

## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM RESIDENTS REGARDING INWOOD REZONING

Inwood Community Forum, hosted by Rep. Adriano Espaillat  
August 1, 2018

1. If the rezoning is not good for our communities, why has it been promoted as the best option that we have right now?

**ANSWER:** This entire proposal has been presented as a binary choice. It oversimplifies this very complicated issue with immense personal and life-changing ramifications. This is a disservice to me as a resident and the constituents — my neighbors — that I have the privilege to represent.

Local and market trends that we are seeing with gentrification are being represented -- disingenuously -- as an inevitability. We have held community forums and meetings where an overwhelming majority of residents have grave and very valid concerns about being displaced from their homes and being victims to a market that will invariably price them out. The so called “best option” is the path of least resistance that I -- and a large number of Inwood and Northern Manhattan residents -- reject as a false choice. [Read article, The zoning game is rigged: The city must slow down and do an honest cost-benefit analysis,” published in the New York Daily News.](#)

2. Though you are without a formal vote in City Hall, what will you, elected officials, do at state and federal levels to fight gentrification every day? What policies will help NYC neighborhoods and support NYCHA funding?

**ANSWER:** This is correct. The fact is that I do not have a formal vote in City Hall. HOWEVER, the local council member is the elected official who sits on the New York City Council and is able to vote in concert with the will and wishes of their constituents.

**ANSWER:** For myself and my constituents, gentrification is a trend that we all have our own experiences and anecdotes about. Gentrification is a result of opportunities and resources that are benefitting one class of people at the detriment of another. I have pushed in Congress to secure increased federal funding for public housing, which has had a significant positive impact in support of Lakeview Apartments and NYCHA. This is why I support and work every day to expand and keep housing affordable; improving

relationships and accountability between law enforcement in our community; enhancing education for all students -- including student like myself whose first language was not English -- to help them succeed in their academic and professional lives; and promote more culturally-competent community and population health.

**3. Won't the wealthier market rate and upper end MIH tenants want different types of stores and products? At higher prices, too?**

**ANSWER:** That is certainly a result we can expect to see. That is not meant to be a slight against those commercial and retail proprietors, but more an inevitability they will move into the neighborhood to meet the demand of these “new” tenants.

**4. Why have community boards been given permission to engage their own city planner, but no budget to pay for one?**

**ANSWER:** The importance of Community Boards has become more evident during this proposal process. I do understand that boards face budgetary constraints and authoritative gaps that leave the community frustrated at times.

**5. Will the lawsuit stop the rezoning? What will the lawsuit do?**

**ANSWER:** There has been wind of a lawsuit opposing the current rezoning proposal. If an action is taken against the City, it will be a high-profile endeavor and will garner significant interest in the community. However, our most opportune moment to enact change is right now, before the plan passes. If the plan passes, I stand ready to join any forthcoming lawsuit.

**6. Does the councilman represent those who already live here or those who will be brought in?**

**ANSWER:** The Council Member represents residents that currently live and reside in the 10th New York City Council District in the neighborhoods of Washington Heights, Inwood and Marble Hill.

**7. Will there be a lottery system for newly constructed dwelling units? What's the time frame for the erection of the newly constructed [housing units] along 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. near Sherman Creek?**

**ANSWER:** According to the report released by the City, the rezoning shall ensure there are 3,860 dwelling units within the new Special Inwood District (C2). When it comes to Sherman Creek and the construction timeline for new units, it is difficult to accurately predict when these projects will be completed. Most of these projects will follow similar trajectories that involve numerous formalities, including the bidding process, which may take months or years to complete. As I have noted many times, many of these projects will be completed after massive displacement of the area's current residents occurs.

**8. Do not rezone. It will ruin the community. Tim Crouse**

**ANSWER:** Mr. Crouse, I agree.

**9. So, the 5,000 units of affordable housing, is there a guarantee those units will be for the displaced current residents of the "Commercial U" if the plan goes through?**

**ANSWER:** There is no guarantee that any number of the affordable housing units that result will be for residents displaced due to the "Commercial U" element of the proposal.

That said, the most recent vote taken was on a proposal that excluded the controversial "Commercial U" component. However, the fact remains that the proposal lacks a general guarantee that displacement will be mitigated over the long term.

**10. Is there a guarantee the proposed 5,000 units of affordable housing will go to long-time Inwood residents or those pushed out since 2001?**

**ANSWER:** There is NO GUARANTEE that the new units of affordable housing will go to long-term Inwood resident that have been pushed out since 2001.

**11. Que crean ustedes del que tiene seccion ocho?**

**ANSWER:** I believe section 8 housing is a vital option for underserved citizens who need stable housing options, especially in areas with high-rent costs like New York City. However, the current rezoning plan does not include any additional Section 8 for Inwood.

