

FINAL VOTE LOOMS ON HUGE JEROME AVENUE REZONING

On January 17, the City Planning Commission voted 10 to 1 to approve the De Blasio administration's proposed rezoning of Jerome Avenue, sending the rezoning to the City Council for final negotiations and an ultimate vote.

Previously, community boards 4, 5, 7 and Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. also recommended the rezoning, though conditioned their approval on a list of changes to the plan.

The rezoning would impact Jerome Avenue and some adjacent streets roughly from East 165th Street to 184th Street, which today are mostly zoned to allow for auto-related businesses.

The rezoning would instead allow residential development—the city now estimates approximately 3,780 new apartments will result from it—along with the creation of new commercial and community facility spaces, and would require all developers to make a portion of the apartments income-targeted under the city's mandatory inclusionary housing policy.

The city has already announced that it will subsidize the creation of income-targeted housing on some public sites, and it predicts that in the near term, because the market on Jerome Ave is still weak, developers will seek to work with the city to

build subsidized, income-targeted housing rather than market-rate housing.

The rezoning is part of a larger, multi-agency plan for the neighborhood including public park improvements, strategies to combat displacement and to preserve existing affordable housing, investments in small businesses and workforce training, and resources for other community needs.

"More than just the rezoning, the Jerome Avenue Neighborhood Plan represents the goals and visions for an active, safe, healthy and vibrant corridor that serves the community," said City Planning Commission Chairwoman Marisa Lago at the vote.

But the Bronx Coalition for Community Vision, a coalition of residents as well as tenant, faith and labor groups, opposes the rezoning and argues that such a massive land-use change will ignite the local real-estate market, resulting in the creation of market-rate housing and exacerbating gentrification pressures. They also argue the mandated income-targeted housing won't actually be affordable to local residents and that there are not sufficient guarantees that development will create pathways to career-track construction jobs for local residents. The group is calling on the Council to reject the plan or reduce the scale of the rezoning by half.

All eyes are now on Bronx councilmembers Vanessa Gibson and Fernando Cabrera, whose districts overlap with the rezoning, to negotiate the plan's final details. Both councilmembers have suggested they will fight for improvements to the plan but ultimately support its vision.

In an interview with City Limits on January 18, Gibson said she would push for more commitments to specific subsidized housing projects, and that it's important to her that new housing serve a mix of incomes, especially families of three making below \$25,770 but also others making in the \$34,360 through \$51,540 range.

"In order for us to achieve a majority of affordable units at the lower income levels, we have to accept higher income apartments," she said. Gibson also said she wanted to see more preservation of existing affordable housing than the city has proposed. Asked to respond to the coalition's request to halve the number of units, she expressed skepticism but said she wanted to review their request and "understand their logic."

The city is retaining the auto-industry zoning in a few spots of the corridor to protect existing auto-businesses, but Gibson said "many of us believe it's not enough" and that she and Cabrera are considering various proposals to expand areas where the city wants auto firms to remain. She also wants the city to offer an assistance package to any auto-business that wishes to relocate from the area.

Among several other concerns, school overcrowding—which the rezoning will only make worse—is a top worry, Gibson said. The School Construction Authority has announced plans to create 388 new seats in School District 10 by expanding an annex at P.S. 33, but Gibson says they're exploring ways to increase capacity further in District 10 and that she is "not going to accept this plan without a brand new school for district 9."



Photo: NYC Council

By Council custom, local members Fernando Cabrera (left) and Vanessa Gibson will have the final say on the plan.

