build steel
5 brick multiple dwellings with 10 units each, all
6 unaffordable as-of-right. Throw in two-story backyard
7 ADUs and two-story garages and our population doubles
8 in 10 years. Not a little housing, a lot of housing,
9 all unaffordable. And what about the contextual
10 rezoning of Flatbush that was just mentioned? That
11 doesn't count, we're told. I also call to your
12 attention, again, the rezoning at ZR23.243, which
13 doubles our FAR. We didn't call for that. There was
14 no communication with the Community Board 14 about
15 that. It's a backroom deal. I urge you to
16 investigate. In closing, let the Council, the
17 People's Chamber, devise a better plan we can all
18 support. Please eliminate TOD, ADUs, and district
19 fixes from the zoning resolution.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
21 expired.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
23 going to hear from John Sheridan.

24 JOHN SHERIDAN: Good evening. I was going
25 to spend my time advocating for City Islands Special

2 Purpose District status, but then while I was
3 waiting, I watched a recording of yesterday's hearing
4 and heard Chairman Garodnik state that Special
5 Districts will remain. He was unequivocal about it,
6 convincing me and others that he has no caveats up
7 his sleeve, that there's nothing at all nuanced about
8 what he said, that in fact, the City Islands Special
9 Purpose District will remain. But if, on the other
10 hand, I am mistaken in what I heard, then I would
11 appreciate clarification from the Chair at some point
12 after my time is up. Should he choose not to clarify
13 yesterday's statement, I will take that as
14 affirmation of my initial impression of what was said
15 about Special Purpose Districts like City Island, but
16 more importantly, the record will reflect that
17 affirmation. With the rest of my time then, I want to
18 submit the following. The City of Yes has no close.
19 The foundational theory upon which it rests is
20 misguided and teetering on the absurd, and I want to
21 explain. We were told yesterday, again, that the
22 simple solution to an affordable housing crisis is to
23 build more housing. We heard it today again and
24 again. We were also told in so many words that until
25 now, low-density neighborhoods in this city have been

2 protected by so-called exclusionary zoning
3 regulations that function to price low-income
4 families out of those markets by inflating home
5 values. Remove those regulations, the theory goes,
6 and property values would come down to more
7 affordable levels. But if this is so, if increasing
8 density equates to more affordability, then why is
9 the city's densest borough, Manhattan, the least
10 affordable? By their own logic, Manhattan should be
11 the most affordable borough in this city. It is so
12 simple even a child could see it, and yet here we
13 are. I implore you all to see the naked truth and
14 vote no to the lie that a City of Yes, a little more
15 Manhattan in every neighborhood does not solve the
16 affordability problem, it exacerbates it. The only
17 people who stand to gain from a little more Manhattan
18 in every neighborhood are the developers and their...

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
20 expired.

21 JOHN SHERIDAN: Profit by it at the
22 expense of the rest of us.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

24 JOHN SHERIDAN: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next panel we're
3 going to hear from is Ariana S., Sade Falebita, Carol
4 Donovan, Jack Spadaro, and Jean Hahn. We'll begin
5 with Ariana S.

6 ARIANA S: Hi, can you hear me?

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

8 ARIANA S: Okay. Hi, my name is Ariana. I
9 was born and raised in Brooklyn, and I've lived here
10 most of my 30 years. I work as an engineer with
11 existing buildings and adaptive reuse of buildings. I
12 oppose this, specifically transit-oriented housing,
13 voluntary UAP, and removing parking mandates. I agree
14 that we need more affordable housing in New York
15 City, but this plan is a volume plan, not an
16 affordability plan, based on the misconception that
17 increasing the volume of housing will decrease the
18 cost of housing, which has consistently shown to be
19 untrue in New York. This theory will not work in New
20 York, as it never has, and demand to live in New York
21 will never plateau, so these units will be luxury
22 market rate units, as they have been for the past 10
23 years, the bulk of the new construction. In most
24 neighborhoods in this city, new development has
25 consistently led to skyrocketing of the cost of

2 living, including my neighborhood, where new units
3 are almost 100 percent more than the existing units
4 owned by families and individual owners, not
5 development companies. Yeah, and people in my
6 neighborhood spend hours looking for parking. Parking
7 spaces are going on sale for 90,000 dollars. These
8 are the things that are happening in specific
9 neighborhoods that we're not addressing and
10 overlooking here, and as a young person who makes
11 more than the national average, I can't even afford
12 some of the affordable units in this city, so I think
13 what we need to do is look at what we're defining as
14 affordable, redefine the area that we use for AMI,
15 and consult with existing communities to see how we
16 can actually bring affordable housing into the city
17 and not just bring what developers and a corrupt
18 Administration would like to push forward, as well as
19 people who have come on and, you know, scripted
20 responses but, yeah, so that's my take. I don't think
21 that this has ever been the case in New York. Areas
22 like Williamsburg, Long Island City, and Crown
23 Heights...

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
25 expired.

2 ARIANA S: Thank you. Good night.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Good night. Next, we
4 have Sade Falebita. Sade, if you can hear me, please
5 unmute. Sade.

6 We'll move on to Carol Donovan. Carol, if
7 you can hear me, please unmute.

8 Carol Donovan. Sade Falebita.

9 Let's move on to Jack Spadaro. Jack, if
10 you can hear me, please unmute.

11 JACK SPADARO: I am here.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Go ahead, Jack.

13 JACK SPADARO: Okay, my name is Jack
14 Spadaro. I'm the Vice President of the Bay
15 Improvement Group. It's a coalition of residents and
16 business owners in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. We live
17 in a flood zone. Common sense building would mean no
18 new building in any flood zones but, since Superstorm
19 Sandy, 200 new housing projects have been built on
20 the waterfront alone. The overdevelopment is real,
21 and the housing crisis is false. Our waterfront
22 community, which has a special use district zoning,
23 such as City Island, should be left as is to keep our
24 waterfront neighborhood in the character that it was
25 intended. This planning is meant for hundreds of

2 years, not short term. We are for affordable housing,
3 but this plan does not incorporate that. We are for
4 more housing. The Mayor wants 500,000 more units in
5 this plan over the next 10 years. Currently, without
6 changing one word of the current zoning, we can build
7 5 million more units. The solution should be
8 comprehensive planning with each community
9 individual's needs, and not deleting zoning
10 altogether. And let's be real, zoning will be deleted
11 all over the city. Whether it be historic districts,
12 special use districts, residential and commercial
13 use, it's all gone. Real estate developers will have
14 free reign to do whatever they like. There are
15 estimated to be more than 100,000 empty units of
16 housing right now for private ownership, warehousing
17 of empty apartments, and tens of thousands of empty
18 co-ops and condos across the city. The City of Yes
19 will impact our city forever and will never be
20 unchanged. This will affect generations to come. The
21 biggest real estate grab in our city history is
22 happening now. Please vote no.

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you, your time's
24 expired.

25 JACK SPADARO: Yes, thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
3 person we'll hear from is Jean Hahn.

4 JEAN HAHN: (INAUDIBLE)

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, go ahead Jean.

