

COMMUNITY BOARD TO VOTE ON MAYOR'S INWOOD REZONING PROPOSAL



Photo: Adi Talwar

The southeast corner of 207th Street and 10th Avenue, in the heart of the proposed rezoning footprint.

BY ABIGAIL SAVITCH-LEW

On January 16, the City Planning Commission certified the de Blasio administration's proposed rezoning of Inwood. That means the Inwood rezoning has officially entered the seven-month public review process known as the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) through which a rezoning is approved or disapproved.

Inwood is the fifth neighborhood rezoning under the de Blasio administration's affordable housing plan to enter ULURP. The Inwood proposal also grew out of local councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez's vision to redevelop Inwood east of 10th Avenue and create a technology and healthcare hub.

The rezoning, proposed by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), would allow substantial residential and commercial development in areas on and east of 10th Avenue both north and south of the MTA railyard, which are currently mostly zoned for industrial or auto-uses. The rezoning would also allow an increase in residential density on East 207th Street, Dyckman Street and Broadway, and it would

apply "contextual zoning"—zoning to preserve the existing character of the area—to surrounding residential blocks. In all upzoned areas, the city would institute mandatory inclusionary housing, which requires that a portion of the units be rent-restricted.

Other components of the proposal would improve access to the waterfront and facilitate the redevelopment of Inwood library with over 100 units of income-targeted housing, a new library and a pre-K program.

The city estimates that these changes could lead to the development of 4,348 units of housing and 1.1 million square feet of commercial space, as well as new space for community facilities.

The proposal is part of a larger plan for the neighborhood that includes investments in housing preservation, neighborhood infrastructure, economic development initiatives, park investments, strategies to prevent displacement and other efforts. The plan also includes investments in broadband and youth STEM education, as well as tech and healthcare training programs at Washington Height's new

Workforce1 center.

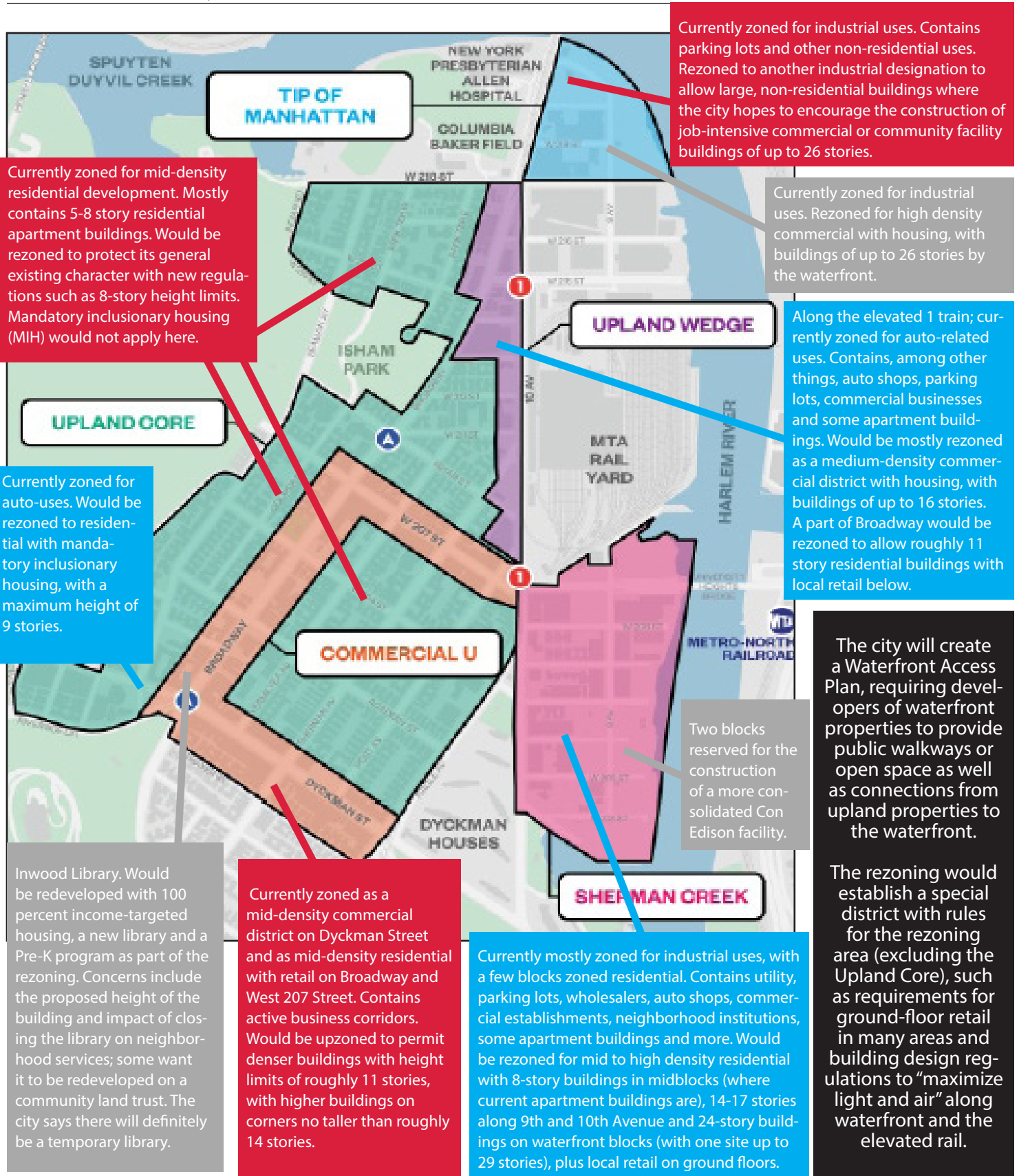
Many residents have raised concerns about the proposal. The same day ULURP began, three neighborhood groups—Inwood Preservation, Northern Manhattan Is Not For Sale and Inwood Small Business Coalition—released a joint statement decrying what they labeled a top-down planning process and a rezoning proposal they argue will "result in gentrification and displacement of our majority-Latinx community and immigrant-owned small businesses," strain infrastructure and encourage landlord harassment.

