

Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice

Priorities Platform

The Gowanus neighborhood is slated for significant land use actions and public investment by the City of New York that will change our community and impact surrounding neighborhoods for decades to come. These changes have the potential to address long standing challenges and problems in our neighborhood or to significantly increase the displacement of long-term residents and businesses and deepen existing inequality.

This platform represents a concerted effort by local residents and stakeholders to elevate social and economic justice as the primary framework under which any rezoning, land use changes and/or public investments occur in Gowanus.

We affirm and demand that the City must include the people most deeply impacted by these changes in decision making -- not merely “listen” to our concerns. In order to prevent the kind of damage that so often is brought upon communities that are rezoned including the negative impacts of the 2003 and 2007 North and South Park Slope rezonings which we are still dealing with today, the City must make concrete policy, on-going funding and infrastructure commitments that will prevent displacement and address structural inequality in Gowanus and the surrounding neighborhoods that are impacted.

The Coalition pledges unity in upholding this platform and affirms and demands that the following principles form the baseline under which any rezoning or public investment should occur.

I. ADVANCE RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

- 1. Ensure people of all racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds shape and benefit from the rezoning process** by working with existing networks of community-based organizations and addressing barriers to participation, including language access and child care needs. Ensure that our input is meaningfully incorporated into the City’s plan.
- 2. Address existing racial and economic segregation** within our communities and schools to ensure children of all races and economic status have the same educational opportunities.
- 3. Work with communities of color to develop policing strategies responsive to their needs**, including cultural competency of officers, no profiling or targeting of immigrants and residents of color, and safe conditions in public housing.
- 4. Guarantee investment in workforce development and training and local hiring** for the broad range of jobs created as a result of the rezoning, land use actions and public investments involving the City of New York in and around Gowanus.
- 5. Create opportunities for residents to start their own businesses** within the community.

II. CREATE REAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING and PROTECT TENANTS FROM DISPLACEMENT

- 1. Protect tenants from being priced out and pushed out** through anti-harassment and anti-displacement policies. Ensure that these policies are given sufficient resources to be effective in their implementation.
- 2. Invest in NYCHA** to address long-standing repair needs and hazardous conditions to ensure NYCHA residents benefit from the rezoning process as well.
- 3. Produce deeply affordable housing units** to meet the needs of the lowest-income people in our community.
- 4. Ensure that a significant share of housing produced by the rezoning is deeply affordable.**

III. PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- 1. Promote climate justice and social resiliency** in Gowanus by providing community preparedness and emergency planning, particularly for public housing residents who are in close proximity to the Gowanus Superfund site.
- 2. Invest in growing and upgrading existing green, open and park space. Ensure new green, open and park space is publically accessible and culturally relevant to all,** with the specific goal of improving health outcomes of community members most deeply impacted by environmental injustice.
- 3. Invest in sewer-shed and green infrastructure** to address the on-going challenges of Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) and urban heat island impacts that compromise the health and safety of local residents.

IV. UPLIFT THE CULTURE & COMMUNITY OF LONGTIME RESIDENTS

- 1. Support and amplify the arts and culture of existing residents of Gowanus** through conventional as well as unconventional artistic forms and cultural expressions. Our definition of art, artist, culture and cultural agent expands beyond the professionalization of these pursuits and includes people and practices that do not necessarily receive payment or formal recognition for their contributions to our community.
- 2. Protect institutions and spaces that are welcoming and culturally relevant** for public housing residents, people of color, longtime residents, recent immigrants, young people, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community, people with mental health issues and members of our community that are insufficiently housed or homeless. Our definition of such institutions are not limited to recognized or funded “art and cultural institutions” but can also include religious institutions, stores, restaurants, non-profit community-based organizations, athletic spaces and public spaces.
- 3. In public spaces in particular, preserve and create culturally relevant access and programming** that allows for full community utilization and collaboration with local artists, muralists and artistic personnel that reflect our community, its culture and vision, including at the Gowanus Canal Waterfront, public parks including Thomas Greene Park

and Double D Pool, local community gardens, and the currently closed Gowanus Houses Community Center.

4. **Celebrate, elevate, promote and preserve the cultural heritage of all of community residents.**

V. PROTECT LOCAL BUSINESSES WHERE WE SHOP AND WORK

1. **Retain and promote industry and manufacturing businesses** that employ residents and provide real living wages.
2. **Protect commercial establishments** that serve the needs of NYCHA residents and other low- and moderate-income residents in Gowanus, including affordable supermarkets, pharmacies and laundromats.
3. **Support workforce development and training and adult education programs** for local residents to be employed in living wage local jobs including industrial and manufacturing jobs.

###

For more information, please contact:

Sabine Aronowsky, South Brooklyn Accountable Development Coordinator, saronowsky@fifthave.org

Juliette Bravo, Tenant Organizer, jbravo@fifthave.org

Michael Higgins, FUREE Community Organizer, michael@furee.org

Coalition Groups (List in Formation)

Fifth Avenue Committee (FAC), Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE), Gowanus Houses Resident Association, Gowanus Houses Arts Collective, Wyckoff Gardens Resident Association, Wyckoff Gardens Resident Watch, Warren Street Houses Residents Association, RAICES Spanish Speaking Elderly Council, VOCAL NY, Christian Help in Park Slope (CHiPS), St Lydia's Church, TRELLIS, Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary & St. Stephen Roman Catholic Church, Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC), Gowanus Alliance, Gowanus Canal Conservancy (GCC), South Brooklyn Local Development Corporation (SBLDC), Forth on Fourth (FOFA) a Committee of the Park Slope Civic Council