**12. How many market rate units will accompany the 5,000 affordable units you're asking for?**

**ANSWER:** This is difficult to answer. Estimates have put the number of new market-rate units around 15,000 but this is merely conjecture.

**13. Pregunta, por que tanto abuso en subir la renta y que cuando se mude algun tengan que subir una cantidad tan elevada, sin que hay un control, y que nosotros no podamos hacer ni decir nada? Todo porque los landlords tienen el poder del dinero.**

**ANSWER:** Yes, landlords and developers hold a tremendous amount of power when it comes to rent rate increases, especially as it pertains to preferential rent. Their sweeping authority presents a great threat to tenants -- we must do more to protect our community in the event that rezoning takes place.

**14. If the vote goes through, will the state courts be able to grant an injunction for further proposals to continue and what are the chances of this measure to succeed?**

**ANSWER:** If a lawsuit is filed and emergency Temporary Restraining Order is requested; it may be granted but that is subject to the Judge. This is a hypothetical situation subject to several factors that I cannot accurately or with confidence speak to.

**15. [What's] going to happen with our public school in the community? It is already overcrowded. We need more for our kids, more camp for kids.**

**ANSWER:** I agree. We must continue to invest in our children to ensure they have the best chance of success in life. Some of the investments touted in this plan would accomplish this. However, given the approval process, logistical considerations, and anticipated construction timeline many of these investments will not benefit Inwood's current resident before they are ultimately displaced. On a larger scale, we must do more to ensure that our students are being given the best opportunity to succeed in the classroom regardless of their native language, area of residence, or their parent's income.

**16. Big buildings on corners, and all of Dyckman and 207<sup>th</sup> at each corner or just B-way, Nagle + 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. I live near 204<sup>th</sup> street, what will happen to our 6 -story building and the character of Inwood as a diverse community.**

**ANSWER:** Across the neighborhood, new large complexes will be built on numerous street corners, which will effectively change the design and feel of the community. Unfortunately, it is difficult to predict the impact rezoning may have on any one property. I encourage you to revisit your lease agreement, speak to your landlord/building owners, and research the potential impact rezoning would have on your building. Lastly, please reach out to our office if you have any housing concerns.

**17. What is being done for affordable housing for our young men and women. Apartments are being taken by universities made into dorms for outsiders?**

**ANSWER:** As your Congressman, I am doing everything I can to assist the young men and women who would face displacement if this rezoning plan passes. In Congress, I have helped secure hundreds of millions in federal funding for affordable housing in New York City, which should improve and expand affordable housing for all New Yorkers. Under the rezoning plan, new affordable housing units will be made available to applicants across New York City because there is not a community preference

protection in place. Thus, not just young residents, but **all** residents of Inwood are at risk of displacement.

**ANSWER:** With that said, there are real-life consequences to the decisions made on election day. We must encourage **all** of our citizens to engage more in the democratic process, including our youth.

**18. Ained Casado. Cuales son los beneficios que tendra la comunidad a largo plazo? Porque lo que llaman “affordable housing” no es affordable para la comunidad?**

**ANSWER:** The long-term benefits of this plan are clear for some people. Clearly, this plan benefits the wealthy, large corporations, and rich developers. It does NOT benefit Inwood’s current residents. The new facilities, parks, and community-focused investments promoted by rezoning advocates are minimal and will likely not be completed by the time most of Inwood’s current residents are forced to move. Thus, it is hard to say there are any long-term benefits.

**19. I’m concerned about the parking on Dyckman street.**

**ANSWER: So am I.** Recently, the bike lanes on Dyckman have been cited as a clog in the neighborhoods economic artery. The current configuration of the street makes driving, biking, parking, equally dangerous. I am currently working with city officials, business owners, and elected officials to resolve this issue.

**20. Why stop at 5,000 affordable units if 12,000 preferential may be lost? Why not demand more?**

**ANSWER:** Great question. It is because Inwood alone faces roughly 3,500-4,000 preferential rent displacements. In total, the plan will cause gentrification to reverberate across surrounding neighborhoods causing around 12,000 units to be at-risk for displacement. We asked for 5,000 units in Inwood to solve the most immediate concerns we have as community leaders.

**21. Is this rezoning a done deal? Why all the paving and water pipe construction? Is it just a coincidence?**

**ANSWER:** Rezoning is not done yet. In fact, the vote on the rezoning measures is tomorrow, Wednesday, August 8th. As with most areas in New York City, Inwood requires maintenance in some areas like roads and water pipe construction. Without a specific address of the construction it is hard to comment any further than to say it is most likely not tied to any rezoning initiatives.

**22. Preference for Inwood residents in new affordable housing. Oppose Corey Johnson's idea to move our people, including senior, to other parts of [the] city to integrate schools. He is sincere and amazingly ignorant. Let's be sure not to let this slip in.**

**ANSWER:** Yes, we need to increase the community preference for affordable housing. As it stands, the community preference is far too low to offset the affordable housing units we expect to lose in the rezoning process. This is a local measure that I, as your federal representative, have no authority over. I encourage you to reach out to your local representatives to share your perspective on the issue.

