

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES, AND ELECTIONS 1  
CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGS, AND  
ELECTIONS

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June 9, 2022  
Start: 10:48 a.m.  
Recess: 12:02 p.m.

HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING - COUNCIL CHAMBERS -  
CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Keith Powers, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Adrienne E. Adams  
Joseph C. Borelli  
Justin L. Brannan  
Gale Brewer  
Selvena Brooks-Powers  
Crystal Hudson  
Rafael Salamanca  
Pierina Ana Sanchez

A P P E A R A N C E S

Leila Bozorg

1 COMMITTEE ON RULES, PRIVILEGES, AND ELECTIONS 3

2 SERGEANT BIONDO: Good morning, everyone.  
3 We're going to start our hearing today so at this  
4 time will all Sergeants start their recordings?

5 COMPUTER: Recording in progress.

6 SERGEANT BIONDO: Recording to the  
7 computer underway.

8 SERGEANT PEREZ: Cloud recording has  
9 started.

10 SERGEANT BIONDO: Thank you. Good morning,  
11 and welcome to today's hybrid New York City Council  
12 hearing for the Committee on Rules, Privileges, and  
13 Elections.

14 At this time, would all panelists please  
15 turn on their video for verification purposes?

16 To minimize disruptions upon speaking,  
17 please place all electronic devices to vibrate or  
18 silent mode.

19 If you'd like to submit testimony, please  
20 send via email to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Again,  
21 if you'd like to submit testimony, send to  
22 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov).

23 Thank you for your cooperation. Chair, we  
24 are ready to begin.

25

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: [GAVEL] Good morning,  
3 and welcome, everyone, to the Committee on Rules,  
4 Privileges, and Elections. I'm Keith Powers. I'm the  
5 Chair of this Committee.

6 Before we begin the hearing, I want to  
7 introduce the Council Members of this Committee who  
8 have joined us today. We're joined by Minority Leader  
9 Joe Borelli. We're joined by Council Member Justin  
10 Brannan, Council Member Gale Brewer, Council Member  
11 Selvena Brooks-Powers, Council Member Crystal Hudson.  
12 We're going to hold there for one second.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All Members online.  
14 We're going to stand at ease for a moment to work out  
15 some audio issues. Thank you for your patience.

16 SERGEANT PEREZ: This is Sergeant-at-Arms  
17 Rafael Perez. Sergeant Biondo, can you hear me on the  
18 Zoom?

19 SERGEANT BIONDO: Yes, I can hear you.

20 SERGEANT PEREZ: Thank you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Okay. We're going to  
22 keep going. Once more, we're joined by, I'm going to  
23 do this one more round, Minority Leader Joe Borelli,  
24 Council Member Justin Brannon, Council Member Gale  
25 Brewer, Council Member Selvena Brooks-Powers, Council

2 Member Crystal Hudson, Council Member Rafael  
3 Salamanca, Council Member Pierina Sanchez, and we  
4 will be momentarily joined by our Speaker, Adrienne  
5 Adams.

6 Can I ask folks to please mute? Thank  
7 you.

8 I want to also today acknowledge our  
9 Rules Committee Counsel Lance Polivy and also filling  
10 in, David Seitzer, staff members of the Council's  
11 Investigative Unit, Francesca Dellavecchia, Director  
12 of the Compliance and Investigations Unit,  
13 Investigators Alycia Vassell and Ramses Boutin, and,  
14 of course, always Chuck Davis who is here somewhere.

15 Today, the Rules Committee will consider  
16 the nomination of Leila Bozorg to the City Planning  
17 Commission. Miss Bozorg has been nominated by the  
18 Manhattan Borough President, Mark Levine. Should she  
19 be appointed, she'll be eligible to serve the  
20 remainder of a 5-year term that expires on June 30,  
21 2024.

22 Before we begin, just a little bit of  
23 background on the City Planning Commission. Pursuant  
24 to the New York City Charter, the City Planning  
25 Commission must consist of 13 members with 7

2 appointments which include the appointments of the  
3 Chair and made the Mayor, 1 appointment each made by  
4 the Public Advocate and each Borough President. All  
5 members except the Chair are subject to the advice  
6 and consent of the City Council. According to the  
7 Charter, the members should be chosen for their  
8 independence, integrity, and civic commitment. CPC  
9 members other than the Chair are not considered  
10 regular city employees, and there is no limitation on  
11 the number of terms a CPC member may serve. However,  
12 CPC members are prohibited from holding any other  
13 city office while serving on the CPC. CPC has several  
14 responsibilities, and some of their duties include  
15 engaging in planning, focusing on the city's orderly  
16 growth, improvement and future development which  
17 involve considerations concerning appropriate  
18 resources for housing, business, industry,  
19 recreation, and culture, overseeing and coordinating  
20 environmental reviews mandated by the State's  
21 Environmental Conservation Law, preparing required  
22 reports, and also establishing various rules  
23 including establishing minimum standards for  
24 certifying ULURP applications and establishing

2 criteria associated with the selection of sites for  
3 capital projects.

4 The member who's designated as Vice Chair  
5 receives an annual salary of 73,855 dollars. The  
6 other members receive an annual salary of 64,224  
7 dollars.

8 Welcome to Miss Bozorg. I thank you for  
9 being here today.

10 Before we have you make an opening  
11 statement, we're just going to ask you to raise your  
12 hand and to be sworn in.

13 DAVID SEITZER, MODERATOR: Do you swear or  
14 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and  
15 nothing but the truth and to respond honestly to  
16 Council Member questions?

17 LEILA BOZORG: I do.

18 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Welcome and thank you  
19 for being here today and, of course, if you'd like to  
20 make an opening statement, the floor is yours.

21 LEILA BOZORG: Great. Thank you. Good  
22 morning, Chair Powers and Speaker Adams and  
23 distinguished Members of the Committee on Rules,  
24 Privileges, and Elections.

2 I want to thank you all first for being  
3 here and for considering my nomination by the  
4 Manhattan Borough President, Mark Levine, to the City  
5 Planning Commission.

6 As Council Member Powers mentioned, my  
7 name is Leila Bozorg. I'm really honored and humbled  
8 to be here to talk about my qualifications and to  
9 take any questions that you have.

10 As the queer daughter of immigrants whose  
11 parents fled an unstable political environment in  
12 Iran following the 1979 revolution, grappling with  
13 inclusivity and mobility, what it means to search  
14 for, build home, and sustain community are all issues  
15 that have been part of my life as far back as I can  
16 remember. Becoming and being an urban planner has  
17 truly felt like second nature to me, and working on  
18 housing and neighborhood policies as social,  
19 political, and economic matters has been at the heart  
20 of my entire career.

21 Currently, I'm the Chief of Strategy and  
22 Policy at a non-profit called NYC Kids Rise where  
23 we're working to not only ensure that every public  
24 school kindergartner graduates with a financial  
25 resource for higher education and has the opportunity



2 to build wealth but also working to support the  
3 ecosystem and institutions, individuals, and  
4 organizations that make up a child's entire  
5 neighborhood and, therefore, impact their chances of  
6 success.

7           Prior to joining in NYC Kids Rise in  
8 October 2020, I served for 6 years at the City's  
9 Department of Housing Preservation and Development,  
10 both as a Chief of Staff to the Commissioner under  
11 former Commissioner Vicki Bean and later as Deputy  
12 Commissioner for Neighborhood Strategies under former  
13 Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer.

