



November 19th, 2019

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One Liberty Plaza  
New York, NY 10006

We write to you today to express our concerns regarding the planning process and proposed development over Sunnyside Yards.

Earlier this year we learned that NYC Economic Development Corporation commissioned a feasibility study regarding a proposed deck over the yard and that a public input period was underway to inform the outcome of the development.

Our positions on the steering committee have helped us better understand the stakeholder-driven conversations that were shaping this project. However, it should be made abundantly clear that our roles on the committee does not imply endorsement of the project. We attended public hearings where EDC presented their proposals to the community. We heard calls for community land trust and public investment, and a resounding rejection of further over-development in Western Queens. We attended meetings of the Steering Committee where representatives from local civic groups expressed concerns around real estate speculation. The current proposal fails to sufficiently address these concerns. The proposed high-rise and mid-rise residential buildings would further exacerbate a housing crisis that displaces communities of color and parcels off public land to private real estate developers. No one wishes to see the specter of luxury development that is Hudson Yards duplicated in Sunnyside. The proposal as it stands reflects a misalignment of priorities: development over reinvestment, commodification of public land over consideration of public good. Rather than building a costly deck, we should consider strengthening the public transit system and re-investing in our public housing stock.

Furthermore, given the current climate crisis, every new development project should be driven by the need to address global warming. That means every part of the construction life cycle from planning, to transporting materials, to building should be intentional about expeditiously fulfilling the goal of de-carbonization. A single greenway and the extension of Lou Loudati park does not meet those standards. Additionally, it is concerning to know that the current plan does not take into account the environmental impacts of developing near the Newtown Creek



Superfund Site, an industrial waste zone that would expose unknown amounts of toxins to local residents upon development.

While we see certain elements of community input in the proposed plan including green spaces and a robust transit system, we are deeply concerned by the lack of accountability in the input process. We are told the plan may not move forward after all the assessments and feedback - however, when pressed about who would make that decision or when it would be made, we are not given a clear answer. Given the decades-long time stamp on the project, it extends beyond any administration's tenure. Additionally, with the current timeline, we do not see an opportunity to pause and evaluate the environmental or public merits of this project. Since the ultimate responsibility of ensuring a publicly-driven process and positive outcome cannot be attributed to any single entity, the power must rest with directly impacted people.

The public process for this project does not embrace the democratic values we believe it should and we cannot endorse a final project that does not reflect the clearly stated needs of the community. We welcome a conversation to address the concerns laid out around process, over-development and environmental justice. We look forward to your response. For any questions, please reach out to Naureen Akhter at [naureen.akhter@mail.house.gov](mailto:naureen.akhter@mail.house.gov), or Matthew Wallace at [mwallace@city.nyc.gov](mailto:mwallace@city.nyc.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez".

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
U.S. House of Representatives

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jimmy Van Bramer".

Councilmember Jimmy Van Bramer  
New York City Council