6 JEAN HAHN: Hi, thank you for staying up
7 so late. My name is Jean Hahn, and I'm a homeowner in
8 Forest Hills, Queens. I am strongly opposed to the
9 City of Yes, which is an ill-conceived plan designed
10 to strip away zoning decisions from local Community
11 Boards because we are not a one-size-fits-all city.
12 There's a saying, never waste a good crisis. Well,
13 City of Yes does this with this zoning proposal.
14 Daylight, air, and open space are important quality-
15 of-life issues which are embedded in our zoning and
16 building codes for a reason. Tossing them to the
17 wayside for City of Yes because we're in a "housing
18 crisis" is akin to throwing the baby out with the
19 bathwater because upzoning does not translate to, or
20 guarantee, more affordable housing. Instead, market
21 and luxury developments get built, pushing low-income
22 residents out. We have all seen examples of this
23 historically and everywhere. If we are truly in a
24 housing crisis, why isn't more being done to put
25 vacant units back on the market where it wouldn't put

2 a strain on our aging infrastructure? Where are the
3 plans for new school buildings, hospitals, police
4 departments, utilities, etc., etc.? Will developers
5 be given freebies when our infrastructure is further
6 overburdened? At the end of the day, we know it will
7 fall on taxpayers who are already struggling with
8 current inflation. I'm opposed to the expansion of
9 transit and town center sites, which would negatively
10 affect the historic and contextual fabric of my low-
11 density neighborhood, which my neighbors and I pay a
12 hefty premium property tax to live in. I'm opposed to
13 permitting ADUs in basements and rear yards as-of-
14 right. Cramped spaces are not quality of life for
15 neither the residents nor their neighbors, and again,
16 brings up the questions of infrastructure. Legalizing
17 illegal basement conversions does not make the space
18 any safer. I'm opposed to eliminating the parking
19 requirement. Many families in Queens rely on cars
20 because we live in transit deserts. To say we don't
21 need parking is discriminatory against those that
22 need a car to get around and those that live in
23 transit deserts, which are pretty much everywhere
24 outside of high-density areas. One other elephant in
25 the room is the class size law, where five out of the

2 17 school districts in Queens have chronic
3 overcrowding. As it is, there aren't enough seats
4 within the districts to accommodate the law, so where
5 do new families that are being built in these multi-
6 story buildings..

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.
8 Thank you.

9 JEAN HAHN: As many have said here, let
10 the people control the housing process with the
11 decision-making at the local Community Board. I
12 strongly urge City Council to..

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time's expired.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
15 have Thomas Caffrey, Israel Peskowitz, Bonnie Harper,
16 and Charles Ober. Thomas Caffrey.

17 THOMAS CAFFREY: You can hear me now?

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, Thomas.

19 THOMAS CAFFREY: You can hear me?

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yeah, go ahead,
21 Thomas.

22 THOMAS CAFFREY: Okay, thank you. Thank
23 you for working late too. My name, as you said, is
24 Thomas Caffrey. I'm the Executive Director of a
25 1,000-member Committee for Environmentally Sound

1 Development. We're on the Upper West Side of
2 Manhattan. We try to support sound development. We
3 strongly oppose this plan because the city needs more
4 affordable housing. This is our main point. But the
5 Mayor's plan completely misses that need, focusing
6 instead on a raft of opportunities for developers to
7 crowd their square feet of rentable and purchasable
8 space into our already overcrowded city. This results
9 in a more crowded city and in spaces potentially
10 available for affordable housing being consumed by
11 further housing for the rich. More sinisterly, as
12 already cited by many other witnesses, it rewards the
13 destruction of now affordable housing with that
14 housing to be replaced by lucrative market rate
15 units. Nowhere in the plan is there a mandate for
16 housing that would be affordable to middle class or
17 poor New Yorkers. No such provision whatsoever, 1,300
18 pages. One speaker after another has first supported
19 COY, C-O-Y, and then added that other or
20 complementary plans could address affordable housing.
21 Why is the Mayor treating the city's number one need,
22 namely affordable housing, as a maybe issue or a
23 number two or number three issue, something we might
24 do in the future after we do this.
25

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
3 has expired.

4 THOMAS CAFFREY: For developers. Thank
5 you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
7 person to testify will be Israel Peskowitz. Israel
8 Peskowitz. Israel, if you can hear me, please unmute
9 and you may begin.

10 ISRAEL PESKOWITZ: Hello, can you hear me?

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

12 ISRAEL PESKOWITZ: Thank you, guys, so
13 much for staying so late. I'm a fourth-generation New
14 Yorker. I've lived in New York City all my life. I'm
15 a member of a Community Board 8 in Queens, but I
16 speak only for myself. I would very much like to be
17 able to afford to live in the city I grew up in. My
18 parents were only able to afford the mortgage on
19 their small attached house they purchased by renting
20 out the basement. This proposal has many good ideas
21 and a few terrible ones. New York City prides itself
22 on being the most diverse city in the world, yet the
23 Council is proposing a one-size-fits-all zoning. I am
24 not opposed to ADUs, to transit oriented development
25 or town center zoning. I, however, am opposed to the

1 removal of parking requirements in transit deserts
2 like East and Queens, to removing ULURP and Community
3 Board oversight, and the lack of affordable housing
4 requirements. I've also noticed that the plan seems
5 to be focused entirely on rentals and not on
6 ownership, which is a vital part of building
7 generational equity. Currently zoning imposes
8 unnecessary parking requirements in Manhattan and
9 downtown Brooklyn, pretending the rest of the city
10 has the same robust transit access as Manhattan and
11 therefore doesn't need cars is just as absurd.

12 (INAUDIBLE) the Queens bus redesign final plan is
13 slated to remove public transit from a neighborhood
14 instead of adding it, but we're still expected to no
15 longer need cars. Not a single study I've seen has
16 cited on cities removing parking requirements looks
17 at the increase in traffic and pollution due to
18 circling for parking or increases in traffic transit
19 times. Closing our eyes and pretending cars don't
20 exist is absurd, if not suicidal. The plan also does
21 not address the need for infrastructure improvements
22 needed to handle increased population. Most people I
23 know in my neighborhood have gotten married and have
24 a few kids and there's not enough housing in their
25

2 area for larger families. With the exception of the
3 UAP, there seems to be nothing in this plan to
4 encourage building anything besides luxury apartments
5 for rich hipsters. It is bizarre that politicians who
6 correctly call out greedy developers suddenly trust
7 these same developers to build housing each neighbor
8 needs instead of fancy gentrification apartments for
9 wealthy hipsters. Please consider voting on this
10 proposal item by item and neighborhood by
11 neighborhood or just voting no. Thank you all for
12 your time and you have a wonderful night.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next will
14 be Bonnie Harper. Bonnie.

15 BONNIE HARPER: Yes, hi.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You can begin.

17 BONNIE HARPER: Good evening and thank you
18 for giving me a chance to speak. My name is Bonnie
19 Harper. I'm a government attorney for a public
20 authority. I'm a homeowner. I am a native New Yorker.
21 I was actually born in Brooklyn. I've lived in
22 Queens. I've lived in Manhattan. I am alarmed at this
23 proposal. I think that the Board has perhaps the best
24 of intentions and their thoughts are laudable but, to
25 be honest with you, this plan is laughable. There is

2 nothing here except to give money away to developers,
3 give land away to developers. It's going to ruin the
4 quality of life in New York. I can't even begin to
5 explain how, and I know many other people have
6 already discussed the fact that our infrastructure is
7 aging. We have water mains that are over 100 years
8 old. They are not going to handle more water. They're
9 breaking. They're being unrepaired. We have a transit
10 system that is over 125 years old that's already at
11 max capacity and inexplicably there is cutbacks in
12 bus service. We cannot seem to expand subway service.
13 We have cut back on so many other City services. The
14 Department of Buildings cannot keep up with current
15 construction. The idea that we're going to have an
16 explosion and all of this unmonitored construction
17 seems like a disaster waiting to happen. We've
18 already had a number of basement apartments flood and
19 people get killed. The idea that we're now going to
20 sanction this somehow seems to fly in the face of
21 reason. We have a city that is in deep trouble
22 environmentally because we've paved over so much. We
23 have the heat island effect which will only go up if
24 we continue to allow this kind of building where we
25 continue to pave over all of our property. Air

2 quality will go down. Our quality of life will go
3 down. Basically, we already have over 8 million
4 people here. We have a lot of untapped housing. I
5 don't know exactly why there is so much property that
6 is being underutilized or unutilized..