14           Under my leadership at HPD, my teams were  
15 responsible for everything from neighborhood planning  
16 initiatives which resulted in projects like the  
17 Brownsville Neighborhood Plan in Brooklyn and the  
18 Resilient Edgemere Plan in Queens to citywide  
19 requests for proposals on public sites including  
20 bringing all of those sites through the Land Use  
21 process which the Commission considers. I help create  
22 new innovative initiatives such as HPD's Big Ideas  
23 for Small Lots Competition, a shared housing RFEI  
24 that explored various co-housing models across the  
25 city. I also played a central role in getting the

2 agency to operationalize advocacy demands for  
3 permanent affordability on public sites through the  
4 use of a legal tool that gives the city a remainder  
5 interest on land that it disposes of. I also oversaw  
6 the agency's entire Rental Assistance and Voucher  
7 Program, which, as you know, serves approximately  
8 39,000 households across the 5 boroughs, the vast  
9 majority with Housing Choice Vouchers.

10           What I am perhaps most proud of from my  
11 time at HPD was managing the extensive process to  
12 create the city's Fair Housing Plan, also known as  
13 Where We Live NYC. To create the plan, we engaged  
14 stakeholders from across the city's diverse  
15 neighborhoods, from everyday residents to those in  
16 protected classes, households being served by various  
17 types of housing subsidies, advocates, professionals,  
18 over 30 government agencies that intersected with  
19 fair housing issues. We coupled this, what we call,  
20 qualitative data through engagement with extensive  
21 quantitative analysis to lay out the existing  
22 conditions across a range of fair housing issues and  
23 indicators across the entire city, and we developed a  
24 set of fair housing goals and strategies to make our  
25 city a more just place to live.

2 Prior to joining HPD in 2014, I served  
3 from 2010 to 2014 at the U.S. Department of Housing  
4 and Urban Development, first as a Presidential  
5 Management Fellow and ultimately as a Senior Advisor  
6 working on initiatives that were aimed at preserving  
7 at-risk HUD-financed housing projects across the  
8 entire country.

9 I'm excited to bring these various  
10 experiences and the perspectives they have provided  
11 me to the City Planning Commission where I will  
12 continue to work for more access to better  
13 opportunities for all New Yorkers, but especially  
14 those that have been historically marginalized or  
15 excluded. The challenges we face as a city,  
16 challenges of affordability, of livability, of  
17 health, equity, and inclusion are many, but,  
18 thankfully, there are also so many resources that our  
19 city has at its disposal and so many willing partners  
20 including all of you in the Council that want to be  
21 part of the solutions.

22 It's not lost on me that I'd be stepping  
23 into this role on the Commission during a time when  
24 fellow New Yorkers' trust in the Land Use process has  
25 weakened. Indeed, we must rebuild that trust and

2 strengthen our Land Use processes so that they  
3 provide for more and different types of housing,  
4 thriving job centers, better access to open spaces,  
5 resilient infrastructure, healthy commercial  
6 corridors, safe streets, and critical amenities, all  
7 of which must be more accessible to people with  
8 disabilities across every neighborhood.

9 I have a deep respect for the role the  
10 Commission plays in working towards these outcomes  
11 through the Land Use Process along with other  
12 stakeholders such as yourself and the Council, but no  
13 entity can take on these challenges alone.  
14 Ultimately, it's also going to require strong  
15 partners in the administration and particularly at  
16 the Department of City Planning to engage New Yorkers  
17 in creating a strategic citywide framework for growth  
18 and development that can guide us towards a more  
19 visionary future. I'm optimistic that the city is  
20 well-positioned to deliver on this through the  
21 leadership of Chair Garodnick.

22 I would be thrilled, pending  
23 confirmation, to join other Commissioners in helping  
24 to ensure that the city's Land Use processes and  
25 projects from across the 5 boroughs contribute to a

2 more affordable, resilient, accessible, and inclusive  
3 city, one that offers agency stability, opportunity,  
4 and a real sense of belonging for all.

5 Thank you, again, for the opportunity to  
6 be here before you, and I'm happy to answer any  
7 questions you might have.

8 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you and  
9 congratulations on your nomination and for joining us  
10 here today.

11 We're now joined also by Speaker Adams  
12 who I want to kick it over to for a few questions and  
13 then I'll take it from there. Thanks.

14 SPEAKER ADAMS: Good morning and welcome.

15 LEILA BOZORG: Good morning. Thank you.

16 SPEAKER ADAMS: Congratulations on your  
17 candidacy for this very important role, and we  
18 welcome you to this hearing this morning.

19 I am just going to go ahead and just  
20 begin by asking a couple of questions. We're really  
21 excited. We hear, by the way, nothing but glowing  
22 remarks about you.

23 LEILA BOZORG: Oh, thank you.

24 SPEAKER ADAMS: So I want to say that  
25 also.

2 I'm just curious to know what is your  
3 view on Land Use as it's going along right now in the  
4 city of New York, what is the best thing about the  
5 process, and what is the worst thing about the  
6 process?

7 LEILA BOZORG: Thank you for that question  
8 and thank you for being here.

9 I think the Land Use process right now  
10 feels a little broken to a lot of New Yorkers, and I  
11 see why New Yorkers are feeling that way. It can  
12 often feel like there's undue pressure on any one  
13 specific community to solve all our city's problems  
14 when a project comes through. It can feel like  
15 there's undue pressure on one specific Council Member  
16 to solve these problems when a project comes through.  
17 One of the things that I think works about, at least  
18 the way the Land Use process was designed and is  
19 structured, is that in theory it gives voice to a lot  
20 of different types of stakeholders, and it has  
21 Community Boards which are theoretically  
22 representative of communities, various types of  
23 elected officials who were elected by their  
24 constituencies have a voice in the process, the City  
25 Planning Commission which is supposed to take a

2 citywide view on projects, Land Use Committee  
3 similarly is supposed to be able to zoom in and zoom  
4 out, and the City Council and the Mayor ultimately  
5 having the decision to make. To me, in theory that  
6 should work. I think some of the way, though, that in  
7 practice it has played out has clearly not worked.  
8 There's often undue voice given to people that are  
9 just the loudest and who have the time on their hand  
10 to show up at meetings. There's not necessarily  
11 enough engagement, or it can feel that way when  
12 projects are coming through, that it feels too late  
13 to engage a community at the point of it being in the  
14 Land Use project, that there should be thoughtful  
15 engagement before, and often it feels like people are  
16 just learning about the project once it's at Land Use  
17 so I think that's one of the core issues where people  
18 feel like their only point of being engaged is  
19 actually when it's already in Land Use when really,  
20 in theory, it should be well before that point. Those  
21 are some of the challenges. I also think right now  
22 there is this undue pressure on a single Council  
23 Member it feels in the process when really the  
24 responsibility is a collective responsibility, not  
25 just on the public but every stakeholder in the

2 process to try to get projects through that are going  
3 to contribute to our citywide needs while balancing  
4 those local needs. That balance feels completely  
5 thrown off to a lot of the public right now, and I've  
6 seen it thrown off in practice as well.

7 SPEAKER ADAMS: How do you see yourself  
8 contributing to helping with that?

9 LEILA BOZORG: I would be one of multiple  
10 Commission members, but I do think the Commission in  
11 working with DCP has a role to play in helping to  
12 frame out a little bit more the citywide context that  
13 these projects that are coming through the process  
14 are living within and to frame that out for the  
15 public better. I think my background at HPD also, I  
16 think there is a major responsibility and I would  
17 just be a voice in echoing of the agencies to be  
18 engaging communities in the neighborhoods that these  
19 projects are coming through well in advance to ensure  
20 that these projects are in some way meeting the needs  
21 of those local communities, or at least have taken  
22 that into deep consideration. That's not necessarily  
23 the role of one Commissioner to do, but I would add  
24 voice to that need and to encouraging the agencies to



2 take kind of that more collective neighborhood-based  
3 approach to thinking about these projects.