-ABIGAIL SAVITCH-LEW

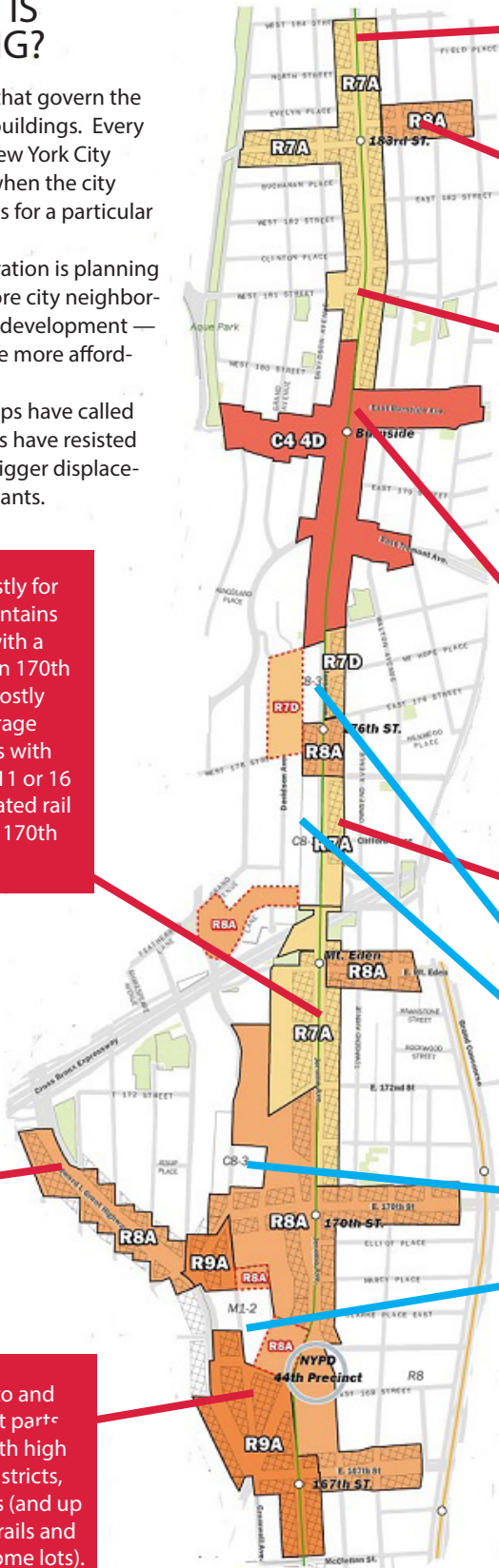
What the Mayor Proposes for Your Neighborhood

WHAT IS ZONING?

Zoning is a set of laws that govern the size, use and design of buildings. Every square inch of land in New York City is zoned. A rezoning is when the city changes the zoning rules for a particular area.

The de Blasio administration is planning to rezone a dozen or more city neighborhoods to permit denser development — and, City Hall says, create more affordable housing.

Some community groups have called for rezonings, and others have resisted them, saying they will trigger displacement of low-income tenants.



Currently zoned for auto, though there are also some other uses. Proposed rezoning would allow for 11-story residential buildings along the elevated rail, and nine stories on the cross streets.

Currently allows for medium-density residential with local retail on lower floors (and actually contains many one-story retail buildings), but will be rezoned to allow 16-story buildings with local retail.

A commercial overlay, which allows neighborhood-serving stores on lower floors, will be mapped throughout the corridor. A special district will also be established with special additional regulations, including rules to accommodate building along the elevated rail and require more active storefront windows.

Zoning currently allows a mix of auto zoning, medium density residential, and local retail, but would be rezoned as a dense commercial district where there can be both housing and department stores.

Currently mostly zoned for auto, though there are also some other uses. Would mostly be rezoned to encourage residential development with maximum heights of 11-, 13- and 16-stories along the elevated rail, with the tallest buildings permitted near subway stations.

The city is leaving in place these three auto-areas and one manufacturing area to serve as "retention zones" for auto businesses. According to the Bronx Coalition, these zones hold 28 percent of the rezoning area's auto-businesses.

Currently zoned mostly for auto, though also contains some other uses, with a commercial district on 170th Street. Would be mostly rezoned to encourage residential buildings with maximum heights of 11 or 16 stories along the elevated rail and 14 stories along 170th Street.

Highway currently zoned for apartment buildings, but rezoning would increase allowable residential density along the highway, with buildings of up to 14 stories.

Currently allows auto and manufacturing. Most parts would be rezoned with high density residential districts, with 17-story buildings (and up to 19- along elevated rails and to 22 -on portions of some lots).

