

NEW YORK – CONNECTICUT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP COMMENTS - FALL 2013

Attendees

160 attendees total across eight workshops, drawing:

- Local neighborhood groups
- Real estate developers
- Local, independent residents
- Representatives from agencies and city & state staff
- Developers of affordable & market rate housing
- Members of local commissions/task forces/community boards
- Consortium members
- Resident participation strongest in Hempstead and Brentwood, where New York Communities for Change and Make the Road New York encouraged members to attend

Common Themes Heard Across the Eight Workshops

- **Increasing Supply**
 - Need diversity of housing types- multi-income, and supportive, small & family, rental & home ownership (programs too restrictive)
 - Developing quality design- and communicating that it's affordable housing.
 - Understand that affordable housing is not the "projects" it used to be
 - Highlight good design, potentially incentivize good design
 - Communicate success stories
 - Need to reduce overall cost of construction
 - Reduce parking requirements or vary them by tenant income. They raise the cost of construction
 - Small pockets of TOD are high asset areas even when embedded in larger low-income area
 - Restrictive local zoning came up repeatedly as a seemingly intractable problem
- **Maintaining existing units:**
 - Need to promote upgrades and maintenance of existing units (for better quality of life, and to prevent housing code evictions and fires)
- **Improving access to adequate housing**
 - Credit scores & application requirements- preventing lock-in to substandard units
 - Communicating what is affordable and why
 - To potential residents
 - What is the income mix, how do you access units?
 - Sometimes you just know where you're not welcome

- **Economic development**
 - Encouraged to look at job creation and not just housing, particularly in low-income communities
- **Transportation**
 - A variety of job access issues were raised, from limited bus service in Suffolk to highway access in Yonkers and Mt. Vernon to the cost of commuter rail service
- **Public Engagement**
 - There were only a few comments on public engagement practices, but there was an interest in follow-through and some said they would like to see more meetings like these.
 - Some wanted to learn more about the planning process itself after seeing the presentation on plan enhancements

Highlights from Each Workshop

Yonkers (12 attended not including Consortium members: affordable housing developers & managers, municipal staff, residents)

- Sewer and other environmental restrictions on development are partially there to prevent the construction of multifamily/affordable housing.
- Recognize that we have a limited number of TOD areas- these are high opportunity areas directly around the station even if the surrounding neighborhood is high-poverty. Need to create/sustain mixed-income housing immediately around station
- Develop incentives to drive development. Incentives/grants for permitting, predevelopment, great design.
- Work to keep employment concentrated in centers and expanding in centers- but keep office parks office parks.

Hempstead (31 attended: developers, anti-poverty staff, local municipal staff, and residents)

- Need to broaden the targets of housing production- too much 55+, should be mix of ownership/rental, supportive and income ranges, and larger family units.
- PILOT incentives to new developers are increasing the strain on existing residents' tax burdens
- Residents lack access to information about housing opportunities, see new housing going to people from out of town.

White Plains (17 attended: affordable housing developers, building industry, church, civic organizations, and municipal staff)

- Costs of building new housing.

- Problems of losing young people to costs & changing preferences.
- Pressure of high tax rates on affordability of existing units, and disincentivizing new subsidized housing.

Fordham (12 attended: neighborhood groups, churches, universities, residents)

- Need more service to help improve credit and help with saving for down payment to allow people to move to new apartments or purchase housing
- Change the image of affordable housing- no longer 'the projects'

Brentwood (15 attended in conjunction with Make the Road, a community services organization)

- Documentation & credit are huge issues. Not having documentation means you can't establish credit or get a driver's license, which prevents employment and housing options
- Transportation problems include lack of sidewalks, inability to purchase a car, poor bus service, dependence on high-cost taxis.

Brooklyn (12 attended: affiliated with East New York, FTA, and Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce)

- Gentrification- kids not being able to live near parents, erosion of community
- Quality of life issues- long, dirty transit rides

Norwalk (11 attended, representing transit riders, social services staff, neighborhood groups)

- Supporting Services- transportation and day care- are barriers to employment. Develop database for these services to help residents access them.
- Deterioration of existing housing results in fires and evictions due to housing code violations. Buildings are rebuilt with fewer units. Programs to support energy efficiency investments, for example, are targeted to ownership and not rental units.

New Haven (2 non-consortium attendees: social service provider and CT DECD official. Also municipal staff)

- Gentrification also happens to small businesses, eventually they leave and local retail no longer provides what remaining low-income households need.
- Opportunities for combining historic tax credit and low income housing credits for mill conversions
- Reduce cost to housing; get local support for higher densities.
- Review environmental restrictions in urban areas- are brownfields cleanup requirements worth preventing redevelopment in sustainable communities?