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
8 has expired. Thank you.

9 BONNIE HARPER: Vote no.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay the last person
11 on this panel is Charles Ober. Charles if you can
12 hear me you may unmute.

13 Charles.

14 Okay. I'm going to call on Sade Falebita.
15 Sade, if you can hear me please unmute and you may
16 begin.

17 SADE FALEBITA: Hi, can you hear me?

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

19 SADE FALEBITA: Well, good evening and
20 thank you for giving the opportunity to speak. My
21 name is Sade Falebita, and I'm Managing Director of
22 Downtown Community Television Center, also known as
23 DCTV. I ask that you consider supporting the proposed
24 amendment being offered by Council Member Marte to
25 allow non-profit cultural institutions who own and

2 are housed in landmark buildings to transfer their
3 unused development rights within an expanded radius.
4 For DCTV, this is a critical matter. DCTV's building
5 has 75,000 square feet of development rights shared
6 50/50 with the city. However, under the current and
7 proposed City of Yes zoning rules, there are no
8 reception sites available. In 1972, our landmark
9 firehouse was saved from collapse and transformed
10 into a center for documentary education, production,
11 and exhibition. Our mission is to use filmmaking as a
12 tool to catalyze, inform, and empower our communities
13 and, since that time, we've provided over 75,000 New
14 Yorkers with affordable and free filmmaking training
15 and resources. Every year, teens and adults in our
16 programs create award-winning original films that
17 document the critical social issues of our time, and
18 we serve many filmmakers in our new cinema that was
19 opened, Firehouse Cinema, and we screen over 100
20 independent documentaries every single year, and this
21 is work that we hope to continue far into the future,
22 but the rising costs and declining production income
23 really have endangered our existence in our social
24 services. Council Member Marte's proposed expansion
25 of air rights transfers for landmarks creates income

2 for the City, it supports our community services, and
3 the creation of desperately needed affordable housing
4 and so we hope that you will explore and endorse this
5 proposal and thank you for your time.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
7 panel we're going to call on is Roisen Ford, Armand
8 Smigielski (phonetic).

9 ROISEN FORD: I read about the City of Yes
10 with great excitement.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Roisen, Roisen,
12 Roisen, one second. The panel is going to consist of
13 Roisen Ford, Armand Smigielski, Daniel Fischer, and
14 Everett Samuel. Roisen, you may begin.

15 ROISEN FORD: Thank you. Good evening. I
16 read about the City of Yes with great excitement. I
17 know that we need two- and three-bedroom apartments
18 for working families to stay in New York. I'm
19 passionate about that. However, the City of Yes does
20 not address the housing needs of New Yorkers and it
21 is a giveaway to developers. TOD, ADU, and district
22 fixes are not worth the damage they do. We've heard
23 activists grilling Council Members today on the new
24 housing in their Districts. In Flatbush, our 2009
25 rezoning untapped thousands of spots in our community

1 to build and we are fighting to preserve 120-year-old
2 homes that make the character of our community. They
3 don't make these anymore but, if the City of Yes has
4 its way, developers sure will knock them down. Nearly
5 every corner lot in my neighborhood is at risk. Do we
6 criticize a mature redwood forest for having no new
7 trees? Others have claimed that 80 percent of New
8 York voters approve this plan because one poll asked
9 questions like should we "allow homeowners to add
10 small apartments to single one- or two-family homes."
11 No one was asked if we should allow 25-foot-high
12 cottages and yards or if century-old homes on corner
13 lot should be replaced with buildings nearly double
14 the size due to the nearly doubled FAR. That is what
15 TOD, ADU, and district fixes would allow. To the
16 whole City Council, I say fewer than 900 people or
17 0.0001 percent of New Yorkers do not speak for 80
18 percent of New York voters. Similar misleading
19 tactics are employed to make people believe that the
20 City of Yes will provide their family relief. Many
21 speakers have spoken (INAUDIBLE) about their own
22 search for housing. This is deeply personal. We all
23 know people affected by this. Families are leaving
24 because the availability and price but also size and
25

2 quality of housing. Families moving to New Jersey are
3 not going to stay in New York City if offered the
4 chance to rent a studio over a garage. TOD, ADU, and
5 district fixes are just not worth it. I urge the City
6 Council to vote no on transit-oriented development,
7 vote no on ADUs...

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
9 expired.

10 ROISEN FORD: Exempt neighborhoods. Thank
11 you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
13 person we're going to call on is Armand Smigielski.
14 Armand Smigielski, if you can hear me, you may unmute
15 and you may begin.

16 Okay. I'm going to call on again Carol
17 Donovan. Carol Donovan.

18 Is Carol Donovan still there?

19 CAROL DONOVAN: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, go ahead, Ms.
21 Donovan.

22 CAROL DONOVAN: Can you hear me?

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes.

24 CAROL DONOVAN: Thank you for giving me
25 the opportunity to speak tonight. I'm President of

2 Richmondtown and Clarke Avenue Civic Association in
3 Staten Island, and we clearly, as many residents of
4 communities have said, we really ask you please say
5 no to the City of Yes in its entirety. The City of
6 Yes has no provision for affordable housing. It's
7 only more housing and surely housing at market rate.
8 We do not want this to become a slum city with no
9 democracy, no ULURP, no community or Community Board
10 input, no provision for increase in infrastructure
11 capacity. The ADUs, they would rob the ability to
12 absorb rain water in backyards. Climate change has
13 made storms much more intense. We need the backyards.
14 SROs, they encourage the transmission of communicable
15 diseases and are very dangerous. Basement apartments,
16 as we've seen, lives were lost in Hurricane Ida.
17 Basement apartments are deadly. Attic apartments,
18 too, are dangerous. The Department of Buildings is
19 understaffed to review or investigate that these
20 types of apartments would meet any types of codes.
21 Parking spaces are clearly needed. Staten Island has
22 one train for half a million people, which is
23 laughable if they say they want transit-oriented
24 development. How will the people get to work if
25 there's barely a train service? We have extremely

2 scarce bus service. The NYPD, FDNY, EMTs, Department
3 of Buildings, schools, hospitals, they are already
4 strained and understaffed, and Staten Island has no
5 public hospital, which is something that would be
6 needed for people that are at an income bracket where
7 they need affordable housing.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
9 has expired.

10 CAROL DONOVAN: All right. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. We're going
12 to ask Armand Smigielski to please unmute. Armand.

