

Sunset Park Voices in the Rezoning Process

A summary of feedback from community workshops hosted by City Councilmember Sara Gonzalez and Community Board 7, along with analysis of related issues.

Prepared by the Pratt Center for Community Development

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Executive Summary

As Sunset Park awaits the results of a zoning study being conducted by the NYC Department of City Planning, City Councilwoman Sara Gonzalez and Brooklyn Community Board 7 co-sponsored one community education workshop and two community conversations about development issues and the anticipated rezoning in October and November of 2007. The workshop and conversations were conducted by the Pratt Center for Community Development.

Residents expressed a wide variety of goals and concerns about development, in small group conversations, two “dot-voting” exercises,” and public speak-outs at the two community workshops. This report provides a summary of the issues and perspectives raised, along with some analysis of related issues by the Pratt Center.

- There was unified concern expressed about **out-of-scale development**. It is worth noting, though, that this did not emerge as the top “vote-getter” in the dot-voting exercise. Out-of-context development received 31 dot-votes, while displacement of current residents received 151, parking 100, traffic 58, and overcrowded schools 57.
- **Protection of the view from Sunset Park**, which literally gives the neighborhood its name, was voiced passionately and consistently.
- While it was not included in the dot-voting, numerous residents urged that **commercial overlays be limited only to the building that fronts on the commercial avenue**, and not – as it is in many cases now – to any buildings on the side-streets (in general, this means reducing the commercial overlay from 150 feet to 100 feet).
- Issues of **affordable housing and displacement evoked the most concern**, with displacement of current residents receiving by far the most dot-votes (151) when residents were asked their concerns about development.

However, there was not uniform opinion about what this meant or how it should be addressed. Some residents expressed openness to additional development, with a goal of creating affordable units, especially in the southeastern portion of the community (i.e. 7th & 8th Avenues, in the 50s). The top two dot-vote-getters on issues of affordable housing were creating new affordable homeownership units (127) and new affordable rental units (110).

Other residents expressed concern that new development would likely be market-rate, and could actually make the current affordable housing crisis worse for existing residents. Saving existing rental housing received 100 dot-votes. Some speakers noted that recent patterns of development on 4th Avenue in Park Slope suggest that (a) developers may not utilize the “inclusionary housing bonus,” since none are doing so in the South Park Slope rezoning area, despite several new buildings, and (b) several hundred rent-regulated units in Sunset Park (especially along 4th Avenue) might be at risk of demolition and replacement by market-rate, non-rent-regulated units if upzoning were to occur. These residents called variously for not upzoning the commercial avenues, for mandatory affordable housing requirements, and/or for strong protections against demolition, harassment, and displacement.