Fair Housing Equity Assessment

Affordable Housing Development and Zoning

- The City of Yonkers does not have inclusionary zoning ordinance.
- Sewers are important to affordable housing development in low density areas and northern Westchester; decentralized septic systems are part of the answer, but it's a new concept and approval process is lethargic with both NYC DEP and Westchester Health Dept.
- A degree of segregation still exists with how housing gets developed
 - Patches of market rate housing has been developing in poor and low income areas valuable. The land is very valuable in these neighborhoods.
- The bigger issues are practices of exclusionary zoning.
 - Environmental restrictions such as steep slope/water are just an excuse to keep out development with something stronger than zoning restrictions.
- Affordable housing isn't being built in Yonkers due to the complications of the HUD settlement issues. There's institutional nervousness. The settlement excluded SW Yonkers.
- In Croton, zoning has not been a tool used to promote affordable housing or any kind of development that would add value to transit.
 - A number of non-profit foundations and organizations are willing to fund development of affordable housing, but Croton simply does not want it.
 - Fear of overcrowded schools and destabilizing property values.
- Some residential developments are within walking distance of the nearest transit stops.
 - A new ordinance allows for mixed use after the lawsuit, but there are no provisions or mandates for affordable housing. (Greenburg is an example)
- Changing the current zoning ordinance is important to introducing TOD.
 - NIMBY attitudes against density.
 - Greenberg developed a 28 family, low-income complex in the midst of community opposition. The project faced 6 years of community opposition
- The county has no interest in overcoming home rule.
- SEQRA is enforced selectively by different communities
- Should affordable housing funding go to poorer cities like Yonkers or exclusionary, affluent communities?
 - Westchester settlement made investment harder in urban areas
 - But you need to take the desire of consumers into account. Survey of homeless found they wanted to move to affluent areas to escape crime, have good schools and find jobs, in that order
- It's all about zoning and getting communities to do it. Berenson decision gives developers the means to challenge but the process takes so long that few pursue it. Counties or municipalities could speed things up by purchasing the land and sue themselves ("But that's like suing your daughter!")

- There are too many municipalities and school districts; School district need to consolidation.

Housing Discrimination

- There is considerable evidence of discrimination; testing (in Yonkers?) showed 40-50% discriminated against

Parking & Transportation

- Parking is expensive to provide. More studies need to be done to understand the demand for parking in the corridor.
 - Parking by income – Parking requirements should be based on income
- There is a bi-furcation of transportation modes—Metro-North and buses
- Transportation is part of the problem; it can take as long to get to the parkway from downtown Mt. Vernon as it does to get to White Plains.
- Parking requirements need to be greatly reduced in robust transit corridors

Competitiveness Funding for Affordable Housing

- Banks are usually not the problem. They are enablers in lending to affordable housing development.
 - Banks get double points when they buy tax credits and then get CRA credits with no tax liability (not a fair use of system).
 - The Community Reinvestment Act process acts as an incentive for banks to continue lending to Affordable housing development because it aids them in retaining their charters.
- Give incentives to developers to ensure quality design in affordable housing. The county has small pockets of natural assets (i.e. TOD downtowns) and requires mixed income there even if the larger neighborhood may already be low-income.
- Municipalities are competing for resources to build affordable housing. This is a very healthy practice.
 - New Jersey Transit Village concept can be loosely taken as an example. The Nassau “Readiness and Desire” can be another example of healthy competition.

Jobs and Businesses

- Need more industrial jobs. There is no light industry left in Mt. Vernon
- Don’t de-concentrate jobs; you need job concentrations, such as there are along I-287 to build the economy.
- Need to understand the basis for business location decisions and how these affect Yonkers and southern Westchester.

Office Parks

- There are so many office parks in the area.
 - Office parks are not the best places to locate apartments. They are so far from each other and there aren’t any direct transit links to connect them.

- Office parks are ratables. It's hard to find new space for ratables. Office parks should continue to have a commercial aspect.
- Converting office parks to include housing would encourage auto-dependent patterns.

Planning Enhancement

Cross Acceptance

- Examples of legislation that has a cross acceptance process.
 - None in NY and CT, but New Jersey has a cross acceptance model, but it is really weak.
- Cross acceptance and time are big issues because communities conflict on decisions.
- Local waterfront revitalization plans have to be reviewed by various levels. They are too inflexible, keep a community from doing anything different.