13 Okay. Let's move on to Daniel Fischer.

14 DANIEL FISCHER: Hi. Thank you for your
15 time. I know it's late, so I'll keep my statement
16 short. My name is Daniel Fischer, and I live in
17 Brooklyn District 34. I've lived in the city for
18 eight years, and I'm 26 years old. I'm here to
19 support the City of Yes proposal in its entirety. As
20 Kamala Harris correctly identified, our country needs
21 millions of new housing units to address our
22 affordability crisis. There is no question that New
23 York City needs to do its part towards reaching this
24 goal. City of Yes represents an extremely exciting
25 proposal for me. As someone who plans to spend the

2 rest of my life in the city, this proposal will quite
3 literally change the trajectory of my life and that
4 of my peers as well. Currently, many my age face a
5 lifetime of looming and ever-increasing housing costs
6 with no relief in sight. If we're rent-burdened
7 today, how bad will it be when we're trying to start
8 families or when we want to retire? Today represents
9 a critical moment in which we can take a real step
10 towards reversing this trend. Ambitious, forward-
11 thinking projects like this one are what define this
12 city, and right now we need another one more than
13 ever. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
15 going to hear from Everett Samuel. Everett Samuel.

16 You can press star 6 if you're using your
17 phone. Everett Samuel. Armand Smigielski. Everett
18 Samuel. Do we have Everett Samuel? Do we have Armand
19 Smigielski? Do we have Charles Ober?

20 Okay, I'm going to move on to the next
21 panelists.

22 Anthony Shatimi. Anthony Shatimi. Anthony
23 Shatimi.

24 Okay, I'm going to move on to Andrew
25 Stern.

2 ANDREW STERN: Hi.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Andrew?

4 ANDREW STERN: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right.

6 ANDREW STERN: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You're welcome.

8 ANDREW STERN: Thank you so much, Chair
9 Riley. My name is Andrew Stern, and I live in Lower
10 Manhattan, where I am proud to be represented on this
11 Council by Council Member Carlina Rivera. I want to
12 thank you all for staying up and hearing out
13 everyone's testimony. Earlier, someone quoted Tim
14 Walz, who I hope will be our next Vice President very
15 soon, and I'd like to bring in Tim Walz's quote of my
16 own. We have permitting that takes too long and
17 prohibits or makes more expensive doing renewable
18 energy projects. I think the same thing applies to
19 housing. We put up barriers to make it more
20 affordable. We've built 12 percent more houses in
21 Minneapolis. Prices went down on rent. It's working.
22 While we're at it, I'd also like to quote something
23 that President Obama said at the DNC back in August.
24 If we want to make it easier for young people to buy
25 a home, we need to build more units and clear out the

1 outdated laws that have made it harder to build homes
2 for working people. Frankly, some very well-
3 intentioned laws and regulations at the local level,
4 often generated from the left and from my own party,
5 sometimes are inhibiting the creation of affordable
6 housing, empowering NIMBY attitudes, and making it
7 very difficult to integrate communities and allow
8 people to live close to where they work. I'd like to
9 urge the City Council to adopt all provisions of City
10 of Yes in the strongest form that they can. This plan
11 is designed to work together with each element
12 complementing the others. For instance, the
13 elimination of parking mandates will make affordable
14 housing development easier to finance, while the
15 inclusion of town center zoning will open up new
16 sites for this housing. A lot has been said about the
17 housing benefits of this plan for millions of New
18 Yorkers in need, so I also want to discuss some of
19 the other benefits of this plan besides producing
20 100,000 badly needed new homes. ADUs will provide
21 opportunities not only for naturally affordable
22 housing in Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten
23 Island, but they will also provide a new stream of
24 income for homeowners struggling to pay their
25

2 mortgages. Transit-oriented development will provide
3 new ridership for the MTA, boosting fare revenue and
4 supporting their continued modernization and
5 expansion. Alongside the elimination of parking
6 mandates, it will also enable more New Yorkers to
7 live car-free, reducing the major cost of living and
8 a significant environmental burden.

9 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time
10 has expired. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. We're going
12 to try Charles Ober. Charles Ober. Everett Samuel.
13 Everett Samuel. Anthony Shatimi. Anthony Shatimi.
14 Armand Smigielski. Armand Smigielski.

15 Okay. We'll go to the next panel, which
16 is going to consist of Ryder Kessler, Ramona
17 Ferreyra, J.P. Freely, Lindsay Lamb, Sarah McKenna,
18 and Joanne Gilbert. We'll begin with Ryder Kessler.

19 RYDER KESSLER: Hi there. Can you hear me?

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

21 RYDER KESSLER: All right. Thanks so much
22 for sticking it out tonight and for all the work
23 folks are doing. My name is Ryder Kessler. I'm the
24 Co-Executive Director of Abundance New York, which is
25 an organization that is really a community of New

2 Yorkers who want to end the scarcity and the
3 stagnation that have had this city in a chokehold for
4 decades. It's a lot of younger folks, folks not that
5 young in their 30s, 40s, parents of young kids,
6 people who are trying to make a life in New York but
7 are often left out of our political processes. I want
8 to point to recent research from Boston University
9 about the over-representation of homeowners and older
10 folks in local politics. This is a quote about local
11 elections. Older homeowners are dramatically over-
12 represented in local elections. While racial
13 disparities in turnout and representation are
14 consequential, they pale in comparison with
15 homeowner, renter, and age disparities. That applies
16 to our elections here in New York. It applies to our
17 Community Boards. It applies to hearings like this. I
18 would hope that folks think about the voices that
19 aren't in this room and folks who are often
20 disempowered from political processes, people for
21 whom the status quo is not working. I didn't know
22 that I would be able to speak tonight. I was spending
23 my day supporting the presidential campaign. Andrew
24 mentioned how the presidential ticket is fully behind
25 this agenda. I want to remind folks, they may not

2 believe that 70 percent or 80 percent of New Yorkers
3 want City of Yes for Housing opportunity to pass in
4 full, but the vast majority of folks will be voting
5 for Kamala and Tim Walz either on November 5th or
6 when early voting starts on Saturday. Do make a
7 voting plan. I know the City Council is super
8 majority Democrats and probably will vote for this
9 agenda. The cornerstone of Kamala's housing plan is
10 more supply because the undersupply of housing is
11 what's causing the affordability crisis. President
12 Obama said it at the DNC that regulations like our
13 outdated zoning code and processes like these that
14 take years.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
16 expired. Thank you.

17 RYDER KESSLER: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
19 going to have Ramona Ferreyra. Ramona. Ramona
20 Ferreyra.

21 RAMONA FERREYRA: Hi. Good evening.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Good evening.

23 RAMONA FERREYRA: My name is (INAUDIBLE)

24 and my colonial name is Ramona Ferreyra. I am
25 submitting this testimony on behalf of Save Section

1 9, which fights to rehabilitate and expand public
2 housing throughout the United States. This has been
3 such a disappointing hearing because so many people
4 are putting oppositions to include and honor the
5 average New Yorkers. This plan does not offer
6 affordable housing to the average New Yorker, and it
7 does not ensure that you will not be discriminated
8 against, face unfair rental increases, and become a
9 fabric of the communities that we're talking about.
10 What does that is public housing under Section 9.
11 NYCHA is the only property manager in New York City
12 that provides truly affordable housing for New
13 Yorkers earning up to 120,000 dollars a year. Our
14 rents are capped at 30 percent of our income. We
15 never face unfair increases. We are supported with
16 tenant development and empowerment leading to union
17 jobs. NYCHA supports BIPOC, the disabled like myself,
18 and elderly New Yorkers, and it gives us talent such
19 as Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor, Marvin Gaye, Nas,
20 and Jay-Z. But it's being disposed of via
21 privatization in New York City through the project-
22 based Section 8 program and the Trust. In order to
23 revert this housing crisis, I encourage you to invest
24 in Section 9 public housing, repair 7,000 units at a
25

2 cost of 45,000 dollars to each taxpayer instead of
3 the 90,000 dollars that developers get, and remember
4 that public housing is the program that provides
5 housing security, affordability.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
7 up.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thanks. The next
9 panelist will be James "J.P." Freeley.