4 SPEAKER ADAMS: Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. I thank  
6 you for that thoughtful question.

7 You talked about this a little bit, but  
8 in your testimony you made the comment we must  
9 rebuild that trust and strength in our Land Use  
10 process so they provide for more different types of  
11 housing, thriving job centers, access to open space,  
12 resilient infrastructure, healthy commercial  
13 corridors, safe streets, critical amenities. I'm just  
14 borrowing from your testimony. Could you talk more  
15 about that? I think you've spoken a little bit in  
16 your answer to the Speaker, but, strengthening our  
17 Land Use processes, what are some ideas you have for  
18 how to do that?

19 LEILA BOZORG: I think that there needs to  
20 be a lot more engagement before a project is entering  
21 into ULURP so that's one piece of it. People think of  
22 just ULURP as our Land Use process. I think of our  
23 Land Use process as the entire process of formulating  
24 a project and getting it through completion. I think  
25 we need in the city just more neighborhood planning

2 efforts where zoning may be part of that conversation  
3 that comes up and part of the solutions that are  
4 proposed, but we need actual neighborhood planning  
5 initiatives with thoughtful engagement, and Community  
6 Boards have an important role to play, but we need to  
7 engage beyond that as well. I think meaningful  
8 neighborhood planning is a starting point. Within  
9 then the Land Use process, I think it really needs to  
10 be informed by a broader citywide framework. That is,  
11 to me, the responsibility of the Commission but also  
12 of the Department of City Planning and other agencies  
13 to be putting forward to the public and engaging in  
14 getting meaningful input on what a citywide framework  
15 for growth or development is so that when, in the  
16 Land Use process, a process is coming through, people  
17 understand how it is meeting citywide goals, what the  
18 trade-off is between citywide and local issues, etc.  
19 Another piece of this for me is just coming up with  
20 actual Land Use proposals that kind of address some  
21 of what you read back and what I laid out. Instead of  
22 so much pressure on just individual projects, maybe  
23 thinking more collectively and broadly about citywide  
24 text amendments so that there's not just undue  
25 pressure on one site but thinking about things like

2 zoning for quality and affordability in the last  
3 administration or some of the citywide text  
4 amendments that we're hearing about now as potential  
5 new ideas which allow for kind of broad changes that  
6 would facilitate the types of housing that we know  
7 are needed across the city so that so much pressure  
8 is not just on one individual project or all these  
9 fights aren't taking place on the back of one  
10 project. There are ways of approaching this with more  
11 of a citywide lens.

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Can you describe how  
13 you balance the critical need for more affordable  
14 housing in New York City which you've addressed and  
15 talked about with concerns from communities about  
16 infrastructure, displacement, and affordability?

17 LEILA BOZORG: I'm of 2 minds of that.  
18 There is absolutely a need for us to be doing typical  
19 city planning, and I don't mean just city planning  
20 processes but planning for infrastructure that meets  
21 our current needs as well as considering future  
22 needs. When it comes to the balance of planning for  
23 housing and planning for infrastructure, sometimes,  
24 just in my experience at HPD, we will hear concerns  
25 about infrastructure as a way to block housing, and

2 sometimes it's a very sincere need that the city has  
3 not responded to. I think it's a case-by-case  
4 situation. I think the city absolutely needs to be  
5 planning in every district on infrastructure, but we  
6 also have to be careful that when we hear, especially  
7 when it comes to affordable housing, some communities  
8 not wanting it because of infrastructure needs.  
9 Sometimes there's a disingenuous argument there, and  
10 so it really, to me, requires leadership at every  
11 level to be listening closely and trying to weigh  
12 this and understand are we talking about real risks,  
13 how do we address those real concerns, what are the  
14 needed infrastructure investments we have to make  
15 before this housing gets built. The other thing is  
16 housing does take quite a long time to build so often  
17 we're having these conversations probably 5, 6 years  
18 before a building is actually going to get built so  
19 there can be time for more planning as well.

20 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thanks for that.

21 Could you talk about a large-scale rezoning that you  
22 believe was successful and what lessons you think can  
23 be applied from that rezoning to future rezonings?

24 LEILA BOZORG: I think Essex Crossing has  
25 been generally very successful, especially given the

2 history of that site. It involved, when I say  
3 meaningful engagement, there were groups that  
4 represented really diverse parts of the communities  
5 surrounding the area that were given a real seat at  
6 the table as part of the taskforce and also a  
7 sustained seat. It wasn't just checking in with folks  
8 and moving on. You had really close partnerships  
9 across city government agencies that were very  
10 committed to understanding the history, listening to  
11 local concerns. You had really interesting cross-  
12 subsidization of new retail and kind of historic  
13 retail that was coming back to the site and the  
14 cross-subsidization of housing and deeply affordable  
15 housing so it's a really nice mix of factors, I  
16 think, that came into play on that site, and,  
17 obviously, one of the things that is very hard to  
18 replicate but made that project a success too was the  
19 way that the city was able to actually serve some of  
20 the people that were originally displaced from the  
21 site many, many years previously. I think some of the  
22 learnings broadly are around just what it actually  
23 looks like when communities have a meaningful seat at  
24 the table and feel like they are part of the  
25 decision-making throughout every type of decision

2 that's getting made so I think that's one piece of  
3 it. I think the financing, it was a very expensive  
4 project, that also is hard to replicate, but that's  
5 also a decision for some of these types of projects  
6 that it's maybe worth sometimes needed to provide  
7 more subsidy to get the type of cross-subsidization  
8 and type of diversity of housing and diversity of  
9 retail that folks are looking so I think the finance  
10 piece of that was also very interesting.

11 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great. Thanks for  
12 that. I have some more questions, but I want to go to  
13 some Colleagues first. I'm going to now kick it over  
14 to Council Member Brooks-Powers followed by Council  
15 Member Borelli and Council Member Hudson.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you  
17 and good morning, everyone. Thank you to the  
18 Committee staff for facilitating today's hearing.  
19 It's a pleasure to meet you in person, Miss Bozorg.