Foes of the city's proposal believe the rezoning will spur development that displaces current residents, create new housing that is not affordable for local people, push out small businesses and fail to provide good construction jobs for local residents. There are also worries about the redevelopment of the library, the impacts on neighborhood infrastructure and the risks of developing in flood-prone areas.

A draft alternative plan created by Northern Manhattan Is Not For Sale included a variety of policy ideas and a demand that all new housing be 100 percent affordable to households making incomes roughly from \$17,000 to \$85,400, while a draft alternative plan created by Inwood Preservation includes, among other ideas, zoning recommendations involving a more extensive use of contextual zoning, with modest commercial and residential development in some areas. The groups are working to merge their drafts into a single plan.

Over the coming months, Manhattan Community Board 12, followed by Borough President Gale Brewer, the City Planning Commission and finally the City Council will vote on the proposal. Given that Rodriguez invited the rezoning study, it's likely he'll want to move something forward. The question is what, and in what ways community feedback will shape that final proposal.

The City's Proposal for Inwood



What is ULURP?

THE CITY DECIDES WHETHER TO DO A REZONING THROUGH ITS UNIFORM LAND-USE REVIEW PROCEDURE OR ULURP



Three officials who will weigh in, top to bottom: Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer has an advisory opinion, Councilmember Ydanis Rodriguez will shape the Council's position and Mayor de Blasio will sign or veto the Council's bill.

1 BEFORE THE ULURP PROCESS BEGINS, the administration must launch a separate process of environmental review. Once the Environmental Assessment Statement is complete and, if warranted, a draft Environmental Impact Statement is prepared, ULURP can begin.

2 THE LOCAL COMMUNITY BOARD considers the plan first. It holds a public hearing and has 60 days to vote on the idea. The vote is only advisory.

3 THE BOROUGH PRESIDENT then has 30 days to render a recommendation—which, again, is only advisory.

4 NEXT, THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION—where most members are appointed by the mayor—takes up the plan. It has 30 days to vote on it. Even if the CPC votes no, the plan can still go to the Council under some circumstances.