10 JAMES FREELEY: Hi. Good evening. Thanks
11 for sticking through it. I saw you at 9 o'clock this
12 morning and you are still so good job with that. To
13 quote Nancy Reagan, just say no. I could end it
14 there, but I'm just going to add one more thing
15 because I know you look like you're falling asleep
16 but...

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I'm wide awake.

18 JAMES FREELEY: According to the 2023 New
19 York City Housing Vacancy Survey as well as ANHD,
20 there are over 700,000 rent-burdened New Yorkers that
21 need affordable housing of less than 1,100 dollars a
22 month. That's just an absurd number, and City of Yes
23 for Housing Opportunity does not even get there. I'll
24 say it again. 703,000 rent-burdened households.
25 Households need units for less than 1,100 a month.

2 Currently, according to the Housing Vacancy Survey,
3 there are only 2,300 available so you've got to
4 figure out how to get from 2,300 under 1,100 dollars
5 a month to 700,000 under 1,100 dollars a month, and
6 that's not my numbers. That's according to the
7 Housing Vacancy Survey and ANHD and such. It's all
8 available online. Just say no. Have a good night.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You too. Next, we'll
10 have Lindsay Lamb.

11 LINDSAY LAMB: Hey, I'll try to make this
12 quick because, by golly, it's late.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thanks.

14 LINDSAY LAMB: Yeah, I don't know how you
15 guys are doing it. I keep getting on and off. But
16 really quickly, I'm Lindsay Lamb. I'm from Prospect
17 Park South, and I'm on the Prospect Park South
18 Association. I had a full testimony based on transit-
19 oriented development but, realistically, when I've
20 been listening to other people talk, what this has
21 really made me realize is one size doesn't fit all
22 when it comes to rezoning, and one size never really
23 fits all. I'm 5'2", so everything one size is way too
24 big. This was particularly highlighted with all of
25 the parking arguments. Parking is great in some

2 places, not great in others. Personally, my biggest
3 concern is the transit-oriented development.
4 Historically, TOD initiatives have been linked to
5 gentrification and displacement from families and
6 long-standing community members. We've seen this in
7 Austin. We've seen it in Minneapolis. We've seen it
8 in every case that people have talked about transit-
9 oriented development. While there is an argument that
10 supply increases, it reduces rents, realistically,
11 this is just a land grab for developers. It's by
12 developers for developers. And, you know, really just
13 stop there and give you your time back because I
14 think it's way too late for us to keep going, but I
15 think one size fits all is not a good plan for
16 anyone.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Lindsay.
18 Next, we're going to have Sarah McKenna.

19 SARAH MCKENNA: Thank you so much. I'm
20 Sarah McKenna. I'm calling in from Victorian
21 Flatbush. I want to echo the voices that have come
22 before me today. The city needs affordable housing,
23 but this is not a plan to achieve that. The City of
24 Yes plan has no mandates for affordable housing, but
25 it does meet the needs of developers for more land.

2 It does not present a viable solution to an issue
3 that is becoming more pressing every year. I'm
4 calling in, as I said, from Flatbush, from Victorian
5 Flatbush, and as a homeowner, I would likely profit
6 from this plan, right? I could expand my home. I
7 could put rental units in my garage and my basement,
8 which both flood regularly. There would really be no
9 requirement for me to charge affordable rents for
10 those spaces, and there would be no incentive for me
11 to fix up those spaces unless I expected a higher
12 rent. That's basically the plan that you guys have
13 presented us with, and it doesn't make any sense.
14 We've worked together as a community to put forward
15 the 2009 rezoning plan for our neighborhood, and it
16 did result, as many have said before me, in 2,000 new
17 units. It was seen as a great success, and it was the
18 outcome of a community working together. One question
19 I have is, why aren't we taking advantage of the
20 massive real estate opportunity we have after the
21 pandemic lockdown in Midtown Manhattan, where we have
22 huge office buildings that are going underutilized
23 and a societal shift that's not going to change? Why
24 don't we put the developers to work to reimagine
25 those huge buildings to create more livable,

2 affordable spaces for our New Yorkers so that we can
3 really solve this problem? Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
5 going to call on Joan Gilbert. Joan Gilbert?

6 JOAN GILBERT: Yes. Good evening. Thank
7 you so very much. Thanks for staying up so late.
8 Appreciate it.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You're welcome.

10 JOAN GILBERT: So, my name is Joan
11 Gilbert, and I'm a resident of Flatlands. I'm in
12 District 46. Flatlands is a southeast section of
13 Brooklyn, and this section of Brooklyn boasts the
14 largest homeowner occupancy in Brooklyn. Most of the
15 houses are one and two families. These were homes in
16 generation, from different generation to generation,
17 and one of the things from the City of Yes Housing is
18 going to do is strip families from generational
19 wealth. Owning your home is one of the ways that
20 generational wealth is created. The other issue with
21 the plan is that there are lots of proposals for
22 building and building, but there aren't any mandates
23 for infrastructure. We, in this area, in Flatlands,
24 we have an electrical grid problem. We also have
25 flooding issues, and it's not just when it's a

2 hurricane. People are still devastated by Sandy and
3 Ida. People have died in their basements so this
4 business about not having any mandates for
5 infrastructure is a big no with the City of Yes. The
6 other issue I had in mind was what sustainable
7 measures do these proposals offer. I am concerned
8 about the increased construction, lack of green
9 spaces, and the density which this can cause.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.
11 Thank you.

12 JOAN GILBERT: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
14 panel I'm going to call up is Ken A., Peter Tooma,
15 Neil Miller, Sachi Takahashi, and Zachary Thomas. Ken
16 A., you may begin, if you can hear me. Ken?

17 KEN A.: Hello, can you hear me?

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yeah, I can hear you,
19 Ken.

20 KEN A.: So, yeah, I've been living in New
21 York for about 13 years. I was born in New York,
22 moved away, and then moved back, and I'm a big
23 supporter of the City of Yes for TOD, UAP, Office to
24 Resi conversions, and all that jazz. So, tonight I'm
25 going to be sleeping good. Hopefully that the City

2 Council will be voting for Yes on City of Yes, and
3 that's my testimony, and I'll let the next one speak.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Thank you. Next,
5 we're going to call on Peter Tooma.

6 PETER TOOMA: Hi, everyone. My name is
7 Peter Tooma. I live in Bedside, Brooklyn, New York,
8 District 36, and I am likewise here to express my
9 support for City of Yes. I think this, as everyone
10 has said, New York City lacks housing and or housing
11 supply, and I think it's hurting the dynamism of the
12 city so this is a great start to get us on a path to
13 build more supply, which will push rents down, and I
14 also think it provides alternative housing for people
15 that need it and for people that can do alternative
16 accommodations so I'm here to express my yes for City
17 of Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
19 going to call on Neil Miller.