20 As Miss Bozorg, as you may know, my  
21 District, which is the 31st Council District,  
22 covering parts of Southeast Queens and the Rockaways  
23 has seen a tremendous explosion of new development in  
24 recent years. Rockaway, in particular, is rife with  
25 new multi-story buildings bringing a large influx of

2 new residents thanks in part to city initiatives like  
3 the Far Rockaway Rezoning, Arverne East, Resilient  
4 Edgemere, and my staff and I have been coordinating a  
5 surprising number of ULURP proposals in my year and  
6 change in office quite honestly, and the sudden  
7 increase at one time in density has not come with  
8 much needed investment in infrastructure and  
9 resources. My constituents have been deprived of  
10 critical services like healthcare providers in  
11 Rockaway, and, with the closure of Peninsula Hospital  
12 last decade took away the only trauma center easily  
13 accessible for many residents on a geographically  
14 isolated peninsula. My constituents are still  
15 struggling to find convenient access to quality care.  
16 On the other hand, our communities have found  
17 ourselves overburdened in other ways, the unintended  
18 consequences is what I'll call it, from some of what  
19 we've been seeing, which has resulted in the siting  
20 of a number of transient shelters versus permanent  
21 housing, permanent affordable housing, permanent  
22 affordable homeownership opportunities, and also a  
23 number of hotels came that were converted into  
24 shelters also, and prior to the current  
25 administration, what was done repeatedly without

2 adequate community engagement or approval, Community  
3 Boards 12, 13, and 14 host the majority of the  
4 shelter beds in Queens so I was happy to hear you  
5 talk about the brokenness in the system and the  
6 process, and I'm interested in digging deeper to  
7 understand what broken looks like to you. Also, in  
8 that context, I'd like to ask a couple of other  
9 questions, particularly given your experience with  
10 HPD. As the former Deputy Commissioner of  
11 Neighborhood Strategies and Division of Tenant  
12 Resources, how did you negotiate community outreach  
13 and engage residents around the importance of  
14 preserving the neighborhood footprint. Furthermore,  
15 how has your time at HPD impacted your perspective on  
16 the work of City Planning on the Commission, what  
17 changes would you make to the CPC's process in terms  
18 of community engagement, how do you intend CPC's  
19 application process and assess sitings holistically,  
20 and, lastly, how did HPD analyze potential community  
21 impact? If you need to repeat anything else, let me  
22 know. I know there's a lot of questions. I know I'm  
23 limited on time. I just wanted to throw it all out,  
24 but you get the gist.



2 LEILA BOZORG: Yes, I think I get the  
3 gist, and I really appreciate everything you're  
4 saying. I do know that there has been a lot of work  
5 taking place in your district, and a lot of that is  
6 coming following years of disinvestment as well so I  
7 think fully can appreciate some of that tension at  
8 play.

9 Let me think of where to start. I think  
10 I'll start backwards, and then if I miss some of  
11 where we started please let me know. In terms of how  
12 my time at HPD leading these teams, I think the  
13 question was how has that informed how I would  
14 approach some of the planning issues. My teams at  
15 HPD, when I became Deputy Commission, I was the  
16 second Deputy Commissioner of something called the  
17 Office of Neighborhood Strategies that had just been  
18 created at the beginning of the administration  
19 actually to help HPD shift from a project-by-project  
20 view of it's work to think about how our projects,  
21 the land that the city owns, and the investments  
22 we're making which are housing investments that also  
23 facilitate other investments are actually serving  
24 neighborhoods and not just specific sites and not  
25 looked at as just in a site-specific context. One of

2 the first things we did actually was create something  
3 called the Neighborhood Planning Playbook, and that's  
4 something I'm really proud of, and we created that  
5 playbook through engagement with various types of  
6 groups and residents across the city, but it really  
7 lays out a transparent process that I think can  
8 inform a lot of our Land Use processes where you  
9 begin by just organizing with people, what is it  
10 we're studying here, what are the issues, who needs  
11 to be engaged, what are the voices historically that  
12 have been left behind, what are the voices  
13 historically that have had a lot of power in  
14 decision-making, and how do we lay out a plan from  
15 there so there's an organize phase, there's a learn  
16 phase going out and learning from residents, doing  
17 data analysis, and collecting all your facts, then  
18 there's a co-creation phase where you'll actually  
19 work and use your professional skills as planners to  
20 actually engage communities to come up with actually  
21 strategies that meet the issues that people are  
22 raising up so facilitating actual co-creation of  
23 strategies to meet the issues that folks are raising  
24 up, and then working to finalize that with folks. The  
25 idea with this playbook was that you're very

2 transparent about the entire process from the start,  
3 you make clear when it starts and ends, what the  
4 different entry points are so that you're not wasting  
5 people's time either. One of the things that we deal  
6 with in the city often is this planning fatigue. That  
7 kind of approach of being very transparent, clear,  
8 meaningful is something I would bring to how I  
9 approach my work on the Commission as well. Again, as  
10 I mentioned, the Commission alone is not responsible  
11 and can't go out and do community planning, but we  
12 can really demand that of projects of the other  
13 stakeholders and agencies involved so I would be a  
14 voice on that side.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: I would  
16 just add also, because in looking at your responses  
17 to some of the questions and just some of my  
18 observations even with engaging with the CPC,  
19 engaging with HPD, oftentimes, we understand New York  
20 has a housing crisis but we also recognized that  
21 there are some communities that are focused on a bit  
22 more and it's not really distributed equitably, and  
23 then, even when it is, because, as you mentioned, my  
24 community has been underinvested for many years, but  
25 even with the development that has come not all of

2 the necessary infrastructure investments have come  
3 along with it. It's been like a partial way, and I  
4 think it's important when City Planning approaches  
5 community development that it really looks  
6 holistically not at one particular project but also  
7 the ones that are adjacent to the proposed site so I  
8 would love to have a commitment from you that, should  
9 you be appointed to this role, that you would be  
10 committed to centering the community's voices and  
11 bringing out the lens when we look at these projects  
12 so that they could be more responsible development  
13 that's happening as opposed to just building  
14 everywhere in the name of having to address a crisis  
15 because I think it creates, like I said before,  
16 unintended consequence when we do that that really  
17 casts a burden on these communities.

18 LEILA BOZORG: I fully hear you and agree,  
19 especially on that development has not played out  
20 equitably or equally in all neighborhoods. I think  
21 one of the realities too that I think your community  
22 has experienced is a lot of affordable housing  
23 development in the city has occurred on land that HPD  
24 or the city has historically owned and owned that  
25 from the '70s and '80s when the city had to take a

2 lot of property that was abandoned, and so a lot of  
3 the affordable housing development occurs where HPD  
4 had land. One of, I think, the biggest challenges we  
5 all face now is how to encourage the right types of  
6 development in higher amenity neighborhoods so that  
7 there's not undue pressure just where HPD owned  
8 historically land to build as much. It's a both/and,  
9 but we need to do more to be making sure that there  
10 is more development occurring in some of these higher  
11 amenity neighborhoods as well while bringing  
12 amenities. It's what we call a both/and approach or  
13 balanced approach, bringing amenities to  
14 neighborhoods that have had a lot of development but  
15 maybe not the other types of investments that  
16 communities need.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Just  
19 before she has to run, I just want to (INAUDIBLE)  
20 Speaker Adams one more question.

21 SPEAKER ADAMS: Thank you, Majority  
22 Leader. Miss Bozorg, I'm kind of refreshed by your  
23 responses. Council Member Brooks-Powers and I do  
24 share Community Boards in Southeast Queens, and I'm a  
25 former Chair of the second largest in Queens. I'm

2 just interested to know, in our relationships in the  
3 years in the past with the city and working with  
4 Community Boards it's been a little bittersweet. I  
5 just want to know how would you elevate those  
6 relationships between the CPC and our Community  
7 Boards.

