Valerie S. Mason
Chair

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The City of New York
Community Board 8 Manhattan
Zoning, Development, and Housing Committee
Tuesday, September 22, 2026 – 6:30 p.m.
Conducted remotely on Zoom

MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present: Michael Anderson, Elizabeth Ashby, Michele Birnbaum, Anthony Cohn, DJ Falkson, Edward Hartzog, Craig Lader, John McClement, Dylan Kennedy*, Gopi Malathi, Valerie Mason, Elizabeth Rose, Marco Tamayo, and Adam Wald

Excused Absences: Margaret Price
**Public member*

Approximate number of public attendees: 31

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m.

1. **Presentation by George Janes on "Land Use Initiatives: What's Happened? What's Coming"**

   George Janes presented on "Land Use Initiatives: What's Happened? What's Coming". He described ways in which recent initiatives have affected and will affect housing growth in the city at large, and in particular in CD8M.

   Affordable Housing Growth Plan
   The plan proposed by HPD calls for targets for growth over the next ten-year period, which would result in a net increase of 700,000 units. Each Community District's future contribution is based on existing size (of housing stock) and prior growth. No consideration was made for holding capacity, access to transportation or jobs, or historic districts, or any planning criteria. Mr. Janes declared the plan "divorced from reality", and it is unclear how these targets will be used. Mr. Janes suggested that applicants will use this plan to support ULURP applications. CD8M is expected to grow the most of any district in Manhattan or Citywide, adding more than 12,000 units (of unspecified size and income level) over the course of the next five years will add up to more than 25,000 (net) new residents to CD8M,

   Fast Track Districts
   The twelve community districts with the lowest percentage of income restricted housing production (from July 2021 to July 2026) will be designated as Fast-Track Districts. Land Use actions within these districts will not be subject to City Council approval. Mr. Janes noted that the current hypothesis is that CD8M will be one of these districts. Although much activity has

taken place or is proposed within CD8M, the city has not updated underlying data that could improve projections for our District. As an example, he mentioned a large development at 1097 1st Avenue which will provide 89 permanently income restricted units (averaging 60% AMI).

Block by Block
This is the mayor's housing plan, a successor to "Housing New York" and "Housing our Neighbors", and a guide to the ways in which this administration will prioritize and address housing issues. More focused on tenant issues than prior Mayoral plans, it promotes the idea of local planning and "micro plans." This proposal welcomes rezonings to make more MIH areas and more housing. The plan description appears to support plans similar to the rezoning developed and proposed by the Task Force for Residential Rezoning.

SEQRA Reform
SEQRA is the state law that governs the environmental review process of development projects. Most actions that create fewer than 500 net new units will be exempt from environmental review. The framers expect that this will lower the cost and shorten the timeline for most land use actions. However, it will result in less information about individual projects, since the environmental review and report provide the bulk of information on proposed developments and their impacts. On the plus side, since this is the largest cost of a land use application, it could make it easier for CB8M to apply for the TFRR proposal.

Charter Revision
In what has become an annual tradition, the city proposes a number of revisions to the City Charter. They are:
Question 1: Streamline Process for Using Public Space for Uses like Ramps, Benches, and Cafes
Question 2: Reform the Contracting Process to Improve Small Business and Nonprofit Opportunities to Work with the City
Question 3: Speed up Street Safety Projects, Office Leasing, and Activation of City Land
Question 4: Simplify Building Permitting
Question 5: Require Contributions to the Rainy-Day Fund to Ensure Sufficient Budgetary Reserves.

Mr. Janes spoke only to Question 3, "Activation of City Land". Lots under 10,000 sf will become ELURP actions as opposed to ULURP actions. This will "unlock revenue for the City" from sale of small lots and development rights from City owned property and Landmarks. In the past the city has prioritized school development, affordable housing, etc. rather than simply monetizing assets. This measure represents a trade of leverage away from strategic priorities toward monetization.

The State of Yes
This is a package of 32 bills dealing with housing. The report describing them was published in August 2026; they will be discussed in legislative session beginning in January. They include the Faith Based Affordability Act which allows avenue zoning to move to a mid-block faith owned site if affordable housing is being built.

A lively discussion ensued, the highlights of which are noted below:

a. One member of the public asked whether any of this make Northwell sale to a Developer more or less possible? He answered that nothing in this makes that potential less likely.

b. Another suggested that the Fair Housing Growth Strategy is not a bad thing, and that the committee shouldn't give the impression that the sky is falling. If we could get to 10,000 units that would make up for the lack of gains in the past. Elizabeth Rose responded with some info about other district growth, specifically that10K new unit growth is a level that has only been seen in districts that have been rezoned from low-density commercial to residential, which led to significant residential growth.

c. Another expressed support for development of new units. They agreed that prior City policies have failed CD8, but didn't CB8 vote against many aspects of COY? What tools do we want? Let's make sure we have a consistent and coherent position.

d. Another member of the public asked if environmental review is removed, how do we find out if a site was polluted/contaminated? There may be other sources/triggers for this. Studies of traffic, shadows, public services, water/sewer etc. will no longer be required – buildings will be assumed not to meet the threshold requiring such studies.

e. Valerie Mason defended CB8's history of support for affordable housing and shared the experience we have had with how our efforts to advocate for affordable housing have been met by City agencies.

f. Marco Tamayo commented that WE all agree that the city needs more housing. The question is whether the same approach should be applied to every district. CB8 is mostly built – therefore development requires development of underused sites, including public housing. We need to consider feasibility. Having zoning capacity doesn't mean that affordable housing will be produced: the economics must work. There needs to be an analysis of where housing can realistically be built and where government subsidies are necessary. Increasing the target doesn't solve the problem if the economics don't work. The city needs a more comprehensive financial plan. He also defended the prior 210' height limit proposal.

g. Elizabeth Ashby reminded everyone that the 210' height limit was focused on preserving the existing lower cost housing. It might not be income restricted as the current policies focus on, but lower cost. We also need to protect the scale, character and livability of neighborhoods. Adding more housing to the most populated district shows there is something wrong with HPD and DCP thinking.

h. Valerie Mason noted that Special District (Second, First, and York Avenues) was intended to enable bargaining for the higher height. Somehow that was lost. If we had more control over as-of-right development, we would have more control over out of scale development. We are

losing affordable housing and affordable retail space, which we will never get back. What good is it if you can have affordable housing but can't buy groceries? We don't have zoning limitations in our toolbox to get what we want.

i. John McClement commented that all he sees is affordable housing being torn down and replaced by monster buildings for the wealthy. We're missing something somewhere.

j. Marco Tamayo made a case for more review, not less. He believes new buildings are neither energy compliant nor sustainable. Cooling towers are no longer registered.

2. **Old Business**
   There were no items of Old Business.

3. **New Business**
   There were no items of New Business.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Elizabeth Ashby, Anthony Cohn, and Elizabeth Rose, Co-Chairs