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Dear Neighbors,

The level of **community engagement** on the Upper West Side is truly impressive. People are passionate about their parks, homes, and schools, and they want an opportunity to be heard. While we might not always agree with each other, the comments are thoughtful, and the discussions are robust. My goal is to continue to engage with residents. Feel free to reach out to me by email or call my office, and I look forward to seeing you at the next community forum!

District News



Residents give ideas for how to spend \$1 million at a neighborhood assembly for Participatory Budgeting (October 1, 2015)

Participatory Budgeting is in full swing and now is the time to get involved. As your Council Member, I have taken \$1 million of the New York City budget and turned it over to you. It's up to you and your suggestions, along with those of your neighbors, to determine which projects will be funded. What would you build or fix to make the Upper West Side a better place? The PB process is an extraordinary opportunity to directly

impact the future of our neighborhood and to get to know your neighbors a little better along the way. I hope you can join us at one of our Neighborhood Assemblies over the next couple of weeks, including this Wednesday, October 14, from 4-6 p.m. at Riverside New York Public Library. All of the upcoming assemblies are listed on [this flyer](#). You can also submit ideas using [this form](#) on my website or call my office at (212) 873-0282 ext. 203.

The **American Museum of Natural History's expansion project** has some residents worried about the impact on the surrounding park. I believe this is an invaluable project for our city, our kids, and for the future of STEM education, and I am committed to seeing it done well and with full community review. The Museum has not yet released the design for the project (they expect to in the next several weeks), but when they do, the review process will be thorough and inclusive of the community. Unlike the Museum's last major construction project, that of the Hayden Planetarium, which was run by State Planetarium Authority and frustrating for everyone, this time the review process will be run by the City Parks Department and the City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). It will include public hearings from those two agencies, two Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) reviews, and two Community Board meetings. I will be working hard throughout this process to ensure that your voices are heard and that the proposed expansion ultimately serves both the Museum's educational mission and the needs of the community. I have called on the Museum to:

- Use as little parkland as possible in the new design by repurposing existing space within the Museum's current footprint.
- Preserve the natural beauty of the space, ensuring that the design fits the nature of the neighborhood and is creative enough to minimize the number of trees affected.
- Come up with a comprehensive and enforceable plan to deal with the congestion the Museum brings, especially from school buses.
- Make the entrance on Columbus at 79th Street not only meet the letter of accessibility laws, but make it truly welcoming for all members of the community.

I have asked AMNH to keep the community apprised of upcoming meetings, and you can stay tuned to my website, where we will post meetings as soon as we know of them.

The upcoming **West Side Tenants' Conference** is a great event for anyone interested in housing issues. Workshop and panel topics this year include Housing Benefits for Seniors, Construction Site Harassment, Affordable Housing, and Illegal Hotels, and I will give a presentation or two. The event is free, and they provide free lunch and breakfast. The conference is on Saturday, October 31st from 9:30am-4pm at the Fordham University School of Law at Lincoln Center (150 West 62nd at Columbus Avenue). [See the flyer](#).



Restaurant and store owners attend a delivery cyclist forum held by the NYC Department of Transportation and sponsored by Helen's office (October 8, 2015)

Last week my office and the Department of Transportation (DOT) held a forum for restaurant and store owners who employ **delivery cyclists**. Over 75 people attended, and DOT gave an informative presentation on the rules of the road for cyclists and distributed accessories like bike lights, reflective vests, and bells to make the streets safer for cyclists and pedestrians alike. The DOT Highway Inspection and Quality Assurance / Commercial Bike Unit will now concentrate on an enforcement effort.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) are not uncommon on the UWS. Why not create one in public housing? Last week I was delighted to speak on a panel about **Aging in Place** held by the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter's Design for Aging Committee. The panel examined 60 Amsterdam Avenue, a public housing building (Amsterdam Houses) on the Upper West Side, which has plans to build a senior-friendly design on its ground floor. I was happy to allocate funding for an initial plan for the project, which will help seniors in public housing stay in their homes.

Department of Education Chancellor Carmen Fariña will hold an **education town hall** for CEC 3 families on Wednesday, October 28 at 6pm at PS 191 (210 West 61 Street). Don't miss this excellent opportunity to discuss issues and concerns with the Chancellor. [See the flyer](#).

I have full faith that **PS 191** is a school that anyone in our community can feel confident in sending their children. If you'd like to learn more about the school, this Thursday you can hear from Principal Lauren Keville, PS 191 teachers, and PTA leaders regarding PS 191's educational philosophy, vision, teaching approach, and curriculum. Community Board 7's Youth, Education & Libraries Committee is hosting the meeting on Thursday, October 15th at 6:30pm at PS 191 (210 West 61st Street, corner of Amsterdam Avenue).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art is holding a free event for teens 13 and older. **Teens Take the Met** is a night of art making, music, performances, gallery activities, snacks, a dance party, and more. The event is on Friday, October 16 from 5pm-8pm at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 5th Avenue and 81st Street. [Learn more](#).

City Hall



Helen speaks about tenant harassment at a press conference with Council Members Carlos Menchaca, Ben Kallos, Rosie Mendez, Margaret Chin, Antonio Reynoso, and Corey Johnson, and tenant advocates (September 30, 2015)

When filing for permits to do gut renovations on residential buildings, landlords sometimes falsely declare the building unoccupied, which allows them to skip safety measures and create an unpleasant and potentially dangerous situation for tenants. A few weeks ago I joined several colleagues to introduce a package of bills to protect tenants experiencing **construction as a form of harassment**. Council Member Corey Johnson and I introduced a bill ([Int. 944-2015](#)) would require the Department of Buildings (DOB) to list a building's occupancy status on its construction permits and online. It would also increase penalties for falsifying permits and make inspection fees the responsibility of the landlord who falsified a permit. You can read more about the issue in [The New York Times](#) and [Chelsea Now](#). You can learn about all of the bills in the package [here](#), and stay tuned for a hearing in the Housing and Buildings committee.

On Thursday, October 22nd at 1pm my **three accessibility bills** will have their first committee hearing, and I encourage anyone to attend and/or submit testimony. To learn more about the bills, my office made [two infographics](#): one on the bill that requires hearing loops in every space in which the government hosts public meetings, and another on the bills to require accessibility notification for events and an ADA coordinator at each city agency. You can also find links to the bill language, my op-ed, a press release, and quotes of support from advocates [here](#). If you plan to attend, be sure to check [this link](#) the day before the hearing to confirm the date, time, and location.

I firmly believe that in order to protect our NYC pension fund returns, we must **phase out our fossil fuel investments**. A few weeks ago, I joined Environment Committee Chair Costa Constantinides in sending a [letter to the City's five pension boards](#) calling on them to study both phasing out of fossil fuel investments and investing in renewables. You know you have a good idea when the Mayor announces a similar plan a week later! He called on the pension boards to divest from coal and study divesting from other fossil fuels, and I'm so glad the idea is gaining traction. You can

learn more about it in [Politico](#).

Recently I co-chaired a [joint Contracts / NYCHA hearing](#) on the need for contracting accountability and transparency for **NYCHA repairs**, in light of leaking roofs at King Towers in Harlem. During this important oversight hearing, we learned how truly opaque NYCHA has been in their contracting process. Because NYCHA is an authority, they claim they do not have to follow normal procurement rules for disclosure. They are not sharing their poor reviews of contractors who completed less than satisfactory work with other agencies nor are they subjecting themselves to the standards required of typical city agencies who contract out. This means that bad contractors could be continually getting jobs at NYCHA or other agencies. I look forward to further tackling NYCHA transparency and accountability with Council Member Ritchie Torres, Chair of the Committee on Public Housing, further.



So, stay engaged. There are quite a few public hearings, from participatory budgeting to school rezoning to hearings at City Hall on important legislation. Please lend your voice to the conversation.

Warmly,

Helen.



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