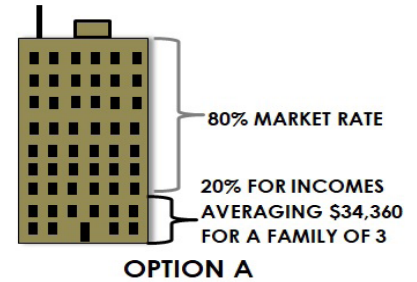
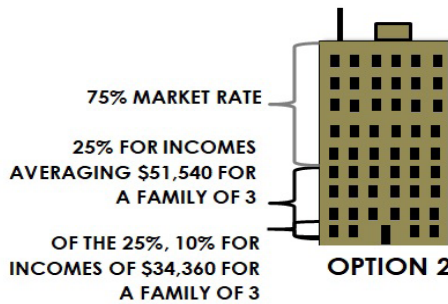
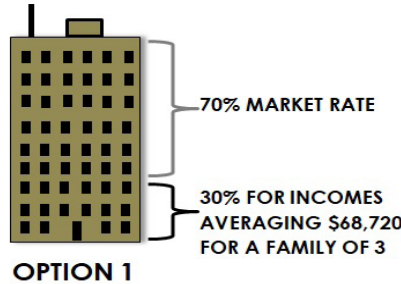
HOW MANDATORY INCLUSIONARY HOUSING WORKS

Mandatory Inclusionary Housing requires developers to reserve apartments for different income groups.

When a neighborhood is rezoned to allow more density, the City Council decides what mix of housing to require from the menu at right.

Income-targeted housing can also be produced through the use of city subsidies, where developers accept city funding in exchange for meeting affordability requirements.

The city has promised that in new, large buildings it subsidizes, at least 10 percent of the apartments will be for households making below \$25,770 and another 10 percent will be for households making between \$25,770 and \$42,950 (for a family of three).



This can be offered along with Option 1 or 2 as an alternative for developers.

AFFORDABLE ENOUGH?

Here's what household income looks like in the rezoning area:

Income tier	Share of area population
<\$25,000	45%
\$25-\$35,000	10%
\$35-\$50,000	15%
\$50-\$75,000	16%
\$75-\$100,000	8%
\$100,000 and up	6%

What Happens Now?

THE CITY COUNCIL

First the Zoning Subcommittee, holds a hearing. Then, the subcommittee votes on the proposal. Next, the Land Use Committee and finally the full Council vote on the proposal. The Council can pass, reject or modify the plan; usually the member in whose district the project falls has the most say. The Council has 50 days to act. (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. But that is very unlikely.)

THE MAYOR

Next, it's the mayor's turn. He can accept or veto the Council's zoning decision. He has only five days to make that call. In reality, the mayor and Council will almost certainly negotiate the final plan that the Council votes on.

BACK TO THE COUNCIL

In the unlikely event that the mayor vetoes the Council's decision, the Council can override that veto with a two-thirds vote. It has 10 days to try.

What Can You Do?

ATTEND AND TESTIFY AT THE PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, February 7, 9:30 a.m.
City Hall

CONTACT YOUR COUNCILMEMBER

Councilmember Vanessa Gibson
718-588-7500
District16Bronx@council.nyc.gov

Councilmember Fernando Cabrera
347-590-2874
fcabrera@council.nyc.gov

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD AT ZONEIN.ORG

1-844-ZONE-NYC (844-966-3692)
zone@citylimits.org

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community Board 4
718-299-0800 * bx04@cb.nyc.gov

Community Board 5
718-364-2030 *bx05@cb.nyc.gov

Community Board 7
718-933-5650 * info@bronxcb7.info

Community Action for Safe Apartments
718-716-8000

NW Bronx Community-Clergy Coalition
718-584-0515

Right to Counsel Coalition
(Help for tenants facing eviction)
www.righttocounselnyc.org

COALITION: COUNCIL MUST REJECT OR REDUCE THE PLAN

The City of New York plans to rezone 92 blocks in the southwest Bronx, mostly along Jerome Avenue, from 167th Street to 184th Street—a plan that would bring over 4,000 new apartments to the neighborhood. This rezoning will forever change the Bronx. The Bronx Coalition for a Community Vision believes it will cause massive residential displacement and the loss of businesses and jobs in our community.

The Coalition was formed in late 2014 after learning about the city's plan, and we have since engaged thousands of residents in developing approaches that are responsive to the needs of our community. We have done everything we can to collaborate with the city to develop a rezoning plan that better meets our community's needs. The city hasn't listened. We ask the Council to do so now.

