



Olga Abinader, Acting Director
Environmental Assessment and Review Division
New York City Department of City Planning
120 Broadway, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10007

May 26, 2019

RE: Comments on Gowanus Draft Scope of Work -- Neighborhood Rezoning and Related Actions

Dear Director Abinader:

The Park Slope Civic Council (PSCC) offers the following comments regarding Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning and Related Actions Draft Scope of Work. (DSOW)

Our comments come from a community advocacy position. PSCC promotes the health, vitality and character of the Park Slope neighborhood and advocates for the interests of residents, businesses and others with a stake in the community. We frequently work with other neighborhood organizations, both in and out of Park Slope.

Through our Forth on Fourth Avenue Committee (FOFA) we have been an advocate for a cleaner, greener, safer and more pedestrian friendly 4th Avenue for almost 10 years. We were instrumental in advocating for the 2011 rezoning of 4th Avenue to mandate commercial space on the ground floor of new buildings and significant increases in fenestration but failed to achieve a goal of more affordable housing. We are responsible (working with NYC Parks/Million Trees) for the majority of 50+ new trees on 4th Avenue between Pacific Street and the Prospect Expressway, as well as (working with DOT) for the placement of a half dozen non-commercial benches.

We are pleased to be a member of Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ) a diverse coalition of residents and community organizations that advocates for a just, inclusive, and resilient Gowanus neighborhood and planning process. Many of our comments are informed by (now) over a year of discussions with members about planning for a just and equitable rezoning of Gowanus.

In our first response to the Draft Rezoning Plan (2/28/19) we stated that “the Park Slope Civic Council believes that any new City zoning actions must respect the existing residents of the neighborhoods affected by the rezoning and enhance the social, cultural, economic and racial mix of the community”. We believe that the DSOW still falls short on actions that would achieve those outcomes, and in some sections, thwarts equity for current and future residents of the area under review. We believe that several significant study gaps in the DSOW of work simply reinforce social, housing and environmental injustices in the draft plan.

Although this response is primarily focused on issues most familiar to PSCC, notably 4th Avenue, there are other issues we will address that deeply concern us and our neighbors on the west side of 4th Avenue. We wish to clearly state that a rush into rezoning action without addressing those issue

will present serious social and environmental threats to us and our neighbors and be inconsistent with Gowanus Neighborhood Plan Goals.

****** Consequently, we stand with our GNCJ partners in demanding that the City provide a clearer road map to reaching all Gowanus Neighborhood Plan Goals BEFORE the ULURP clock begins.

Some of the problematic prevailing assumptions in the DSOW and the data required for that roadmap are discussed below. However, we will first note the inadequacy of any visual representations related to project decisions. All provided maps in the scoping document are flat and one-dimensional - nowhere are pedestrian views depicted nor are elevations depicted.

****** To increase transparency and aid public oversight, PSCC requests that DCP make public all its mapping and GIS data related to the proposal. This includes shapefiles for the project and study areas, potential and projected sites, and other pertinent files. We note that in this response we, or our partners, have been forced to create new files from NYC data bases in order to provide an informed response. This is an unreasonable burden for public review.

****** The final EIS must include pedestrian views of open space areas as well as dimensional depictions of depth and bulk of allowed new construction.

PROJECT AREA

Current exclusion of NYCHA Housing from Scope - As we stated in our comments about the draft plan, we continue to insist that the NYCHA residences which house close to 25% of current Gowanus residents must be included in the scope of the study, with planning for remediation action of the universally acknowledged deficiencies in the housing conditions. Further, in light of the fact that two of the three NYCHA projects (Warren Street and Wyckoff Gardens) will be subject to significant land use changes associated with NYCHA 2.0 strategies, which in turn will result in significant land use and occupancy changes in the near future, there is no excuse for keeping them outside of the project area.

The DSOW states (p. 11) that the City will consider funding improvements to Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens, and Warren Street Houses during the rezoning process. A statement about giving consideration to these funding improvements does not rise to the level of an actual commitment and offers no assurance that any improvements will be undertaken. In prior rezoning actions undertaken by the City, for instance, in East New York, the City committed substantial funding towards infrastructure improvements.

****** The City should address the need for NYCHA housing improvements as part of the EIS and should commit to an infrastructure funds that will be available to fund a meaningful level of improvements to the NYCHA properties even if still immediately outside the project area.

Warren Street (572 Warren Street - 200 units) is now part of the HUD Rental Assistance Program (RAD) which converts apartment funding to the Section 8 Program and will soon see significant

renovations, including HVAC systems, as well as electrical and plumbing systems. The extent of tenant relocation associated with this conversion is still unknown but an increase in infrastructure (electrical and CSO) demand is probable.

Under the NextGen Neighborhoods program, NYCHA has selected two private companies to develop two new 16-story mixed-income buildings at Wyckoff Gardens (530 current units) totaling an additional 500 units. Both new buildings will have 50 percent market-rate and 50 percent affordable housing for low-income households earning up to \$51,540 for a family of three. NYCHA will own the land, but a private management company will control the buildings. The proposed development at Wyckoff will provide 11,000 square feet of retail space, including a restaurant and training facility, and 1,000 square feet of social service space. A yet undetermined amount of funding will be advanced to NYCHA to begin repairs of the existing buildings. Again, at minimal, this infill project will increase infrastructure demands.

To separate these two NYCHA developments (and Gowanus Houses) from the project area simply makes no sense ignoring the facts that residents are part of the community and that the significant land use changes will have environmental impacts on the larger Gowanus infrastructure. Lack of inclusion a) further silos MYCHA residents, b) contributes to an underestimation of the impact of new construction on sewers and electrical demand and, c) cuts off any opportunities to actively plan for community investment in improving the quality of life for NYCHA residents as part of the Gowanus Neighborhood Plan

**** NYCHA housing must be included in the rezoning study area**

Curiously, despite not including NYCHA housing in the area of study, the DSOW notes that “the City will consider funding improvements to Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens and Warren Street Houses during the rezoning process” (DSOW, 11). We argue that the time for “consideration” is long past.

