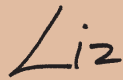


# State Senator Liz Krueger’s Neighborhood Update – Fall 2017

Dear Friend,

This newsletter offers a report on a number of important issues impacting the 28th Senatorial District over the last year, as well as information on upcoming community events. I hope you find this helpful. As always, feel free to reach out to my office for information and assistance.



## LAND USE

### Contextual Zoning

The East River Fifties Alliance (ERFA) submitted an application to the NYC Department of City Planning for a **zoning change for the area east of First Avenue between 52nd and 59th Streets** that would preserve the low- and mid-rise character of the neighborhood and encourage the development of affordable housing. I joined Councilmembers Ben Kallos, Dan Garodnick and Borough President Gale Brewer as co-applicants with the community.

The area included in the proposed rezoning is one of the only residential communities remaining in New York City where mid-blocks have no height controls for buildings. At least one developer has already announced a plan to construct a 1,000-foot supertall luxury tower in the community, and other sites in the neighborhood are similarly susceptible to out-of-scale development. ERFA’s rezoning application would create a contextual district that would prevent supertall towers through height limits, affordable housing incentives, and design controls for wide buildings. Community Board 6 and the Borough President held public hearings on the proposed zoning changes this summer, and then strongly urged approval of the application. I am working with my fellow elected officials and ERFA to urge the City Planning Commission to approve the rezoning as expeditiously as possible.

In June, I also joined my fellow electeds in hosting a **forum on overdevelopment and zoning on the Upper East Side**. The forum discussed local community initiatives, and closing zoning loopholes in our fight against overdevelopment.

### East Midtown Rezoning

In August, the City Council approved the rezoning of East Midtown after a long, comprehensive, and inclusive process. This rezoning was originally proposed in the final months of the Bloomberg administration, but that version was denied approval by the Council because of concerns both about the rushed process and the lack of commitment to improvements in public amenities. In May of this year I joined my colleague Brad Hoylman in submitting testimony to the City Planning Commission on the proposed rezoning, urging the inclusion of additional open space improvements, enhanced transit access and improved street design. I am pleased that the final plan ensures that this extremely complex rezoning balances the needs of those who already live and work in East Midtown, vital infrastructure and open space improvements, and our historic structures, while encouraging the planned development of 21st Century commercial buildings. I want to especially commend Councilmember Daniel Garodnick and Borough President Gale Brewer for their leadership in achieving these goals through active dialogue with a Task Force of three Community Boards.

### Landmarking

In May, I joined my Senate colleague Brad Hoylman in writing to the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) calling for the landmarking of the **Rose Reading Room and the Bill Blass Public Catalog Room at the New York Public Library**. I am happy to report that in August, the LPC approved landmark status for both these iconic spaces.

In May I also wrote to the LPC urging them to immediately consider landmark designation for **827-831 Broadway/47 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street** which faced immediate risk of demolition. The LPC had denied a request by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation in 2016, but is now reconsidering that request for landmark designation based upon additional research into the historical, architectural and cultural significance of these buildings. I am happy to report that while landmarking is under consideration, the developer has withdrawn their application to demolish the buildings.

Finally in July, Senator Hoylman and I urged the LPC to consider landmarking the **historic Kaskel & Kaskel building at 316 Fifth Avenue** in the Madison Square area. Unfortunately, in August, the LPC denied the request for consideration. In response, I have joined several of our elected colleagues in pushing the LPC once again to consider expansion of the **Madison Square North Historic District**, to protect the character of the neighborhood in the face of increasing pressure from development.

### Construction Issues

I have been working with my fellow electeds to mitigate the impacts of construction on the corner of Lexington Avenue and 86<sup>th</sup> Street on both traffic and subway access. I brought key players together for a meeting with the developer of this project, the MTA, and the Department of Transportation to hear their collaborative plans for minimizing the impact of this construction on the community. As a result of construction at this site, a temporary stairway entrance on the Northeast corner of the intersection will serve the northbound platforms of this station until construction is complete in the Summer of 2019. The final product will include a new in-building subway entrance stair on Lexington Ave, a sidewalk subway entrance stair on 86th St, an elevator serving the local northbound platform on 86th St, and a widened sidewalk at this corner to accommodate these new features.

