



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

# **GOWANUS NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION FOR JUSTICE ANNOUNCES TOP DEMANDS FOR THE CITY SPONSORED GOWANUS REZONING**

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## **GOWANUS NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION FOR JUSTICE ANNOUNCES TOP DEMANDS FOR THE CITY SPONSORED GOWANUS REZONING**

**BROOKLYN, NY** - The Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ) - a racially and socioeconomically diverse coalition of stakeholders focused on equity, inclusion, economic and environmental sustainability and justice - formally presented its priority demands for the proposed Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning on Wednesday, February 5th, 2020. As the Gowanus Rezoning approaches the start of its official public review process, GNCJ has outlined what must be included and committed to by the City of New York before the rezoning can be approved and has launched an online petition on their website at [www.gncj.org](http://www.gncj.org) calling for public endorsement of their priority demands.

The coalition's top demands for the Gowanus rezoning are the following:

### **UPFRONT FUNDING FOR FULL CAPITAL NEEDS AT WARREN, WYCKOFF, AND GOWANUS**

The City must dedicate enough upfront funding for full capital needs at Warren Street Houses, Wyckoff Gardens and Gowanus Houses (WWG) local public housing. All funding spent to improve WWG must adhere to HUD Section 3 hiring policies to ensure local NYCHA residents and low-income residents are hired to complete the work.

### **NET ZERO COMBINED SEWAGE OVERFLOW (CSO)**

Mandate net zero CSO from new construction created as a result of the rezoning, through the following actions: (1) Accurately model how increased density will increase CSO and impact local hydrology, (2) Require and enforce CSO mitigation in new development and (3) Ensure city investment in infrastructure to completely mitigate any negative hydrological impacts of rezoning.

### **CREATE AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SPECIAL DISTRICT WITH POWERFUL AND CLEAR LOCAL OVERSIGHT**

Formal recognition and dedicated resources for an Environmental Justice Special District with a local oversight board with a diversity of representation from local residents including public housing, and from businesses, industries, nonprofit, faith based and civic associations to oversee implementation of all City commitments and developer requirements, inclusive of commitments to residents of the three local

public housing complexes.

"I'm proud to stand with GNCJ to insist that the Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning proposal include the core demands of our community, including upfront funding to meet the capital needs of the nearby NYCHA developments, a plan to guarantee that new development will not add any additional combined sewer overflow into the canal but will instead make the canal cleaner, and the establishment of a structure for oversight and accountability with meaningful resident engagement. It's only with GNCJ's extensive community organizing with diverse set of stakeholders, including leaders on the front-lines of housing, environmental, racial, and social justice work, that it is possible to imagine achieving a rezoning that our community could support." - Council Member Brad Lander

"The GNCJ Coalition has been fighting for the community, especially our public housing neighbors, throughout this rezoning process. The residents of Warren Street, Wyckoff Gardens, and Gowanus Houses have had basic needs neglected for too long and this rezoning must have substantial benefit to the developments. Their capital needs must be met. All the demands laid out by GNCJ today reflect the desires and needs of the community and we encourage the city to continue to engage on a deep and meaningful level." - Council Member Stephen Levin

"Gowanus is the first neighborhood that the de Blasio Administration is rezoning that is (now) majority white and the first City sponsored rezoning since releasing its affirmatively furthering fair housing plan in January 2020 - Where We Live. Gowanus is also home to the City's first US EPA Superfund site and multiple brownfield sites all of which are being cleaned-up. Mayor de Blasio has an opportunity to leave a lasting legacy of inclusion, sustainability, opportunity and equity for Gowanus - a neighborhood he represented as Councilmember and where public housing residents, other low and moderate income residents and industrial business have been left out of the improvements happening in the community. FAC is proud to stand with GNCJ in calling on the de Blasio administration to do the right thing and embrace GNCJ's demands and priorities. They are in line with what the City has said it wants to do. The proof will now be in their actions." - Michelle de la Uz, Executive Director of Fifth Avenue Committee

"We should learn from the mistakes of previous rezonings. Compromising residents

in the area or the integrity of the Gowanus Canal cleanup must be a nonstarter. Increased density cannot come at the cost of area low-income renters, namely those in the area's public housing developments like Gowanus Houses, Wyckoff Gardens and Warren Street Houses, which have enormous unaddressed capital needs. EPA has steps underway to reduce combined sewer overflow and redevelopment cannot impede or reverse this progress. The 2013 EPA-issued Record of Decision requires that any future development under the City's purview not compromise the environmental cleanup remedy, and specifically redevelopment projects must prevent additional sewer load. Moreover, any rezoning needs to be proactive on environmental problems and incorporate a special green district." - Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY)

