



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

State Senator Gustavo Rivera Jerome Avenue Study Public Hearing Testimony

GUSTAVO RIVERA October 6, 2017

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We have a responsibility as a community to build a more prosperous future, but as history has taught us, economic development and progress come with their own set of challenges. The Jerome Avenue Rezoning has been a demonstration of how government can work alongside the community to improve upon an incoming municipal project.

I am always a supporter of projects that aim to bring opportunities to our neighborhood. However, not at the expense of the existing community. My priority for this project has always been to prevent displacement by protecting the affordability of housing, the rights of tenants, and the neighborhood as a whole, while bringing new resources that our community needs and deserves. I am optimistic about what we have been able to accomplish through this process. The leadership and engagement demonstrated by Councilwoman Vanessa Gibson, community service organizations, and more importantly, our residents has allowed us to shape this project and align it our needs and goals.

Thanks to that input and participation, the study now recommends a new school, park, street lamps and walkways. The Mandatory Inclusionary Housing policy, the strongest in the nation, will guarantee the addition of newly built income-restricted units, permanently

increasing our affordable housing stock. We were able to develop lower AMI options than what were originally proposed by the City, ensuring more current residents will be able to afford the newly-created units coming into the neighborhood. These are important and lasting accomplishments that will not only improve our neighborhood, but help maintain affordability.

We know this progress does not come without compromise. We know that some of our residents will not be able to afford the new units and that some landlords are already taking advantage of the situation to hike up rents, harass tenants, deregulate units, and inflate their profits.

However, we do have more resources than ever before to help us address these challenges. There are many fantastic community-based organizations in my district who are organizing and empowering folks to stay in their apartments and get the repairs and services they both legally and morally deserve, namely CASA and the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. Thanks in big part to the leadership of Councilwoman Gibson, tenants now have access to free legal representation under the Right to Counsel law passed earlier this year. These advocates and tools continue to play a strong role in protecting our community from those trying to exploit folks throughout the Jerome Rezoning.

As we move forward with this process, we know that the developers that come into our neighborhood will have a lasting impact on how the neighborhood progresses. We need to work to secure developers who are willing to collaborate with our community and hold them accountable. We need to encourage non for profit developers, who are able to build 100% affordable housing, to come to our neighborhood. I ask that each of you here today continues to be engaged through the implementation of this project.

The Jerome Rezoning will bring a great number of resources to our neighborhood that we would have not been able to access otherwise. It is a positive step for our community and

our residents. Nevertheless, our job as community advocates is never done. We must continue to work to ensure that the necessary compromises made through the implementation of the Jerome Rezoning are in our best interest so our neighbors today can be our neighbors in the future.