One of my many concerns about this project had to do with the developer’s plan to place the crane on the East side of Lexington Ave and the effect that would have on car and bus traffic. My colleagues and I reached out to the Department of Transportation and secured a commitment that three lanes of traffic would be maintained at all times during construction.

## EDUCATION

### Advocating for Additional Pre-K Seats on the Upper East Side

I joined my colleagues in meetings with the NYC Department of Education (DOE) and in writing to the Chancellor regarding the need for additional pre-K seats on the Upper East Side. According to the testimony by the DOE before the City Council, more than 900 four-year-olds applied for the 596 seats currently slated to be available for the 2017–2018 school year. This represents a loss of 22 seats from the previous school year and means that at least one in three four-year-olds will not be offered a seat in their neighborhood unless additional seats are identified. I also joined Councilmember Ben Kallos and other colleagues at a rally in April calling on the DOE to solve this problem. There is also a severe shortage of pre-K seats in East Midtown, and I will continue to push DOE to address these unmet needs. Universal means EVERY 4 year old should have a seat available. The City is proposing moving forward with UPK for 3 years olds as well. This is not realistic unless they can find the space, which seems unlikely if we cannot address the unmet demands for the 4 year olds. While the specifics are still being finalized, the DOE has committed to opening new pre-K centers on the Upper East Side and East Midtown and to continue to expand pre-K capacity in the years ahead.

## PARKS

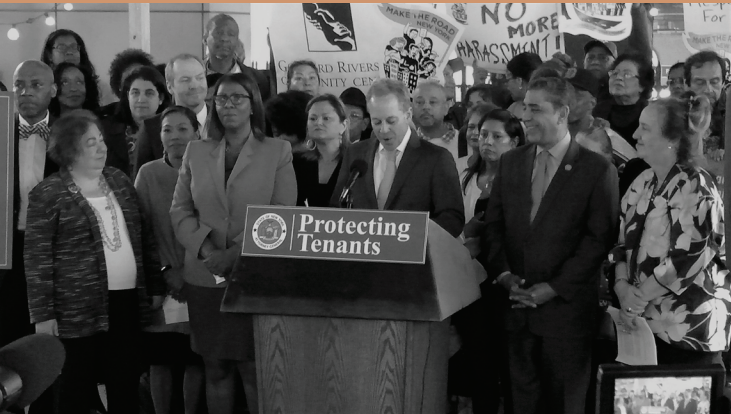
### East River Greenway Funding

I was extremely pleased that Mayor De Blasio’s and the council included \$100 million in capital in the city budget to close the gap in the East River Greenway between 61st to 53rd Streets. I have long advocated for completing the Greenway and improving existing sections, and this funding is a major step toward that goal. I look forward to working with the Mayor and my colleagues to identify additional funds to address remaining gaps in the Greenway.

HOUSING



*In May I stood with my elected colleagues, city officials and Upper East Side students to welcome Women In Need to E 91st Street. I am proud to represent a community that wants to be there for each other, particularly for families who need a helping hand to climb out of homelessness and get back on their feet.*



*In May I joined Attorney General Schneiderman and other elected officials at a press conference announcing the my introduction of anti-harassment legislation drafted by the Attorney General’s office to make it easier to criminally prosecute landlords who improperly force rent-regulated tenants out of their homes. This legislation (S.6473/A.7992) is carried in the Assembly by Joseph Lentol.*



*In July I joined Assembly colleagues and tenant advocates to announce new legislation to strengthen enforcement against illegal hotels. Illegal short-term rentals rob communities of affordable housing and drive up rent for local residents while creating unsafe conditions both for residents and for short-term renters.*

TRANSPORTATION

Public Transportation Infrastructure

In recent months city and state officials have shown an increasing focus on the deteriorating state of our public transportation system. New MTA Chair Joseph Lhotta has established both short- and long-term goals for addressing problems with the subway system. Just as importantly, he has indicated a willingness to re-examine the priorities of the MTA. While new train lines and wi-fi in stations are lovely additions to the system, if the shiny things get priority over more prosaic matters like maintaining adequate service and addressing basic system maintenance we will never get out of the public transportation crisis we now find ourselves in. When Chair Lhotta testified before the Senate during his confirmation, his mantra was “state of good repair.” I hope he will continue to repeat that mantra in the months and years ahead despite the inevitable political pressure he will face to prioritize pet projects.