Promoting the right planning issues

- Need to attach a dollar value to a plan leading into implementation.
- Review State law at what a comprehensive plan needs to have.
 - Should time be spent to make transportation and housing a requirement or not?
- Well-meaning planning tools can turn into "box-checking" that doesn't really mean anything.
- Time should be spent to learn needs at the regional level.

Planning Coordination and Open Communication

- Planning has been reactive to transportation catastrophe, major development. This process is an opportunity to be proactive.
- Raises what resources do local and state have to engage in regional planning
- Cookie cutter regional planning report means absolutely nothing.
 - How can cities and municipalities save if there plan are integrated? What's the dollar value on planning? How do we hang the carrot?
- We need to communicate that TOD has value. Make the value proposition of TOD common knowledge.
- It's difficult as a local to stay on top of the regional activities.
- Plans become meaningless forms after a couple of years.
- Other participants- like idea of having agencies coordinating.
- What resources do local municipalities have to participate in existing planning, much less cross-acceptance?

Fair Housing Equity Assessment

Affordability & Credit

- The rent is too high for some people in the community especially single mother with low income.
 - Housing costs and taxes are a deterrent to affording a home.
- Getting qualified people to apply for home ownership is challenging.
 - Poor credit, no credit, or criminal record.
- No income stability or opportunity translates into affordability tension.
- Hempstead already has affordable housing, but can't bring in enough people to live locally and support the tax base.
- Need to alter paradigm of thinking to mixed wages instead of mixed income.
 - Area median wage
- Every community should do their fair share to contribute to affordable housing
- It's very hard to compete with section 8 voucher holders. Landlords Section 8 represents very steady income.
- The definition of affordability is a problem. What is considered affordable housing usually excludes low income?
- New apartments are not only expensive, but way too small.
- PILOTs are inequitable. Developers get favorable treatment and other tax payers pay the burden
- The county's Department of Social Services can take too long to process paper work. Oftentimes, department's efforts lead to unfavorable options such as shelters and hotels.
- Use different income tiers to get a range of rents, including for very low income
- Rents should be based on income and ability to pay.
- People who can afford housing in Hempstead don't send their kid locally

Supply and Diversity of Affordable Housing

- There is a lack of options in obtainable and desirable neighborhoods. There isn't enough 'bridge' housing, and not enough rentals (too many housing types are being built to suit the 55+ taste. There isn't enough being built for young professionals)
 - More 'bridge housing' should be in Hempstead. Bridge housing is a residential alternative that contains social services that allow individuals to make the transition into independent living.
- Lack of inclusionary affordable housing
 - Inclusionary housing on the island should be based on New York City's 80/20 model.
- Legalize accessory dwelling units.
- Need more mixed-income housing projects in Hempstead and similar places.
- HUD should consider enforcement affordable housing through penalties to grantees of public funds.

- Landlords prefer to evict low income tenants so they can get higher rents.
- Need more of all types of housing, but especially two-bedrooms and larger suitable for families.
- Community needs to be part of the process to determine what is considered affordable and what is negotiated in CBAs.

Opposition & Discrimination

- There is a lot of community opposition to rental housing and sometimes school age children.
- Affordable housing is concentrated in certain areas of town. Concentrated affordable housing drives down property values.
 - Some communities with affordable housing are over populated with minorities through steering practices.
 - The village of Island Park and their denial of affordable housing development is one example.
- The way 'affordable housing' is defined can lead to stigmatization.
- Look into why some housing applications get turned down – racism, discrimination
- Addressing voter backlash
- Discrimination is the tip of the iceberg, some people don't know if they are being discriminated against.
- Racial subprime lending
- Everyone already knows where people of color aren't welcome—e.g., Garden City and “all the Levittowns” on Long Island—so you don't go there.
- There is both institutionalized racism (gave example of experiencing it in college) and an economic issue that rents are out of reach
- How does HUD allow Nassau County to put all the subsidized housing in Hempstead?
- They don't have standard NIMBYism in Hempstead because the village wants development
- Give everyone access to free legal services

Education and Advocacy on Affordable Housing Issues

- Develop more advocacy efforts at the at town and village boards
 - Vision long Island does an excellent job at grassroots advocacy.