NYCHA is the largest affordable housing provider in the neighborhood, with WWG being home to 25% of renter households - the majority of whom are African American and Latinx - in the neighborhood. Previous rezonings along 4th Avenue resulted in the loss of hundreds of units of rent stabilized housing, and significant displacement of Black and Latino residents. While NYCHA residents have been able to stay, they have had to endure terrible housing conditions that threaten their health. If housing conditions continue to deteriorate, residents living in public housing may be displaced due to its eventual condemnation. Despite this crisis, the City of New York has not meaningfully linked strategies to preserve public housing as part of the Gowanus rezoning to address the \$312 million 5-year capital funding need.

Current strategies under the Mayor's NYCHA 2.0 plan, including the transfer of certain developments out of NYCHA management through Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) and infill construction, are being implemented in ways GNCJ believes to be in violation to our vision for equity and inclusion for this community. One of our core principles - to respect, protect and connect public housing and its residents - informs GNCJ member group's disapproval of the current plans for RAD at Warren Street Houses and infill construction at Wyckoff Gardens, which have been developed without sufficient resident engagement. Any mechanism to fund the needed repairs at WWG must have clear engagement of and oversight from residents to protect residents from evictions and exposure to hazardous conditions.

"We are enduring a public safety, health and housing crisis. Wyckoff Gardens residents and our neighbors living in local NYCHA's Gowanus Houses and Warren

Street Houses have been forced to endure broken and leaky pipes, peeling paint, heatless apartments, dangerous holes in walls and ceilings – which allow in mice, rats and other vermin to come into our homes – and chronically non-working elevators.” - Monica Underwood and Cherry Shiver, FUREE

One of the dirtiest water bodies in America, the Gowanus Canal annually receives over 300 million gallons of combined sewage and stormwater overflow or CSO. Under the Superfund, the City is required to manage a significant percentage of the problem, but we need policy and planning mechanisms to ensure that new development doesn't make the issue worse. The scope of the Gowanus Rezoning estimates over 18,000 new residents, which will put added pressure on our city's sewer lines unless managed and mitigated. In order to ensure that the rezoning does not increase CSO into Canal, the City must comprehensively study the sewer system through the Environmental Impact process and develop policy tools and investments tied to the rezoning that ensure that new development is part of the solution.

“The Gowanus combined sewage overflow status quo stinks. Any acceptable rezoning needs to make it better. The City must commit to integrated planning and investment for water management to achieve a Net Zero CSO rezoning. The Council's current proposed modifications to the Unified Stormwater Rule are an important opportunity to ensure that new development does not increase sewage overflow into the Canal but the City still needs to provide accurate modeling and commitments to tracking the implementation of stormwater and sewage management.” - Andrea Parker, Gowanus Canal Conservancy

Gowanus has a long history of environmental issues and injustices, from historic industrial pollution and siting public housing next to those uses and contamination to redlining by the federal government to urban renewal by local government to flooding during Superstorm Sandy. The neighborhood has gone decades without the necessary infrastructure investments to support area businesses and the growing residential community. The City must formally recognize the importance of ecological and social justice needs in the Gowanus neighborhood by creating and funding a local oversight board to oversee implementation of all City commitments and developer requirements, inclusive of commitments to residents of WWG. This board must be given the authority to oversee and address issues of effective coordination, adherence to planning timeframes and guidelines, and mitigation of unanticipated environmental and social equity consequences and must include a

diversity of representation from local residents including public housing, and from businesses, industries, nonprofit, faith based and civic associations, and. With the right leadership from the City, the unique challenges posed by one of the most polluted water bodies and neighborhoods in the country can be the impetus for cultivating a groundbreaking green neighborhood.