The state also needs to stop redirecting funds away from the MTA. The MTA has various direct revenue streams such as the payroll tax that are supposed to be reserved for MTA use, but since 2011, the state has diverted \$456 million in operating funding away from the MTA to non-MTA purposes. Governor Cuomo claims that this is not a diversion because of increased revenue from dedicated sources, but a reduction in other funding is still a reduction, and the consequences of this underinvestment in the MTA are now clear to all. There also needs to be more transparency about what monies may already be available, as there is undoubtedly capital funding that has not been spent because of project delays or because the release of the funds for specific projects has not been approved. All these resources need to be on the table to address the current crisis.

The success of our public transportation system is critical to the economic success of the New York City region, which in turn is critical to the well-being of all New Yorkers across the state. The city and the state both need to be part of the solution, and the state legislature also needs to be willing to explore additional funding mechanisms such as congestion pricing to ensure the long-term stability of the system. Chair Lhotta has called for \$800 million in additional funding for the next year, but says an additional \$8 billion will be needed before 2020. All parties will need to step up with ideas about how to meet this need, and work with the new MTA leadership to ensure that we direct funding in the most effective way to pull the system out of crisis.

This is not the first time our subway system has been in crisis. In the late 70’s and early 80’s conditions were demonstrably worse than they are now, but under the leadership of Richard Ravitch and with the support of elected officials at all levels of government, the system experienced a renaissance. It is all our jobs to learn from and repeat that history.

MTA Ventilation Plant in Murray Hill

As many of you may know, the proposed emergency ventilation plant in Murray Hill has been postponed by an amendment to the MTA’s Capital Plan. I have written to MTA Chair Lhotta urging him to review this project in light of the broader needs of our public transportation system discussed above. Previous MTA leadership called for the construction of the Emergency Ventilation Plant on the basis of a 1994 safety study, but then postponed this project in order to fund other non-safety-related projects. I believe it is appropriate to review whether the 1994 analysis is still relevant given the many changes to the system that have occurred in the interim, including the construction of new tunnels for East Side Access in the same area. If the project is determined to still be required to ensure the safety of the system, there needs to be coordination with other projects in the Murray Hill area to minimize the impact on the community, given the other projects currently impacting this area, including East Side Access, repair work on the Queens-Midtown Tunnel, and substantial private real estate development.

Bus Service

While I applaud the arrival of the M79 Select Bus Service to join the successful M86 SBS and M15 SBS in my district, I have also been extremely concerned about cuts to service on several lines serving my district. I joined many of my colleagues in writing to



the MTA to protest these service reductions to the M31, M42, M66, and M72 of up to 7% of scheduled service. I hear from constituents regularly that bus reliability and speed has declined substantially in recent years. Earlier this year I signed on to a letter with many of my fellow state electeds urging the MTA and DOT to accelerate the roll-out of several technologies that are proven to improve bus service. Given the declining state of bus service, I believe that the MTA should be focusing its efforts on making the bus travel a truly reliable and efficient mode of transport, not cutting back on service to save money. As you know, the neighborhoods in my district have high numbers of older adults, many of whom live blocks away from the nearest subway, or have trouble accessing stations that lack elevators or escalators. I will continue to pressure the MTA to ensure these and other riders have a reliable bus system.

Subway Escalator Maintenance

Earlier this year I wrote to the MTA urging them to prioritize subway elevator and escalator maintenance, which is critical to ensuring access to the subways for people with disabilities. An audit by City Comptroller Scott Stringer showed failures to perform timely inspections and preventive maintenance. I was particularly disturbed with failures on escalators and elevators on the brand-new Second Avenue subway line. The E train stop at Lexington and 53<sup>rd</sup> is 139 steps to the sidewalk when the elevator and escalator are both broken – a problem reported twice recently by riders. Riders with disabilities should be able to rely on the subway system to get where they need to go, and not have to worry that they will get to the station and find they cannot access it because of a broken elevator.