Disconnect with Communication

- Learning of housing opportunities happens by word of mouth.
- There's a held belief that 'renters are not vested in the community'
- Education efforts should be the responsibility of local fair housing organizations
 - i.e. Long Island Housing Partnership
- People are getting pushed out because they don't know the information or don't know where to get it.
 - The delivery of housing information is a barrier.
- Renaissance project has a community benefits agreement that was negotiated without community input.
- There is a disconnect at the federal level and what is happening on the ground

Infrastructure

- Impact on infrastructure should be considered
 - Downtowns should stay walkable

- Decrease size; huge structures are a deterrent and eyesore
- Put a cap on rents
- There should be more meetings for community input, and more organizing by residents

Planning Coordination

Developing Leverage

- People who oppose come with strength
- Need outreach to supporters/advocates – the 90% need their voices captured too
- More people need to be at the table for these kinds of public meetings.
- Community social media and engagement can be used as a means of public engagement.
- Grassroots organizing is important planning
- Not enough people are talking to each other. SCI is the first attempt
- Need to support of trained facility organizers that work in the community
- Political alignment helps to fund community facilitator, which can act as intermediaries between the public and the ones making decisions on where funds are spent.
 - Case and point would be Wyandanch
- Sometime friction helps to reach a solution

Project execution

- Make changes more timely – why do projects take so long?
- (from the developer side) – outreach to community: Avalon offered to host event/activity to showcase/highlight successes

Tax relief

- Township should help to fund own projects.
 - How owners would need a plan to help with tax relief
 - There are too many taxes – there should be some form of consolidated tax relief

Education and awareness

- Tear down barriers and misconceptions
- Advertising for workshops, meetings
- Organize candidates to serve on boards, committees
- Need to support development in areas where infrastructure can support development

Cross Acceptance:

- In theory sounds good. Reality is turf warfare, inertia
- Mandate and enforce. Accountability and punishment are effective (outside the cost of doing business)
- Mandate affordability a la Massachusetts – 40B
- Threshold in communities: carrot and stick
- Discrimination is rampant in all aspects of real estate.

Fair Housing Equity Assessment

Availability & Quality

- There are a lot of people who need apartments, but there are enough in the Bronx
- The current multifamily buildings are distressed.
 - Many people don't make enough to live in one of the newer affordable housing units.
 - Very low income individuals with no access to Section 8 have limited choices.
- Challenging for landlords to keep housing in good shape without subsidies.
- There are no programs or incentives for private landlords to improve substandard housing in the Bronx.
- Affordable housing programs need to be linked with the private sector.
 - Can't ignore role of private sector
- We need more emphasis on, and funding for, home ownership to help stabilize and improve neighborhoods.
- Harlem church developing affordable housing on 8th Ave. The Harlem Church cited the need for more affordable rentals to stabilize gentrifying neighborhoods

Credit & Affordability

- Most of the current affordable housing programs are geared toward poor, low income individuals, and it is still a constraint.
 - This needs to be broadened to middle income individuals.
- There is a development funding culture, with mutually reinforcing behavior from HPD and developers that reinforces emphasis on low-income housing.
- More moderate and middle-income housing as well as supportive and low-income housing, esp. in transitioning or gentrifying neighborhoods like Soundview and Parkchester.
- Putting money together to finance a move is very difficult. The complications multiply for people with poor credit.
- Services are needed around credit and debt so people can have access to housing.
- Some residents in the Bronx cannot buy homes because they don't get approved by banks.
- There is no structure or funding to get people ready to buy a house.
- Cost of construction is too high
 - Convert apartments to condo; it may keep cost down
 - How can existing housing programs be tailored to fit people in the Bronx
- There is a need to re-visit the Tenant Interim Lease Apartment Purchase Program
- Daycare is essential to the conversation. The lack of available daycare services is a consideration especially for single mothers.
- Maintaining the value of the privately-owned houses is another important consideration.
- A good mix of affordable housing is important to a community.
 - HPD policies are getting better with regard to mixing housing types.
- Faith-based and non-profit developers could use an ombudsman to get help with funding, approvals and regulations of city and other agencies.

Information & Communication

- There is not enough information on what type of offerings are available for housing in community.
- Middle income people don't benefit often from Affordable housing funding.
- There should be standards for every agency to address when a major transportation or development project is introduced.

Housing Models

- Supportive housing is driving the market; it is more lucrative to the developer. Webster Avenue - becoming a supportive housing corridor. The assumption in supportive housing is that the residents will never have private mobility.
- There is a potential for market rate development in the Bronx, but supportive housing blunts that potential.
- Information between modes of transportation, and information at job centers is an issue more locations.

Planning Enhancements

Coordination

- SBS corridors brought a lot of groups together. The process led to neighborhood level planning and coordination.
- Faith-based organizations need a deeper involvement with affordable housing development.
- Consider the concept of developing a clearinghouse of information on local, state and regional initiatives in planning.

