



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)
www.OANA-NY.org

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Neighborhood Rezoning: A Better Path for Astoria

By Richard Khuzami

In the ever-evolving landscape of New York City, the need for thoughtful urban planning has never been more critical. As we look to the future, it's clear that neighborhood rezoning offers a more comprehensive and beneficial approach compared to individual rezoning requests for specific projects. Locally, in Community District 1 in Queens, OANA has been advocating for such a rezoning of the general area south of Broadway in Astoria to Dutch Kills.

Astoria north of Broadway and Dutch Kills have both had neighborhood rezonings, but the area in between has not (designated Ravenswood by DCP). As a result, the area of North Astoria and Dutch Kills have had 9 ULURPS* (Rezonings) and 80 lots rezoned since 2010, but the Ravenswood area has had 21 ULURPs and 219 lots.** (Note that the Astoria North rezoning was contextual, meaning it strove to keep much of the existing housing, allowing expansion primarily based on accessibility to public transit. This way, Astoria North has kept much of its long-time character.) There is no greater example of the advantages of neighborhood rezonings.

Here's why neighborhood rezoning is the way forward for Astoria and beyond:

Rezoning at the neighborhood level allows for a holistic approach to urban planning. It ensures that all aspects of the community's needs are considered, including housing, transportation, green spaces, and commercial areas. This comprehensive planning leads to more cohesive and sustainable development.

A consistent template for development reduces uncertainty for both developers and residents. This predictability can attract more investment and lead to more cohesive community development. When everyone knows the rules, it's easier to plan and build for the future.

Encouraging greater community participation and input ensures that the voices of residents are heard and their needs are met, leading to more equitable and inclusive development. When the community is involved, the results are better for everyone.

Addressing zoning at the neighborhood level streamlines the standard per development approval process, saving time and resources for both the city and developers. This efficiency reduces the administrative burden on city agencies and speeds up the development process.



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Preventing piecemeal development ensures that growth is balanced across the neighborhood. This leads to better infrastructure planning and more sustainable development patterns, benefiting the entire community.

Incorporating environmental sustainability measures more effectively, such as green building standards, stormwater management, and preservation of open spaces, helps create healthier and more resilient communities.

A well-planned neighborhood rezoning can boost local economies by creating vibrant, mixed-use areas that attract businesses and residents. This can lead to job creation and increased property values, benefiting everyone in the community.

Taking a strategic approach to addressing housing needs, including affordable housing, ensures that housing developments are well-integrated and meet the needs of diverse populations.

Facilitating coordinated infrastructure improvements, such as transportation, utilities, and public services, ensures that they keep pace with development. This leads to better services and a higher quality of life for residents.

Neighborhood rezonings generate a [“Points of Agreement”](#) document that commits NYC to capital investments to facilitate those quality of life improvements. Private rezonings do not! [You can find an example here.](#)

Supporting a long-term vision for the community aligns development with broader city goals and policies. This approach leads to more resilient and adaptable neighborhoods that can thrive for generations to come.

Neighborhood rezoning can positively impact the housing market in NYC, particularly in terms of affordability. By increasing the housing supply, it helps alleviate the housing shortage and stabilize or reduce housing prices, especially when it includes neighborhood-wide MIH provisions for affordable housing, ensuring that new developments contribute to the availability of affordable units.

Eliminating the need for developers to hire land use attorneys and lobbyists for each individual project significantly reduces legal and lobbying expenses. Streamlining financing allows developers to secure funding more easily and quickly. This efficiency can lead to projects being completed 1-2 years earlier, reducing carrying costs and allowing developers to start generating revenue sooner. Lowering these costs for developers should, in turn, reduce asking rents for tenants, making housing more affordable.



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Some argue that a framework study would suffice instead of neighborhood rezoning. While a framework study may establish zoning guidelines, it does not go through the ULURP process, which maximizes community input. It also does not eliminate the individual ULURP requirements for specific developments that are not as-of-right. While some may prefer ULURP hearings for all non-as-of-right developments, this has proven to be a costly and cumbersome system.

Not having individual ULURPs will not lessen community input because residents would have made their feelings known during the neighborhood rezoning process. Additionally, they can still express their opinions on specific developments to their City Councilmember, who holds the actual decision-making power in land use matters. The Community Boards and Borough Presidents are only advisory in this process.

Many businesses whose facilities are now non-compliant with existing zoning have to go through a costly and time-consuming process for land use ULURP or BSA approvals to expand. They often decide to expand in other neighborhoods or leave the area completely, causing the loss of needed jobs for no good reason except bureaucratic barriers.

The benefits of neighborhood rezoning over individual project rezonings are clear. It promotes a more organized, inclusive, and sustainable approach to urban development in NYC. By embracing neighborhood rezoning, we can create vibrant, resilient communities that meet the needs of all residents and ensure a brighter future for our city.

Richard Khuzami, President of Old Astoria Neighborhood Association.

**The Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) is a standardized process in NYC for public review of land use applications.*

***Per ZOLA. [Spreadsheet](#)*