Queens Midtown Tunnel Traffic

In May, I joined my colleagues in writing to the Department of Transportation about the serious traffic and noise problems around the Manhattan entrance to the Queens-Midtown Tunnel resulting from the ongoing weeknight and weekend repair work on the Tunnel. My office has been getting an increasing number of complaints about this issue from residents of the area. We requested specific actions to mitigate the traffic and noise resulting from this construction; including signage, diverting traffic away from the Tunnel, and increased enforcement of “blocking the box” and honking violations, especially during overnight hours when the noise is particularly problematic to residents of the area.

Snow Removal Issues

Last winter I wrote to the Department of Sanitation asking them to review snow removal practices, as the current methods often result in the snow blocking access to buses and crosswalks. The continued presence of these curbside snow banks days after snowstorms makes walking outside and boarding buses treacherous for all and near impossible for the elderly and disabled. Improving pedestrian safety via the multi-agency “Vision Zero” campaign has been a priority for the city, and it is critical that pedestrian needs also be considered as part of the city’s snow removal policies. Plowing the city’s streets so that emergency and public transit vehicles can continue to operate is critical, but the job is not complete until the crosswalks and bus stops are clear.

HEALTHCARE

Mount Sinai Beth Israel Reorganization

As many of you know, Mount Sinai is planning to close parts of Beth Israel hospital and reorganize its healthcare-delivering services in the area. While I understand the need to modernize and maximize efficiencies in healthcare delivery, I am concerned that these changes not undermine access to healthcare for the communities served by Beth Israel. Overall, the community is being told by Mount Sinai what services will be moved without a full explanation of the range of procedures that will ultimately be available, and where. Communities across New York have been shaken by the changes to healthcare access, hospital closings, and alterations that have occurred over the last decade, and it is critical that as Mount Sinai moves forward with its plans, there is ample opportunity for community participation in a full assessment of how the new facilities will meet healthcare needs.

I have joined my colleagues in writing to the State Department of Health to urge them to look at the various proposed changes to healthcare services in a holistic rather than piecemeal manner. I have also participated in a number of community forums on the plans, and I will continue to bring community concerns both to Mount Sinai and the State Department of Health. I will keep you informed of future meetings on this important issue.



*In May I was delighted to join Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President, Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon and many others to open The Motherhood Center, an invaluable resource for those suffering from perinatal mood disorders such as maternal depression. Paige Bellenbaum, the co-founder of the center, has been a tireless advocate for passage of legislation to improve access to screening and treatment for maternal depression.*

Changes to Open Enrollment for Marketplace Coverage

Also on the health care front, ***I want to make sure you are aware that the Open Enrollment Period in New York will run from November 1, 2017 to January 31, 2018.*** Although the current administration decided to significantly shorten the Open Enrollment Period (November 1st - December 15th) New York has its own marketplace, and therefore, is able to determine the length of its Open Enrollment Period.

Health insurance providers will make 2018 plan details available by November 1<sup>st</sup>. If you would like to consult with a trained representative at no charge prior to selecting your health insurance plan, Navigator Sites are an excellent resource. The following is the contact information for a local Navigator Site:

Community Service Society of New York

633 Third Avenue, 10th Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
888-614-5400

Please make sure to call and schedule an appointment for November 1, 2017through January 31, 2018 to ensure healthcare coverage in 2018.

Before selecting your plan, it is important to check the following:

- 1. Will your primary physician, ob/gyn, and any specialists accept the insurance?*** This is important to verify, even if you are not changing plans. Health insurance companies are using narrower provider networks than before, which may cause reductions to their list of in-network providers.  
  
***Please note that a new search tool has been added to the New York State of Health marketplace website:*** <https://pndslookup.health.ny.gov/>. This tool allows you to search by medical provider to see what health insurance plans s/he accepts. It also allows you to search by health plan to see which medical providers are in-network.
- 2. Will any regularly prescribed medications be covered under the plan?*** Each health insurance plan has a list of pharmaceuticals that are covered. If you are concerned about prescriptions being covered, this is important to verify before you enroll in the plan. Navigator Site representatives can provide assistance with this.

