



**STATEMENT BY ANITA LAREMONT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NYC DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING TO  
2019 CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION**

**March 21, 2019**

Together with Community Boards, ULURP was established in 1975 as part of a set of Charter revisions that discarded top-down master planning and established a locally responsive land use decision making process.

ULURP was amended in 1989. It was then that the City Council's role was expanded to amplify the voice of communities in NYC's land use process.

ULURP today has three essential ingredients : **Balance, Predictability, and Transparency.**

**Balance** ensures both neighborhood and citywide perspectives are given weight in the ULURP process.

Community Boards and Borough Presidents comment first, ensuring decisions are informed early on by local perspectives.

Decisions are made by entities – the City Planning Commission and the City Council -- with responsibilities to the whole city. Decisions are informed but, we hope, not dominated by local voice.

**Balance** also refers to the shared power of the executive and the City Council that emerges from ULURP.

The 1989 Charter gave the executive a 1-vote majority on the Commission, but it gave the City Council the final word on every ULURP application.

The Council itself balances its role as a citywide body against its practice of giving a dominant voice to the local member on land use matters.

As such, local perspectives and the views of the Council are strongly represented and increasingly decisive in ULURP.

While some local voices feel the ULURP process does not give them a strong enough voice, we hear from affordable housing developers, Fair Housing advocates, and others, who see that local concerns are frequently winning out over the wider needs of families, immigrants, and others among the City's most vulnerable.

**Predictability** refers to access to a process with a finite timeline. This seven-month process provides opportunities to elicit and consider information that can and does affect the outcome, up to and including the decision whether or not to approve.

ULURP ensures that the City cannot, as in Chicago, sit on applications forever; nor can the City rush projects through in a week.

We strongly urge caution around proposals that would allow non-applicants to introduce amended applications during ULURP or that would significantly broaden changes that can be made at the very end of the process. This will undermine predictability and deter many from entering ULURP in the first place.

**Transparency** refers to ULURP's requirements for public notice and information. The process informs the public and ensures the rights of all parties, including applicants, to due process and the opportunity to be heard on changes that may affect them.

In making its decision, the Commission responds to all relevant comments and elaborates on the grounds for its decisions in a public report.

We see this basic process as sound, and caution strongly against changes that undermine its **balance** and **predictability**. We are, however, mindful of ways to make the process more **transparent**.

We are already making more information easily accessible to the public earlier in the process. Among our many new transparency tools, I will point to our ZAP portal, which maps all applications, and will soon make full applications available to all online.

We commit to working toward ever greater transparency.

Thank you.