“An Environmental Justice Special District represents a neighborhood-scale commitment to defining and achieving ambitious sustainability performance goals and will unite public and private groups into an organization supported by a governance structure. The governance structure brings together city agencies and a diverse group of community residents for the express purpose of real-time assessment of the impact of proposed development in a neighborhood, beginning with agreement on baseline conditions identified through techniques such as a Racial Equity Impact Assessment and a Community Health Needs Assessment. It can promptly address issues of accurate coordination, adherence to planning timeframes and guidelines, and mitigation of unanticipated environmental and social equity consequences.” - SJ Avery, Park Slope Civic Council (PSCC)

“I am thankful for the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice in their effort to ensure the will of the community is heard and that the rezoning addresses local NYCHA capital needs and ensures a clean canal,” said Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon. “I am also concerned that the increased density and infrastructure pressure in this environmentally fragile area remains unaddressed and demands close scrutiny. The rezoning of Gowanus must ensure environmental justice and I urge the City to take very seriously its position as a steward of the environment in this rezoning process.” - Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

In addition to these top demands, GNCJ has laid out further priorities to ensure a rezoning that truly and equitably benefits the community. These include commitments for affordable housing serving residents that need it most; investing in social resilience and job creation opportunities; and protecting and investing in industry and art.

“There is no truly affordable housing without a quality job. And it’s impossible to promote environmental justice without investing in the local workforce to carry out and benefit from that just future. We are so proud to be a part of GNCJ, fighting for a holistic set of priorities that includes our long-time employers in the Industrial Business Zone, and add up to an economic “win-win” for the community - well

beyond this rezoning.” - Ben Margolis, Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC)

The below demands are priorities for the entire coalition and can also be found on their website at [www.GNCJ.org](http://www.GNCJ.org). The Coalition is asking for public support to endorse these demands via a petition to NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio at: [www.change.org/SupportGNCJ](http://www.change.org/SupportGNCJ).

### **UTILIZE CITY’S COMMITMENT TRACKER TO GUARANTEE TIMELY REOPENING AND RENOVATION OF THE GOWANUS COMMUNITY CENTER WITH ONGOING SUPPORT FOR RESIDENT-LED PROGRAMMING**

All funding spent to improve local NYCHA developments must adhere to HUD Section 3 hiring policies to ensure WWG residents and low income residents are hired to complete the work.

### **INVEST IN COMMUNITY HEALTH & SOCIAL RESILIENCE**

Commit to a comprehensive package of funding to improve Social Resilience and Health outcomes for CD6 public housing residents by supporting an Environmental Justice and Racial Equity Assessment. Ensure all CD6 residents are included in a Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Emergency Preparedness Plan to address local health disparities and disaster risks.

### **BUILD ECONOMIC EQUITY ENSURING LOCAL ACCESS TO SECTION 3 EMPLOYMENT**

Commit to HUD Section 3, HPD and NYC administrative code compliance and enforcement. Fund the promotion of local CD6 residents earning under 80% of Area Median Income applying for training, employment and economic opportunities through Section 3.

### **INVEST IN KNOW-YOUR-RIGHTS TRAININGS**

The City must provide funding for know-your-rights training, including Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, civil rights compliance and other building and tenant related training and services to WWG residents.

## **100% AFFORDABILITY ON PUBLIC LAND**

Require 100% affordability on land owned by the City of New York. The City must provide the necessary subsidies to provide permanent and deeply affordable units (for seniors & low incomes 0-60% of AMI).

## **ADDRESS LOCAL SKILLS GAP WITH TARGETED MULTI-YEAR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT**

Programming must include bridge programming for CD6 residents with barriers to living wage employment with focus on public housing residents and an industrial sector apprenticeship program. Implement through CBOs.

## **STUDY, IMPLEMENT AND ENFORCE TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS TO FUND FULL CAPITAL REPAIRS AT WARREN, WYCKOFF AND GOWANUS NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS (WWG)**

The City must comprehensively and transparently examine and permit the purchase and transfer of development rights from WWG to privately owned parcels within the larger Gowanus area-wide rezoning, not to exceed the density that the City has already proposed in the Draft Scope of Work. Strong and representative local oversight of the generated funds must include WWG residents.

## **CREATE AN AFFORDABLE HOUSING LOTTERY PREFERENCE FOR LOCAL CD6 NYCHA RESIDENTS**

The City, through HPD, must make the necessary regulatory and legislative changes to create affordable housing lottery preferences for local NYCHA residents, and an increased percentage for people with disabilities as well as ensure the creation of a significant number of affordable units for seniors. The City must also commit to a significant number of Section 8 vouchers for existing NYCHA residents so they can move to newly created affordable housing. The planned Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) pilot must be in Gowanus and start as soon as possible.