Convening

- Business improvement districts Community boards, Community Based Organization are the types of organizations that would help to convene regional planning meetings.
- Where should outreach be held?
 - Parks , gateway center, Fordham plaza
 - Green markets, soup kitchens, Gym, library
- Sometimes community boards do not represent the voice of residents.
- Always consider integrating technology into the public outreach process.

Information Sharing

- Nobody had a broad picture. People talk about what it impacts at their local and intimate level.
- Context framing is important
- Communities know what they want. There are ways to build on what exist, but more information is needed.
- Also, the sub population (elderly adults and youth) need to have their say in the process and need information to make educated decisions.
- Support for educating groups to know more of these plans

Jobs

- Need stronger connections to more economic activity
- Great TOD infrastructure, but poor accessibility. The Hudson River Towers are an example.

Fair Housing

Affordability & Availability

- Few apartments in White Plains or Westchester for people in my circumstances—renting a room using Section 8.
- “Affordability” not defined. Twenty-two percent of housing in White Plains are subsidized. Most of them are designed for workforce housing, and not low income.
- We’re reaching a tipping point where young people are not buying homes, both due to costs and changing preferences.
- Westchester is full of little communities who need young people in housing that they can afford
- There are a lot of illegal sublets in small river towns.
- Both housing and transportation costs are barriers.
- Sec. 8 keeps changing its criteria and people can keep their apartments in perpetuity, even if they no longer need them.
- More non-profits need to provide more section 8 housing.

Fair Adequate Housing Barriers

- The following are all associated with high cost: taxes; construction; cost of land; approvals; land use practices.
- Renters and buyers both lack affordable options, and minimum wage earners can’t afford housing
- Disconnect – migration patterns, foreclosures
- Federal incentive grants for regional planning
- From tax perspective, subsidized housing increases cost for homeowners
- Taxation and property inequities
- Constraints of Westchester settlement

Biases

- Generational and cultural biases
- Bias vs. kids in school system
- Impacts construction limits on # of bedrooms to limit # of kids
- Balkanization of school districts, zoning – lack of uniformity, makes larger scale planning difficult
- Breaking NIMBY barriers – extension of infrastructure that making housing possible.

Collaboration

- Bring business orgs and young professionals to the table

Awareness and Communication

- Perception of unavailability
 - Tools of homeownership lacking
 - Education of opportunities needed
- Educating is important for communities and for addressing opposition.

- Identify success stories and build on them.
- How might the information be used to assist or this process?
- There is a distrust of the federal government in Westchester (especially since HUD settlement) which undercuts ability to provide incentives and build coalitions.
- Education is key: Need to create a different image of building and development to show how multi-family and subsidized housing can fit with community (Everyone now thinks of big public housing projects)

Zoning and Regulations

- Schools, property values
- Access to transportation
- Infrastructure funding – sewers, etc. - should examine different options such as a decentralized sewer system. Reduce NYC influence over water/sewer systems
- Cost and impact of taxes
- Advocate for home rule
- Consistency of accessory apartment regulations
- Consider study of centralization (schools, police, etc.)
- Need to study how many units of affordable housing need to be built
- How can transportation keep up with the needs?

Jobs

- Need investment in and by future generations
- Jobs and economic opportunity are key
 - Reduce taxes
- Loss of young people is an issue that can resonate in Westchester
- Jobs are going to urban areas
- Need incentives for villages and towns to provide greater density and more affordable units

Housing Infrastructure needs

- Watershed restricts development as do sewer infrastructure. Proximity to centers needed.
- Westchester County is not getting NY Rising dollars from HUD.
 - How could any community progress in this situation?
 - Segregation is a strong word.
 - Affordable housing is drawn to infrastructure.
- Infrastructure can be resisted in communities.
- Focus in Westchester is up-county; infrastructure down- county.
- Preserving stock of affordable housing – takes resources.
- Changing conditions disrupt plans.
- Educating is important for communities and for addressing opposition.
- Affordable housing is a function of Infrastructure, Political will, Zoning barriers and Enforcement.

Planning Enhancements

- There is a need for robust environment of or governance, political, economic will; desire to improve through infrastructure.
- Focus attention on the issue.