In its current form, the city's plan will drive up rents in the community, exacerbating displacement pressures on an area that thousands of New Yorkers and dozens of businesses call home. By the city's own estimate, almost half of the apartments the rezoning will bring will not be subsidized or subject to the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) requirements. These 2,000 apartments will have no affordability restrictions at all.

As for the subsidized apartments, at most 10 percent will be affordable to the almost half of families in our community who make less than \$25,000 a year; when factoring in the 2,000 market-rate units this rezoning will bring, that means just 5 percent of new apartments will be for families most in need. And this is the best-case scenario. If the Trump Administration's proposed cuts to the federal housing budget come to pass, where will the city get the money to subsidize more than 2,000 apartments? Even if the city has the money, it admits that over the 10-year build-out period, the market will shift to the point that developers no longer want to take subsidies.

Meanwhile, the current HireNYC approach, which requires only that developers receiving significant city subsidies share job postings and consider local candidates, does little to help low-income residents actually get hired for high-quality construction jobs. The city must require developers to craft plans that create clear local-hiring goals for targeted groups—such as women, disconnected youth, NYCHA residents, and reentry populations—as well as invest in job-training programs that will enable residents to secure career-track construction jobs.

We implore the Council to vote down this plan, which is flat-out wrong for our neighborhood. If this isn't possible, we ask the city to meet us halfway by creating a strong jobs program and cutting the scale of the rezoning in half so it creates about 2,000 units of housing in our community, much of which would be subsidized.

Either path would decrease the risk of displacement and enable the city to continue the strategies that have helped create over 1,500 subsidized apartments in our area since 2014, which on average are more affordable than the apartments the proposed rezoning would create. The administration should also create hundreds of housing vouchers targeted toward homeless families who have been displaced from our community. We also demand the city track all current affordable units lost and develop a comprehensive plan to replace those units.

Our preference is to collaborate with the city on a different plan—one that meets the community's needs. However, if the Council elects to pass the irresponsible city proposal, which is based on a legally inadequate environmental review that categorically excludes consideration of displacement risks, we are prepared to exercise our right to sue to stop it.

-BRONX COALITION FOR A COMMUNITY VISION
STEERING COMMITTEE

BORO PREZ: A REZONING THAT TRANSFORMS THE ENTIRE BRONX IS POSSIBLE

The plan for the future of Jerome Avenue represents tremendous transformative potential not just for the surrounding neighborhoods, but for the entire Bronx.

Whatever we do, we must ensure that this rezoning works for everyone, especially the tenants who currently call these neighborhoods home.

The commitments my office has negotiated with the administration will help do just that.

At my public hearing on the Jerome Avenue rezoning in November, I listened to so many local residents who shared their concerns about this rezoning proposal leading to displacement. In their testimony, they underscored to me just how important it is that this rezoning work for low income and vulnerable tenants.

That advocacy fueled my negotiations with the city, and the commitments we negotiated have set the standard for tenant protections going forward.

First and foremost, the city has committed to creating new apartments within the rezoning for the lowest income levels, and has agreed to set aside half of all apartments for current community residents.

“We must ensure that this rezoning works for everyone, especially the tenants.”

In addition, the city has agreed to the creation of a Certificate of No Harassment pilot program within the rezoning area to protect tenants from being harassed; the creation of a Southwest Bronx task force that will help identify and protect buildings of concern and keep more units affordable; a guarantee that the city will preserve

1,500 units of affordable housing over a two-year period in Bronx Community Boards #4 and #5, keeping thousands of residents in affordable homes over the long-term; reopening the southern portion of Aqueduct Park and additional protections for the auto industry, among other commitments.

The people of The Bronx are not opposed to improvements. We want to see our communities flourish. But we also want to be able to enjoy the benefits created by ongoing development. The residents who testified at my hearing asked for greater affordability, more significant tenant protections and assurances that this rezoning would work for everyone, including them. I got this administration to agree to protect our current residents.

As this process moves forward, I urge Council Members Vanessa Gibson and Fernando Cabrera to continue to take the administration to task in order to negotiate the best possible agreement for both the people in the neighborhoods surrounding the Jerome Avenue corridor as well as the entire Bronx.

These commitments from the city are excellent steps towards those goals, and I am proud to have negotiated for them on behalf of the Jerome Avenue community.

-RUBEN DIAZ JR.,
BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT