
New York for Sale

Community Planning Confronts Global Real
Estate

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Preface

This book comes out of two decades of my own involvement in neighborhood-based planning in New York City as a professional planner both inside and outside government. I worked with the Red Hook and UNITY (UNderstanding, Imagining and Transforming the Yards) plans in Brooklyn, among many others, and with the Organization of Waterfront Neighborhoods. For six years, I chaired the Pratt Institute Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment and worked with many communities on planning issues. I am a member of the Steering Committee of Planners Network, an organization of progressive urban planners and activists since 1975, and coedit *Progressive Planning Magazine*. I am also a founding member of the New York City Campaign and Task Force on Community-based Planning and write the monthly Land Use column for *Gotham Gazette* (<<http://www.gothamgazette.com>>). This book is thus a product of engagement in practice, and I wrote it primarily to help inform the practice of community planning. I have tried to be faithful to the truth and the facts I have uncovered but make no claims of total objectivity. I remain an unabashed advocate of community-based planning as an instrument for achieving greater social justice. I do not glorify local community planning and make a clear distinction between the inclusionary, democratic practices linked to global struggles for social equality and the exclusionary, elite practices that serve exclusionary local property interests.

This book is written for community planners, both the experts who have no formal professional training but learned by doing and the professionals and students everywhere who do and study community planning. Its purpose is to develop the theory and practice of community planning, community organizing, and long-range political strategies that improve the quality of life and eliminate inequities in urban neighborhoods. I have put references in an end-of-book notes section and a

selected bibliography to help make the narrative more accessible to those who are outside academic communities. While this is clearly an insider's view of New York, I expect that it will be meaningful to planners and organizers in other cities around the world, especially those with powerful finance and real estate sectors. New Yorkers may be familiar with the stories told here, but I do not think anyone has put them together before and interpreted them in the way I have. And few have made the connections I have made between urban social movements, global real estate and urban planning.

Several escapes from New York during the more than five years it took to complete this work helped achieve some detachment, including five months at the Cornell program in Rome, two months as a Fulbright senior specialist, and two weeks at the Mesa Refuge in Point Reyes, California.

Three friends who recently passed away—Linda Davidoff, Ed Rogowsky, and Walter Thabit—were inspirations and are sorely missed. Many thanks to Peter Marcuse, James DeFillipis, Eva Hanhardt, and Tom Gogan for comments on early drafts. Eddie Bautista, Eva Hanhardt, and Ron Shiffman deserve special mention for their contributions to the cause of democratic community-based planning and environmental justice in New York City. I have learned a great deal from them. Caterina Timpanaro's work on community planning in Italy has been insightful, and I thank her for her work on researching the illustrations for this book. Laura Saija's expertise in graphics is responsible for the cover design and finishing of all the illustrations. Thanks to Andrew Maroko for compiling two maps. The many grassroots community activists I have interacted with, too numerous to mention, are the real experts who have taught us all. I also appreciate the collaboration and support I have received from Eve Baron, Ethan Cohen, Mario Coyula, Nadia Crisafuli, Dana Driskell, Ann Forsyth, Frances Goldin, Filippo Gravagno, Rosalind Greenstein, Jill Hamberg, Chester Hartman, Michael Heiman, Marie Kennedy, Brian Ketcham, Carolyn Konheim, Norman Krumholz, Jacqueline Leavitt, Norma Rantisi, Ken Reardon, Marci Reaven, Alejandro Rofman, Bruce Rosen, Arturo Sánchez, Mitch Silver, Beverly Moss Spatt, Lorenzo Venturini, and Julie Sze. I have learned from the work of my Hunter College colleagues Nick Freudenberg, Jill Gross, Lynn McCormick, Terry Mizrahi, Jan Poppendeick, Laxmi Ramasubramanian, Sigmund Shipp, and Susan Turner-Meiklejohn. Cecilia Jagu helped with research on Cooper Square. The Gotham Center Seminar in 2004, which was organized by Mike Wallace, helped me develop the early chapters, and

the final chapters were drafted in the supportive environment of the Mesa Refuge in California. A grant from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy assisted with research on Cooper Square. City Council member Leticia James and State Assembly member Valmanette Montgomery provided valuable leadership and funding for work on the Atlantic Yards environmental assessment through the Council of Brooklyn Neighborhoods to the Hunter College Center for Community Planning and Development.