- Translate measurement into consensus.
- Taxes are specific concern.
- Taxes in the area are really high.
 - Tax credit for affordable housing programs adds to more taxes on people
- Cross-acceptance is a cultural process that requires a willingness to let go of total control

Engagement

- Our community is suffering from a lack of funding and involvement.
 - Urban design programs are being defunded every year.
 - Young people are not a part of the regional planning process.
 - School loans and job searching are crippling their energy to participate.
- We are missing a robust environment of emerging professionals & youth energy.
- Federal incentive grants to “play well together”
- Cross acceptance is a cultural change & needs a cultural context
 - Need information to understand.
 - It takes a lot of patience, and it needs to get to the level of the “streets”
 - There needs to be financial incentives associated
- Information systems can best be described as a tower of babel. There are too many different formats of analytical information out there, but no mean of understanding them.
- Need to show economic analysis impact for regional actions
 - Attaching a dollar value to every recommendation can make a compelling case for decision makers to move forward on an action. Need to measure the “cost of quality” as well. (i.e., how much actions will drive up tax rates)
- Taxes are a problem. Everyone wants their own school district, but that drives up costs and taxes.
- Northern county is a “different world” without sewers and transportation
- Acknowledge the positives in Westchester: It has more jobs, infrastructure and planning than other parts of the Hudson Valley.

Fair Housing Equity Assessment

Housing & Home Ownership

- Saving money for a down payment on a home mortgage is very difficult in this community.
 - Even if money is not a problem, the lack of credit becomes an issue. Without credit, many residents of the Latino community cannot own a new home.
 - Establishing credit is difficult, and it limits a resident's ability to live anywhere in the community.
- Illegal immigration status is the number one barrier that prevents residents in the Brentwood community from establishing credit.
- Foreclosure is rampant. High foreclosure rates lower the amount of rentable places.
 - Foreclosure also creates derelict neighborhoods, and contributes to youth issues
 - Foreclosure occurs often in Mastic and Shirley.
- People in this community need assistance to keep their homes. The local authorities and banks should get involved to prevent foreclosure.
- It's culture to allow close family and friends to live under one roof. It is also economical when everyone supports the mortgage payment by contributing rent.
 - Some towns categorize this multifamily dwelling, which they do not allow.
- Local codes should allow for homeowners to build accessory units up to code.
 - Most common would be basement apartments.
- People on disability income still do not make enough to pay rent or pay for a mortgage.
 - Income and affordability is a big issue for people with disabilities in the community
- There are not many handicap or accessory houses on the island.
- It is very challenging to find housing in the Brentwood area.
 - The new housing development close by is not making the affordable situation any better. It is not affordable for Latinos in the local community.
- There are patterns of code enforcement targeting the Latino community.
 - It's a complaint-driven process, which is used to make raids that target Latino households legitimate.
 - The complaints are about overcrowding (fire hazard) and noise, which violates the local code. Once the complaints are called in, local authorities visit the alleged source and issue violations.
 - Although it's a legitimate complaint, the scheme reeks of prejudice against Latinos.
 - There was a class action lawsuit brought by members of the Workplace Project (Valdez et al v Town of Brookhaven) against the Town of Brookhaven was settled in early 2011.
 - There exists a need to re-engineering housing corridor with codes.

Disconnect with Brentwood

- The local municipality does not take the larger Latino community into account. Only residents with citizenship papers receive attention.
 - However, the community would appreciate every opportunity to collaborate and share their ideas.
- In the Brentwood community, there is a large group of residents that do not have papers and are void of a civic voice.
- Immigrants come for a better life, but then services are being withdrawn
 - There is no budget to support the recreational needs of our children.
 - A number of places are closing in the community (recreational spaces)
 - The most basic services in the community are closed.
 - The youth are affected the most.

Transportation & Connectivity

- There's a need for more transportation services to cover industrial areas.
 - If the L.I bus budget gets expanded, it should include areas where people work.
 - Industrial areas like Hauppauge, Deer Park & Bohemia need better bus connections.
- Some neighborhoods have no sidewalks
 - Sidewalks are needed to form a complete network
- Pedestrian scale lighting is needed on Suffolk Avenue on the walk from the train station
- Attention needs to be directed to the bus service, because there is not enough to support current needs.
- Some residents can't have or hold on to a job because they don't have a car.
 - They don't have a car because they don't have a license.
 - They can't get a license because they do not have their citizenship papers.
 - Use of a car is expensive.
- Lack of mobility limits job opportunities.
- Train service frequency can be an issue also.
- Some bus stops need shelters. Shelters would help with irregular bus schedules and harsh winter weather conditions.
 - Indirect routing, slow travel speed.
- Car sharing is practiced, but it is nothing anyone can depend on.
- LIRR: parking is getting crowded
 - It may be helpful to build more parking garages
- The cost of energy and taxes are really high.
- Wages not sufficient to pay for transportation, especially when a taxi is needed due to lack of bus service.

