


How can you build a better neighborhood?



Do you want to see something new in your neighborhood, but don't know where to start?

Do you want to influence something new that's planned for your neighborhood, but don't know how to get involved in the process?

I wish we could have a playground on that empty lot.

I wonder if that new apartment building is going to be affordable.

“**Land Use**” is the term used for what happens on each parcel of land in our city. The process for land use decisions is spelled out in the City Charter, which acts as the City’s Constitution. Many groups can be a part of land use decisions in NYC — the Department of Buildings, the Department of City Planning, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, City Council, developers, and landlords.

Construction happens all the time, but community members often find out too late to have a say in how a space will be used. **Learn what type of development is happening in your neighborhood so you know who’ll be part of the decision making process and how to get involved.**



How do these decisions get made?

“Zoning” defines and restricts what size and what type of development can be built. There are different zoning designations — residential, like an apartment building; commercial, like a supermarket; industrial, like a factory; and sometimes a combination, known as “mixed use,” like a highrise apartment building with a community center on the ground level.

New developments have to go through different processes depending on how the area is zoned.

If a proposed project...

- **Doesn't fit the current zoning**

A **zoning change** is required, and the project has to go through a process called the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (or ULURP, pronounced YOU-LERP). Zoning changes can be for one lot, a block, or a whole neighborhood. ULURP involves City Council, Community Boards, and the City Planning Commission. They all hold public hearings that you can participate in. City Council has the final vote on most projects that go through ULURP for a zoning change. If a project includes affordable housing, *sometimes* the Affordable Housing Appeals Board can reverse the City Council's vote.

- **Fits the current zoning**

It's considered “as-of-right” and no zoning change is required.

- **May alter a landmarked building**

It has to be reviewed and approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which identifies and protects NYC's architecturally, historically, and culturally significant buildings.

Here are some ways to get involved:

- Visit the DOB website to know what's planned for your neighborhood: nyc.gov/site/buildings/dob/construction-in-my-neighborhood.page
- Find out how your neighborhood is currently zoned: Zola.planning.nyc.gov
- Contact your City Councilmember and find out when they're holding public hearings: council.nyc.gov/districts/
- Attend your local Community Board meeting: nyc.gov/site/cau/community-boards/community-boards.page
- Attend City Planning meetings: nyc.gov/content/planning/pages/calendar
- Attend Landmarks Preservation meetings: nyc.gov/site/lpc/index.page



Find Your People

If you find a group that aligns with your interests, like a neighborhood association or non-profit, join them to make your needs and concerns heard. The more people who share their concerns, the more pressure is put on city officials and developers to listen and act.