20 NEIL MILLER: Great. Thank you so much.
21 Just a quick comment since it's late. I support the
22 City of Yes plan. Not like it really matters, but I'm
23 a fourth-generation New Yorker. My parents grew up in
24 Queens and Whitestone in Jamaica, and the homes that
25 they lived in provided an opportunity for my family

2 to get ahead. Those opportunities are out of reach
3 for too many people now, including New Yorkers that
4 are coming to start a new life here today, and
5 there's a lot of great elements in the plan to
6 recreate that opportunity. There was a lot of process
7 with this plan. I sat through all of my Community
8 Board meetings, more than 10-hours' worth, with
9 presentations from City Staff and outside
10 consultants, and they did a really great job
11 answering tough questions that we asked. I learned a
12 lot about the proposal. To address some of the other
13 comments that I heard. This doesn't do anything for
14 affordability. The biggest impact this will have on
15 Midtown, where I currently live, is Universal
16 Affordability Preference, UAP, which will be a great
17 step. Also, some other commenters mentioned the need
18 to enable office conversions. I have some great news,
19 that's in the plan. It's in City of Yes. I hope that
20 City Council votes to move this forward. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
22 have Sachi Takahashi. Sachi?

23 SACHI TAKAHASHI: Thank you so much. My
24 name is Sachi. I live in Manhattan. I'm on the board
25 of Open New York, a non-profit pro-housing

2 organization that advocates for more housing
3 throughout the state, I serve on Manhattan's CB5, I'm
4 a renter, I am a non-profit professional, and I'm
5 speaking in my capacity as an individual, not on
6 behalf of CB5 or any other group. We've heard it said
7 many, many times today that New York is in a housing
8 crisis, and the City of Yes for Housing Opportunity
9 is a critical citywide solution. I support the entire
10 policy package in the City of Yes for Housing
11 Opportunity, and in particular, the Universal
12 Affordability Preference, since it creates permanent
13 and affordable housing and works hand-in-hand with
14 State tax breaks to bring more housing and especially
15 more affordable housing to our community. I also
16 especially support allowing office-to-residential
17 conversion. I spend most of my time in Midtown, which
18 is an area that would really benefit from having this
19 option and, again, this policy works hand-in-hand
20 with the State's program to pay for affordable
21 housing in office-to-residential conversions, but the
22 City needs to pass these zoning changes so that we
23 can take advantage of these benefits and get new
24 affordable housing in our community. I also think the
25 policy for landmarks to be able to transfer air

2 rights more flexibly is also really smart. It's a
3 best practice that marries the goals of historic
4 preservation with the evolving needs of a community
5 and the evolving financial needs of our historic
6 institutions. Thank you so much for your time and
7 consideration of these policies that make sure New
8 York City isn't just the best city in the world, but
9 also that it's accessible and inclusive for anyone
10 who wants to live here. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
12 going to hear from Zachary Thomas.

13 ZACHARY THOMAS: Hi, everyone. I'm Zachary
14 Thomas. I'm a member of Manhattan Community Ward 3.
15 I'm also on the Parks Committee, but I'm here
16 speaking on my own behalf. I'm also a deacon at 87th
17 Street Baptist Church nearby Thompson Square Park. We
18 recently celebrated 50 years serving East Village and
19 Alphabet City. We are a neighborhood church, although
20 many of our members come from deep Brooklyn and
21 Queens to go to church on Sunday morning. We just had
22 a young couple move out of the city due to high
23 housing costs to move in with a family member out of
24 state. Institutions like my church need housing
25 reform like City of Yes to ensure the church has

2 steady membership for another 50 years. National
3 leaders like President Biden and Vice President
4 Harris have made it clear we need to build more
5 housing to address our housing crisis, and I agree
6 with lifelong New Yorkers like (INAUDIBLE). We need
7 City of Yes. Please vote Yes in its full form. Thank
8 you. Good night.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
10 panel I'm going to call up is Amit Bagga, Victoria
11 Hillstrom, and Charles Ober. We'll begin with Amit
12 Bagga. Amit Bagga.

13 AMIT BAGGA: Good evening, Council Member
14 Riley and the Committee. I don't know if you can see
15 me. If you can't, I will be happy to speak to you
16 nonetheless. My name is Amit Bagga. I am a very proud
17 resident of Sunnyside, Queens, and I am a native New
18 Yorker. I was born and raised, Council Member Riley,
19 very close to your Council District in the great
20 neighborhood of Pelham Gardens in the Bronx, a one-
21 to-three-family-zoned neighborhood, very much like
22 the one that are the types of neighborhoods where
23 most of this opposition is coming from. I would argue
24 it's actually even a little bit nicer than some of
25 the neighborhoods where some of this opposition is

1 coming from. I first want to just quickly start out
2 by thanking the great, noble, and brilliant public
3 servants, Leila Bozorg, Genevieve Michel, Deputy
4 Mayor Maria Torres-Springer, and Chair Garodnik for
5 their tireless service over many decades for this
6 city. They have been working on housing issues for a
7 long time. This is a plan that is incredibly well
8 thought out and puts New Yorkers at the heart of what
9 it does. I have had the great honor and pleasure of
10 serving the people of New York over 17 years in
11 public service, federal, city, and state government,
12 but I am speaking to you today entirely in a personal
13 capacity. My parents, who are now in their 80s, fled
14 a very horrific war in 1947 where they had to cross
15 borders and ultimately found their way to New York
16 City and to the Bronx in the early 1970s. My mother
17 was a psychiatric social worker who served the State
18 of New York for nearly 50 years. My father was a
19 junior engineer. They were able to buy a home in
20 Pelham Gardens at the very end of the 1970s with the
21 incomes that they had at the time precisely because
22 New York City, in that moment, was providing a
23 sufficient amount of housing for the people who were
24 seeking lives and livelihoods that were better than
25

2 what they had. People who had come from all over the
3 world, who had escaped famine, war, lack of economic...

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
5 expired.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
7 going to hear from Charles Ober. Charles. Charles.
8 Are you there, Charles? Charles.

9 CHARLES OBER: Am I unmuted now?

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yeah, we finally got
11 you, Charles. There you go. Go ahead.

12 CHARLES OBER: I'm sorry. I even changed
13 computers trying to connect. CHAIRPERSON RILEY: It's
14 okay.

15 CHARLES OBER: Again, Charles Ober. I'm
16 the Vice President of the Ridgewood Property Owners
17 and Civic Association. I'm also a Vice President of
18 the Queen's Civic Congress. I serve on Community
19 Board five. I can't speak for Ridgewood Property
20 Owners and the Queen's Civic Congress, but the City
21 of Yes is not a proposal for affordable housing. We
22 actually do support (INAUDIBLE) in Ridgewood, Queens.
23 We are a high-density neighborhood of 80,000
24 residents with 2-, 3-, 4-, 5-, 12-unit buildings, 20-
25 unit buildings. We did have a very substantial number

2 of rent-stabilized apartments who have been pushed
3 out by developers so the number of affordable housing
4 has dropped tremendously. However, our members rent
5 to tenants that they've had for many years and charge
6 affordable rent. We are now getting inundated by
7 offers from developers and equity companies to sell
8 out our properties, and it's obviously gone way up
9 since this City of Yes proposal. Two-family houses
10 can now become four-family, three families can become
11 six-family, six units can become 12. Framed buildings
12 that are underutilized can be torn down and five and
13 six-story buildings can be built, but money goes to
14 money. Developers...

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Thank you. Your time's
16 expired.

17 CHARLES OBER: Okay, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thanks, Charles. Next,
19 we're going to have Victoria Hillstrom. Victoria?

20 VICTORIA HILLSTROM: (INAUDIBLE)

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

22 VICTORIA HILLSTROM: Hi, thank you very
23 much for having me. My name is Victoria Hillstrom,
24 and I am calling to oppose this absolute nightmare. I
25 am a noted designer. My work has been published. I

2 passed all three of the loft bills over our case in
3 Tribeca, which we testified at the MIH hearings. It
4 was an absolute nightmare. I would just like to say
5 that the Lower Manhattan (INAUDIBLE) tenants,
6 dwellers, absolutely are opposed to the SoHo zoning
7 in a plan that was approved for City Council to
8 demolish 185 rent-stabilized buildings, to alter
9 (INAUDIBLE) to office space, big box retail, six-
10 million-dollar units, restaurants, and hotels. This
11 is an extremely important class of housing that
12 supports our billion-dollar industry of fashion, film
13 and TV, music, entertainment, and the arts, where we
14 live/work based on zoning for manufacturing. The
15 notion that City Council or City Planning would
16 literally take this important class of housing and
17 alter it for any amount of money will put our
18 billion-dollar industry out of business so the notion
19 that City Planning would seek to charge artists a tax
20 that developers are not charged is discriminatory.
21 The notion that artists that converted de facto
22 multiple dwellings into...

23 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
25 panel I'm going to call on is Nicholas Oo, and

2 there's an unidentified iPhone user. Can you please
3 use the raise hand function so we can submit you into
4 the Zoom so you can testify?

5 We'll begin first with Nicholas Oo.

6 NICHOLAS OO: Hey, can you hear me?

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

8 NICHOLAS OO: Hi, my name is Nicholas Oo.

9 I support the City of Yes Housing Opportunity. I live
10 in Astoria. I immigrated to New York more than a
11 decade ago. I'm a citizen voter. It's simple. We need
12 to build more housing to slow rent growth and lower
13 rents. Minneapolis rents went down when they built
14 more. Austin rents went down in the past year because
15 they built more. Minneapolis rents went down 10
16 percent because they got rid of parking mandates. If
17 we want people of all walks of life, all backgrounds
18 to be able to live here, we need to build more
19 housing. We're currently in a game of musical chairs.
20 There aren't enough chairs for everyone, and the
21 highest bidders get the chairs. We need to have more
22 chairs. We just need to get out of the way and not
23 try to slow things down. We need to get things to go
24 fast. There's no time to slow down. We're in a half-
25 million-unit shortage, and this will get us 100,000,

2 which is a good start, and we just need to do more.

3 Thank you. I support this plan.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. We're
5 getting more people that are signing up, so the next
6 person is Kevin LaCherra. Kevin LaCherra, if you can
7 hear me, please unmute.

8 KEVIN LACHERRA: Can you hear me?

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

10 KEVIN LACHERRA: Great. Thank you very
11 much. Yeah, thank you very much. I'm just here to
12 state my support for the City of Yes. My name is
13 Kevin LaCherra. I'm a fourth-generation Green Pointer
14 and a fifth-generation New Yorker. My great-great-
15 grandparents were Italians who came through Castle
16 Garden 145 years ago next week. At the time, there
17 were plenty of people in the city who opposed them
18 being here, and I thank God every day that New York
19 City had a space for them, and I thank God that New
20 York City has a space for me. I live in Green Point.
21 I'm a proud Green Pointer. Green Point currently has
22 a population of about 42,000 people. When my grandpa
23 was born here in 1924, there were over 75,000 people
24 living in Green Point, and our city has always been a
25 place where people have been able to make their home,

2 build their lives, and I think that's what this is
3 ultimately about, the ability for our city to remain
4 what it has always been, right, you know, which is
5 that beacon, the Statue of Liberty, the shining city
6 on the hill, and all that so very heavily in support
7 of City of Yes. Thank you all for sticking with this
8 hearing as long as you have. I just got in from a
9 long day so I'm glad it's still going, and thank you
10 very much.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There is an
12 unidentified iPhone user, number ending in 5872. If
13 your number is ending in 5872, please use the star 9
14 function to raise your hand, and then the star 6
15 function to unmute, and also there is a Zoom user.
16 You have 30 seconds.

17 The next panelist we're going to call up
18 is Eric Miao.

19 ERIC MIAO: Hi. Thank you for doing this
20 so late. I just wanted to call and speak on behalf of
21 the proposal. So, I grew up in apartments. I've lived
22 in New York now for 17 years. I help run a business
23 that employs about a thousand people, and I think the
24 number one issue that we see is people want a space
25 to be able to live that is affordable, to be able to

2 raise a family, and to stay in the city, and so
3 anything that is citywide that I think is proposing
4 somewhat straightforward, sensible, modest things
5 that create more housing, long-term housing, is a
6 huge positive, definitely has the chance, probably
7 the likelihood to be the most significant thing that
8 this Administration is able to do, I think, for the
9 average person who lives in New York, so I just
10 wanted to call and say thank you to folks who have
11 been introducing this. That's all I've got. Thank you
12 very much. I hope that this passes, and I hope that
13 the Council votes for it in full.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I'm going
15 to take a two-minute pause.

16 The next person we're going to call up is
17 Peter Estes. Peter, if you can hear me, please
18 unmute.

19 Peter, if you can hear me, please unmute.

20 PETER ESTES: Okay, I should be unmuted.
21 Can you hear me?

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thanks. You may begin.

23 PETER ESTES: Great. Hi, and thank you
24 all. I really appreciate you being up so late and
25 committed to the process. I might have to move to

2 your District, Council Member. So, my name's Peter.

3 I'm a student living in Brooklyn here to speak in

4 support of City of Yes. I'll keep it pretty brief and

5 just say that City of Yes for Housing Opportunity is

6 a really massive undertaking, and it's a chance for

7 New York to do something really meaningful. We need

8 to go further than just this zoning reform, but this

9 is an exciting opportunity to make a difference in

10 addressing our housing crisis. A few things that I

11 think I heard in other people's testimony today. It's

12 important to note that City of Yes is not one-size-

13 fits-all. There was significant thought given to

14 differences between low-density and high-density

15 districts, if you look closely at the plan, and I

16 think that those are borne out, and it's pretty clear

17 that the amount of homes that are projected to be

18 added, even at the higher end in some districts, is

19 (INAUDIBLE) enough to cause any infrastructure

20 problems or exacerbate existing ones, which should be

21 dealt with. I've also heard a lot of concern over

22 parking, and I think it's really important to just

23 emphasize the point that developers are still going

24 to build parking where there's some demand for

25 parking. There's nothing preventing them from doing

2 that. And it will actually, well, recent studies have
3 shown that removing parking mandates can
4 significantly boost the production of affordable
5 units, increased by, like, 36 percent in areas where
6 parking requirements were lifted, according to a
7 Regional Plan Association study that came out just a
8 few years ago. It's also just important that we
9 collectively nudge ourselves towards using public
10 transit. Third, UAP combined with state incentives is
11 a huge game-changer. If we'd had UAP in place 10
12 years ago, it would be like we had built another
13 year's worth...

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time's expired.
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
17 panelists we're going to call up are Pedro Rodriguez,
18 Peter Estes, and the Unknown Caller, ending at 1578.
19 Pedro Rodriguez, you may unmute and you may begin.