**** The City must commit to funding critical building improvements at all three developments and must break ground on the long-shuttered Gowanus Community Center before the re-zoning proposal goes through ULURP.**

LAND USE, ZONING AND PUBLIC POLICY

The transformative power of past 4th Avenue re-zonings, which neither created affordable housing nor welcomed pedestrians with commercial destinations (and has been held up by some as a model of design sterility) needs to be a cautionary warning to NYC DCP in terms of preparing a final EIS. The Municipal Art Society’s 2018 study, “A TALE OF TWO REZONINGS: Taking a Harder Look at CEQR” is a further cautionary tale about how the Downtown Brooklyn Rezoning EIS dramatically underestimated residential development, resulting in rezoning that accomplished few of its commercial goals and resulted in a massive, heavily shadowed downtown. (Illustration attached)

The Park Slope Civic Council has worked hard, through its Forth on Fourth Avenue (FOFA) committee to dispel the notion of 4th Avenue as a barrier between neighborhoods (Park Slope and

Gowanus or Boerum Hill). Another re-zoning, with increased building height and density, but no destination points for residents, seriously runs the risk of creating a virtual wall between neighborhoods.

A close look at DSOW Tax Map Figures 2a through 2f (attached) highlights a special problem with some 4th Avenue intersections. While the vast majority of lots along 4th Avenue are avenue oriented, there are several intersections where side street lots are street-facing right up to their intersection with Fourth Ave. Building on these lots (presumably creating a large 4th Avenue facing building replacing from 1 to 4 smaller housing units oriented toward the intersecting street) puts the side or back of the new, higher and more dense building next to the entrance of a low rise residence aligned with its neighbor. It also significantly shortens and alters the streetscape. Because aligned house set-backs on such streets vary considerably from street to street, the problem may vary in severity from block to block

**** New development on corners where street-facing low-rise housing is continuous to a 4th Avenue intersection deserve special study in terms of impacts on urban design, visual resources, direct and indirect residential displacement, property value, open space and shadow affects. Mitigation should be spelled out for each site.**

The Tax Maps also illustrate an intersection oddity would create bad urban design as well as be contradictory to one of the rezoning intents - “balancing transformative growth at a scale that enforces a sense of place and responds to surrounding context” (p13 DSOW). Throughout the proposed 4th Avenue corridor, on both sides of the avenue, the new zone boundary lines frequently include at least one, and sometimes two, side street facing lots that are behind existing higher rise 4th Avenue facing buildings. These lots would be eligible for up-zoning, which could mean that behind a 12-story building on 4th Avenue a developer could build up to a 17-story building that would have no relationship to 4th Avenue at all and be immediately adjacent to a block of three or four-story buildings. While there may be a paper-tidiness to strictly maintaining a 100 ft zoning area, simple common sense suggests that the new zone considers the historical/existing foot prints.

**** The special district zoning on 4th Avenue should not extend to residential side streets in instances where buildings constructed under recent rezonings occupy the width of 4th Avenue facing lots.**

**** At the very least, there should be an analysis of potential displacement, environmental impact, and traffic impact of building up to 17 stories on side street-facing lots behind pre-existing 12-story 4th Avenue facing buildings.**

We add that during the City Planning sponsored meetings about the Gowanus rezoning, community members were repeatedly given reassurances about available strategies to mitigate the impact of high-density blocks meeting low-density blocks. If New York City is willing to create special rules for canal blocks (p38) we see no reasons why adjustments cannot be made on 4th Avenue. As the rezoning plan stands now, the edges of 4th Avenue could turn into a jagged, snaggle-tooth border that bisects adjacent residential streets.

Environmental special district

The Gowanus Neighborhood Plan is ambitious. The concept of a ‘Special Gowanus Mixed-Use District’, if vibrant, inclusive and equitably enacted through-out the Gowanus neighborhood, is an important first step toward a “thriving, inclusive, and more resilient Gowanus where existing and future residents and workers are able to participate in civic, cultural and economic activities and where a wholly unique resource- the Gowanus Canal - can thrive and play an active role in that equitable and sustainable growth.” (DSOW p23) But it won’t be enough. It doesn’t go far enough.

At a time when we will be experiencing dramatic climate change within 20 years, where recent rezoning has often left community residents feeling at best, left out, and at worst, betrayed, and where there is deep distrust that rezoning only benefits developers, we need a different way of committing to ecological sustainability. We really don’t have a choice. We think that it’s time to create a special environmental district, a place where people and the planet are at the center of urban development, and Gowanus is an ideal place in New York City to further pilot the idea.

An environment special district, sometimes called an EcoDistrict, is a neighborhood-scale commitment to achieving ambitious sustainability performance goals and unites public and private groups into an organization supported by a governance structure. It is not theoretical - such districts have been popular in European cities for over a decade and sites are being piloted in US cities such as Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Portland and Miami - there even is a less populated designated environmental special district in Staten Island.

Within an environmental special district, a foundational component is an accurate assessment of the impact of proposed development in a neighborhood, beginning with agreement on baseline conditions. It is based on a philosophy that all participants in any proposed development have a shared responsibility for minimizing environmental impacts, even for mitigating pre-development ones. Stormwater mitigation becomes not simply a municipal responsibility to provide pipes and treatment plants, but a system that begins with how buildings manage water and waste and includes public and private sector landscape requirements. An environmental special district recognizes that watershed boundaries are not determined by streets.

The Gowanus Rezoning Plan should (and could) have the following components

- ** Support for health and social resilience, starting with a Racial Equity Impact Assessment and a Community Health Needs Assessment and including lead and mold abatement in public housing and a Gowanus Emergency Preparedness Plan

- ** Plans for no net increase in Combined Sewer Overflow that include water consumption targets and green infrastructure to help manage street run-off

- ** Standards for promoting comfortable and equitable public spaces that include investment in Public Realm improvements (such as those in the Gowanus Lowlands Master Plan) and continuing public input into Public Space design

- ** Standards for no net increase in energy use, such as requiring new development with a FAR

greater than M1(2) include local energy production or savings equal to not less than 20% of projected energy use and the installation of efficient fixtures, solar and/or battery storage on all publicly owned or financed projects.

Members of the Gowanus Coalition for Neighborhood Justice, representing a wide range of individuals with a deep interest in a sustainable Gowanus, have been exploring the concept of environmental special districts and are eager to partner with the City in the formation of such a district in Gowanus.