Planning Enhancement

- No opportunity to be a part of the planning process; not at the table.
 - Most residents in the community don't know how the town of Islip receives public funding from the United States Government.
- Impossible to come across publicly funded projects or even know how to apply to grants because of citizenship status.
- Make the Road is an important resource for the local Latino community in Brentwood. They represent the voices of undocumented residents.

Fair Housing Equity Assessment

Fair Housing

Affordability & Availability

- Although a lot of housing gets built, not many of them are affordable.
 - Imagine paying \$600,000 in neighborhoods like Downtown Brooklyn, Bed Stuyvesant, and Park Slope. The majority of residents cannot afford some of the newer condominiums.
 - People are not making enough for a down payment.
 - Resident who receive Social Security benefits are really worst off because they are on a fixed salary.
- It's difficult to open new businesses, permitting is onerous, incentives are for larger business rather than small mom & pop stores
 - Please, don't forget small businesses.
 - Make a concerted effort not to drive out small businesses.
- The city needs to work harder to accommodate different salaries.
 - There are concerns of the availability of social security down the line... when it runs out.
- Veterans are horribly neglected
 - Stipends do not change to compete with cost of living. The cost of living cannot be covered by veteran stipend.
 - Sometimes, it takes a year to wait for veteran benefits to be processed.
- How to accommodate extra residents in Queens? Up zone all 2-3 story buildings around train station.

Gentrification and pushing out existing communities

- Aggressive promotion of billionaires and tourism.
 - At risk of marginalization of existing, poor communities, frisking, etc.
- Local residents feel the transiency their communities.
 - New residents of the neighborhood do not go to community meetings or block parties.
- Residents fear that they will not be able to live in the same community they were raised.
 - Children of resident cannot afford housing in Brooklyn
 - What percent of people wouldn't be able to buy their own homes in today's market?
- Everyone wants to develop the Brooklyn waterfront.
- The Black population is leaving because they're being out-gentrified from other neighborhoods. Minorities are relocating because they're being priced out.
- Community gardens are important. They become more essential when we consider the importance of fresh and affordable foods. Although empty lots are the perfect opportunity for

infill development, community gardens need to be protected and not converted to development sites.

- Improvement to East NY is great, but it will gentrify and push people out... what rent stabilization is there? How will any projects guard against gentrification?

Access to Amenities

- Fresh and affordable food geography: some communities don't have access to fresh food.
- The problem is there aren't any bad neighborhoods anymore. Everyone wants to stay in the city. No one wants to move out.
 - Housing projects are on very attractive parcels of land.
- Jamaica Bay Greenway: This project is going to draw a million people to the outer borough. Are they thinking about transportation capacity?
- The time spent on the subway negatively impacts health. Two hours on the train affects choices about cooking, spending time with kids.
- Our transit system doesn't compare with international systems (in terms of cleanliness, rats, mice, etc. smell).
- Also ways to improve opportunity- can both be improving assets within low-income neighborhoods, or improving connections to job centers.

Misconceptions of Project Developments and Poor People

- We're avoiding the conversation on homeless shelters. ENY is inundated with homeless shelters.
 - The men and women in these shelters could be put to use to keep New York cleaner
There's got to be a way to use their labor to support infrastructure
 - Men Shelters in New York has an associated stigma.
- How do we correct the idea of the "projects" before we're being asked to build more of them?- people hear up zoned for housing, and they assume it's a projects housing development.

Planning Enhancements

Cross Acceptance

- Can give too much power to small communities over regional projects- be obstructionist. Or other agencies having too much say over local decisions.

Planning and Evaluation

- Every four years, the armed forces engage in a "re-forger" that brings together the different branches of the armed forces & engineers to reassess their "Common components."

Communication of information

- We need a better informational websites. The current ones are hard to navigate. The 311 hotline made a drastic difference.
- Block associations, community boards are the best means of outreach.
- I see flyers for meetings that I can't go to, can't get any information. Different community boards have different website adequacies.

- No. maybe 1 step is information clearinghouse that makes info available so people can figure it out
 - Show a short film that shows how it's been done well elsewhere. (Melrose Commons in the Bronx is a good example to use as example of local project).
- Regional collaboration leads to better outcomes at the community level

NORWALK – NORWALK CITY HALL, DECEMBER 2, 2013

Affordability

- Need to discuss affordability in terms of other personal expenses.
- There is no single solution to affordable housing; requires a portfolio approach.