8 LEILA BOZORG: Between the CPC and the  
9 Community Boards, the relationship between those two?

10 SPEAKER ADAMS: Yes, and I apologize. I've  
11 got the hotline and the red phone right now.

12 LEILA BOZORG: That's okay. Thank you for  
13 your answer. I think part of it is working to ensure  
14 that the Commission is actually hearing from all  
15 voices that represent a community, and that is often  
16 the Community Boards but it's often much more than  
17 the Community Boards. I think as a planner and as  
18 policymakers, it's always been a tension we all  
19 grapple with is how to make sure we're actually  
20 hearing from folks that don't necessarily have the  
21 time to be on a Community Board but are just as  
22 impacted as Community Board Members and how to make  
23 sure Community Boards are being held accountable to  
24 being representative of their entire communities. I  
25 think this is not something just for the City

2 Planning Commission to solve, but I think that the  
3 entire ecosystem of players in the Land Use process,  
4 we all need to, and the agencies as well, this is not  
5 just a Community Board issue, and I don't mean to  
6 imply that, need to be coming up with different ways  
7 to be hearing from different types of constituents  
8 that are speaking not just to our current needs but  
9 our future needs as well. One of the things we heard  
10 so much when I was at HPD was people talking about  
11 their own kids being priced out of their neighborhood  
12 when they were old enough to be able to rent a home  
13 so we need to not just think of our current needs but  
14 our future needs as well, and that requires also  
15 trying to think about those who don't have a voice in  
16 the current moment that a project's coming through.

17 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great. Thank you.

18 We're now going to move to Council Member Borelli and  
19 then Council Member Hudson and Council Member  
20 Restler.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you. Thank  
22 you for your testimony and the questions that you  
23 answered.

24 Can you just describe your opinions and  
25 thoughts on single family zoning? It's been a

2 controversial topic in other cities, and there's been  
3 discussion here. Can you just describe your opinions  
4 on it?

5 LEILA BOZORG: I think specifically in New  
6 York, single family zoning is such a small part of  
7 our zoning districts so unlike some other cities  
8 nationally where the conversation is let's get rid of  
9 single family zoning and that's going to solve a lot  
10 of their housing crisis issues, we don't have quite  
11 the same balance so it hasn't been a central strategy  
12 in my mind that is going to solve some of what we're  
13 trying to solve for. I do think, just full  
14 transparency I helped lead the city's Fair Housing  
15 Plan, I do think that some of the historic practices  
16 in creating single family zoning and some of the deed  
17 restrictions that, some homes still carry those even  
18 though they're not operational. There were a lot of  
19 practices in single family communities that have  
20 created exclusion, created the type of segregation we  
21 face so I don't ignore those issues, but I also don't  
22 think that in New York the conversation is the same  
23 as like Minneapolis where so much more of the city is  
24 actually zoned as single family zoning. I do think  
25 it's important for us to look at how every community



2 can be contributing to the types of citywide needs we  
3 have, and I don't think single family districts  
4 should be alleviated of that responsibility of being  
5 part of the solution.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: The other  
7 question I have is your general thoughts on cars and  
8 whether parking requirements are important in some  
9 neighborhoods and necessities or whether you think  
10 that every part of the city should transition away  
11 from car use and parking, etc.

12 LEILA BOZORG: I think there are  
13 definitely parts of the city where we should be  
14 reducing or even eliminating our parking requirements  
15 to make way for other amenities and more housing so  
16 that the cost of a project can go more towards some  
17 of the citywide needs or even the housing needs we  
18 have than parking. I think that has to be looked at  
19 neighborhood by neighborhood, district by district. I  
20 think there are a lot of districts where historically  
21 there wasn't enough transportation investment for  
22 people to be able to get to jobs without cars so we  
23 can't ignore that and just turn off the switch, but I  
24 do think to be a more resilient city, to be a more  
25 equitable city, we do need to move away from as much

2 car use. It's a serious environmental issue. It's a  
3 serious mobility issue. It's a tough conversation,  
4 but I think it has to be looked at across the  
5 neighborhoods in different types of zoning districts.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Just to be clear,  
7 you are not going on the City Planning Commission  
8 with grand designs to end single family zoning and  
9 end car ownership in this city?

10 LEILA BOZORG: Not personally.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Okay. Great. Can  
12 you just discuss some of the circumstances where you  
13 feel, let me put this in context. Your Borough  
14 President who appointed you is a friend of all of  
15 ours, he was a Member of this body, and I'm sure he  
16 can remember having many conversations in the  
17 Members' Lounge, as do many Members of the Council,  
18 where we moan and groan about City Planning and why  
19 we think they're not doing the right thing and etc.,  
20 etc. That said, can you give us an idea of the  
21 circumstances where you feel you would be justified  
22 in voting against the desires of the Community Board  
23 and Council Member of an area?

24 LEILA BOZORG: Yeah, I think we all...

2 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I want you to say  
3 no, you'll never do that. I'm hoping for that answer.

4 LEILA BOZORG: What did you say?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I'm hoping you  
6 just say no, I'd never do that.

7 LEILA BOZORG: I vowed to tell the truth  
8 so I'll say I think it's more complicated than that  
9 and I think that's part of how we all have different  
10 roles in the Land Use process and all have different  
11 lenses and different, this isn't to say I don't  
12 think, the Commission should be listening to local  
13 voices as much as Council Members need to, but I do  
14 think there's this balance that needs to be struck  
15 between balancing local concerns and local issues  
16 with citywide needs and that's kind of at the heart  
17 of a lot of our really challenging conversations. I  
18 think the circumstances, it's hard to answer in the  
19 hypothetical, and I just want to be transparent that  
20 I can't say that every time a community votes against  
21 something that in my position on the Commission I  
22 would vote against it too. It really would have to be  
23 very case specific to understand what are the root of  
24 those concerns when someone's voting no, are they  
25 speaking to real citywide risks and local risks that

2 should counterweigh whatever citywide benefit the  
3 project is purportedly making so I would say I would  
4 just have to really look at the specifics.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: You mentioned, I  
6 think correctly, sort of the disconnect between the  
7 public and the City Planning Commission, sort of the  
8 broken nature of the Land Use system. Do you think  
9 that's because Community Boards and Council Members,  
10 each of whom represents districts larger than most  
11 American cities, do you feel that the constituents  
12 believe that in a system where the only elected  
13 person and the only elected body that governs them is  
14 ignored in favor of a citywide body of which some  
15 members might not have ever stepped foot in the  
16 district? I know I'm asking real metaphysical  
17 questions.

18 LEILA BOZORG: Since you made the  
19 comparison to other places, I do want to clarify  
20 while I think there are broken pieces of our Land Use  
21 process, I don't think the whole thing is broken,  
22 and, when you look comparatively at other types of  
23 Land Use process, we have something that's stronger  
24 than other models out there, and I think there's a  
25 real, it has been challenging and there are pieces

2 that need to be strengthened, but I don't think the  
3 core issue we're facing is just a broken Land Use  
4 process. I do think the process allows for the  
5 Council and the Mayor and other stakeholders to vote  
6 with the Member and consider those very local issues  
7 and balance them against citywide issues, and it can  
8 go either way. It just depends on the practices, and  
9 the process allows for both. I do think it really  
10 ends up being case specific. I completely hear and  
11 understand the tension you're speaking to, but I  
12 think that tension is kind of the heart historically  
13 and today and into the future of how challenging Land  
14 Use is balancing these very real local concerns with  
15 an obligation to be doing things that advance the  
16 city in the direction it needs to go in.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Thank you very  
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. We're  
20 going to go Council Member Hudson followed by Council  
21 Members Restler, Sanchez, and then I think Brooks-  
22 Powers has a followup.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you so much,  
24 Chair. Hello, good to see you. I'm excited for your  
25

2 nomination by the Borough President and  
3 congratulations.

4 My question is this is a time when the  
5 city faces a deep and really seemingly unrelenting  
6 housing crisis and we know it's important to build  
7 more housing but also to prevent the mass  
8 displacement of black and brown folks and extremely  
9 low-income New Yorkers, those who have quite  
10 literally made the city what it is and keep the city  
11 going so my question is how do you plan to reconcile  
12 the need for more housing with the need to also build  
13 housing specifically for low and moderate-income New  
14 Yorkers with the greatest need?