5 THE CITY COUNCIL ACTS NEXT. First the Zoning Subcommittee, then the Land Use Committee and finally the full Council votes on the proposal. The Council can pass, reject or modify the plan. By custom, the member in whose district the proposal falls usually has decisive sway. The Council has 50 days to act.

6 IF THE COUNCIL MODIFIES THE PROPOSAL, it goes back to the Planning Commission for 15 days to review and vote again—unless so much changes that ULURP has to start over.

7 NOW IT'S THE MAYOR'S TURN. He can accept or veto the Council's zoning decision. He has only five days to make the call.

8 IF THE MAYOR VETOES the Council's decision, the Council can override that veto with a two-thirds vote. It has 10 days to try.

TAKE ACTION!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Community Board 12
Public Hearing on Inwood Rezoning
Thursday February 22, 6:30 p.m.
I.S. 52, 650 Academy Street

In addition to the public hearing, the Inwood Rezoning Proposal will be discussed at the following Community Board meetings, to be held at 530 West 166th Street 6th Floor:

Traffic & Transportation Committee
Monday February 5, 7 pm

Business Development Committee
Tuesday February 6, 7 pm

Public Safety Committee
Wednesday February 7, 7 pm

Land Use Committee
Wednesday February 7, 7 pm

Housing & Human Services Committee
Thursday, February 8, 7 pm

Youth & Education Committee
Monday February 12, 7 pm

Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee
Tuesday February 13, 6:30 p.m.

KEY CONTACTS

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INWOOD COMMUNITY SERVICES
inwoodcommunityservices.org
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KEY DOCUMENTS

CITYLIMITS.ORG/INWOODdocs

HELP FOR TENANTS FACING EVICTION

Learn about the rights you might have to free legal counsel under a new city program.

righttocounselnyc.org

susanna@righttocounselnyc.org

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

We want to hear from you about your plans for, comments on or questions about the future of your neighborhood.

VISIT our website to comment on stories and get more info: zonein.org

CALL us toll-free at 844-ZONE-NYC to leave a voice comment

EMAIL us at zone@citylimits.org with criticisms, comments, story ideas or questions

MAIL us at City Limits, 8 West 126th Street, New York, NY 10027, and tell us what's on your mind.

THE CITY'S PLANS FAIL OUR IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

BY PALOMA LARA AND AVA FARKAS

New York City is the quintessential immigrant city. With 28 percent of the population foreign born and many more second-generation immigrants, the city prides itself as a culturally diverse sanctuary for immigrants.

Northern Manhattan is the epicenter of one such immigrant community—the Dominican community. Dominicans make up about 63 percent of the Latinos in the area, who are 74 percent of the total population. Immigrating to the city at a time when minority enclaves faced urban blight and a vanishing social safety net, Dominicans transformed a once crime- and drug-ridden neighborhood into a thriving community. The streets lined with small, mostly Dominican-owned businesses and the strong community fabric allowed them to elect representation from their own.

Inwood NYC will only exacerbate the existing displacement of Northern Manhattan's working-class immigrant community. Dominicans are already fleeing steep rent increases here for the Bronx, and those who remain are the most rent-burdened ethnic group, with 48 percent of households paying more than a third of their income in rent. Under the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing that Inwood NYC calls for, three of every four new apartments will be luxury housing, and the few "affordable" units will still be too expensive for the majority of Inwood residents. Rising property values will incentivize landlords of rent-regulated buildings near the rezoning to use egregious loopholes in the rents laws, like preferential rent, to further raise rents and evict tenants.