Housing and Zoning

- Illegal units and violations of housing codes.
 - Results in evictions
 - Absentee landlords also contribute to evictions, since they do not respond to violations in a timely fashion.
- Consider how housing and land prevent access to services and good schools.
- Correlation of housing land use, and services – is it geographic?
- Loss of housing stock due to fires
 - The rebuilt stock often has fewer units, and is more expensive.
 - Insurance constraints impact the number of units rebuilt.
- Rental vs. Ownership
 - Programs affordability apply more to ownership situations
 - Renters can't really benefit from these programs
 - Applies to energy efficiency programs also

Opportunity Mapping

- Why isn't Stamford showing on the education recap map?
 - Poverty levels in Stamford
 - Concentrations in Stamford

Access to Information

- Identify success stories; examples or case studies of housing techniques and educational opportunities.
- Information clearinghouses on a regional scale
- CT: "211" system done through the United Way

Access to Transit and Other Amenities

- Highest singular barrier to employment is transportation; second highest is day care
 - A tool to find local daycares would be very helpful for residents with children.
- Senior housing: Need housing just for people with disabilities
- Housing, transit and access-to-jobs a key component.
- Grandparents raising grandchildren: Some publically funded homes restrict seniors from being the guardians of children.

Planning Enhancement

Cross Acceptance

- Involve the business sector in cross acceptance.
 - It will create an element of competition
 - Solar connectors: only homeowners see value and can take advantage of energy efficient programs.

- There is no need to reinvent the wheel.
 - There are plenty of success stories of collaborative governance; we just need to look for them.

Coordination

- As we work to simplify complexities, we need to develop credibility in our process among others in the region. There is no other way to expect people to consider our recommendations?
- Find a hook to make regional issues affect people. Usually money is a good hook. Placing a dollar value on a regional planning initiative makes a convincing case.
- Start smaller and grow coordination
- Look at TOD success stories, and replicate the ones that are successful for this region.
- Feedback on how input is actually used
- Private sector in the process reduces adversarial aspects
 - They are very important to the process, but they need a space to freely express opinions.
- Convening and facilitating discussions as a step toward planning enhancement

Fair Housing Equity Assessment

Affordability

- The cost to build affordable housing should be added to the list of barriers.
- Housing program regulations that seem contradictory to the mission of preserving affordability:
 - In Washington Heights, the major employment (medical) institutions are buying rent stabilized buildings, but are offering the apartments to their employees at higher percentages.
 - This is a common trend shared with Washington Heights and New Haven where local institutions are pushing into communities.
- Commercial businesses need some help to stay in place. Rent needs to be affordable for some local businesses so they can provide services at lower cost so residents.
- There is some merit to keeping buildings in “as is” condition or shy of a state of disrepair.
 - Renovating buildings create a new rent demand, which could drive of gentrification.

Mixed use

- The recommendations should be geared towards promoting and preserving income diversity.
- Redirect mixed income housing tax credits for mill conversions. After conversions, they have the potential to support mixed use, workforce housing.
 - There may not be a need to build new homes in New Haven. The best strategy could be to repurpose them.
 - Create vibrant stable mixed income/use neighborhoods.

Access to Information

- Prescribe recommendations on how technology can be used to enhance flow of information to community residents.
- Most residents don't know of the amount of information t out there related to affordable housing.
- Community residents should, but know how public planning dollars reach local communities.
- The 311 hotline works well, but it can be deconstructive if callers don't know how to ask the right information.
- Use public resources to support mixed use vibrancy in downtown areas.
- Address how long it's taken to turn around state policy on housing planning.
 - When businesses pay higher rents, local residents pay a higher price for amenities.
- The process for building new affordable homes, tearing down old structures, property cost, brownfield redevelopment, utility vaults etc. all contribute to housing unaffordability.
- We need some form of urban renewal that is benign.

- More flexibility on urban soils that can lead to development. The EPA should have pre-investigated sites that are okay to receive development.
- Lack of motivation for developers is to build substandard housing on HUDs back - not sure what this point means.

Planning Enhancement

Fragmented Planning & inefficiencies

- Lego piece theory of economic development
 - Will aligning all of the different plans help advance our region's future?
- Sustainability should be driven by a vision and strategy.
- Some projects will be in a funding pipeline for up to 15 years. When the time and money arrives, the project becomes purposeless or obsolete. This is one process how money is wasted.
- Inability to assemble resources is one barrier in the way of just planning.
- Address capacity on rail systems for Amtrak.

Scaling Down to the Local Level

- If there is no strategy for vision at the local level, it's hard to do all coordinated planning.
- Community level benefit – how do we get community members to engage in the HUD process for their own purpose?
- Represent local level issues.
- Not enough “on the ground” project based predevelopments to trigger other kinds of development
 - Not enough specific plans for sites
- What can't we just do community planning without the planning process?