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Update

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The City Planning Dept., in response to charter revisions passed in last November’s General Election (proposed by Mayor Adams’ Charter Revision Commission), has issued a “fast track” list of 12 local community districts citywide where the least amount of new affordable housing has been built in the past five years. As a result, under the new charter provisions, the approval process on future developments will be sped up, in an effort to create more affordable housing faster.

Community Board 7, the Upper West Side, is on that list—not because UWS residents don’t want affordable housing, but because developers here prefer to build as-of-right, market-rate developments without (what they view as) the time-consuming hassle of Community Board or City Planning or City Council approvals. They can make more money, faster, without that process. (In 2024, my office surveyed buildings constructed since 2022, and found that all but two contained 100% luxury units.)

The charter language that City Planning is implementing is a purely quantitative approach, and counts only new housing built from scratch—not existing buildings being converted or rehabbed into affordable units.

Well guess what? There’s not that much vacant land on the Upper West Side, and thus our affordable housing metric, under these new rules, is in the basement. We’re not alone—the Upper East Side is also on the “List of 12.”

City Planning’s designation oversimplifies and neglects the realities of affordable housing that does exist in our neighborhood: our many sites for temporary supportive housing, SROs on the market, formerly illegal hotels converted to safer housing, many NYCHA units, and hundreds of 421a subsidized units. (It also neglects to recognize the City HPD’s failure to preserve rent-regulated housing. Community Board 7 had a net loss of more than 15,442 rent-stabilized units between 2007 and 2022!)

Furthermore, the proposed calculation is based on unit quantity, encouraging smaller units like studios that favor single adults. This one-size-fits-all bias will limit the diversity of household units, which is essential to encouraging families to settle here and send their kids to local schools.

Finally, the new charter language removes the ability of local council members to negotiate for developments that benefit the community—including considerations for open space, height, density, and requiring affordable units be built on-site rather than off-loaded elsewhere (as is allowable now; we are negotiating with Extell about the former ABC site on these issues).

Throughout my career in the City Council (and as Manhattan Borough President), I’ve always stood for increasing and preserving affordable housing stock. But I opposed this Charter change last year, and it’s bad policy now. The effort to circumvent local leadership—in exchange for expediting the process by a meager 4 months—is the anti-democratic cherry on the sundae.

[There will be a City Council hearing on the administration’s Block-by-Block housing plan](#)—including this Fast Track change—at 1 pm on 10/21, where I plan to raise these issues.

Here’s the [full release from the administration](#) announcing the list of 12.