TASK 3. SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Further commercial displacement on 4th Avenue. The characterization of 4th Avenue as an “active retail corridor” (DSOW.12) is inaccurate and misleading. While pockets of retail remain (notably in blocks on the western border of the Avenue) and there are scattered small business holdouts, the two City-led rezoning efforts in the past two decades have transformed the preponderance of 4th Avenue to residential, with many large commercial spaces still sitting empty in new buildings, while doctors’ offices and day care centers are typically the occupants of new ground floor spaces that do have tenants. A number of formerly small commercial spaces are shuttered as building owners speculate on rezoning outcomes. Simply because of the anticipation of rezoning, 4th Avenue streetscape alteration is continuing, with at least six new large residential developments either under construction or planned -- more than are listed as “projected and potential development sites” (Figure 8 - DSOW). The days of “one story industrial uses...local retail shops... and walk up buildings”, are all but vanished, particularly south of Union Street.

The majority of remaining small business, particularly the local restaurants, quick meal take-out shops and area bars/eateries along 4th Avenue who contribute a vestigial feeling of “neighborhood” are in low density buildings (see attached “PLUTO¹ Commercial area assessment”). The impact of a probable displacement of these establishments needs to be examined before the buildings that house them are torn down for residential spaces.

(Note: the Pluto file and analysis by GCNJ suggest that the DSOW significantly underestimates potential development and resultant displacement. The DSOW leaves 309 parcels along 4th Avenue out of the study. While many of these sites are city/state owned, occupied by a community use/organization, or developed after the 2003 rezoning, there are at least 42 parcels along 4th Avenue that should have been studied as Potential or Projected development sites in the RWCDS. These parcels were developed pre-2003, are at least 4,000 sf [or assemblages of 4,500 sf], and owned by realty groups, development corporations, holding companies, and LLCs. They must be included in the final EIS.)

The Special Gowanus Mixed-Use District (GSD) controls would “include supplemental ground floor use regulations in key locations to require active non-residential or commercial uses foster a safe, varied and walkable pedestrian experience along major corridors...and incentivize inclusion of a

¹ PLUTO is publicly available NYC GIS data containing extensive land use and geographic data at the tax lot level in ESRI shapefile and File Geodatabase formats. The PLUTO files contain more than seventy fields derived from data maintained by city agencies.

more specific set of uses that include... arts-related, civic ...and repair and production services.” (DSOW - A28). These controls should be extended to 4th Avenue to incentivize building smaller affordable ground floor spaces.

** The city needs to map existing small commercial business located in low rise buildings along 4th Avenue to understand the impact of displacement of businesses that are in fact “cultural resources” and directly impact pedestrian experience of public space. Any impact should be mitigated by requiring smaller affordable spaces in new construction for relocation.

** The DSOW references a “Gowanus Mix” to assure some variety in ground floor space. Presuming that “Gowanus Mix” is vibrant, inclusive and equitable, 4th Avenue should also be subject to a similar requirement to require diversity in use of ground floor space. Support incentives similar to those of MIH could be put in place to encourage developers to build small (or at least flexible) and rent less expensively. This type of zoning adjustment was recently enacted in Upper West Side (Manhattan) rezoning.

** To further support active ground floor use and discourage maintenance of empty space as a tax right off, we suggest that ground floor space that remains empty past one year of construction be subject to a non-occupancy tax.

Residential Displacement - We continue to urge that the final EIS carefully examine, and NYC DCP rethink, the speed at which 4th Avenue development is likely to take place. Because building on 4th Avenue does not require the type of soil remediation required at potential building sites closer to the canal, it is significantly easier to build on 4th Avenue. Our members who live near 4th Avenue have reported almost intrusive real estate interest along the site, with homeowners under a barrage of mailings, and occasionally visits, urging property sale.

** We assume that City Planning has data on past 4th Avenue displacement post past rezoning - or could at least create illustrations from BRUNO maps. That data needs to be included and examined in the final EIS as part of forecasting potential displacement.

** Land use maps that illustrate the current status of the Avenue (i.e. Tax Map Figures 2a through 2f) should mark those buildings built since rezoning (virtually all at 12 stories) and use them as illustrators of current height variations, the extent of neighborhood change in the past decade, and predictors of future development.

The DSOW asserts that direct residential displacement does not need to be studied because less than 500 residents will be displaced (DSOW, 49). We believe the rezoning will ultimately surpass that number. However, because of the currently small residential population of Gowanus west of 4th Avenue a displacement of even a small number has potential to alter the socioeconomic conditions of the neighborhood.

Recognizing the potential for similar displacement throughout the whole re-zoning area, we suggest the following actions:

** Analysis of direct business displacement should include examining adverse impacts on low

cost services like bodegas and laundromats that serve the majority low-income tenants of public housing. This analysis should also determine the number of artists and makers that will be displaced.

** Analysis of indirect residential displacement should not exclude potential displacement within rent stabilized units, which have been subject to tenant displacement as a result of landlord harassment (despite prohibitive laws)

** Analysis of indirect business displacement should also pay particular attention to the Industrial Business Zone (IBZ). Mitigation measures should be identified as part of the IBZ planning process.

** Last but not least, the land use analysis needs to take into consideration the significant recent land use changes beyond the ¼ mile boundary that already have had impact on area infrastructure (electric grid capacity, impact on public transportation lines, school capacity), and include Downtown Brooklyn and the entirety of Atlantic Yards / Pacific Park, half of which is just outside the ¼ mile boundary.

Disaggregation of data -Viewed at an aggregate level, the overall, and growing, wealth and environmental quality of Community District 6 masks significant economic disparities and environmental injustices. In order to accurately measure the direct and indirect displacement impact of the project, the EIS must use a baseline that “learns” from prior rezoning action in the neighborhood and pays particular attention to outlier populations (notably NYCHA residents). For example, we understand that, in terms of displacement of rent regulated tenants, a study developed by the Fifth Avenue Committee found that over the past 10 years CB 6 has lost 31.4% of its rent stabilized units, as opposed to a 10.5% loss city wide.

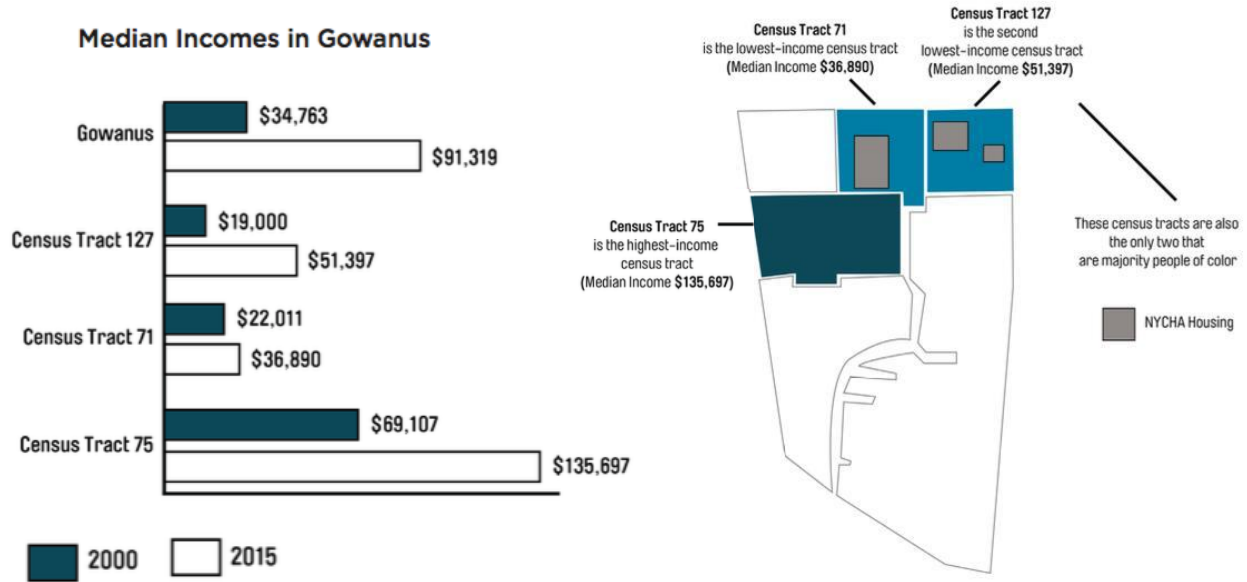
As the district has moved closer to a new rezoning in during almost a decade of public discussions about Gowanus development, land speculation in the district has resulted in multi-million-dollar parcel turnovers and attendant increases in the average income.

Forbes Magazine recently reported (May 12, 2019): “Out of the country's 8,700 Opportunity Zones created as part of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, 22 of them have seen the number of households with an income over \$200,000 grow by at least ten percentage points, according to a study released last week by analytics firm Webster Pacific.

The study focused on households earning \$200,000 or higher since that is the top income tier in the decennial census questionnaire. The top of the list found Gowanus in South Brooklyn going from having only 0.3% of households earning over \$200,000 in 2000 to 21.6% of households reaching that level 17 years later.” (emphasis added)

Yet, as the graphic on the following page illustrates, the influx of new money obscures the economic condition of many of the longest residents of Gowanus. Not everyone is making money from Gowanus development and there are very obvious pockets of economic hardship. Not everyone will have the resources to live in new apartments or shop in stores catering to new wealth. We fail as a community if we simply rezone for the wealthiest in a neighborhood.

INCOME INEQUALITY IN GOWANUS



** The EIS must study the unique socio-economic and health impacts within public housing developments as part of an at-risk population. It is not enough to assume that they are safe from displacement, especially in light of necessary remediation actions (for lead, mold, failing - and sometimes already failed - heating and cooling systems, unreliable elevators etc.) that preclude staying in place while they occur.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The EAS states that the rezoning will not affect police/fire stations and health care service (p52), despite the influx of 17,000 new residents and years of congestion due to construction. We are skeptical of this assertion, if for no other reason that new construction and watermain replacement projects have taken their toll on roads in the zoning district. Parts of 4th Avenue and narrow streets to the west of it, are in bad repair as well as chronically prone to flooding.

** The EIS should include an analysis of emergency response time, both during construction and after construction is complete. and should identify whether the existing facilities that presently deliver these services are adequate to meet the needs of the projected new population.

** If the existing facilities are inadequate based on this analysis, the EIS should identify the location of new facilities that will be required to meet the demand and the zoning should be altered

to provide for the location of these new facilities and before land costs become prohibitive due to the rezoning action.

Libraries - PSCC has a special relationship with the Pacific Branch Library, for which it has sought landmark designation. The Pacific Branch Library, which opened on October 8, 1904, was the first “Carnegie” library in Brooklyn. It was designed by noted architect Raymond Francis Almirall, who designed two already landmarked buildings in Park Slope (Bath House No 7, now called the Lyceum, also on 4th Avenue, and the Park Slope branch of the Brooklyn Public library, located over 20 blocks away from the Pacific Branch), as well as other notable buildings in the United States. It’s one of the few distinctive buildings left on the up-zoned 4th Avenue. It is widely used - by students at three local school, by a variety of community organizations, by children’s story groups, by residents of Wycoff Gardens and other NYCHA housing developments and for many educational and training classes.

Although on property that will be up zoned, as of this writing, the Brooklyn Public Library has committed to keeping this treasured community resource in place. It is the only library in the proposed rezoning area.

**** Upfront capital and ongoing expense funding should be dedicated to the Pacific Branch Library to make needed repairs, to maximize the use of the space, and for already needed staffing to keep the library open 7 days a week and for longer hours on those days.**

Gowanus Community Center - The decade long closure of this facility is nothing less than a scandal. Its closure has deprived residents of accessible meeting space for both social, educational and cultural events. Residents of Gowanus Houses have been told for over two years that there is money in the budget to fix it, but there has been no movement.

**** Construction should begin on the Gowanus Community Center resource before the rezoning is approved.**

Schools - The proposed action projects the development of 8,212 new dwellings units throughout the project area as a result of the projected action. The NYC Department of Education (DOE) uses a factor of 0.29 school seats per dwelling unit in planning school capacity changes. Therefore, the projected increase would require the addition of 2,381 school seats to accommodate the new population.

The projections also assume an increase of 901,167 square feet of new office space. The prediction of the development of new office space rather than housing is highly uncertain. The 2004 rezoning of Downtown Brooklyn greatly misjudged the direction of the market, and instead of significant office development, massive residential development occurred instead. As a result, a significant deficit in school capacity was created in downtown Brooklyn which has proven to be highly difficult to remedy. Assuming that 50% of the projected new office space in Gowanus fails to materialize, and residential development occurs in its place, it would necessitate another 150-160 school seats based on the same DOE formula. The overall requirement for new school capacity would then be 2,540 or more seats.

In response to the failure of recent re-zonings to accurately predict changes in school capacity, the City has responded by providing a FAR incentive to developers to build such schools as a part of new development after the rezoning have occurred. This approach has generated greatly outsized developments, most notably of which has been the 80 Flatbush Avenue project, which have generated enormous community opposition.

The failure to address school capacity needs goes beyond the failure to accurately project market conditions and development patterns. It also involves a severe timing mismatch between when the rezoning occurs and when the City makes the investment in the needed school facilities. By waiting until after rezoning takes place, when the land increases in value, the City can no longer afford to acquire the land for new schools and is forced to offer developers zoning bonuses, which triggers massive new development projects. This situation will inevitably be repeated in the Gowanus project area, since the City does not commit funds for new public facilities in advance, and then subsequently finds that it cannot address the deficit in school seats once the projected amount of new housing is built.

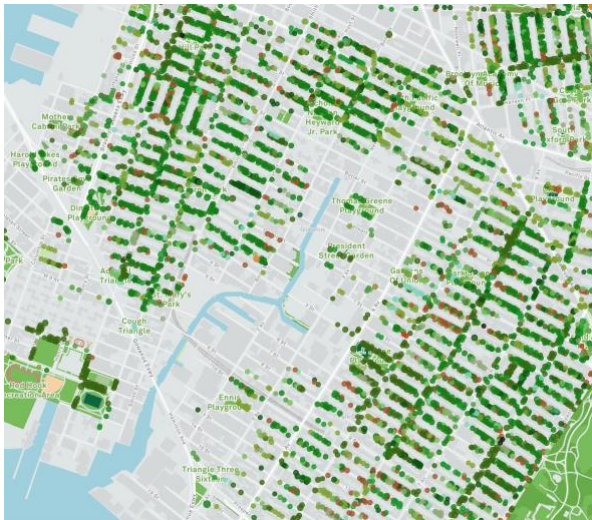
*** The locations and types of schools, i.e., primary, middle or high school, should be properly identified before ULURP begins, and the City should take sufficient steps to reserve publicly-owned land for new schools or to acquire privately-owned land to ensure that these critical community facilities can be available when the demand exists for these schools.*

OPEN SPACE

Streets and sidewalks are the largest open spaces in neighborhoods and 4th Avenue is the largest street in the proposed rezoning area. While PSCC was able to make some headway in planting trees along the avenue, it remains the border of a “Tree desert”. As is obvious from the large white expanse in the graphic on the following page, from 4th Avenue to Bond Street, the area around the canal is strikingly devoid of any shade canopy. Streets where major development is scheduled to occur are devoid of trees, which are critical to a pleasant pedestrian experience, help mitigate flooding and have a traffic calming effect. The absence of trees has also contributed to “heat islands” on 3rd Avenue and sections of 4th.

Proposed planted *medians* along 4th Avenue (a part of the Vision Zero program) may help with “greening”, but the actual planting of new trees and medians has not yet occurred, lagging far behind road reconstruction

LACK OF CANOPY AND GREEN SPACE / HEAT ISLAND



Mature Street Trees (over 12" Caliper)
(NYC Parks "Tree Map")



Urban heat deserts identified on 3rd Avenue
Urban Land Institute / FAC

** Developers must be required to plant substantially-sized trees on their properties, with size correlated to the height of their buildings. The guaranteed maintenance, or replacement of the trees and tree beds by building managers should be required, perhaps through contract with local community-based organizations. If tree planting is not feasible, developers should pay into a 4th Avenue Tree Trust to ensure that trees are planted on 4th Avenue.

** The City of New York and developers along 4th Avenue should collaborate in planting and maintaining the medians on 4th Avenue as part of the rezoning.

(Side note: The DSOW claims (DSOW, 54) that the Project Area does not encompass areas that are underserved by open space - this is not true. The area of 4th Avenue south of Union Street is considered by NYC Parks to be underserved by park space.²)

Public Accessibility -The DSOW makes a distinction between passive and active open space but does not differentiate between public open space and publicly accessible (but privately controlled) open space. The promenade at the Lightstone building is an example of a “public space” that passively discourages use by the absence of signage - it’s there, but one needs prior knowledge of how to get to it.

** In addition to an inventory of “open space”, the EIS should include a clear definition of how “public spaces” will be controlled.

SHADOWS

² https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/oec/technical-manual/2014_ceqr_tm_open_space_map_gowanus.jpg

The DSOW refers to the effect of shadows on “sunlight-sensitive resources”. While not recognized as such in planning jargon, we suggest that people fall into the category of “sunlight-sensitive resources” just as much as plants do and suggest that particular attention be paid to the area around the canal, where buildings are slated to reach their greatest height but which is also the centerpiece of the re-zoning effort. (A 20 to 30 story building still casts a long shadow, even if the building has set backs).

Seasonal impact - As construction of higher buildings with polished facades on 4th Avenue has commenced, the Avenue has become a markedly colder space to walk in the winter. With minimal sunlight reaching the sidewalks and an increase in wind, many locals avoid walking on it.

** The seasonal impact of building shadows on the streetscape along the canal, along 4th Avenue, and on the street around Thomas Green Park and Washington Park (as well as in the Park) should be studied and depicted in graphic representations.

** Building shadow effect on gardens (both private/residential and public) should also be studied and depicted in graphic representations.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

PSCC is a member of The Gowanus Landmarking Coalition, a group of Gowanus residents, neighborhood organizations, local businesses, and city-wide organizations who came together to advocate for city landmark designation for key historical, architectural, and cultural sites in Gowanus prior to neighborhood rezoning. The organizational focus is on ensuring that Gowanus retains an authentic sense of place - and remains capable of telling its own many-layered story. To that end, it has submitted a list of 13 buildings and 2 historic districts to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) for consideration for landmark status. (www.gowanuslandmarks.org).

The DSOW comments that it will work with LPC in identifying potential architectural resources but that is not an adequate response to the threat of losing Gowanus history. Stating that the EIS will “assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Action on any identified architectural resources, including visual and contextual changes as well as any direct physical impacts,” is woefully inadequate. A late assessment of impact will not prevent the destruction of architectural resources. The community has requested that this assessment be completed well in advance of the start of the ULURP process, and the LPC has had adequate time to complete the survey and calendar buildings and historic districts deemed worthy of preservation. Once the rezoning action is completed, it will become more difficult to undertake these protections.

Repeatedly during City-led meetings about developing a Plan for Gowanus, NYC agency representatives stated that they understood and respected the overwhelmingly strong statements that preserving of at least some of the historic character of Gowanus is of great importance to Gowanus residents and members of the larger adjacent neighborhoods.

** Language in the final EIS section on Historic and Cultural Resources should reflect a firm commitment to preserve as much of the built historical significance as possible. It also should report the outcome of the survey that the City has promised it would be complete throughout the Gowanus planning process.

Old Stone House - The Old Stone House (OSH) & Washington Park is dedicated to preserving and teaching local and national history as it has impacted our historically significant Brooklyn neighborhood. It is the conservancy organization for JJ Byrne Playground and Washington Park – caring for a neighborhood park, playground and gardens to create a vibrant public space.

The Old Stone House Building is a reconstruction of the 1699 Vechte-Cortelyou House. Located on the border of Park Slope and Gowanus in Brooklyn, OSH marks the place where the original Dutch farmstead stood, and the culminating engagement of the 1776 Battle of Brooklyn took place. It also commemorates the birthplace of the Brooklyn Dodgers. It is a Historic House Trust of New York City site and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Immediately adjacent to the project area, it is within the 400 ft radius of secondary review. The k and the Old Stone House are self-described as “Where Brooklyn comes to learn, play, grow and connect” and is an exemplary historic and cultural resource. In response to its extraordinary popularity, and resulting space demands, OSH has embarked on a capital building project to make the core building handicapped accessible (installation of an elevator) and build a new multipurpose performance space annex.

** The Old Stone House & Washington Park should receive community benefit funds for retrofit of the existing building, construction an annex and expanded staffing

URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The EIS must, through renderings, accurately illustrate the impact of 17 story buildings on 4th Avenue on the visual connectedness with both Gowanus and Boerum Hill. Because it is a “slope”, residents on the west side of 4th Avenue are able to see some of the church steeples, trees and ornate tops of buildings on the Park Slope side. From the perspective of residents on the East side of 4th Avenue, some spectacular sunsets can be seen looking toward Gowanus.

There is a jarring disconnect between 17 story buildings on 4th Avenue and far lower level buildings on 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Avenues which would be exacerbated by being allowed to “build taller” on residential lots behind 12 story buildings on 4th. On some blocks houses are set back from the street, with generous (often planted) front yards- new buildings fully built out to the sidewalk will literally block what can be seen through the windows of the lower rise houses and shadows may affect front yard gardens. It is not at all clear how the depth of new buildings will affect the backyards of adjacent buildings of lower height. There is no consistency between the design elements of the 4th Avenue border and the surrounding neighborhoods of Park Slope, Boerum Hill and even Gowanus.

** Design Guidelines must be translated from text into simulations of ground level views to accurately assess their impact and possible remediation of negative impacts.

WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

** The final EIS must support a development plan where there is no net increase in Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) or energy demand

** The EIS must study water and sewage management at the watershed and CSO-shed scales to accurately measure the impacts and needed mitigation

**New developments over 4 FAR should require mitigation of anticipated daily water consumption by at least 50% through on-site CSO best management practices.

** Require new development to install site-appropriate right-of-way green infrastructure, including suspended pavement, wet swales and street and rain gardens to manage a percentage of street stormwater along new frontages

** Require that sewer main lines be maintained through use of preventive maintenance schedules that are shared with community stakeholders to stop sewage back up in 1st floor NYCHA apartments and neighborhood homes

TRANSPORTATION

Under the DSOW, the Special Gowanus Mixed Use District (GSD) will establish streetscape requirements with the goal of establishing a “pedestrian-friendly environment” (DSOW, 37). While the proposed GSD includes important provisions for mandating active frontage and limiting curb cuts, the plan leaves out essential elements for creating a pedestrian-friendly environment, especially along major corridors such as 4th Avenue.

** The scope of the GSD should be expanded to include provisions for right-of-way green infrastructure and areas of respite with seating.

** Landscaping on 4th Avenue can contribute to traffic calming: expedited completion of proposed Vision Zero build outs would increase pedestrian safety.

PUBLIC HEALTH

** In light of severe lead and mold abatement problems in NYCHA housing, the compound effects of new construction on the health of NYCHA residents, especially the high percentage of elderly residents, must be examined.

** Long overdue lead and mold abatement must be a part of mandated activity during the rezoning

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

** In the canal area and the blocks adjacent to it, the IES needs to specifically spell out what is being done to protect at least parts of the historic Gowanus neighborhood character. Planning needs to be proactive about acting on the input from planning meetings they convened as opposed to falling back on declarations of no available mitigations for adverse impacts.

On behalf of the Park Slope Civic Council, we appreciate your consideration of the comments and recommendations above and thank you for your work on the Gowanus Rezoning Project.