## **MAP THE MOST AFFORDABLE MIH OPTIONS**

The City must map ONLY the deepest mandatory inclusionary housing (MIH) options so low-income residents and the local public housing community can afford the new affordable housing. Use existing options: option 1 - 25% of units at 60% of AMI and



option 3 - 20% of units at 40% of AMI.

### **MANDATE DEEPER MIH LEVELS FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPERS**

Developments along the Gowanus Canal must commit to deeper affordability than MIH alone by providing 25% permanently affordable housing at an average of 50% of AMI with 10% at 30% of AMI.

### **FOLLOW THROUGH WITH IBZ COMMITMENT**

The City must complete the IBZ visioning planning process and a final document outlining investment commitments in the IBZ including (1) workforce development funds, (2) critical infrastructure improvements, and (3) land use changes that protect industry BEFORE CB6 ULURP hearing.

### **CREATE JOBS FOR LOW INCOME CD6 RESIDENTS TO MAINTAIN NEW BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC SPACE**

Leverage both private and public investment in buildings and public spaces to create jobs for low income CD6 residents in new buildings and the public realm by requiring and committing to local CBO partnerships for recruitment, training and hiring.

**PRESERVE INDUSTRY AND ART SPACES** by implementing an incentive of 0.3 FAR for specific uses groups in Gowanus Mix that are limited to production, repair, and arts uses exclusively. Require public disclosure and transparency in leasing agreements of Gowanus Mix spaces.

### **INVEST IN LOCAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

Fund Summer Youth Employment Program slots to ensure access to youth from WWG communities.

We need to be intentional about the way we plan for the future of our city and this means including the voices of those who built up and are invested in our communities. I am proud to stand with the GNCJ and support the priorities they have laid out. This rezoning should be seen as an

opportunity to learn from past mistakes and move forward in a way that is equitable and inclusive. “ - State Senator Velmanette Montgomery

The Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice is a racially and socioeconomically diverse coalition made up of groups focused on equity, inclusion, economic and environmental sustainability and justice. The Coalition seeks to elevate the voices of the Gowanus community that have not been heard in the City’s planning process, understanding that the residents who are most impacted must be the decision makers in the future of their community.

Members of GNCJ include:

350 Brooklyn works to reverse climate change and achieve climate justice through local action. We promote sustainable energy, oppose the fossil fuel industry, and educate and activate our community. 350Brooklyn is a local affiliate of 350.org, a global grassroots organization.

Arts & Democracy/Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts (NOCD-NY) is a network of artists, cultural organizers, and activists that supports the cross fertilization of culture, participatory democracy, and social justice.

Arts Gowanus is a not-for-profit organization working to support, promote, and advocate for local artists and a sustainable arts community in Gowanus, Brooklyn.

Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE) is a Brooklyn-based multiracial organization made up of almost exclusively women of color.

Fifth Avenue Committee (FAC) is a comprehensive community development corporation in South Brooklyn that advances economic and social justice by building vibrant, diverse communities where residents have genuine opportunities to achieve their goals, as well as the power to shape the community’s future.

Gowanus Canal Conservancy (GCC) advocates and cares for ecologically sustainable parks and public spaces in the Gowanus lowlands while empowering a community of stewards.

Inquilinos Unidos / Tenants United (IU) a tenant organizing project of the FAC and Neighbors Helping Neighbors (NHN) that focuses primarily on South brooklyn residents whose mission is to empower and unite tenants by creating safe space where they can develop leadership to defend their homes, preserve community and improve rights as tenants.

Park Slope Civic Council (PSCC) promotes the health, vitality and character of the Park Slope neighborhood and advocates for the interests of residents, businesses and others with a stake in the community.

Residents of Local Public Housing at Warren Street Houses, Wyckoff Gardens, and Gowanus Houses

Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corp. (SBIDC) is a local organization promoting economic development by serving small businesses and residents of the Sunset Park, Red Hook, and Gowanus neighborhoods in Brooklyn, New York.

St. Lydia's is a church where life is lived out around the table. A progressive, LGBTQ-affirming congregation in the Gowanus neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York.

Trellis is a community development nonprofit that helps neighborhoods address injustice together.

Turning the Tide (T3) An Environmental Justice collaborative led by FAC, Red Hook Initiative (RHI) and SBIDC that focuses on engaging and empowering South Brooklyn public housing residents in the climate change movement to ensure that investments for NYCHA capital improvement meet the real and pressing needs of residents.

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