**23. How are you going to ensure we won't experience "Commercial + Retail gentrification" when landlords raise rents and drive our local businesses out?**

**ANSWER:** Exactly. If you are a proponent of rezoning, you cannot honestly guarantee businesses will be protected if rezoning passes. The commercial/retail roadmap rezoning takes is clear: businesses will be forced to pay higher rents, or they will need to relocate. Now that we are in the eleventh hour, some advocates of the plan tout incremental, ear-grabbing adjustments as monumental augmentations to the rezoning proposal. In reality, these adjustments merely present small, insignificant barriers for developers and will ultimately not save the majority of small businesses in the community.

**24. This has been happening for the last 10 years, now landlords are buying out tenants for a few thousand dollars so that they can change the apt status and the Neighborhoods. How are you going to stop this?**

**ANSWER:** I will **never** stop fighting for tenants' rights. Upon my arrival to Congress, I began energetically advocating for expanded affordable housing investments. Last year, I helped secure \$400 million in federal funding to improve affordable housing. However, many of the laws impacting tenants here in New York City are instituted by local politicians. To change the laws, you must vote for representatives who share your passion for stopping this awful trend.

**25. Why Tenants and Landlords were not properly informed? 2. How does cleaning the 207<sup>th</sup> Street from vendors and moving them to post Ave help?**

**ANSWER:** Cleaning 207th street and moving the vendors to Post Avenue was a temporary measure implemented as we wait for the completion of the upcoming plaza. Since the move to Post Ave., street vendors abide by a set schedule, they no longer have to fight for space, and they are being held accountable for street cleanliness.

**26. The library is thriving - why put at risk such an important anchor?**

**ANSWER:** The Inwood Library is a vital resource for our community's residents. Under this plan, the library will be redeveloped into a larger, new library. According to multiple statements, Manhattan Borough President Brewer has received assurances that there will be a temporarily library open as the new one is being constructed.

**27. Will the community leaders focus on community organizations, programs, and recreational centers for youth members?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, we are constantly investing in our community's youth. Yet, we must continue to do more. This plan claims to inject millions in funding for new technological and education investments for Inwood. However, as we have seen in other areas of the plan, many of the details around these claims are vague. Also, some

of the investments touted in this plan were going to happen anyways, such as the investments in George Washington High School.

**28. Given that tenant rights have loopholes that landlords have exploited – how are the politicians in Albany (Senator Marisol Alcantara) going to help close those loopholes.**

**ANSWER:** I cannot speak on behalf of other elected officials. This process has encouraged engagement and public discourse, which is refreshing. If you have any questions about the Senator's policy positions, I encourage you to reach out to her office.

**29. Shouldn't rent reform laws and the SBJSA proposal be in place BEFORE a rezoning is passed? Our tenants and businesses need REAL protections!!**

**ANSWER:** Logically, it would make sense to have these in place before rezoning is passed but the city officials, developer, and elected representatives who are advocating for rezoning have shunned logic at every turn. Furthermore, this entire plan is predicated on misleading illusions, specifically as it pertains to protections for tenants and businesses. For advocates of rezoning, it would be counterproductive to pass laws protecting the current residents and local businesses they are aiming to displace.

**30. Under MIH only 10% of ALL units built will be Inwood Affordable. What if any contingency plan does the state have for the mass displacement that will occur?**

**ANSWER:** The state has not released a contingency plan. If the rent rates increase to the levels we expect, the community's current residents will be forced to find housing in areas with more favorable pricing options.

**31. What will happen to the political careers of our Latino politicians if half of their voter base is displaced?**

**ANSWER:** The Latino people are resilient, adaptable, and here to stay. New York City is a wonderful place that is constantly changing. The Latino community is a crucial staple within New York City and a single politician, vote, or initiative will change that.

**32. The existing height restrictions give the community character. How can we understand how high developments will go when development can go higher if developer “throws in” a senior center (for example)?**

**ANSWER:** I couldn't agree more: the modest buildings, bounds of green, picturesque neighborhoods, and waterfront access, make Inwood a tranquil slice of Manhattan. There are a number of resources that help describe the expected changes rezoning would bring, including changes to the height of buildings. I encourage you to reference materials released by the City Council and Manhattan Borough President's office.

**33. Without the appropriate tenant rights protections and small business protections in place, we cannot risk a rezoning that will displace thousands.**

**ANSWER:** I agree, the stakes are too high to pursue rezoning without the necessary protections in place. We are not “predicting” that rezoning will displace businesses and residents, history has clearly shown that it will. The real estate market, as it pertains to both commercial and residential properties, will be greatly inflated when the area experiences hyper-development. Inevitably, this leads to the displacement of the areas current residents and businesses.