Sincerely,

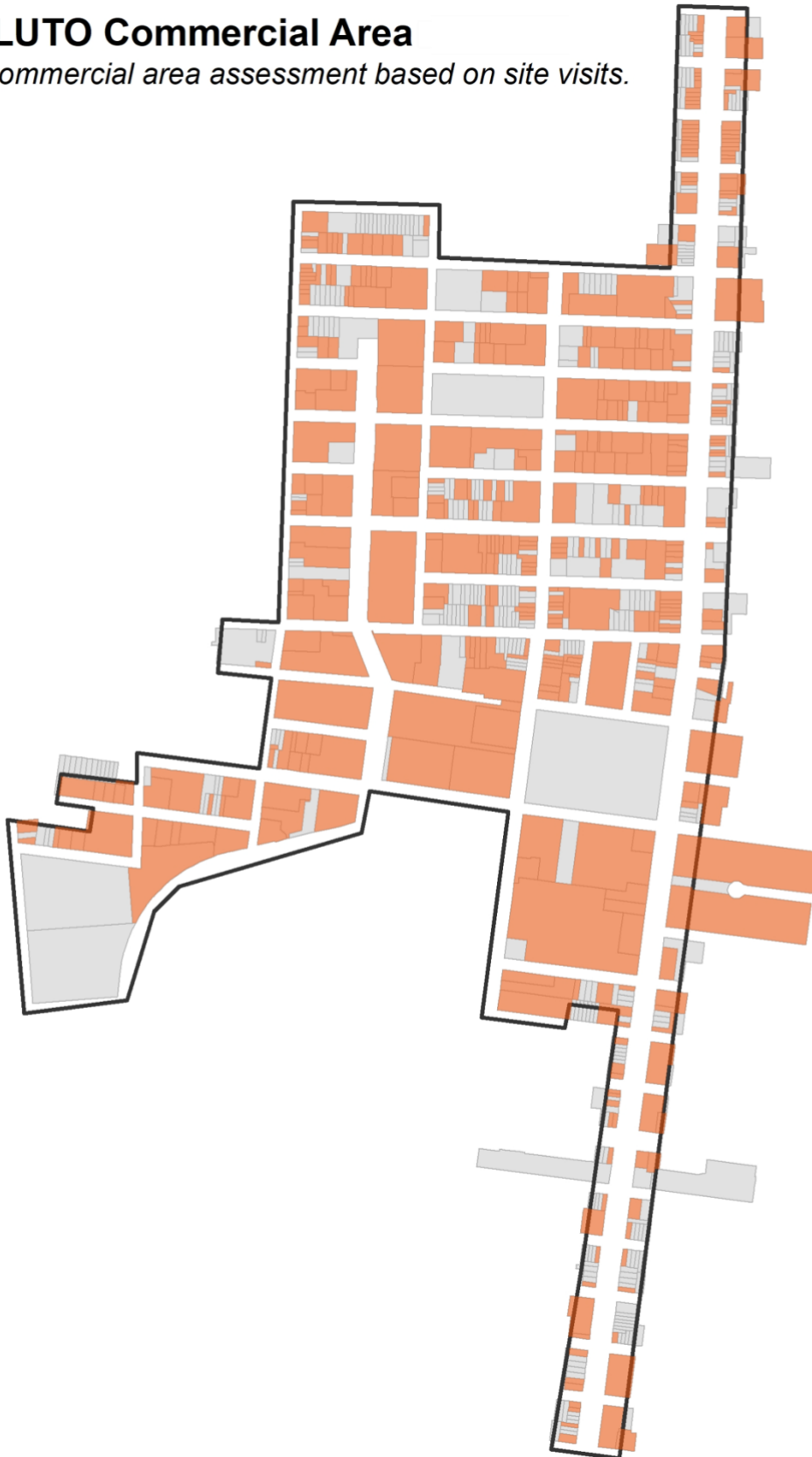
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Rydell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Joe Rydell, President
Park Slope Civic Council
www.parkslopeciviccouncil.org

copy: Councilmember Brad Lander

PLUTO Commercial Area

**Commercial area assessment based on site visits.*



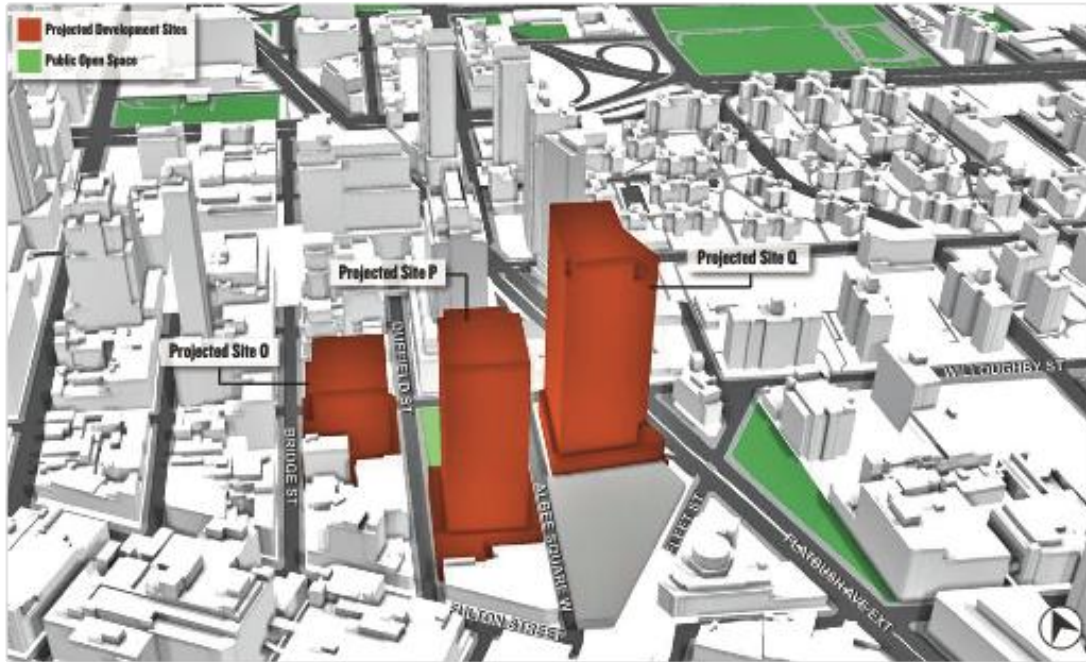


Figure 39: Northwest View, Projected Development Sites O, P, and Q, Downtown Brooklyn

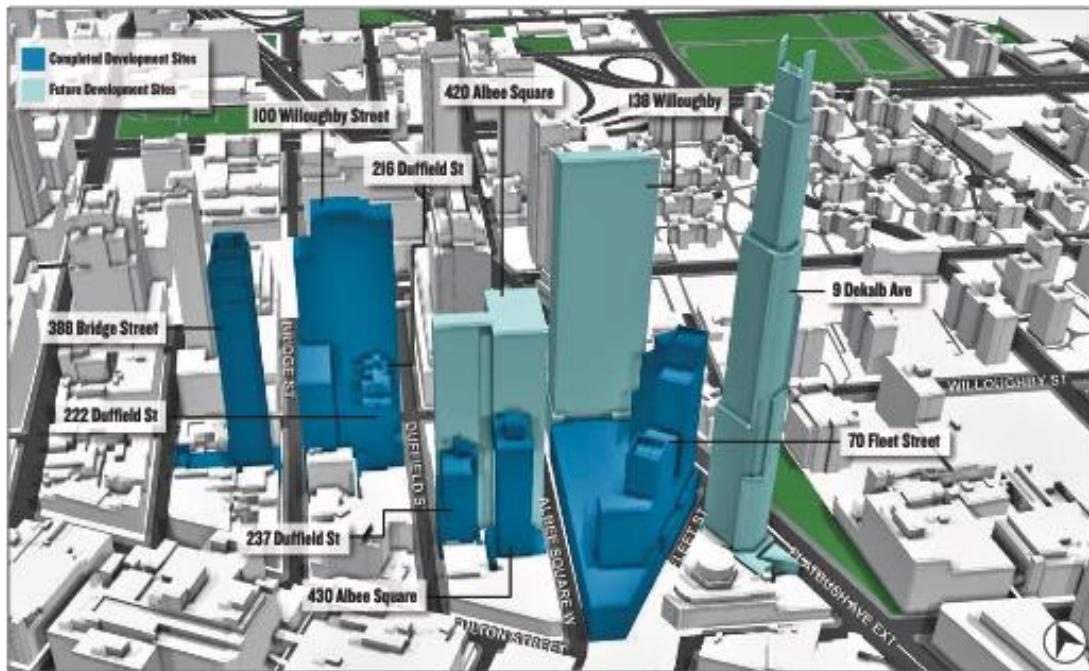
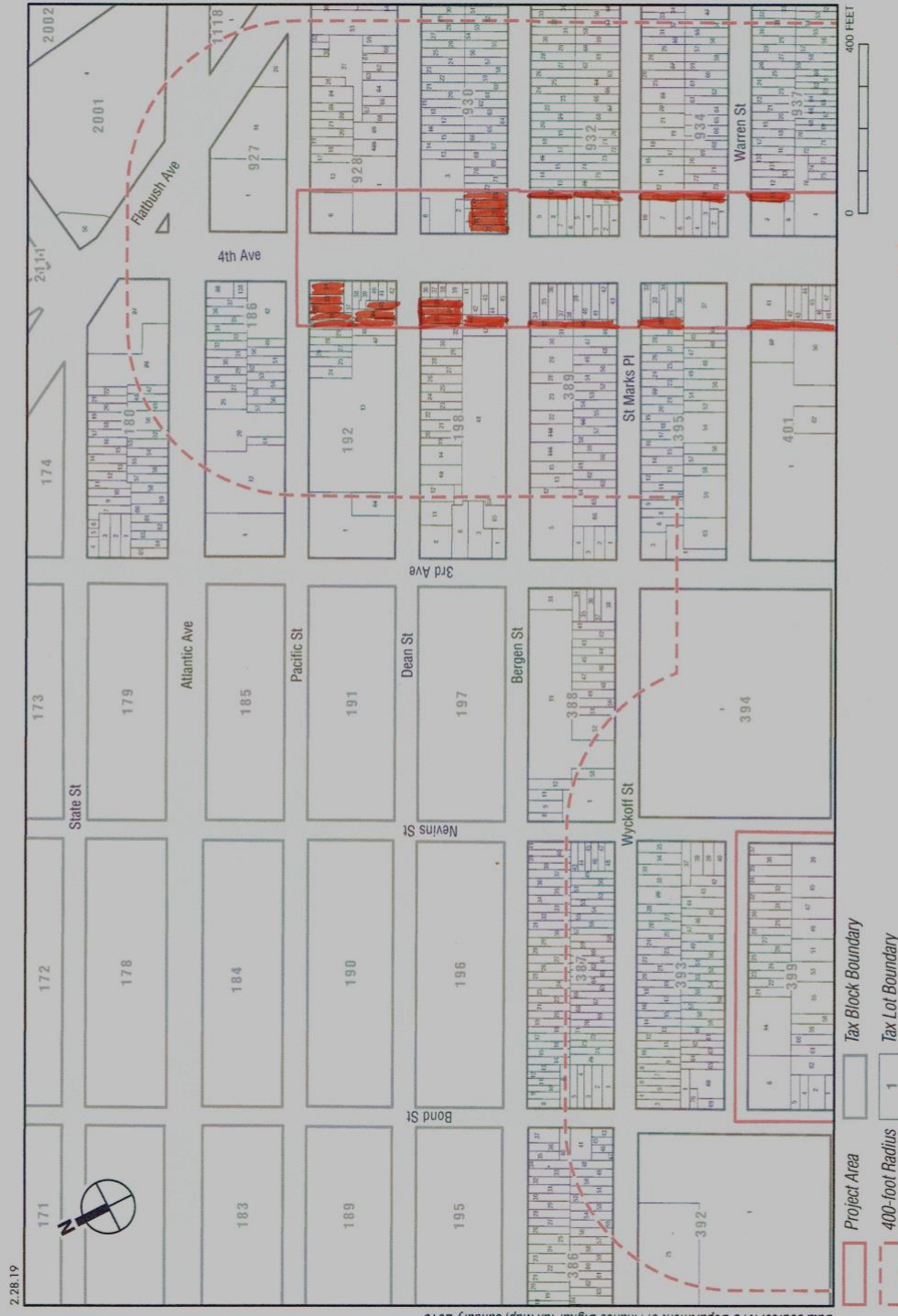


Figure 40: Northwest View, Development Facilitated by the Rezoning, Downtown Brooklyn

“A Tale of Two Rezonings” The Municipal Art Society of New York 2017

Attachment 1 Comparison of Downtown Brooklyn EIS to actual



2.28.19

Data source: NYC Department of Finance Digital Tax Map, January 2019

Side street-facing lots

Tax Map Figure 2a

GOWANUS NEIGHBORHOOD REZONING AND RELATED ACTIONS



2.28.19

Data source: NYC Department of Finance Digital Tax Map, January 2019

Tax Map
Figure 2b

GOWANUS NEIGHBORHOOD REZONING AND RELATED ACTIONS

- Project Area
- Tax Block Boundary
- Tax Lot Boundary
- 400-foot Radius



Tax Map
Figure 2c

— Side street-facing lots

GOWANUS NEIGHBORHOOD REZONING AND RELATED ACTIONS

Data source: NYC Department of Finance Digital Tax Map, January 2019



Side street facing lots

Tax Map
Figure 2d

GOWANUS NEIGHBORHOOD REZONING AND RELATED ACTIONS



Side street-facing lots

Tax Map
Figure 2e

GOWANUS NEIGHBORHOOD REZONING AND RELATED ACTIONS

- Project Area
- 400-foot Radius
- Tax Block Boundary
- Tax Lot Boundary

Data source: NYC Department of Finance Digital Tax Map, January 2019

2.28.19



Tax Map
Figure 2f

GOWANUS NEIGHBORHOOD REZONING AND RELATED ACTIONS