20 PEDRO RODRIGUEZ: Hi, can you hear me?

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

22 PEDRO RODRIGUEZ: Hi, thank you so much
23 for the opportunity. My name is Pedro Rodriguez, and
24 I have lived in New York City for over two decades. I
25 currently live in Forest Hills, Queens. I am a

1 father, a husband, a Dominican immigrant, and a
2 member of Queens Community Ward 6. My parents moved
3 here in the '90s, and I came here in 2002 at the age
4 of 12. I lived in Section 8 in the Bronx until they
5 moved out of my parents' place after college. I was
6 the first member of my family to go to college, which
7 helped me buy a place in Forest Hills in 2019, but
8 the rest of my family couldn't, and they left New
9 York City in large part because of the housing
10 crisis. I've lost many friends over the years, and
11 now my current friends are considering leaving
12 because of the housing crisis. This is something
13 every New Yorker has experienced, even those who
14 oppose more housing. For this reason, I support City
15 of Yes, especially the part of lifting parking
16 minimums. I mean, I get it. I am a driver myself, so
17 I get the frustration of not finding parking when you
18 need it, but keeping parking minimums does not help
19 with that. They increase the number of cars in the
20 city, making traffic worse and making housing more
21 expensive. Instead, the City should increase scalable
22 transportation options, such as bus lanes and micro-
23 mobility. I get that current residents get to vote,
24 such as myself, but let's not forget that we depend
25

2 on future generations to keep the city going. My son
3 is 18 months old right now. Will he be able to afford
4 to live in the city in 20-plus years? Will we still
5 have a housing crisis then? We cannot continue to say
6 that we are living in a housing crisis and then do
7 nothing about it. I call on the Council to keep the
8 proposal as is, to side with the overwhelming
9 majority of New Yorkers who support more housing, and
10 to side with President Obama and Vice President
11 Harris when they call for the removal of local
12 restrictions on housing construction earlier this
13 year. That is my statement. Please vote yes on this
14 critical proposal, and good night.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The next
16 three callers end in 5872, 1578, and there's a Zoom
17 user. Once again, the next three are 5872, 1578, and
18 unknown Zoom user.

19 We're going to begin with 5872. Please
20 press star six to unmute yourself. The phone number
21 ending in 5872.

22 Okay, you can submit your testimony
23 through landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: Oh, I...

25 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay, go ahead.

2 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you. I'm just
3 listening. I don't know why I'm showing up as a
4 speaker, but I appreciate your time this evening.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we're
7 going to call on 1578. 1578, please press star six.
8 1578, can you please press star six?

9 Okay, we're going to go to the Zoom user.
10 Zoom user, can you please unmute yourself? Zoom user,
11 can you please unmute yourself?

12 Okay, we're going to go to David Gordon
13 on Zoom. David Gordon, can you please unmute
14 yourself?

15 DAVID GORDON: Hello, can you hear me?

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

17 DAVID GORDON: Okay, thank you so much. I
18 just want to reiterate my support for the City of Yes
19 zoning proposal. This is the biggest proposal for
20 upzoning and zoning for new housing in at least half
21 a century. This will be incredible for young people
22 like myself, who though I am lucky enough to live in
23 New York City now, I don't know if I'll be able to
24 live in New York City forever given the high cost of
25 rent. I especially want to bring attention like the

2 previous speaker to eliminating parking minimums. We
3 know from research and from just looking around our
4 already congested city that cars are one of the
5 biggest things that are in the way of housing, and
6 it's a shame that for the city with the best transit
7 system in America and one of the best transit systems
8 in the world that we still mandate that apartments
9 have housing. Thank you so much for this testimony. I
10 very much encourage my Council Member and all of the
11 Council Members on this Committee and in the City
12 Council to vote yes on City of Yes. This is the most
13 important vote they will take this year. Thank you so
14 much.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. This panel
16 is excused. We're going to go to Raul Rivera in
17 Chambers. Raul, you may begin. You have two minutes,
18 Raul.

19 RAUL RIVERA: Good evening. My name is
20 Raul Rivera. I'm a native New Yorker. I want to talk
21 about the 1964 Civil Rights Act, discrimination,
22 public spaces, and housing. If any Council Member is
23 for the City of Yes, they are discriminating against
24 the New Yorker. That's how I feel. I also want to
25 address Council Member Salamanca. He is the Chair.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Raul, it's midnight.
3 Please keep it to...

4 RAUL RIVERA: I reclaim my time. I'm going
5 to.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Go ahead.

7 RAUL RIVERA: You're referring all the
8 testimony that people submit to his Committee.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes.

10 RAUL RIVERA: I want to speak on the fact
11 that he is the Chair to the Committee on Land Use,
12 and Eric Adams is indicted right now, and this is his
13 proposal, right, the City of Yes, and I think he's
14 gaslighting people, and I don't know why we have so
15 much testimony when he's under indictment, and this
16 is his program, this is his proposal. This should not
17 pass. It should not pass at all, and the fact that
18 also I want to bring out the fact that Salamanca's
19 wife received a job, right, she received a job, and
20 it's questionable there because Salamanca is the
21 Chair to the Committee on Land Use, and we reported
22 him to the Conflict of Interest Board. He knows it. I
23 was here, and I testified against that, so it's very
24 suspect the way Adams is going, the way Salamanca,
25 his wife is getting a job, and he's the Chair to the

2 Committee on Land Use. We just want to put that out
3 there. If you're a City Council member and you're for
4 the City of Yes, you're not for the New Yorker.
5 You're discriminating against us, and you're
6 violating the 1964 Civil Rights Act. You might not
7 think that's true, but that is exactly what's
8 happening. I was here this morning, and what we had
9 outside there was nothing but non-profits. HTC,
10 Richard Morocco, all these non-profits were there,
11 and they're nothing but lobbyists, and we say no to
12 the City of Yes today, tomorrow, forever, and I'll
13 have you know, too, I am currently homeless. I am a
14 homeless New Yorker trying to survive in the city I
15 was born in, and it's disgusting. In this City
16 Council, we have blacks, we have Puerto Ricans, we
17 have Dominicans, and it's our own people failing us,
18 our own people. It's not the white man. It's not
19 white supremacy, and it's not Donald Trump. It's our
20 own people.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay, we're going to
22 stand at ease for about 30 seconds to see if anyone
23 else is going to pop in and testify or sign up online
24 and testify.

2 All right, there being no one else who
3 signed up to testify in person or online, I will
4 proceed to close this hearing.

5 As a reminder, if you were not able to
6 testify today, you can submit written testimony over
7 the next three days by submitting an email to
8 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

9 That concludes a very long but very
10 informative hearing. It was critical that we hear
11 from all of you about this important proposal to
12 address the housing shortage that the city is facing
13 and the need for more affordable housing. We will
14 take into consideration everything that was said
15 today in evaluating the Administration's proposal
16 over the next month.

17 I would like to thank the members of the
18 public who took the time out, stayed in here to
19 testify, stayed online to testify, my Colleagues that
20 came here today. A special shoutout to the
21 Subcommittee Counsel and the Land Use Team that are
22 still here and the Council Staff that are still here.
23 A special shoutout to DCP that's still here as well.
24 I also want to give a huge shoutout to the Sergeant-
25 at-Arms who did a tremendous job today. We really

2 truly appreciate you all. A special shoutout to
3 Chelsea Kelly, the Deputy Director of Planning and
4 Land Use and her intake team, and for everyone else
5 who participated in today's hearing, we could have
6 not done it without you. This meeting is hereby
7 adjourned. [GAVEL]

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

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 October 30, 2024