This rezoning will be disastrous for our immigrant-owned small businesses on 207th St., Broadway, and Dyckman where the rezoning will replace manufacturing areas and small business corridors with high-rise luxury buildings and chain stores. In Inwood, 94 percent of small businesses lease their space and 53 percent of Inwood's small business owners say their rent is "barely affordable." These businesses will face increased harassment from landlords who will either only offer month-to-month leases or not renew, besides incentivizing landlords to exercise demolition clauses to build larger buildings. Should the rezoning pass as is, the foundation of the local economy where 53 percent Latino and 29 percent women-owned business reside, will crumble, taking our community along with it. Although \$1.23 million is being invested through the Business Improvement District (BID) to boost community "beautification" projects, BIDs have proven hazardous when introduced into immigrant communities. Landlords pass on BID fees to renters, while BIDs feed off wealthy consumers to make large profits, privatize our public spaces, and harass street vendors.

By building majority luxury housing and incentivizing commercial property owners to replace small businesses, the city is abandoning the very community that has for years fueled the renaissance of this city. The mayor has continually told us that gentrification is an inevitable process, but isn't the purpose of government to protect its citizens from displacement and loss of livelihood by implementing policies that address the root issues of institutionalized racism and corporate greed?

We defeated the Sherman Plaza project because it was not truly affordable for our community and by standing together, our councilmember listened. We must stay united and loudly say, with one voice: "NO to the Inwood NYC rezoning plan!" We deserve better.

--Paloma Lara and Ava Farkas are members of Northern Manhattan is Not for Sale.

THE CITY OFFERS AN EXCITING COASTAL VISION FOR INWOOD

BY OBED FULCAR

Did you know that three-fourths of Northern Manhattan is surrounded by water, yet Inwood residents do not have access to the Harlem River waterfront? Most of Brooklyn, Western Queens, and the entire West Side and most of the East Side of Manhattan have world-class waterfronts that promote recreational activity for residents and visitors alike. But what about the Inwood residents? Are we not New Yorkers, too?

Sherman Creek sits on the Harlem River and used to be a thriving hub for water-related activities but that changed in the early 1900s when the area became used for heavy industrial facilities. By the 1970s, Sherman Creek was totally blocked off to Inwood residents, and it remains that way today. Right now, we only have a bare concrete public pier at the end of Dyckman Street on the Hudson River and La Marina.

All of this could change if the city's Inwood NYC neighborhood plan is approved this summer. The plan seeks to update how new development happens and will mandate that new properties along the waterfront build and maintain public open space. I believe that the Sherman Creek area and Harlem River waterfront are in need of housing and community spaces, as opposed to the all of the parking lots and other spaces that aren't being used to their full potential.

At Friends of Sherman Creek we became very excited when we learned that the city was taking a fresh look at this initiative and we have been participating in all organized public meetings ever since. As long time advocates for Northern Manhattan waterfront parks, we are excited and highly optimistic about the possibilities this plan could bring. The last time we were this excited was in 2011 when NYCEDC published the Sherman Creek Waterfront Master Plan. The plan was based on a yearlong study of the area and extensive community input. Fast-forward to 2018, and guess what? Where the 2011 Sherman Creek Waterfront Master Plan called for a "clam farm" there now exists a thriving oyster garden.

It is my dream to one day see Inwood's Harlem River waterfront full of boats, just like in Lake George, where one can dock and then walk to a local seafood restaurant or cafe. I would love to see 9th Avenue as a pedestrian boulevard, lined with food trucks, artist tents highlighting Northern Manhattan arts and crafts, as well as street musical performances—instead of the automotive shops that are currently polluting the Estuary.

I strongly believe that it's critical that we prioritize waterfront open space and related infrastructure while creating affordable housing. Just like my good friend, the late Obie Bing, who knew the Sherman Creek area firsthand, tirelessly proclaimed that Northern Manhattan infrastructure must be rebuilt first if any developments of any kind were to happen.

One of the main goals of Inwood NYC is to preserve the community's affordability, create new job opportunities, and improve its livability by creating a waterfront that rivals Long Island city's. To do this successfully, the city must also create home ownership opportunities for middle-class residents so that current and future generations stay in the community they helped build up through good times and bad. That is one of the most effective ways to preserve the fabric of our special community from a potential tidal wave of gentrification.

--Obed Fulcar is the founder and director of Friends of Sherman Creek Conservancy Inc.