15 LEILA BOZORG: Thanks for that question.  
16 This gets at the heart of a lot. I think part of what  
17 you're getting at is a lot of what we look at and  
18 talk about when trying to figure out threading this  
19 needle of fair housing issues. How do you continue to  
20 build housing which is important for I want to say  
21 making the city more affordable but it's really  
22 trying to stem the unaffordability of the city as  
23 much as possible so how do you balance that with the  
24 real lived experience of people who are being  
25 displaced as a result of the housing crisis we

2 currently have today? Part of it is that if we  
3 weren't building housing and if we continue to build  
4 housing at too slow of a pace that displacement risk  
5 is even higher, and I think that's part of the  
6 concern sometimes is which is going to create more  
7 displacement for communities? More housing or less  
8 housing? A piece of this for me is very much about  
9 what type of housing are we talking about and where  
10 are we talking about. Our city, we need to be doing  
11 much more development in higher amenity neighborhoods  
12 what HUD typically called high opportunity. I don't  
13 like that dichotomy personally, but there are a lot  
14 of neighborhoods where so little of the rental  
15 housing stock is affordable to low-income people. We  
16 need to switch that calculation. We need to be  
17 putting a lot of energy into communities that have  
18 not taken on enough development that will alleviate  
19 pressures, but we also need to be very careful about  
20 the type of housing we're talking about. I'm kind of  
21 a housing supply person, but I also don't think  
22 housing supply of unregulated housing is the only  
23 that's going to solve our problems. We have to have  
24 more tenant protections in place. We have to be  
25 making investments in preserving people's homes and

2 preserving the affordability of people's homes so I  
3 think new housing has to be coupled with these other  
4 strategies. It's not just a housing supply issue of  
5 what you're speaking to.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you. You  
7 sort of addressed this a little bit I think with  
8 Council Member Borelli's points about being nominated  
9 by the Borough President, but I just want to ask  
10 plainly. Have you been empowered by the Borough  
11 President to perhaps carry your values forward  
12 regardless of whether you might be a dissenting voice  
13 on the City Planning Commission?

14 LEILA BOZORG: Yes. He and his team have  
15 been very clear that I'm empowered to use my  
16 judgement in consultation obviously. I think part of  
17 what we respect about each other is both of our  
18 approaches is about listening first. Even though I  
19 have the experience I shared, I'm someone who doesn't  
20 think I know a lot, and I always want to hear what  
21 other people have to say. My disposition is to  
22 understand people's different perspectives before  
23 even shaping one of my own so I have been empowered,  
24 but we've also discussed how we've both been



2 committed to listening to very different types of  
3 voices and each other.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. We're now  
6 going to go to Council Member Restler who I believe  
7 is joining us remotely.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you very  
9 much. Thank you, Majority Leader. I have just one  
10 comment which is to commend the Borough President of  
11 Manhattan for such an inspired choice to the City  
12 Planning Commission. I have had the privilege of  
13 working with Leila over the years, and she is  
14 incredibly smart, knowledgeable, values driven,  
15 effective, pragmatic. We're just fortunate that the  
16 Borough President has selected somebody of such  
17 caliber to serve in this important role, and I am  
18 hopeful that the City Planning Commission will be a  
19 stronger, more effective, more responsive body with  
20 Leila serving on it. I just wanted to express my  
21 strongest and most enthusiastic support for this  
22 nomination and congratulations to you, Leila, on this  
23 opportunity to continue to serve New York City.

24 LEILA BOZORG: Thank you, Council Member  
25 Restler. It's great to see you.

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, Council  
3 Member Restler. Nice to see you. We're now going to  
4 go to Council Member Sanchez and will be followup  
5 from Council Member Brooks-Powers.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Good morning.  
8 Leila, it's great to see you. Just echoing Council  
9 Member Restler's comments. I've had the privilege of  
10 working with you in your time in the administration  
11 and even before that when I was a Community Board  
12 Member and an advocate working at (INAUDIBLE). It's  
13 just always been really incredible to watch you work  
14 and to watch how thoughtful you are.

15 I wanted to sort of follow up on a couple  
16 of the threads. Council Member Borelli mentioned some  
17 of this with his question about when do you go  
18 against a local Community Board or local Council  
19 Member. Council Member Hudson kind of touched on it  
20 talking about the displacement risk that black and  
21 brown communities face. Continuing along that thread,  
22 I'd be really curious to hear you talk about both how  
23 you'll think about it, how you'll talk about it with  
24 your Colleagues on the CPC as a supply advocate so we  
25 do need more housing in the city of New York. We're

2 under-producing, but that shortage is so egregiously  
3 felt and exists among the lowest income New Yorkers  
4 so just geographically we saw in the HVS this week  
5 that Manhattan has a 10 percent vacancy rate but the  
6 Bronx has a 0.78 vacancy rate, and then when you  
7 break down that vacancy rate by income level, it's  
8 really just the lowest income New Yorkers that are  
9 struggling the most, which to me, of course, points  
10 that yes there's a supply problem but we have to make  
11 sure we're subsidizing those that need it the most in  
12 order to alleviate that pain that people are feeling.  
13 To put this in a form of a question that is related  
14 to my Colleagues' questions, when do you vote no on  
15 an affordable housing project? We had a project that  
16 almost came through the Council but was withdrawn at  
17 the last moment, One 45, which would've offered some  
18 affordability but not affordable to Harlem, not  
19 affordable to that community. In thinking about  
20 projects like that, projects that do something but do  
21 not get at that deep level of affordability and those  
22 most key needs that the city has, how will you think  
23 about that and how will you talk about that with your  
24 Colleagues?

2 LEILA BOZORG: Thank you for being here  
3 and for your question, Council Member Sanchez.

4 I think, to me, I spoke to this a little  
5 bit before, but it has to be considered as a  
6 potential both/and. I don't think a project like the  
7 one you mentioned, it's a private application, the  
8 responsibility and the developer, I'm not going to  
9 speak too much to that project, I actually don't know  
10 too many of the details, but the point I want to make  
11 is not every project can solve all of our problems,  
12 but each project has a role to play. The challenges  
13 you spoke to, that the Housing Vacancy Survey also  
14 recently really highlighted, speak to the need for us  
15 to be putting a lot of subsidy towards building as  
16 much deeply affordable housing as possible so that's  
17 a government responsibility to be putting those  
18 resources in place, finding those sites, making the  
19 incentives right because we need private developers.  
20 We don't have enough public land to build as much  
21 deeply affordable housing as we need so we do need to  
22 incentivize private actors to be part of the solution  
23 as well. I think it's a balance. I think not every  
24 private application will a) accept public subsidy to  
25 go deeper or b) be able to kind of solve the deep

2 affordability need necessarily so I think it's our  
3 responsibility to push them to go as far as possible  
4 while also acknowledging that there's another piece  
5 of our problems that this project may help alleviate  
6 or work towards, not going to fully solve it, no  
7 single project it, and there's no way that just  
8 market rate development is going to solve our housing  
9 affordability crisis. I absolutely do not believe  
10 that. It is this real balance of dedicating a lot of  
11 subsidies towards deep affordability and in a diverse  
12 set of neighborhoods. We cannot continue to just  
13 concentrate where we have land necessarily our deep  
14 affordability. We really have to be looking to build  
15 in a lot of different types of neighborhoods and  
16 giving opportunity for low-income residents to live  
17 in different types of neighborhoods and choose to  
18 live in different types of neighborhoods,  
19 particularly families with children. I think one of  
20 the things I just want to mention that as a houser  
21 I've always been deeply concerned about is how little  
22 family housing we're able to build in higher amenity  
23 neighborhoods and we know that the impact on children  
24 is greater than any other population when we're able  
25 to house them in higher amenity neighborhoods.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so  
3 much. I see I'm out of time, but, if the Chair would  
4 permit me one more question?