3. **Which plan will be the most affordable while providing the amount of coverage you need?** Research has shown that many people do not take the time to comparison shop before selecting a health insurance policy. It is worth taking the time to consider your healthcare needs and assess which plan will give you the greatest savings based on premiums charged, co-pays, and deductibles. Navigator Site representatives can also provide assistance with doing a comparison of plan costs.

**Fall Open Enrollment for Medicare Plans**

The Fall Open Enrollment period for Medicare is also approaching, if you wish to make changes to your current plan. From October 15-December 7, you can join a new Medicare Advantage plan, join a new Part D prescription drug plan, switch from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage plan, or switch from a Medicare Advantage plan to Original Medicare. Any changes made during the Fall Open Enrollment period will take effect January 1, 2018.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**11th Annual Senior Resource Fair**

My 11th Annual Senior Resource Fair will take place on Wednesday, October 18th from 2:00 to 5:00 pm at Temple EmanuEl, 1 East 65th Street. Last year’s fair was attended by more than 500 people and over 60 non-profit senior service providers and advocacy groups participated and provided information about a range of issues including Medicare, housing, and volunteer opportunities. No RSVP necessary.

**Roundtable for Boomers & Seniors**

Senator Liz Krueger’s Roundtable for Boomers & Seniors provides an opportunity for constituents to come together to explore life issues that are relevant across the age span. At each session, attendees hear from and engage with professionals who are knowledgeable on topics that are of most concern to the growing population of older adults in New York City. Over the course of five sessions, the Roundtable looks at a specific issue from different perspectives each month.

Events continued below



New York State Senate, Albany, NY 12247



**State Senator Liz Krueger’s  
Neighborhood Update – Fall 2017**



**Albany Office:**  
808 Legislative Office Building  
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(518) 455-2297

**District Office:**  
211 East 43rd Street  
Suite 1201  
New York, NY 10017  
(212) 490-9535

**E-Mail:** lkrueger@nysenate.gov  
**Website:** lizkrueger.nysenate.gov

**Events continued from above**

This year’s series will focus on engagement. The first roundtable will take place Thursday, November 9th from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 East 70th Street, and the topic will be loneliness. To RSVP call (212) 490-9535 or email lkrueger@nysenate.gov

**Excelsior Scholarship Program**

On Tuesday, October 24th at 6:30pm I am joining Assemblymember Seawright in hosting an event on The Excelsior Scholarship with. The program will inform attendees on the details of the Excelsior Scholarship and the Enhanced Tuition Award. These awards, in combination with other student financial aid programs, allow some students to attend SUNY or CUNY tuition-free. Both programs are serving students for the first time this fall and will be phased in over the next three years, beginning with New Yorkers making up to \$100,000 annually in the fall of 2017, increasing to \$110,000 in 2018, and reaching \$125,000 in 2019. The event location is to be determined.

**The Reproductive Health Act Public Forum**

On Tuesday, November 14<sup>th</sup> from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m, I am hosting an event on The Reproductive Health Act at the CUNY Graduate Center, Proshansky Auditorium, 365 Fifth Avenue at 34<sup>th</sup> Street. I will be joined by actress and advocate Martha Plimpton, as well as other prominent advocates, to increase awareness of and support for modernizing NYS law in the face of federal threats, ensuring that abortions in our State will remain safe, accessible, and legal. Join us to learn about volunteer opportunities and political actions you can take to help pass the Reproductive Health Act in 2018. To RSVP call (212) 490-9535 or email lkrueger@nysenate.gov

**Forum on Access-a-Ride**

On Thursday, December 14<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m, I am hosting Forum on Access-a-Ride, its challenges and the MTAs plans for its improvement at Mount Sinai Downtown - 10 Union Square East between 14th and 15th Streets, in the 2nd Floor Conference Room. To RSVP call (212) 490-9535 or email lkrueger@nysenate.gov.