5 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Go ahead.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank  
7 you, Chair. Leila, you said a couple of times we can  
8 put a lot of pressure on a single project, we can put  
9 a lot of pressure on a single Council Member to solve  
10 this crisis that the city is facing as a whole, and  
11 one thing that a lot of folks have advocated for in  
12 the past years, myself included, has been for a  
13 comprehensive plan for the city of New York or a  
14 comprehensive planning framework that allows us to  
15 really have a citywide conversation about what is the  
16 role that different communities have to addressing  
17 this crisis, and what is the city's responsibilities  
18 to fund or secure the resources to build the  
19 infrastructure needed to support growth where we want  
20 to see it, but in my experiences and working with the  
21 administration and before that as an advocate who was  
22 on the outside pushing for comp planning, there's  
23 always been a pushback to sort of having that  
24 conversation on a citywide scale so as you go and  
25 think about joining the Planning Commission, how do

2 you think about comprehensive planning in the city of  
3 New York? Do you think that's an idea that is worth  
4 talking more about?

5 LEILA BOZORG: Yeah, thanks for that  
6 question. I am of the mind that we absolutely need to  
7 be planning comprehensively and that there needs to  
8 be a citywide framework that is guiding our  
9 investments and is transparent and understandable to  
10 New Yorkers so I do think there is much more we can  
11 and should be doing, and, when I say we, I mean  
12 really the city can and should be doing to be putting  
13 out a vision that also engages people that includes  
14 neighborhood-level planning but presents a citywide  
15 framework. I have been wary of some of the calls for  
16 comprehensive planning when it starts to sound like a  
17 5, 6, 10-year process where people think we're going  
18 to all come to agreement on where housing should be  
19 built, and I don't have optimism that that's  
20 something we can all come to agreement on or that  
21 every Council Member is going to sign off on and I  
22 get nervous if that becomes a way of just slowing  
23 down the progress we need to make so I think, again,  
24 it's about presenting a citywide framework,  
25 developing a citywide framework that New Yorkers can

2 understand and trust, knowing that we're never going  
3 to get everyone to agree and that we still need to be  
4 moving forward with projects to kind of stem what  
5 would happen if all projects stalled.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so  
7 much, Leila, and best of luck.

8 LEILA BOZORG: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. We're  
10 going to go Council Member Brooks-Powers followed by  
11 Council Member Salamanca.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.  
13 When I think about the City Planning Commission and I  
14 think about all the opportunity it presents for  
15 communities and development and what that looks like  
16 and in going back to what I was saying before in  
17 terms of the unintended consequences that I've seen,  
18 I think it's important to be able to find that  
19 balance between the city priorities and issues to  
20 address some of those concerns and crises that we  
21 face as a city, but at the same time find a way to  
22 take into account what that looks like on the ground  
23 because oftentimes the Commission will present  
24 something and locally, and I can speak just from a  
25 local perspective, there always seems to be a



2 disconnect, and I think that Council Member Hudson  
3 said it pretty eloquently looking at the black and  
4 brown communities and the impact and some of what  
5 I've seen that has been unintended consequence has  
6 led to gentrification as well as further segregation.  
7 When I think about Southeast Queens and going to your  
8 point earlier about communities that have  
9 historically been transportation deserts, that still  
10 exists, right? There have been times where I've said  
11 I'm going to take the train into City Hall and it  
12 takes 2 hours each way to get there, and, when I do  
13 my transportation tours to try to get to some of my  
14 Colleagues' districts, there's sometimes are routes  
15 that take over 3 hours for me to be able to get  
16 there. When you think about development and parking  
17 as Council Member Minority Leader Borelli had stated,  
18 it's important to not diminish the need for parking  
19 because the investments in transportation are not  
20 going at the same rate and speed unfortunately as  
21 development and so the unintended consequences means  
22 that people are closed out of economic opportunities  
23 because they cannot realistically get from point A to  
24 point B. Then with the development, similarly in  
25 black and brown communities like Southeast Queens

2 where it's the largest concentrated area of black  
3 homeownership, those types of communities have to be  
4 prioritized and protected. They are historic  
5 communities that are just very far and few in between  
6 in terms of opportunity for generational wealth and  
7 so I'm interested in and so I'm interested in  
8 understanding your thoughts on how you plan to  
9 leverage your role on the Commission in terms of the  
10 balancing of the city issues and the local dynamics  
11 that exist so that it would prevent further  
12 segregation and further gentrification that has been  
13 happening as a result of some of these actions.

14 LEILA BOZORG: Thank you for that  
15 question. I think part of balancing these issues is  
16 not just listening to them but also developing real  
17 solutions that are outside of housing. What you're  
18 talking about is also the need for us to be very  
19 thoughtful about job centers and about how we get to  
20 job centers and balancing that need with the types of  
21 developments that's happening. That city planning,  
22 the Commission has some responsibility on that, the  
23 Department of City Planning and transportation  
24 agencies, but that is where it's not just about  
25 finding a way to pass housing projects but really

2 being accountable to different communities about the  
3 different types of investments that need to be made  
4 to alleviate affordability. Affordability is not just  
5 a housing issue. It's also about your time and money  
6 to get to work. It's about how many resources you  
7 need to spend to be able to get your child to a good  
8 school. When I talk about affordability, I'm not just  
9 talking about housing solving that issue. I think  
10 planning comprehensively in a community and with a  
11 community cannot just be about housing needs. We need  
12 to think about how other city commitments and  
13 investments are part of the equation of solving the  
14 challenges that residents face.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you  
16 for that. I just really would like to close and say I  
17 ask that you use your voice if you're appointed to  
18 this and champion that because communities like the  
19 ones that I represent have been really impacted. We  
20 need the investments in our communities but not at  
21 the sake of losing our black and brown homeowners,  
22 not at the sake of pushing black and brown low-income  
23 people out of the community that they've called home  
24 for many generations. Thank you.

25 LEILA BOZORG: Absolutely. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. Last but  
3 not least, we'll go to our Land Use Chair, Council  
4 Member Salamanca.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you, Mr.  
6 Chair. Good morning.

7 LEILA BOZORG: Good morning.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: First I want to  
9 congratulate you on getting here, and, just reviewing  
10 your resume when I got it and then just sitting here  
11 and looking at your package, you are extremely  
12 qualified and just want to congratulate you on this.

13 I know that Council Member Sanchez was  
14 touching up on this and I want to touch up on this as  
15 well a little bit in terms of the position City  
16 Planning takes when an application gets to the  
17 Commission. Many times, I would say 99 percent of the  
18 times when City Planning approves an application and  
19 it goes through the ULURP process, when it gets to  
20 the Commission, 99 percent of the time the Commission  
21 approves it regardless of the community opposition,  
22 and I wanted to get a sense from you when an  
23 application is before you, what's going to be your  
24 stance when there's an application and there's big  
25

2 community opposition such as the Community Board and  
3 the Borough President?

4 LEILA BOZORG: Absolutely. Thank you for  
5 that question and thank you for being here.

6 I think my position will be to really  
7 deeply listen and understand the facts at play and  
8 the perspectives at play. If there is that deep level  
9 of opposition, I want to hear why, I want to  
10 understand the history of the concerns. I'm not  
11 speaking to your district when I say this but  
12 sometimes community opposition can come in the form  
13 of exclusionary interests and sometimes it comes in  
14 the form of sincere concerns about the risks that  
15 this project presents to a neighborhood and so it has  
16 to be looked at, to me, on the facts and  
17 understanding the root causes of the concerns that  
18 people are speaking to and then being able to zoom  
19 out and balance how should this be weighed against  
20 whatever benefit is purportedly coming from this  
21 project and is it worth it.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: I heard One 45  
23 being one of the projects. One of the concerns that  
24 we had there was the tremendous opposition that there  
25 was not from just the community but the Community

2 Board, the Borough President, the local Member, the  
3 local State-elected officials there, but the project  
4 continued on. What is your take on building in areas  
5 that has max density compared to building density in  
6 communities that have very little density to fight  
7 back this affordable housing crisis that we have?

8 LEILA BOZORG: Can you just repeat...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: There are areas  
10 and communities such as, I would say myself, Council  
11 Member Sanchez, Diana Ayala, where we may be transit  
12 rich, we're low-income communities, we have high  
13 buildings, 6, 7-story buildings depending on the  
14 area, some areas are 20-story buildings, and we have  
15 other communities in the borough that have very small  
16 density and there's an opportunity to build housing  
17 there. What is your position on that?

18 LEILA BOZORG: I think we need to look at  
19 each type of residential district and understand  
20 where the real opportunities are to build more  
21 densely in a way that makes sense while also doing  
22 the work to be protecting existing communities,  
23 protecting tenants. We can't do the building without  
24 the other tools that are designed to protect tenants  
25 and to improve neighborhoods. We have to look at

2 different types of districts, look at strategies that  
3 will help create more density where it makes sense,  
4 but it does require a nuanced a look at different  
5 types of zoning districts and understanding what the  
6 strategies are. In some cases, it may be a density  
7 factor issue. In some cases, an FAR boost just for  
8 affordable housing makes sense. In some cases,  
9 mapping MIH might make sense depending on the  
10 district. I think it really has to be looked at  
11 district specific.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: One of the main  
13 issues that we have a city is the affordability of  
14 units, the AMI, the area median income, and I see  
15 that you worked at HUD for some time there and the  
16 AMI structure, the way it's set for the city of New  
17 York, it just doesn't include the 5 boroughs, but it  
18 includes the surrounding counties which makes our AMI  
19 for the federal government calculation much higher  
20 than what it actually is in the city of New York.  
21 What can you do as a Commissioner in the City  
22 Planning Commission to try to get the messaging out  
23 to the federal government to make this change?

24 LEILA BOZORG: On this issue, first of  
25 all, HUD actually does have within its AMI

2 calculation something called an adjustment factor for  
3 high-cost areas so once an area passes a threshold of  
4 certain costs, AMI is set in a different way than it  
5 is in other places to account for the high cost of  
6 that region so there is already an adjustment factor  
7 in place. I want to clarify that. It's helpful to  
8 think of AMI just as a benchmark so just because HUD  
9 says the AMI of this area is X, that doesn't mean we  
10 need to build to that AMI. It's a benchmark for us as  
11 policymakers and for the agencies that control  
12 housing subsidy to then decide how much subsidy they  
13 need to put in a project to meet different income  
14 levels so even if that calculation for some reason is  
15 flawed, we don't need to set it at that AMI. It's  
16 really just a benchmark for how much, the only thing  
17 that's going to make housing more affordable in the  
18 context you're speaking of is more subsidy. It's  
19 really about a benchmark to help policymakers decide  
20 how much subsidy to put in a project so if the AMI is  
21 a certain number and to get to low-income residents  
22 you need to go to 60 percent of AMI then you decide  
23 how much money you want to put in to get to that, or  
24 if you want not go to 30 percent, so I would think of  
25 it more as a benchmark than a calculation issue.



2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: We have 5  
3 boroughs. We want to build affordable housing in all  
4 5 boroughs, and I understand that we need to be  
5 attentive to the amount of subsidy that you put into  
6 one project because it limits what you can on another  
7 project and so every year the AMI goes up.

8 Finally, just to put on your radar, one  
9 of the challenges that I see, at least in my district  
10 and I know it's happening to all of my Colleagues,  
11 but I'll give an example of my district. There's land  
12 that we've rezoned under the context of affordable  
13 housing, I would say I have a project that was  
14 rezoned in 2018, HPD to this day has not closed on  
15 that project. As a result, that land has been sold to  
16 a different developer, the third owner, the third  
17 developer, and that developer's committing to  
18 building affordable housing as the original plan,  
19 but, if the city closes now on that project, the AMI  
20 that we voted on 2018 are totally different than the  
21 ones in 2022 because they can only go by the AMIs of  
22 that specific year. That's one challenge. The other  
23 challenge is if this developer doesn't get to close  
24 because it's 2 blocks down from the Metro North  
25 station, the value of the land has gone up, and there

2 are developers who want to pay more than what the  
3 land actually is worth because they know that they  
4 can build market rate in the South Bronx so how can  
5 City Planning help out in terms of ensuring that  
6 projects that are being rezoned, you're talking to  
7 HPD to ensure that HPD can close on that project in a  
8 reasonable amount of time?

9 LEILA BOZORG: That takes the coordination  
10 and the commitment around subsidy and the  
11 accountability around commitments because part of  
12 what you're speaking to is a subsidy problem. If HPD  
13 can't close on a project, it's because it's got too  
14 many other projects in its pipeline so it's about how  
15 to be accountable to whatever commitments are being  
16 made to that community about the timing of this  
17 project. Unfortunately, our city, things are  
18 constantly shifting and so the AMI issue you're  
19 speaking to in that context is concerning. If  
20 commitments have been made about a certain AMI level  
21 and then the market has changed such that that AMI is  
22 now a higher set of incomes, that, to me, requires  
23 conversation with HPD about trying to meet the  
24 original commitments and putting more subsidy in the  
25 project in order to do that. It becomes this

2 balancing act for HPD on where and how much subsidy  
3 to be putting in. This coordination you're talking  
4 about is absolutely critical, and I know Council  
5 Member Brooks-Powers' district has had this  
6 challenges as well of just the timing of when a  
7 project is coming through with the expectations that  
8 are set about when it's going to close and then other  
9 factors really impacting that is very challenging and  
10 I know it does a disservice to the trust-building  
11 that's needed with communities about believing what  
12 agencies are saying about when projects are going to  
13 get done. I understand that.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right.

15 We'll continue to have those conversations. I want to  
16 congratulate you and thank you again. Thank you, Mr.  
17 Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you. We do not  
19 have anyone currently signed up for public comments.  
20 We'll give them just a minute or so if folks would  
21 like to sign up virtually. No members here now.

22 All right. I don't believe we have anyone  
23 here from the public so we're going to say thank you  
24 to you for your thoughtful testimony and answers, and  
25 I want to thank all of my Colleagues who participated

2 in today's hearing. We're going to recess today's  
3 hearing and reconvene on Thursday, June 16th, for a  
4 vote on this nomination, and we'll see folks then.  
5 Thanks so much.

6 LEILA BOZORG: Thank you. Thank you so  
7 much, Council Member.

8 [RECESSED]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date July 20, 2022