

**Missed Opportunities:
Analyzing New York City's
Community-Based Planning Statute**

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Abstract

Beginning in 1989, New York City Charter Section 197-a gave Community Boards, the most local form of government in New York City, the opportunity to formally engage in community-based planning by sponsoring “Plans for the development, growth, and improvement of the city and of its boroughs and community districts.” These 197-a plans are reviewed by the Borough President, Department of City Planning, City Planning Commission, and City Council, and, if adopted, are intended to inform the relevant actions of city agencies. Since 1989, in a city of 59 Community Boards and over eight million residents, only eleven Community Board-sponsored plans have been adopted. Using city documents, especially the 197-a plans, this thesis investigates the value of the 197-a process as a means of community-based planning. The thesis finds that the non-binding nature of these plans prevents them from being an effective method of community-based planning and offers recommendations for improvement.

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1. Introduction

In the current political moment in the United States, it feels urgent to investigate existing pathways for democracy and how they can be improved. Section 197-a of the New York City Charter defines a pathway for Community Boards to sponsor (or co-sponsor, with local community groups) plans relating to issues within their jurisdiction: namely, to propose “Plans for the development, growth, and improvement of the city and of its boroughs and community districts.”¹ After review by governing bodies including the Borough President, Department of City Planning, City Planning Commission, and City Council, if adopted, these 197-a plans are intended to “guide future actions of city agencies in the areas addressed.”² Although these plans are non-binding, giving more advisory power to these local bodies is significant; it might provide for greater community influence on the Department of City Planning than was allowed before 197-a was instituted.

The opportunity for Community Boards and Borough Presidents to sponsor plans was first made realistic through an amendment to the City Charter in 1989.³ The formal *Rules for the Processing of Plans Pursuant to Charter Section 197-a* were adopted in 1991.⁴

¹ *New York City Charter* § 197-a.

² City of New York Department of City Planning, “The 197-a Plan Process” (PowerPoint Presentation), https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/197a_plan_process.pdf.

³ Amy Widman, “Replacing Politics with Democracy: A Proposal for Community Planning in New York City and Beyond,” *Journal of Law and Policy* 11 (2002-2003), 147.

⁴ City of New York Department of City Planning, *197-a Plan Technical Guide* (1997), 1, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/publications/197a.pdf>.

Community Boards are the most local level of New York City government. They have existed as advisory bodies since 1963 and were given review power over land use in their jurisdictions in 1977, but “demands from communities for greater control over land use decisions” helped bring about the aforementioned Charter revision, which delineated specific steps for the proposal of these plans.⁵

Since 1991, only thirteen⁶ 197-a plans have been adopted; one entered into the process but was withdrawn; and one was disapproved.⁷ It struck me as strange that over the course of nearly thirty years, in a city of 59 Community Boards and over eight million residents, only thirteen plans have been adopted, with only eight Community Boards going all the way through this process. In city planning, a field in which decisions impact people’s daily lives, community expertise and input should be an important part of the planning process. And especially in a city as large and diverse as New York, some degree of decentralization and ground-level input is important to ensure that planning is contextual and effective. The presence of the 197-a option demonstrates that New York City understands this and values community input. The question is whether the 197-a plan in practice makes for a meaningful expression of community voice in New York City’s planning process.

⁵ Widman, “Replacing Politics with Democracy,” 145-7.

⁶ As explained on page 3, only the eleven 197-a plans that were sponsored by Community Boards are discussed in this thesis.

⁷ City of New York Department of City Planning, “Community-Based Planning,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

Objectives and Key Questions

In this thesis, I investigate the 197-a process and analyze eleven of the thirteen approved 197-a plans, to determine the extent to which their goals have been accomplished in the years since they were approved. These are the plans sponsored by Community Boards since the *Rules* were adopted in 1991, until the time of writing in 2018.⁸ This work is towards an understanding of the influence of 197-a plans—as an official expression of local knowledge and input—on the work of City agencies. According to Widman, the 197-a option came as a response to the City community’s desire for greater input.⁹ Was this the right response? Using several criteria, including the City’s own standards for evaluating 197-a plans, I examine the plans in their original draft form, the modifications made by the City Planning Commission and City Council, and coverage in local newspapers and other relevant documents to evaluate how the original vision of the plans was expressed in the final plans and in the subsequent planning of the areas.

Thirteen plans have been adopted by the City Council between 1991 and 2018. Community Boards sponsored eleven of these; one was sponsored by a Borough President; and one was sponsored by the Department of City Planning itself. Although the 197-a process was designed to accommodate these various planning bodies, I have chosen to analyze only the eleven plans sponsored by Community Boards. I have done so for two main reasons: first, that the Community Boards are the most local level of New York City government, and

⁸ City of New York Department of City Planning, *197-a Plan Technical Guide* (1997), 1.

⁹ Widman, “Replacing Politics with Democracy,” 145-7.

thus they may present the view closest to the ground; and second, that the geographical scope of the plans submitted by Community Boards is necessarily smaller than the scope of the plans submitted by organizations with broader jurisdiction. There are only five Borough Presidents—and only one Department of City Planning—while there are 59 Community Boards. As such, we can assume that the relationship between the sponsor and the adopting bodies (the City Planning Commission and the City Council) is substantially different for the Community Boards than for the others. With this in mind, I believe that focusing only on the Community Boards allows for a more apples-to-apples comparison (and, hopefully, a more interesting one).

The main question that I seek to answer in this thesis is: How meaningful and effective is the 197-a plan as a method of community-based planning? Towards answering this primary question, I answer several other questions, including:

- What makes a 197-a plan likely to be adopted? Which types of neighborhoods, community groups, and/or topic areas are suited to 197-a plans?
- What makes a 197-a plan likely to be implemented? What were the results of each plan? Did the plan lead to a rezoning, a policy change, other change, or no change at all?

Answering these questions involves analysis of the plans themselves, as described above and below; some demographic analysis of the Community Districts whose Boards have sponsored plans; and examination of City standards and documents.

Personal Goals

I have several goals in undertaking this thesis. One major goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the 197-a planning process in New York City, and to use this understanding to offer recommendations on how NYC planning might better incorporate and be informed by local, community input. Jane Jacobs wrote in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* that “No other expertise can substitute for locality knowledge in planning.”¹⁰ The act of allowing Community Boards to sponsor plans intended to advise the central Planning Department seems an acknowledgment of the value of this type of “locality knowledge,” and an attempt to create space for it. By examining the plans that have made it through this process in terms of their origins, content, and results, I hope to answer whether such locality knowledge is sufficiently incorporated into the city planning efforts through this regulatory method.

Another goal is that the knowledge and understanding gained from the New York cases has relevance to other cities and other cities’ planning departments who wish to engage with the public more and have a more participatory planning process.

This project combines several of my interests and relates to my own personal and professional goals. I first learned about 197-a plans while working for the Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) this summer. MAS has published two documents about New York City community-based planning and 197-a plans specifically. In its 2004 *Briefing Book of Community-Based Plans*,

¹⁰ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 418.

the MAS Planning Center expressed a clear stance on 197-a: “Clearly, the current 197-a process is neither efficient nor effective... The City has a unique opportunity to adopt a new approach to planning that recognizes and values the ideas and contributions of ALL communities and ALL New Yorkers.”¹¹

Whether I end up working in New York City or elsewhere, and whether I work for city government, a planning commission, a nonprofit, or some other organization, I hope that the lessons I learn from this thesis will help me be a more competent and able professional, one who works to make sure community voice is represented in processes that impact communities.

Methodology

The primary analysis for this thesis is split into two parts, separated in terms of timeline. The first is analysis of the plans themselves: from whom and from where they came, what problems they sought to solve, and how they were adopted by the City Council. Information for that part of the analysis is presented in Chapter 3. The second part is analysis of what has come of the plans in the time since they were adopted; a time that ranges from 9 to 26 years at the time of writing, depending on the plan. This information is presented in Chapter 4. Combined, these two pieces present a picture of the plans—and of the 197-a program broadly—over a relatively full lifespan. And these two pieces allow for

¹¹ The Municipal Art Society Planning Center with the New York City Community-Based Planning Task Force, *Planning for All New Yorkers: Briefing Book of Community-Based Plans*, (New York: The Municipal Art Society Planning Center, 2004), 2.

an assessment of the successes and failures of the 197-a program as New York plans for its future.

Before analyzing the plans in detail, I knew that I wanted to look at key elements including how they came about, who was involved in making them, and what they sought to accomplish. Reading the plans and getting a sense of the way they presented these elements led me to a more formal categorization. The criteria fall into four broad categories: source, process, content, and result.

Source: Which Community Board sponsored the plan?

In comparing the plans and Boards, I look at demographics and other data about Community Districts, including income, race, education level, and geographic situation. It is worth noting here that two of the five boroughs have not had any 197-a plans adopted by the City Council.

Process: How did the plan go from idea to formal document?

What led the Community Board to pursue the plan? How was the community involved in the planning process?

Content: What does the plan address? What are the goals?

Some of these plans are comprehensive neighborhood plans; some are land use/zoning plans; and others are waterfront plans. As such, the plans vary considerably in scope and in the amount of intervention required by the City.

Result: What has come of the plan?

197-a plans have been adopted by the City Council as far back as 1992; the most recent 197-a plan was adopted in December 2009. As such, we

have the benefit of each plan having been passed more than eight years ago, leaving significant time for plans to at least begin to be implemented. I present plans' goals and priorities in Chapter 3 and use those as metrics for whether/to what extent the plan has been implemented. Here, I especially look for specific land use changes and program implementations that the sponsors identified as high priority in their plans. Some plans provide more details regarding implementation priorities and chronology than others. With these checkpoints in mind, I examine City documents and other online resources to determine the extent of a plan's implementation as a metric of its success.

The primary method for this analysis is archival research. The analysis of the plans for Chapter 3 is based on extensive documentation available on the Department of City Planning (DCP) website.¹² For each adopted 197-a plan, the DCP has posted a document including both the original plan as submitted by its sponsor and the final plan, approved by the City Council. Each of these documents also includes the comments, modifications, and deletions made by the City Planning Commission (sometimes on behalf of other City departments) on the way towards the plan's adoption. The DCP documents thus include more than just the plans themselves; they also include a sort of dialogue between the sponsor (the Community Board) and the governmental bodies responsible for adopting the plan and then using it as a guide in their work. The differences between the original plans and the final, approved plans factor into this analysis, as they help

¹² City of New York Department of City Planning, "Community-Based Planning," <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

us understand the City's priorities and approach to the 197-a planning process. In examining these documents, I looked for several key elements:

- **Background and Demographics:** What led the community to submit a plan, and who makes up the community (in terms of race and socioeconomic status)?
- **Goals and Scope:** What does the plan seek to accomplish? What is the geographical area covered by the plan? In what topic areas does the plan offer recommendations?
- **Recommendations:** What specific measures does the plan recommend? (This section is primarily presented in general categories, and is used to differentiate zoning/land use-based interventions from policy interventions.)
- **Public Participation:** As these plans are meant to be “community-based,” it is important to examine how the community was involved in the planning process.

All of the above information is included in the 197-a plans, as required or recommended in the *Rules for the Processing* and the *Technical Guide*.

The methods for analyzing the results of the plans are more complex. Some information about plan results (especially regarding rezoning actions) is available on the DCP website. For other information, I examined existing literature, including especially *New York for Sale* by Tom Angotti¹³ and a recent

¹³ Tom Angotti, *New York for Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2008).

interview with Angotti.¹⁴ I also searched the web, focusing on specific recommendations in the plans to examine whether they had been implemented or not. As noted in the “Limitations” section of Chapter 6, information regarding non-zoning interventions was more difficult to find than information regarding rezoning.

In Chapter 2, I present the methods and results of my search of existing literature about the 197-a plan, community-based planning, and public participation techniques. In Chapter 3, I discuss the 197-a process in more detail and present summaries of the eleven Community Board-sponsored 197-a plans that have been adopted by the City Council. In Chapter 4, I examine the results of the plans since their adoption, categorizing the plans as “mostly implemented” or “implemented with changes.” In Chapter 5, I present an analysis of the eleven plans (based on the information collected in Chapters 3 and 4), discuss some trends and important results of my findings, and answer the main question: How meaningful and effective is the 197-a plan as a method of community-based planning? Chapter 6 includes a summary of the thesis, recommendations and policy implications based on the results, a discussion of limitations, and suggestions for further research.

¹⁴ Whitney Kimball, “The life and death of community-based planning in New York,” *Hopes & Fears*, 2014, <http://www.hopesandfears.com/hopes/city/city/214185-affordable-housing-condo-development-new-york-city>.

2. Literature Review

Putting New York City's Community-Based Planning in Context

Introduction

In undertaking the literature review, I had two major goals. First, I was interested in examining existing literature about community-based planning (and specifically about 197-a plans) in New York City; this could include case studies as well as discussion of some of the underlying principles. Second, I was interested in looking at the broader fields of public participation and participatory governance to help provide context for the analysis of NYC's community-based planning efforts. The search yielded some information about 197-a planning but was most fruitful in illuminating forms of public participation and the theories behind them. The two subcategories of this review are: 1) case studies of public participation; and 2) techniques, theories, and best practices.

The existing academic literature about 197-a plans is fairly limited. Tom Angotti's *New York for Sale*, which examines community-based planning and real estate in New York City, has been an essential guide for this thesis; it is briefly discussed in this literature review, and discussed again in Chapters 5 and 6.¹ That book appears to be the most detailed book or academic work regarding the 197-a process and history. Unsurprisingly, there is some significant discussion of 197-a (including its merits and failures) in the public, non-academic sphere; this type of discussion is incorporated throughout the thesis, particularly in Chapter 5, rather

¹ Angotti's book "looks broadly at representative community plans and places them in their political and social contexts to help better explain their content and the diverse processes followed in developing them" (Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 5). The book features a chapter ("Making the Plans Official") that discusses the ten 197-a plans that had been adopted at his time of writing.

than in this literature review.

Methodology

The literature search was an iterative process. I searched three databases: Google Scholar, JSTOR, and JumboSearch. All three databases yielded articles in both the case study subcategory and the best practices/techniques subcategory; these subcategories presented themselves through this iterative search process.

I began with a search for “community based planning” AND “new york city” in Google Scholar, which, excluding patents and citations, yielded 802 results. By changing the search to “197-a” and “community based planning,” I narrowed the results down to 40. One especially useful result from this search was Amy Widman’s journal article, “Replacing Politics with Democracy,” which is informative both from a theory and case study standpoint.

JSTOR was the most fruitful database for this literature review. Searching “197-a” alone yielded 10 results, including the Jason Corburn article discussed below; searching “197-a” AND “community based planning” yielded only two results. Iterative searches of combinations of “community based planning,” “new york” or “new york city,” and “best practices” yielded narrow results that were the most promising, based on abstracts; “community based planning” AND “best practices” yielded 22 journal articles, and “participatory planning” AND “community based planning” yielded 19 articles.

Searching JumboSearch² with similar search terms and strategy yielded many of the same articles as were found in JSTOR. Two new, useful articles were Todd Bressi’s brief discussion of 197-a plans—one of fairly few articles that specifically discuss 197-a plans, as it turns out—and Murray, Tshabangu, and Erlank’s article discussing best practices in participatory governance.

Public Participation Case Studies

Case studies were valuable here either due to discussing New York City community planning efforts or due to presenting other public participation/participatory governance methods in a specific, detailed context, that allows for comparison with the 197-a approach.

197-a Plans and New York City

Discussion of 197-a plans is fairly limited in the literature. Amy Widman provides some history and context, presenting Section 197-a as a result of a process of both “decentralization” and greater community input in New York City, following the 1963 establishment of advisory, local Community Boards and the 1977 requirement “that Community Boards review and vote on all land use applications in their jurisdictions.”³ Per Widman, Section 197-a was first made possible with the creation of the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) in 1977, but made realistic in 1989, when specific steps were identified for Community Boards and Borough Presidents to propose plans for land in their

² JumboSearch is a database and search function of Tufts University’s library, available at: <https://tischlibrary.tufts.edu/find/jumbosearch>.

³ Widman, “Replacing Politics with Democracy,” 144-5.

jurisdictions.⁴ Widman identifies this change, realized through a revision to the City Charter, as the result of “Demands from communities for greater control over land use decisions.”⁵

Angotti’s *New York for Sale*⁶ and Widman’s “Replacing Politics with Democracy” article both present case studies of 197-a plans. Widman examines 197-a planning efforts in Vinegar Hill and Greenpoint, two formerly industrial areas in Brooklyn that transitioned into more residential spaces.⁷ In Vinegar Hill, the wealthier neighborhood, the demolition of a “135-year-old neighborhood church” for “equipment storage” mobilized residents, leading “Community Board 2 to establish a special task force to explore possible 197-a plans in the area.”⁸ The Department of City Planning, “at the residents’ request,” conducted a study and “proposed rezoning the area to residential,” which was later approved.⁹ In Greenpoint, a lower-income neighborhood with similar industrial presence, residents sought rezoning to avoid more industrial uses. They worked with the Pratt Institute and ran an inclusive 197-a process, garnered community support, and sent their Community Board-approved plan to the Department of City Planning for approval; DCP’s modifications before approval, Widman claims, weakened the plan.¹⁰ Widman highlights the fact that Vinegar Hill received much more City support than Greenpoint did. In Vinegar Hill, the City Planning

⁴ Ibid., 145-7.

⁵ Ibid., 146.

⁶ Angotti’s work and findings are discussed in more detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

⁷ Greenpoint’s 197-a plan is discussed throughout the thesis, as it is one of the eleven Community Board-sponsored plans that were adopted.

⁸ Ibid., 157.

⁹ Ibid., 156-7.

¹⁰ Ibid., 170-2.

Commission “conducted a zoning study... and [proposed] the zoning changes... at the community’s request,” while Greenpoint’s planning did not include “assistance from the city,” and their plan was later modified by the DCP.¹¹ In addition, Vinegar Hill sought a geographically narrow down-zoning, while Greenpoint’s plan was geographically broader and mixed-use; Widman offers that this made Greenpoint’s plan harder to implement, and may have contributed to its modification.¹²

Todd Bressi, in a short article summarizing 197-a, identifies some positive outcomes from all the approved 197-a plans at his time of writing, but also identifies several obstacles. Like Widman, Bressi points to limited support from the city and limited resources available to Community Boards.¹³ Bressi also points out that, “Even if a plan successfully runs the gauntlet of staff review and planning commission and city council approval, it is still only advisory—a sore point with many planners.”¹⁴

Both Widman and Bressi point out that the success of 197-a plans has been limited by some specifics of the process and structure. They also both illustrate a desire from communities to be more involved with the planning process. More specifically, it seems possible that 197-a plans are more limited by structural factors—particularly high cost, inconsistent city support (both political and financial), and an advisory (non-binding) role—than by a lack of interest

¹¹ Ibid., 180-1/

¹² Ibid., 188-9.

¹³ Todd Bressi, “Digging into the grass roots: New York’s community planning process hasn’t always lived up to expectations,” *Planning* 66, no. 3 (2000): 10-13, <https://login.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/206710997?accountid=14434>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

from the community. Bressi identifies groups that “[have sought] alternatives aimed more directly at getting results.”¹⁵ This is significant: it could mean that a revised 197-a process might have greater participation and more impact than the current process.

Another important limitation on the potential value of 197-a plans is the makeup of Community Boards. Tarry Hum undertakes two case studies of “immigrant neighborhoods” in New York City to demonstrate that Community Boards—as discussed above, a key body in creating 197-a plans—are more representative of the “largely embattled white middle class” electorate of New York City than of their specific community, because Community Board “members are appointed by elected officials.”¹⁶ Even if a Board-sponsored plan is adopted, then, it might be less representative of the community than hoped.

Other Case Studies: Trends

Some trends emerged from examining other case studies found in the literature search. These are considered here both in terms of their role as public participation tools and their relationship to 197-a planning. In the public participation field, there appears to be a strong environmental justice presence. Guy M. Robinson discusses community-based planning in Canada's coastal communities, in which “stakeholder committees” including “residents, local

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Tarry Hum, “Planning in Neighborhoods with Multiple Publics: Opportunities and Challenges for Community-Based Nonprofit Organizations,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 29, no. 4 (2010): 473-74, accessed November 17, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X10368700>.

government officials, and representatives from local businesses and academia,” guide local environmental management for the government.¹⁷ Jason Corburn looks at two community organizations in Brooklyn doing community-based participatory research around environmental health issues, one of which worked with the EPA to bring “local knowledge... into the U.S. EPA risk assessment” of the area.¹⁸ Though the structures in these two case studies are different, they both reflect governmental interest in community knowledge of environmental issues. This may indicate that, for environmental or health issues that have clear local influences, government or other experts who are accustomed to leading research and decision-making may be inclined to welcome local or community participation.

Salkin and Lavine discuss many case studies of community benefits agreements (CBAs), which offer another form of community participation in decision-making. Their description of CBAs marks a potential parallel between goals of CBAs and 197-a plans. They state: “communities may utilize [community benefits agreements] to ensure that development occurs consistent with the sometimes more narrow goals and desires of neighborhood residents, as opposed to the sometimes broader goals and desires of municipal and regional governing bodies.”¹⁹ They discuss four case studies in New York, three of which

¹⁷ Guy M. Robinson, “Community-Based Planning: Canada’s Atlantic Coastal Action Program (ACAP),” *The Geographical Journal* 163, no. 1 (1997): 25-6, accessed November 16, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3059683>.

¹⁸ Jason Corburn, “Combining Community-Based Research and Local Knowledge to Confront Asthma and Subsistence-Fishing Hazards in Greenpoint/Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York,” *Environmental Health Perspectives* 110, Supplement 2: Community, Research, and Environmental Justice (2002), 241-2, accessed November 17, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/stable/3455059>.

¹⁹ Patricia Salkin and Amy Lavine, “Negotiating for Social Justice and the Promise

are criticized for not including sufficient community input. Although CBAs may share some goals with 197-a plans, because they are typically development-oriented and often include corporate presence, they may not be suitable for comparison with 197-a plans (though they may function as an alternative in New York's development-heavy environment).

Examining these case studies makes it clear that 197-a plans operate in a unique structural and political context. A key requirement in all public participation is the government's commitment to truly being inclusive (this is a challenge across subject areas and methods).

Techniques, Theories, and Best Practices

Best practices and common techniques in public participation are considered in this thesis for comparison with the 197-a process. Slotterback, examining six transportation planning case studies, finds best practices to include "a range of different types of participation techniques";²⁰ a "local champion" person or organization;²¹ "clear sense of the desired outcome," "political leadership," "professional design expertise," and "visualization."²² Applying these practices to the 197-a process, the importance of a combination of a well-

of Community Benefits Agreements: Case Studies of Current and Developing Agreements," *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law* 17, no. 1/2 (2007/2008): 114, accessed November 16, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25782806>.

²⁰ Carissa Schively Slotterback, "Public Involvement in Transportation Project Planning and Design," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 27, no. 2 (2010): 153, accessed November 16, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030901>.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 154-6.

organized community and a city willing to commit resources—a need pointed out by Widman—becomes clear.

Public participation GIS (PPGIS) featured prominently in the literature search. Lejano sees GIS as a tool that can lead to “alienation,” creating distance between the planner and the reality of the community; he thus sees a need to use tools like participatory action research to do “social ground-truthing.”²³ Al-Kodmany sees GIS as a tool to help the public do visualizing and “visioning exercises,” but identifies the need for a “facilitator” to ensure the public understands and can valuably utilize spatial technology.²⁴ Both Elwood and Sieber recognize the empowering potential of GIS for community organizations: for communities to quickly test possibilities and possibly indicate “greater expertise” to other decision-makers;²⁵ and as a democratic tool allowing for the “[incorporation of] local knowledge.”²⁶ Given the ability to use it (a major variable), GIS might serve an important role in 197-a planning, for communities to gain legitimacy and support internally as well as with the Department of City Planning.

²³ Raul P. Lejano, “Technology and Institutions: A Critical Appraisal of GIS in the Planning Domain,” *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 33, no. 5 (2008): 653-5, accessed November 17, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29734059>.

²⁴ Kheir Al-Kodmany, “Bridging the Gap Between Technical and Local Knowledge: Tools for Promoting Community-Based Planning and Design,” *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 18, no. 2 (2001): 125-6, accessed November 16, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43030568>.

²⁵ Sarah Elwood, “Beyond Cooptation or Resistance: Urban Spatial Politics, Community Organizations, and GIS-Based Spatial Narratives,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, no. 2 (2006), 337-8, accessed November 17, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3694050>.

²⁶ Renee Sieber, “Public Participation GIS: A Literature Review and Framework,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96, no. 3 (2006): 502, accessed November 17, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4124429>.

These articles discussing techniques all mention some need for expertise and collaboration. Murray et al., use case studies to establish that “participatory skills need to be taught to citizens... and that capacity-building workshops for local government officials and citizens are necessary.”²⁷ In a city with as much diversity and political will as New York, perhaps one of the reasons 197-a plans have been so limited is a lack of training around the topic—a possible product of limited commitment by city departments to providing resources for 197-a plans. Taken together, these various analyses of best practices make it clear that, for communities to meaningfully participate in governance and decision-making, they must have the right tools and the ability to use them effectively, and it is likely that this ability is the product of some training or other government-community group collaboration.

²⁷ Jessica Murray et. al, “Enhancing Participatory Governance and Fostering Active Citizenship: An Overview of Local and International Best Practices,” *Politikon* 37, no. 1 (2010): 63, accessed November 16, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02589346.2010.492149>.

3. Adopted Plans I: Origins

In this chapter, I examine from where and from whom these 197-a plans came, and what problems they sought to solve. In so doing, I look for a few things, including whether the plans' goals fit with the city's guidance, and whether the sources of plans reflect the diversity of the city according to demographic measures including income, education, and ethnicity. I look at what the capital-c City wants by presenting some key standards for the 197-a plan. I then look at "what the people want" by discussing the plans themselves.

What Is the City Looking For?

New York's *197-a Plan Technical Guide*,¹ first published in 1997, presents a more human and more detailed explanation of the process than the City Council's *Rules for Processing*. This guide includes a section, "How to Decide Whether to Do a 197-a Plan," in which the Department of City Planning (DCP) clarifies which situations the 197-a Plan is best suited for and frankly presents the challenges of the process:

Shepherding a community-based plan from inception to adoption is no small undertaking. Before getting started, community boards should weigh the costs and benefits carefully. The process can take years, demand considerable resources, expose irreconcilable community factions, and, after all that, result in an adopted plan that has been substantially modified. Yet it can be worth the time and effort and the risks involved. At their best, 197-a plans can forge consensus within a community about its future direction, challenge conventional wisdom among decision-makers, and lead to significant shifts in land use policy...²

¹ City of New York Department of City Planning, *197-a Plan Technical Guide*, 1997, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/publications/197a.pdf>.

² *Ibid.*, 7.

As the plans that have been adopted prove, the process is indeed extremely time- and effort-intensive, with most plans taking five or more years from start of process to adoption.

The guide makes it clear that the plans ought to lay out specific goals and priorities and present demographic, land use, and other data to establish the needs that the plan addresses. It also clarifies that “[s]pecific zoning, design, service or funding proposals are generally inappropriate in 197-a plans.”³

In order to be adopted by the City Council, a 197-a plan has to meet two sets of “threshold standards”: one for “form and content,” and one for “sound planning policy.”⁴ The form and content standards cover scope (in content and geography), “Clarity / Coherence,”⁵ “data and analysis needed to document the problems identified in the plan and to justify its recommendations,”⁶ and finally, “documentation of... public participation in [the plans’] formulation and preparation.”⁷ The sound planning policy standards require that plans discuss “long-range consequences,”⁸ “jurisdiction,”⁹ “consultation with affected agencies,”¹⁰ and “relationship to applicable policy documents.”¹¹ The plan must pass “threshold review... by the Department of City Planning and the City Planning Commission,” before it undergoes “substantive review... of the plan’s

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 32.

objectives, policies and proposals” by the “community board, borough president, City Planning Commission, and City Council.”¹²

Two of these threshold standards focus on participation and equity. The public participation standard¹³ is emphasized in the guide, which deems public participation “essential” and states that:

It ensures that the diverse range of viewpoints and conditions in the community are acknowledged, resulting in a plan whose proposals serve the community at large. It is only through community consultation that a consensus supporting the 197-a plan may be developed.¹⁴

The “long-range consequences” standard requires that “All plans, no matter what their form and content, shall include discussion of,” among other factors, “their impact on economic and housing opportunity for all persons (particularly those of low and moderate income).”¹⁵ The guide states that “The intent of this standard is to discourage exclusionary 197-a plans, that is, plans that would foreclose or severely restrict opportunities for new housing, economic growth, or siting needed city facilities.”¹⁶ These standards are not earth-shattering. The public participation rule does not set some number of citizens that must be involved nor number of meetings that must be held (beyond one required public hearing). Likewise, while the consequences standard “discourage[s]” exclusionary plans, “It does not bar proposals that might have that effect.”¹⁷ However, both

¹² Ibid., 1.

¹³ City of New York City Planning Commission, *Rules for the Processing of Plans Pursuant to Charter Section 197-a*, 1991, Section 4.010g, accessed April 18, 2018, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/publications/rules_197a.pdf.

¹⁴ City of New York Department of City Planning, *197-a Plan Technical Guide*, 1997, 29.

¹⁵ City of New York City Planning Commission, *Rules for the Processing of Plans Pursuant to Charter Section 197-a*, 1991, Section 4.020a.

¹⁶ City of New York Department of City Planning, *197-a Plan Technical Guide*, 1997, 30.

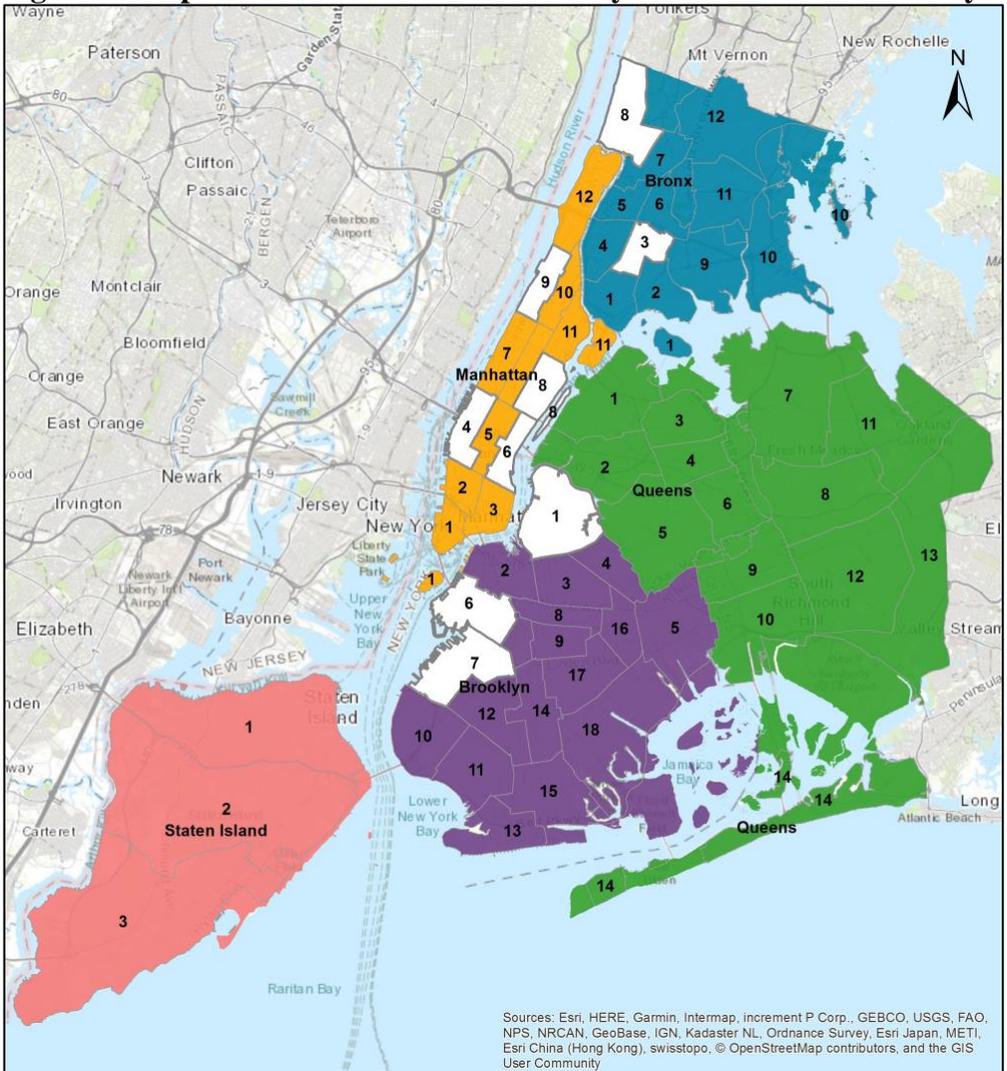
¹⁷ Ibid.

standards are important, and signify that the city, in formulating the 197-a process, paid some attention to equity and inclusiveness.

Importantly, the *Guide* states that plans may be “comprehensive” or “may focus on a single issue.”¹⁸ As the following discussion of the plans demonstrates, both these options were used by communities. The map below (Figure 1) shows the 59 Community Districts of New York City; districts whose Community Board submitted a 197-a plan are highlighted.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

Figure 1: Map of 197-a Plans and Community Boards of New York City



Map created by Brennan Corrison.

Borough and Community District Boundary data source: NYC Department of City Planning.¹⁹

Base map source: ESRI.²⁰

What Do the People Want?

As discussed in Chapter 1, eleven Community Board-sponsored plans have been adopted by the City Council since this became possible in 1991. The

¹⁹ New York City Department of City Planning, “Political and Administrative Districts - Download and Metadata,” accessed May 1, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/data-maps/open-data/districts-download-metadata.page>.

²⁰ ESRI, “World Topographic Map,” last updated April 25, 2018, accessed May 1, 2018, <http://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=30e5fe3149c34df1ba922e6f5bbf808f>.

following table (Table 1), adapted from the Department of City Planning, chronologically lists these plans, focus areas, and time from start to finish. (This excludes the two non-Community Board-sponsored plans that have been adopted, one from the Manhattan Borough President and one from the Department of City Planning.) Following Table 1, I present some categorization for plans in terms of their scope, goals, and sources. After that, I include brief summaries of all the plans.

Making Sense of the Plans

Eleven plans may not seem like much. But when each 197-a document—including the original plan, modifications, and City Council and CPC resolutions—is over 100 pages long, it becomes a lot of information to sort through for a project of this size. I present some categories here to help process this significant amount of information. These categories are used in the analysis of the results of the plans in Chapter 4.

One of the most significant elements of each plan is, of course, what it seeks to accomplish. The goals of each plan are a product of the Community District's history, its concerns for the future, and its population's needs. Two key questions allow us to sort the group of eleven 197-a plans in informative ways.

Table 1: Community Board-Sponsored 197-a Plans

<i>Plan Title</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Focus</i> ²¹	<i>Process Started</i>	<i>Date First Submitted</i>	<i>Date Adopted</i> ¹⁸
Partnership for the Future: A 197-a Plan for the Revitalization of Bronx Community District #3	Bronx 3	Comprehensive	1985	6/89, then 7/91 (due to adoption of official Rules)	11/92 (as modified by CPC)
The Chelsea Plan: CB4 Chelsea 197-a Plan: A Contextual Zoning Proposal to Create Housing Opportunities	Manhattan 4	Zoning	1986	4/94	5/96 (as modified by CPC)
Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration	Brooklyn 6	Comprehensive	1992	7/94	9/96 (as modified by CPC)
Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan	Manhattan 6	Waterfront	1970s	5/95	3/97 (as modified by CPC)
Williamsburg Waterfront 197-a Plan: A Matter of Balance; Housing, Industry, Open Space	Brooklyn 1	Waterfront/ Comprehensive	1989	10/98	1/02 (as modified by CPC)
Greenpoint 197-a Plan	Brooklyn 1	Comprehensive	1989	10/98	1/02 (as modified by CPC)
CD 8 2000: A River to Reservoir Preservation Strategy	Bronx 8	Comprehensive	1997	6/00	11/03
197-a Plan for the Queensboro Bridge Area	Manhattan 8	Waterfront / Streetscapes	2002	8/05	8/06
197-a Plan for Community District 9: Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville, Morningside Heights	Manhattan 9	Comprehensive	1991	8/05	12/07 (as modified by CPC)
197-a Plan for the Eastern Section of Community District 6	Manhattan 6 & East Side Rezoning Alliance	Comprehensive with focus on waterfront and open space	2003	10/07	3/08 (as modified by CPC/CC)
New Connections/New Opportunities: Sunset Park 197-a Plan	Brooklyn 7	Comprehensive with focus on the waterfront	1996	6/07	12/09 (as modified by CPC)

²¹ Text in rows below is quoted directly from: City of New York Department of City Planning, "Community-Based Planning," <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

1. Has the area had a history of growth or of disinvestment?

If a Community Board feels that an area is experiencing growth that is too rapid, out of sync with the local context, or otherwise negatively impacting the community, it might seek to establish some limits on growth using zoning among other tools. Areas that have recently experienced growth—and expect more—may not have sufficient open space; this, too, influences some of the 197-a plans.

If an area has experienced significant disinvestment in recent years or decades, on the other hand, it might try to motivate investment or otherwise revitalize the area. Demographically, residents of areas that have experienced such disinvestment tend to have lower income, be less educated, and be more ethnically diverse than residents of areas that have experienced significant growth. Plans for these areas tend to recommend programmatic elements that can support communities. It is also worth noting here that areas of disinvestment also often have the burden of noxious facilities with negative environmental impacts; as Angotti notes, “Many of the current generation of community plans [including some 197-a plans] arose from the struggles for environmental justice in the 1980s and 1990s.”²²

2. What is the scope of the 197-a Plan?

When I use the word “scope,” I am referring to a few important elements. Scope refers to the focus area(s) of the plan; as the Department of City Planning’s “Focus” categories reflect, this can broadly be divided into “comprehensive,”

²² Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 131.

“zoning,” “waterfront,” “streetscapes,” and “open space,” or some combination of thereof.²³ Scope refers to the geographic extent of the plan; this ranges from a portion of a few blocks, as in the *Stuyvesant Cove* plan, to a full Community District (several plans). Another point related to geographic scope is the size of the residential population involved. New York’s Community Districts vary significantly in population size, and among Districts whose Boards submitted comprehensive (i.e., District-wide) plans, population ranged from 57,162 (Bronx 3 in 1990) to 111,724 (Manhattan 9 in 2000).²⁴ The variations in scope affect variations in degree of implementation, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Very broadly, recommendations made in 197-a plans fall into two categories: land use and services. The 197-a plan seems primarily designed to allow communities to offer land use recommendations; this is even discussed in the *Technical Guide*.²⁵ This orientation towards land use is due in part to jurisdiction issues; these plans are submitted to the Department of City Planning and the City Planning Commission, and land use issues are squarely within their jurisdiction. Making land use recommendations in a 197-a plan does not guarantee that they will be implemented, but it does align neatly with the 197-a plan’s purpose. Recommendations regarding service provision do not fit as neatly with the purpose of 197-a nor with the responsibilities of the organizations that review the plans. As such, whenever a 197-a plan makes recommendations for

²³ City of New York Department of City Planning, “Community-Based Planning,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

²⁴ NYC Open Data, “New York City Population by Community Districts,” *City of New York* (2018), accessed April 24, 2018, <https://data.cityofnewyork.us/City-Government/New-York-City-Population-By-Community-Districts/xi7c-iiu2>.

²⁵ City of New York Department of City Planning, *197-a Plan Technical Guide* (1997): 7.

services, the City Planning Commission puts a disclaimer in its consideration of the plan, such as: “the Commission notes that these recommendations are subject to funding availability and competing city-wide priorities.”²⁶

In the plan summaries below, I briefly discuss a few key points from each plan. These are: background/context, relevant demographic information, scope and primary goals of the plan, recommendations for how to achieve those goals, and, if discussed in the plan, the public participation process involved. This is to give a sense of each plan’s history, intentions, and proposed methods for implementation. For each plan, some or all of these elements relate to whether and how the plan would be implemented (or not).

²⁶ Brooklyn Community Board 6, *Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration*, Fall 1996, 16, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/bk6_red_hook_197a.pdf.

Table 2: Partnership for the Future: A 197-a Plan for the Revitalization of Bronx Community District #3 | Bronx 3 | Adopted November 1992

Background and Demographics	Having experienced significant decreases in population, disinvestment, low median income, and negative impacts due to urban renewal, Bronx CB3 sought in the 1980s to present a plan to “revitalize” for the future. As the CPC put it in its report, “The plan proposes to reverse the pattern of population decline, housing deterioration, and social distress by reestablishing the community at a reasonable density in affordable housing with a full range of social services.” ²⁷ In 1980, median income in the district was “\$7,455 - less than half the citywide median of \$16,818 and well below the official poverty income for a family of four - \$11,600.” ²⁸ The district’s “ethnic mix changed radically in thirty years from 1950 to 1980: Whites dropped from 54% to 3% of the population and Blacks doubled from 36% to 70% while Hispanics tripled from 10% to 27%.” ²⁹
Goals and Scope	CB3 had five primary goals, presented below (all quoted from the Plan): 1. “To re-establish the Community Board #3 district as a dynamic, viable community.” 2. “To increase the population of CB #3 district to 100,000 by the year 2,000.” 3. “To provide a viable economic base for the community through the provision of job training, and the creation of labor intensive opportunities.” 4. “To maintain, develop and expand the supporting infrastructure of the district.” 5. “To maintain the parks and recreation areas throughout the district.” ³⁰ The Plan was comprehensive and district-wide in scope.
Recommendations	CB3’s extensive recommendations include both land use and policy measures: “zoning changes,” “new housing programs,” needs assessments, and “an economic development plan.” ³¹
Public Participation	The plan was the product of community input and priorities dating back to the mid-1980s, ³² was first

²⁷ Bronx Community Board 3, *Partnership for the Future: A 197-a Plan for the Revitalization of Bronx Community District #3*, Spring 1993, §1, 3, accessed December 5, 2017. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/bx3_partnership_197a.pdf

²⁸ Bronx Community Board 3, *Partnership for the Future*, §3, 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, §3, d-f.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³² *Ibid.*, c.

	submitted in 1989, and then held until the formal <i>Rules for Processing</i> were adopted in 1991. The Plan does not discuss the public participation involved in its creation.
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Table 3: *The Chelsea Plan: CB4 Chelsea 197-a Plan: A Contextual Zoning Proposal to Create Housing Opportunities* | Manhattan 4 | Adopted May 1996

Background and Demographics	<p>Manhattan CB4 started on the path that led to this plan in 1984, in response to “long-held concerns” from residents as “Housing projects and recent development... caused displacement, threats to historic character, and community controversy.”³³ The board wanted to take a “pro-active” approach rather than “reacting to [various] issues one by one,” which they deemed “ineffective.”³⁴ CB4 had initially submitted a 197-a plan around these issues in 1987, before the 1991 processing rules were adopted; the plan that was eventually adopted in 1996 was a rewritten version of that plan, with mostly the same recommendations.³⁵</p> <p>In the years before 1990, Chelsea experienced some “fluctuations in population” while its ethnic makeup remained “relatively constant”: 68% White, 21% Latino, 7% African American in 1990.³⁶ The District’s median income in 1990, \$31,600, marked a “dramatic increase of 133%” from 1980; the 1990 income was “2% below the Manhattan median... and 6% above the median for New York City.”³⁷</p>
Goals and Scope	<p>The plan is highly focused in geographical scope and in approach, primarily offering contextual zoning recommendations for “the historic residential community roughly east of Tenth Avenue.”³⁸ The goals of the plan are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Provide for orderly growth and change” • “Provide opportunities for new, economically-integrated housing” • “Preserve the existing low-income housing stock”

³³ Manhattan Community Board 4, *The Chelsea Plan: Community Board 4 Chelsea 197-a Plan: A Contextual Zoning Proposal to Create Housing Opportunities*, Summer 1996, §3, 2, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/mn8_chelsea_197a.pdf.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Prevent significant displacement of residents and businesses” • “Preserve ethnic and economic diversity” • “Protect residential areas from commercial intrusion” • “Preserve the character and visual unity of Chelsea” • “Preserve the traditional urban form and scale of the community” • “Protect the Chelsea Historic District and other areas of historic character”³⁹
Recommendations	As stated in their report, the CPC saw the specific zoning proposals in the plan as too specific—making the plan more like a “Section 197-c rezoning action” than a 197-a plan—so, with the Board’s agreement, the recommendations were modified to be more general (“reduced,” “existing,” or “increased density,” rather than specific zones, e.g.) ⁴⁰ using a “Neighborhood Planning Framework.” ⁴¹ To better balance “neighborhood preservation goals” and “opportunities for new housing development,” the Commission recommended some specific “density increases.” ⁴²
Public Participation	Public participation took place for the initial formulation, including a public Community Board meeting in 1986, extensive outreach to “almost every group in Chelsea,” and “Meetings and private discussions... with almost all elements of the Chelsea community.” ⁴³ The board continued “frequent contacts with groups and individuals in the community... leading up to the refiling of the Plan.” ⁴⁴

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., §2, 19-20.

⁴¹ Ibid., 18.

⁴² Ibid., 15.

⁴³ Ibid., §3, 9.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 10.

Table 4: Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration | Brooklyn 6 |
Adopted September 1996

<p>Background and Demographics</p>	<p>The Red Hook plan was a reaction to “disinvestment, isolation and abandonment” in “the last three decades”: “With population, housing units and jobs near historic lows,” the Board wrote, “the time is appropriate for Red Hook to enter a new self-defining era.”⁴⁵ The plan emphasizes and builds on the neighborhood’s history of “maritime and industrial activities.”⁴⁶</p> <p>In 1990, the community was largely low-income, with “approximately 50 percent of the population at or below the poverty line” and “approximately 75 percent” living in the community’s large public housing development.⁴⁷</p>
<p>Goals and Scope</p>	<p>The plan focuses only on the Red Hook neighborhood, which makes up a portion of Community District 6. The plan has nine “main objectives”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Promote opportunities for the development of Red Hook’s main asset--its people--including improved housing, social services and youth services, and the expansion of the residential community.” • “Support the preservation and expansion of industrial and maritime activity where it is currently solidly positioned in the northwest and southeast sections of Red Hook.” • “Promote employment and business opportunities for local residents.” • “Promote new residential development in the context of an economically, socially, and physically integrated community.” • “Guide future development in a way that minimizes conflicts between industrial and residential communities.” • “Strengthen, support, and expand the burgeoning arts community.” • “Improve access to, egress from, and circulation within Red Hook by public transportation.” • “Strengthen existing retail commercial areas.” • “Revitalize and create public access to the waterfront, one of Red Hook’s major assets.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Brooklyn Community Board 6, *Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration*, §3, 16.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

	The “primary goal” of the plan “is to restore Red Hook’s population to approximately 18,500” ⁴⁹ from its population of 10,800. ⁵⁰
Recommendations	The plan’s recommendations include a combination of zoning changes, “Physical Improvements,” ⁵¹ new housing construction, and services/programming.
Public Participation	The public participation process appears to have been extensive, with “participants [including] a broad spectrum of community groups, residents, and businesses,” ⁵² and 32 meetings of the 197-a subcommittee of CB6 from April 1992 to June 1994. ⁵³

⁴⁹ Ibid., §2, 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁵¹ Ibid., §3, 52.

⁵² Ibid., §2, 15.

⁵³ Ibid., §3, 88.

Table 5: *Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan* | Manhattan 6 | Adopted March 1997

Background and Demographics	Of the eleven 197-a plans examined, this has the narrowest geographic and content scope. It focuses mainly on a single site, Stuyvesant Cove, bordering the East River. The community in the plan’s study area had experienced “steady growth, even during the period when the city’s population was falling” “from 1970 to 1990.” ⁵⁴ Census District 6’s population had fairly high median household income (\$45,912) and was well-educated; 7.94% of the population was below the poverty line and 4.53% were unemployed. ⁵⁵ The plan was the product of a history of development and infrastructure-building that had lessened the community’s open space and access to the waterfront; in submitting the 197-a plan, the Board sought to provide “over-arching policy for the coordination of [the many] city, state and interagency actions at or near the site.” ⁵⁶
Goals and Scope	The plan’s “three primary goals are: development of easily accessible public park and open space at the waterfront; encouragement of water-dependent uses that are compatible with the open space goals of Community Board 6; and consistency with planning goals of the Department of City Planning and the Manhattan Borough President's Office.” ⁵⁷ The main expression of these goals is the recommended creation of a “1.9 acre park at the Stuyvesant Cove site.” ⁵⁸
Recommendations	This plan’s recommendations originally included “policy goals, design guidelines and specific design proposals”; the CPC deemed these too specific and, working with the Board, replaced them with “Planning Principles.” ⁵⁹
Public Participation	There was significant public support for the plan as expressed in the public’s participation; the community was mobilized partly in strong opposition to a NYC proposal for a “River Walk” at the site in the 1980s. ⁶⁰ The process included 8 subcommittee meetings, “presentations,” and a “public hearing before the Board.” ⁶¹

⁵⁴ Manhattan Community Board 6, *Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan*, Spring 1997, §3, 13, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/mn6_stuyvesant_cove_197a.pdf.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 72-c-d.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, §2, 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, §3, 69.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

Table 6: Williamsburg Waterfront 197-a Plan: A Matter of Balance; Housing, Industry, Open Space | Brooklyn 1 | Adopted January 2002⁶²

<p>Background and Demographics</p>	<p>As the Board presents in a letter introducing the original submitted plan, “During the mid 1980’s, Community Board No. 1 responded to the growing concerns emanating from residents and businesses focusing upon the district’s deteriorating waterfront. Seeing that a more comprehensive approach was needed than just reacting to individual complaints, the Board established a Waterfront Committee... [which] began to set out a path to seek remedy for the ills that were plaguing the waterfront.”⁶³ These waterfront “ills” include “decaying buildings”⁶⁴ and especially waste transfer stations, the latter of which the Commission acknowledged as “much of the impetus for this plan.”⁶⁵</p> <p>In the 1990s, Williamsburg was a growing community with immigrants and artists. The area was “young,” “relatively poor,” (45% below poverty line in 1990), and not very well educated (“44% of adults over 25 years of age have attained a high school diploma or higher”).⁶⁶ The plan notes “fears of gentrification” in two areas of Williamsburg.⁶⁷</p>
<p>Goals and Scope</p>	<p>The plan’s scope is the area of Williamsburg with a focus on the waterfront. The five primary goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Conform waterfront development to adjacent neighborhoods” • “Increase waterfront access and public open space” • “Promote a clean and safe living and working environment” • “Promote local economic development” • “Support and strengthen existing diversity”⁶⁸ <p>As the title suggests, Williamsburg’s industrial economy was also a priority, and the plan seeks to “preserve existing, high performance industry” while also making room for mixed uses.⁶⁹</p>

⁶² Note: this is one of two plans sponsored by Brooklyn Community Board 1 that were adopted in January 2002. As is discussed, they started as part of the same process then branched off.

⁶³ Brooklyn Community Board 1, *Williamsburg Waterfront 197-a Plan*, Spring 2002, §2, 1, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/bk1_williamsburg_197a.pdf.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, §3, 69.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, §2, 7.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, §3, 2-3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, §3, 58.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 9.

Recommendations	The plan presents “approximately 60 specific recommendations” across a broad range of categories, ⁷⁰ which include zoning recommendations affecting waterfront uses and “where appropriate... encourag[ing] housing or mixed-use development.” ⁷¹ The plan also presents policy recommendations regarding housing, economics and environment, ⁷² with the plan noting gentrification-related “increased competition” and “demand” for housing given somewhat affordable prices, population growth, and limited construction. ⁷³
Public Participation	This plan involved extensive public participation. As the Commission acknowledged, the presence of waste transfer stations on the waterfront helped mobilize the community in CD1. The formal public participation process around a 197-a plan for both Greenpoint and Williamsburg began with “five [facilitated] open meetings” in 1989, followed by five workshops between 1993 and 1995 “to further explore what people would like to see on the waterfront.” ⁷⁴ Following some meetings of the Waterfront Committee of CB1 in 1996, the Greenpoint group branched off from the Williamsburg project for its own 197-a plan; the Williamsburg project continued with multiple “working groups... to keep refining Williamsburg’s recommendations,” plus Committee-hosted “focus sessions.” ⁷⁵ Outreach to residents continued with a broad mailing of a “summary of the plan, printed in a newspaper format” and a public forum in March 1998 with over 200 attendees. ⁷⁶ Area businesses were brought in through targeted outreach, including meetings as well as letters to “1,200 business and commercial property owners throughout the study area.” ⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Ibid., §2, 3.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., §3, 12.

⁷³ Ibid., 56.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 8-9.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 9.

Table 7: Greenpoint 197-a Plan / Brooklyn 1 | Adopted January 2002

<p>Background and Demographics</p>	<p>Like the Williamsburg plan, the Greenpoint plan was in part a product of “the community’s strong opposition to waste transfer use.”⁷⁸ The community was “outraged” and mobilized by years of “burdensome facilities” and “ad hoc siting decisions.”⁷⁹ The Greenpoint plan started as part of the same process as the Williamsburg plan discussed above but branched off in 1997 due to different focus and a desire to cover the full Greenpoint area as opposed to its waterfront alone.⁸⁰ The Board notes Greenpoint’s “diverse polyglot immigrant population,” with 36% of its residents being foreign-born (compared to 28% citywide). Of the 36,700 residents of Greenpoint in 1990, 73.2% were White (including a large and growing Polish population), 21.8% were Hispanic, 3.5% were Asian, and 3.5% were Black. With 62% of residents 24 and up holding a high school diploma or higher, the area is slightly below Brooklyn and citywide averages but above the district average of 48%.⁸¹</p>
<p>Goals and Scope</p>	<p>The plan is comprehensive in scope, covering several land use and policy categories throughout the Greenpoint area. As the community was mobilized due to uses with negative environmental impacts, environmental policies factor into the goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Build upon the already strong social, economic, and cultural base of Greenpoint through sustainable programs that would reinvigorate this ethnically and culturally diverse community. • Reclaim the East River waterfront as a publicly accessible walkway and promenade and build a residential and public access connection from Greenpoint’s Historic and existing residential community to a new revitalized and publicly accessible waterfront. • Retain Newtown Creek as a ‘Significant Maritime and Industrial Zone’ and an industrial sanctuary and at the same time, initiate ‘high performance standards’ for manufacturers, enter into ‘good neighbor agreements,[’] and reclaim and clean-up the Newtown Creek area.

⁷⁸ Brooklyn Community Board 1, *Greenpoint 197-a Plan*, Spring 2002, §2, 8, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/bk1_greenpoint_197a.pdf.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, §3, 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, §2, 2.

⁸¹ All quotes and figures from *Ibid.*, §3, 16-18.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link new and existing housing units, live and work spaces, workshops, recreational and commercial and business uses, youth, educational and social service facilities, infrastructure and environmental improvements in a balanced and sensible way on and around the community’s historic waterfront”⁸²
Recommendations	The goals presented above are considerably more detailed than most goals in other 197-a plans. Recommendations include rezoning recommendations, especially regarding industry, manufacturing, and the waterfront; policy recommendations; and limits on future waste transfer uses.
Public Participation	Like the Williamsburg plan, the Greenpoint plan is the product of a robust public participation process conducted over “several years” and initiated by the Board’s Waterfront Committee. ⁸³ From 1989 until 1997, the process worked towards one plan for both Williamsburg and Greenpoint. After this split into two plans and processes, the “Greenpoint 197a Committee” held “three major public forums” and two “business community” meetings; presented at public CB1 meetings; distributed “over 9,000 copies of the Newspaper edition... of the proposed 197a Plan”; and had other “work sessions and informal meetings with area residents, community organizations and other community-based efforts.” ⁸⁴

⁸² Ibid., §3, 38.

⁸³ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 8, 12, 13.

Table 8: CD 8 2000: A River to Reservoir Preservation Strategy | Bronx 8 |
Adopted November 2003

Background and Demographics	This Plan is a product of “concerns over changes to the scale and character of the area’s neighborhoods, and the need to improve educational and employment opportunities, preserve historical resources, protect open space, and improve local commercial districts.” ⁸⁵ The plan “seeks to protect the area’s unique character and natural assets.” ⁸⁶ The large population (95,600) is mostly medium income (1998 median income: \$40,500), well-educated (75% high school graduates), and majority White (59% White; 25% Hispanic; 12% Black Non-Hispanic). ⁸⁷
Goals and Scope	As its title suggests, the plan is preservation-oriented; it is “a means of protecting the area’s unique character and natural assets.” ⁸⁸ The plan covers the full Community District, and puts forth six goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Preserve the scale and character of area neighborhoods; • Strengthen protections for sensitive natural features including steep slope areas, mature trees, water features, and the surrounding contexts of these features; • Improve the appearance and economic vitality of local commercial districts; • Foster economic opportunities and improve access for all segments of the population to cultural and educational facilities; • Create additional recreational resources, enhance existing parks, and promote the greening of major corridors; and • Preserve and educate the public about historical resources.”⁸⁹
Recommendations	The “plan originally presented 70 recommendations addressing issues ranging from zoning and land use to housing, parks, education and economic development.” ⁹⁰ Some of these were out of scope, and the CPC called some zoning recommendations too specific; as such, the Board

⁸⁵ Bronx Community Board 8. *CD 8 2000: A River to Reservoir Preservation Strategy*, Fall 2003, §3, I-1, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/bx8_river_reservoir_197a.pdf.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, II-1.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, III-1.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, §2, 2

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

	modified them and made them more general, towards “shaping a workable blueprint for implementation.” ⁹¹
Public Participation	The Board held five 197-a plan-related public hearings between January 1999 and March 2000. ⁹² The Board distributed a questionnaire to Neighborhood Associations asking them to identify the most important issues in their neighborhoods and offer recommendations. ⁹³ The Board also conducted fifteen “Community and Agency Interviews,” ten of which included government agencies/officials. ⁹⁴

Table 9: 197-a Plan for the Queensboro Bridge Area | Manhattan 8 | Adopted August 2006

Background and Demographics	At the time of writing, Manhattan Community District 8 was “the most densely populated district in New York City,” had a “ratio of parkland per person well below the City average,” and had an “intensified... need for public open space” given recent and anticipated development. ⁹⁵ Interest in increasing open space was well-established, but little progress had been made: “Over the past twenty years numerous studies and plans have considered the enhancement of open space areas around the Queensboro Bridge and improvement of waterfront access, but a comprehensive vision for the area has never been clearly articulated.” ⁹⁶ The submitted plan did not note demographics for the district; the below demographics are from NYC Open Data for 2006-10. The large population (216,229) is very wealthy, with a median household income of \$112,206, 4.4% unemployment, and 2.5% of the population under the poverty level; and predominantly White, with 79.6% of the population identified as White Non-Hispanic, followed by 8.6% Asian and 7.1% Hispanic/Latino (of any race). ^{97,98}
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⁹¹ Ibid., 11.

⁹² Ibid., Appendix A.

⁹³ Ibid., Appendices B, 1-7.

⁹⁴ Ibid., Appendix C, 1.

⁹⁵ Manhattan Community Board 8, *197-a Plan for the Queensboro Bridge Area*, Summer 2006, §2, 2, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/mn8_queensboro_bridege_197a.pdf.

⁹⁶ Ibid., §3, 5.

⁹⁷ NYC Population FactFinder, “Demographic Profile: 1 PUMA | Manhattan: Upper East Side - 3805 (approx. Manhattan CD 8),” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed April 29, 2018. <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/513/demographic?mode=change>.

⁹⁸ NYC Population FactFinder, “Economic Profile: 1 PUMA | Manhattan: Upper East Side - 3805 (approx. Manhattan CD 8),” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed April 29, 2018. <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/513/economic?mode=change>.

Goals and Scope	<p>The plan was created “to help guide the city in its attempts to revitalize the area.”⁹⁹ The plan has a narrow focus, which the Borough President described as “manageable” and CPC described as “targeted.”¹⁰⁰ The six goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Improve waterfront access, including links with the esplanade; • Provide improved connections between existing open space areas; • Provide more street greenery with overall streetscape improvements; • Create more open space, including dedicated park space and passive recreational facilities; • Preserve views to and from the Queensboro Bridge and the waterfront; and • Enhance outreach and coordination with New York City agencies.”¹⁰¹
Recommendations	<p>The plan is quite narrow and focused with its recommendations. The recommendations include “a new waterfront park in the area of the former heliport and Department of Sanitation (DOS) building,” with related access and facility improvements; and improvements to “Existing Open Spaces” and “Streetscapes.”¹⁰²</p>
Public Participation	<p>The need and public desire for more open space were well-established in the District. The Board held 21 meetings “open to the public” between March 2002 and March 2005; these included fifteen 197-a committee meetings, five full board meetings, and one public hearing.¹⁰³ The committee met with “Public Officials,” “City Agencies,” and “Other Groups,” including the Municipal Art Society, East Midtown Association, and an artist.¹⁰⁴ The CPC commended the Board for “reaching a consensus within the community on an approach to public open spaces.”¹⁰⁵</p>

⁹⁹ Manhattan Community Board 8, *197-a Plan for the Queensboro Bridge Area*, §2, 9.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 2-3.

¹⁰³ Manhattan Community Board 8, *197-a Plan for the Queensboro Bridge Area*, §3, Appendix A, 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Appendix A, 2-4.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, §2, 7.

Table 10: 197-a Plan for Community District 9: Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville, Morningside Heights | Manhattan 9 | Adopted December 2007

<p>Background and Demographics</p>	<p>It appears that this plan was initiated by the Community Board due to concerns about development in the area. The Board describes the focus area, which includes the three neighborhoods mentioned in the title, as a unique topographical, architectural, and historical space with “several major academic and religious institutions,” including especially Columbia University.¹⁰⁶ The Community District population is lower-income (median: \$29,743), has high unemployment (18%), and is “racially diverse” with many immigrants; Hispanic residents make up a plurality of the population (43.2%), followed by Black residents (30.9%), and White residents (17.6%).¹⁰⁷ Given this population, which could be displaced by unchecked development, the plan seeks to support the community with jobs and housing, guide development, and prevent displacement. (It also seeks to preserve historical elements.)¹⁰⁸ It is important to note that Columbia University had a comprehensive plan that covered the same area, so the DCP and CPC worked to address differences between the two (including extensive feedback and modifications), and the CPC reviewed the two plans at the same time.¹⁰⁹</p>
<p>Goals and Scope</p>	<p>The Plan is comprehensive in content and covers the full District, “with a particular focus on Manhattanville, as it is the most likely area for intensive future development.”¹¹⁰ The plan’s goals include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Build on the strong social, economic, and cultural base of the district through a sustainable agenda that would recognize, reinforce and reinvigorate this ethnically and culturally diverse community; • Ensure that development in the district is compatible with the existing and historic urban fabric and keeps with the neighborhood’s character; • Create the conditions to generate good jobs for its residents;

¹⁰⁶ Manhattan Community Board 9, *197-a Plan for Community District 9: Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville, Morningside Heights*, Spring 2008, §3, 4, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/mn9_hamilton_manhattanville_197a.pdf.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 4 and p. 15.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., §2, 6.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., §3, 2.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide housing and services that are affordable to the community; • Provide for future growth while preserving the district’s physical and demographic character without displacement of existing residents.”¹¹¹
Recommendations	The plan offers many recommendations – 40 pages’ worth, under 34 different headings – including rezoning suggestions, policy recommendations with an emphasis on housing and jobs, and requested city interventions including affordable housing requirements, eminent domain use, and special designations. ¹¹² As noted above, differences between this plan and Columbia’s led to edits and modifications by both the Board and the CPC.
Public Participation	This plan was the product of a long process, going back to “technical assistance” in 1991 and public forums led by a consultant in 1992; a draft 197-a plan submitted to DCP in 1998 was “returned for reconsideration of various aspects.” ¹¹³ The process picked up again in 2003 through a new 197-a committee, which “held monthly public meetings,” “[t]hree community-wide forums to solicit feedback on draft recommendations,” and used issue-based “Community Feedback table[s].” ¹¹⁴

Table 11: 197-a Plan for the Eastern Section of Community District 6 | Manhattan 6 | Adopted March 2008

Background and Demographics	At the time of writing, Manhattan 6 was undergoing lots of development and expecting more. The Board came to the 197-a plan as a way to guide and manage the various projects: “Both the scale and the intensity of the new projects proposed... require an overall vision to coordinate the separate developments in the context of an integrated community plan... a guide for constructive cooperation.” ¹¹⁵ Notably, Manhattan 6 is the only Community Board that had multiple 197-a plans adopted years apart (Brooklyn 1 submitted two plans concurrently). The demographics presented in the plan are quite limited; the plan discusses the population under age 5 to establish the need for day care facilities, ¹¹⁶ and the percent of population below the
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¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., §2, 3-4.

¹¹³ Ibid., §3, 5.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Manhattan Community Board 6, *197-a Plan for the Eastern Section of Community District 6*, Spring 2010, §3, 1, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/mn6_eastern_197a.pdf.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 18.

	<p>poverty line (7.8%, or 11,227 of the 144,022 CD6 residents) to establish the need for affordable housing.¹¹⁷ Median household income in the district (not mentioned in the plan) is significantly higher in the period in which the plan was formulated and adopted (2000s) than in the 1990s, when the Stuyvesant Cove plan was adopted: \$106,864 in 2006-10 compared to \$45,912 in 1990.¹¹⁸ It is also worth noting that the East River Realty Corporation had “recommendations for the same area,” leading the CPC to “consider both proposals at the same time.”¹¹⁹</p>
Goals and Scope	<p>As the title indicates, the plan focuses only on the eastern section of Manhattan 6; this is because “major changes [were] currently planned” in this area.¹²⁰ As phrased by the CPC, the “primary goals are to”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “increase the amount of useful open space” • “improve access to the waterfront and complete the East River Esplanade” • “enhance and reclaim the street network to restore the street grid and improve transportation systems and access to the waterfront” • “implement land use policies consistent with historical trends in the area, and” • “preserve significant residential developments and individual buildings.”¹²¹
Recommendations	<p>Specific recommendations include requests for special districts, physical restrictions on new development, contextual zoning changes, policy/program implementation (including affordable housing and daycare), “complet[ing] the waterfront esplanade” and improving pedestrian access to the waterfront using bridges.¹²²</p>
Public Participation	<p>The Community Board first reached out to the community about the 197-a plan in 2003; it held ten 197-a plan meetings between September 2003 and May 2004, then</p>

¹¹⁷ Ibid., Appendix D.

¹¹⁸ This is an increase in income even when taking inflation into account.

NYC Population FactFinder, “Economic Profile: 1 PUMA | Manhattan: Murray Hill, Gramercy & Stuyvesant Town - 3808 (approx. Manhattan CD 6),” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed April 29, 2018, <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/389/economic?mode=change>.

¹¹⁹ Manhattan Community Board 6, *197-a Plan for the Eastern Section of Community District 6*, §2, 4.

¹²⁰ Ibid., §3, 1.

¹²¹ Ibid, §2, 2. (Formatting my own.)

¹²² Ibid., 3.

	held its public hearing on the plan in June 2004. ¹²³ The Board submitted the plan for “preliminary review” by DCP “in June 2004”; following DCP feedback, the Board revised the plan and resubmitted in August 2005; that plan “was referred out for public review on April 3, 2006”; finally, the Board submitted another revised plan (with “updated information” and “revisions in response to comments by affected City agencies”) in October 2007. ¹²⁴
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Table 12: *New Connections/New Opportunities: Sunset Park 197-a Plan* | Brooklyn 7 | Adopted December 2009

Background and Demographics	Sunset Park is partly located on the waterfront of Upper New York Bay, and its waterfront industry, which had struggled in the 1960s and ’70s, bounced back in the following decades, driven by “[e]conomic development policies and programs.” ¹²⁵ The plan is an attempt to bring all of Sunset Park, including “upland communities” which hadn’t previously played a decision-making role in waterfront issues, into the development of the waterfront (and to benefit from it), with “the opportunity to influence revitalization efforts and ensure that future developments on or adjacent to the waterfront benefit the local community as well as the city and region as a whole.” ¹²⁶ Brooklyn Community District 7 has a large population (119,013, per 2000 Census); 49.2% of the population in Sunset Park-Industry City (the relevant communities for the 197-a plan) is foreign born; and the study area’s population is 67.4% Hispanic/Latino. ¹²⁷ In 2000, the District’s median household income was \$34,434, below city average and just above Brooklyn average; percent of the population below the poverty line was higher in the district (24.9%) and the study area (27.9%) than in the city overall (21.3%). ¹²⁸
Goals and Scope	The plan is relevant to all of Community District 7, across multiple policy/need areas. The waterfront, however, is the key focus area of the plan. The plan seeks to revitalize the waterfront, maintaining space for industrial areas while creating new opportunities for people to use the waterfront

¹²³ Ibid., §3, Appendix B, 1-2.

¹²⁴ Ibid., §2, 1.

¹²⁵ Brooklyn Community Board 7, *New Connections/New Opportunities: Sunset Park 197-a Plan*, Spring 2011, §3, 1, accessed December 5, 2017, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/community/197a-plans/bk7_sunset_park_197a.pdf.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 41-44.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 53-54.

	<p>for both economic and open space/recreation purposes. The plan’s goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “To promote industrial redevelopment and job creation in Sunset Park while retaining existing industrial jobs. • To maximize waterfront access and open space opportunities in combination with industrial and waterfront development. • To preserve existing industrial, commercial and residential uses and fabric in the area east of First Avenue. • To encourage development that places a minimal environmental burden on adjacent residential communities. • To preserve and celebrate Sunset Park’s rich maritime and industrial heritage.”¹²⁹
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>Because this is a comprehensive plan for the district (with emphasis on the waterfront), the recommendations span various content areas. They include rezoning suggestions, particularly regarding land uses at the waterfront and the desire to increase open space; waterfront and transit access improvements; policies to promote jobs and housing; development of “community facilities”; historic preservation; and environmental interventions, including brownfield remediation, rules around impact assessment, and the designation of “a ‘Sustainable Industrial District.’”¹³⁰</p>
<p>Public Participation</p>	<p>There was significant public participation in this project dating back to a workshop in 1997. Public engagement between 1998 and 2006 included many meetings of the 197-a committee, “Focus Meetings” on various specific topics, a “Business Forum,” meetings with community organizations, and the distribution of a newspaper, brochure, and questionnaire.¹³¹</p>

¹²⁹ Ibid., §3, 16-17.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 19-24.

¹³¹ Ibid., Appendix 1, 222-224.

4. Adopted Plans II: Results

It has been nearly nine years since the most recent 197-a plan was adopted. With this timeframe in mind, we know that there has been ample time for the implementation (or non-implementation) of recommendations from all eleven Community Board-sponsored 197-a plans. This timeframe is also significant because, as it has been so long since the last plan was submitted, and none seem to be in progress, it seems quite likely that no more 197-a plans will be submitted, at least not in the near future.¹

In this chapter, I examine how the city has acted (or not acted) in response to the recommendations and goals of the eleven 197-a plans. The *Rules for the Processing of Plans Pursuant to Charter Section 197-a* make it clear that an adopted 197-a plan is not binding. An adopted 197-a plan is intended to “serve as a policy to guide subsequent actions by city agencies” and to be considered by CPC as it “[reviews] land use and zoning actions,” but it “shall not preclude the sponsor or any other city agency from developing other plans or taking actions not contemplated by the 197-a plan that may affect the same geographic area or subject matter.”² As Angotti states, the latter rule is “a gaping loophole that would let [DCP] ignore community plans.”³ As I discuss further in Chapter 5, the plans—and the processes behind them—can hold value beyond the

¹ The longest period between adoption of plans was between the first and second plans, from Bronx Community Board 3 and Manhattan Community Board 4; the intervening time was less than four years.

² City of New York City Planning Commission, *Rules for the Processing of Plans Pursuant to Charter Section 197-a*, Section 1.011.

³ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 156.

implementation or non-implementation of their recommendations. In this chapter, though, I only examine the extent to which city actions recommended by the plans have occurred. This is to get a sense of how City agencies have reacted to the various plans, and the extent to which they have been “guided” by them. It is challenging to analyze the extent to which goals have been met. The metrics are quite clear, because they are specifically outlined in the plans themselves. When plans recommend construction of specific elements—such as the waterfront parks recommended by Manhattan 6 and Manhattan 8 in their plans—it is easy to evaluate whether the goals have been met, because a park is either built or it is not. When plans recommend rezoning, we can tell whether a rezoning has indeed been implemented in the suggested area, and to some degree, whether that rezoning aligns with what the community wanted as expressed in the plan. When plans recommend policies, these are harder to follow from a research standpoint.

As indicated below, in some cases, the plans appear to be approved and then effectively dismissed or ignored; in other cases, the plans achieved at least some of their goals. The plans are split into two, fairly broad categories: mostly implemented or implemented with changes. Discussion of what made these plans successful or not follows in Chapter 5.

Mostly Implemented Plans

While it does not seem that any plan has had every one of its recommendations implemented, four of the plans have had their main recommendations implemented and their main goals fulfilled. The two plans for

which goal fulfillment is clearest both focused on developing new parks. The primary goal of Manhattan 6's 1997 *Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan* was the creation of a "1.9 acre park at the Stuyvesant Cove site [identified in the Plan]."⁴ Stuyvesant Cove Park "opened in 2003," about six years after the plan was adopted.⁵ This is a clear fulfillment of one of the plan's three primary goals.⁶ Manhattan 8's 2006 *197-a Plan for the Queensboro Bridge Area* also had among its key recommendations the creation of "a new waterfront park" towards the goal of gaining open space in the area; like Manhattan 6, the plan suggests a specific site for the park: "the area of the former heliport and Department of Sanitation (DOS) building."⁷ Other key physical changes recommended by the plan include "links with the esplanade," "improved connections between existing open space areas," and "overall streetscape improvements."⁸ The Board was involved with the planning of a park, which was later named Andrew Haswell Green Park, at the site specified in the plan; "Phase I" was "completed" in 2013,⁹ and another phase opened as recently as November 2017, with more building to come.¹⁰ The goal of "a new waterfront park" has thus clearly been met in Manhattan 6. The extent to which some of the other improvements have been met is not clear.

⁴ Manhattan Community Board 6, *Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan*, §2, 2.

⁵ City of New York Department of City Planning, "Community-Based Planning," <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

⁶ The others were "encouragement of water-dependent uses" and "consistency with planning goals of Department of City Planning and the Manhattan Borough President's Office." (Manhattan Community Board 6, *Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan*, §2, 2.)

⁷ Manhattan Community Board 8, *197-a Plan for the Queensboro Bridge Area*, §2, 2-3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹ Manhattan Community Board 8, "Fiscal Year 2013 District Needs Statement," 2013, 7, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www.cb8m.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/FY2013-District-Needs-Statement.pdf>.

¹⁰ Brendan Krisel, "New Park Space Opens On Upper East Side Esplanade," Upper East Side Patch, November 22, 2017, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://patch.com/new-york/upper-east-side-nyc/new-park-space-opens-upper-east-side-esplanade>.

Parks are not the only changes that have been implemented as the result of 197-a planning: two plans that recommended rezoning have had their goals fulfilled. The second 197-a plan that was submitted, Manhattan 4's 1996 *Chelsea 197-a Plan: A Contextual Zoning Proposal to Create Housing Opportunities*, initially had specific zoning suggestions, which were made more general using a Neighborhood Planning Framework created by the CPC. The contextual zoning recommendations focused on preservation of "existing low-income housing stock" and of "the traditional urban form and scale of the community,"¹¹ and (partly in response to CPC feedback) balanced this with some "density increases."¹² In response to the plan, the DCP submitted two rezoning applications and one special district application. The first rezoning, approved by the City Council in September 1999, "[mapped] thirty-four new or expanded zoning districts covering more than sixty blocks."¹³ The DCP stated that the rezoning was "intended to implement the recommendations of the Chelsea 197-a Plan, which was adopted in 1996."¹⁴ Based on these recommendations, the rezoning created "contextual districts requiring a predictable built form," and

¹¹ Manhattan Community Board 4, *The Chelsea Plan: CB4 Chelsea 197-a Plan: A Contextual Zoning Proposal to Create Housing Opportunities*, §3, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, §2, 15.

¹³ City of New York Department of City Planning, "Chelsea Rezoning," 1999, 1, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/chelsea/chelsea.pdf>.

¹⁴ City of New York Department of City Planning, "Press Release: CITY PLANNING COMMISSION CERTIFIES COMPREHENSIVE PROPOSAL FOR ZONING CHANGES IN CHELSEA," 1999, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/press-releases/pr031599.pdf>.

included reductions and increases to permitted densities in different areas (as well as some maintenance of densities).¹⁵

The locations of these changes generally followed the recommendations of the adopted plan. The second rezoning, which created the Special West Chelsea District, was also a result of the plan; when the first rezoning was implemented, “the Department of City Planning committed to re-examining West Chelsea’s zoning [which had just changed] at a later date.”¹⁶ According to the DCP, “The Special West Chelsea District proposal follows up on that commitment” and was approved in June 2005.¹⁷ Among the changes implemented were modifications to inclusionary housing “to encourage the development of affordable housing in the Special West Chelsea District.”¹⁸

Bronx 8’s 2003 plan, *CD 8 2000: A River to Reservoir Preservation Strategy*, sought to use zoning to preserve and protect “the scale and character of area neighborhoods” as well as significant natural and historical features, and to use policies to support “economic opportunities.”¹⁹ The zoning elements of the plan were implemented by the Department of City Planning quite quickly. Four rezoning initiatives fulfilling goals of the plan, as well as an amendment (as requested) to the rules of Special Natural Area Districts,²⁰ were approved between

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ City of New York Department of City Planning, “West Chelsea Zoning Proposal – Approved!” 2005, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/west-chelsea/westchelsea.pdf>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Bronx Community Board 8, *CD 8 2000: A River to Reservoir Preservation Strategy*, §2, 2.

²⁰ City of New York Department of City Planning, “Special Natural Area District Rezoning – Approved!” 2005, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/special-natural-area-district/snad.pdf>.

September 2004 and October 2005.²¹ The changes were all down-zoning or contextual rezoning, which all worked towards the preservation-oriented approach of the 197-a plan. In a public hearing regarding the rezoning of parts of Central Riverdale and Spuyten Duyvil, Community Board 8 representatives noted the rezoning's consistency with their 197-a plan.²² It is clear that the goals of limiting residential scale and of preserving the natural environment were met by the rezonings and the amendment. Angotti remarks that the "DCP moved the Riverdale plan through the approval process quickly" and "was faithful to the Riverdale 197a plan's exclusionary goals"; he also notes that "Riverdale is the wealthiest neighborhood in the Bronx."²³

Implemented with Changes

Though the four plans discussed above were mostly implemented, the remaining seven plans have not been implemented in the way that their sponsors hoped.

City Action that Does Not Align with the Plan

One of the key goals of the very first 197-a plan that was adopted, Bronx 3's 1992 *Partnership for the Future* plan, was to reverse the trend of disinvestment and to increase the population to 100,000. They planned to do this by "reestablishing the community at a reasonable density in affordable housing

²¹ City of New York Department of City Planning, "Community-Based Planning," <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

²² City of New York City Planning Commission, "C 040515 ZMX," September 2004, 6, accessed April 24, 2018, <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/cpc/040515.pdf>.

²³ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 180-181.

with a full range of social services.”²⁴ The population-based goal is easy to measure: Bronx 3 did not reach a population of 100,000; its 2000 population was 68,574,²⁵ an increase of about 11,000 over its 1990 population. It seems clear that the related “reasonable density” goal was not met, either. Angotti notes that though “many of the vacant lots identified in the CB3 plan were eventually developed by the New York City Housing Partnership,” “the Partnership’s preference was for suburban-style one- and two-family homes.”²⁶ This is a much lower density than the plan suggested.²⁷ Angotti describes this as “inefficient and inequitable,” and mentions that it was “challenged by We Stay! ¡Nos Quedamos!,” a local community organization.²⁸ Interestingly, the Department of City Planning states on its website that the plan’s goals of “revitalizing the district,” “facilitat[ing] mixed income housing development,” and “increas[ing] the population” “have been substantially met.”²⁹ Angotti’s description of the results of the plan strongly contradicts the Department’s claim. The idea that the plan was not implemented in the way Bronx 3 hoped or intended is further supported by John Dudley, “the current [2008] CB3 District Manager,” who told

²⁴ *Partnership for the Future: A 197-a Plan for the Revitalization of Bronx Community District #3*, §1, 3.

²⁵ New York City Department of City Planning, Population Division, “Table G-4: New York City 2000 Census Tracts within Community Districts,” October 2001, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/data-maps/nyc-population/census2000/g4.pdf>.

²⁶ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 158.

²⁷ Bronx Community Board 3, *Partnership for the Future: A 197-a Plan for the Revitalization of Bronx Community District #3*, §1, 20.

²⁸ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 158.

²⁹ City of New York Department of City Planning, “Community-Based Planning,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

Angotti that the plan “doesn’t really have any teeth” and that “maybe once or twice I’ve looked at it.”³⁰

Brooklyn 6’s *Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration* was adopted in 1996. Like the Bronx 3 plan, the Red Hook plan covered a low-income area that had suffered “disinvestment, isolation and abandonment.”³¹ As Angotti presents, the plan “called for preservation of a mix of industry, retail, and housing vaguely defined as ‘mixed-use development,’ particularly along the waterfront.”³² Despite a detailed implementation plan, the existence of “the Brooklyn Borough President’s Red Hook 197-a Plan Inter-Agency Implementation Task Force,”³³ and praise for the plan from the then-chair of the CPC,³⁴ the original plan was not really implemented. This was due in part to local conflicts and in part to CPC action: “the Planning Commission overruled the community board’s continuing support for the original plan and accepted all of the changes proposed by business leaders.”³⁵ This new, significantly modified plan was adopted, and then was ignored when, “[i]n 2004, the CPC approved a zoning change for a section of the Red Hook waterfront to allow the construction of a big box store.”³⁶ Angotti’s analysis shows that the plan was weakened before its final approval, and that its priorities for the waterfront were not valued by the CPC. Angotti adds in an

³⁰ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 158.

³¹ Brooklyn Community Board 6, *Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration*, §3, 16.

³² Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 163.

³³ Brooklyn Community Board 6, *Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration*, §2, 17.

³⁴ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 164.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

interview that the DCP “did not proceed with the recommendations for housing, for zoning, for economic development.”³⁷

The two 197-a plans from Brooklyn 1, covering Williamsburg and Greenpoint, both came from “concerns emanating from residents and businesses focusing upon the district’s deteriorating waterfront”³⁸ and “waste transfer use.”³⁹ The specific goals of the two plans differed, as did the communities that they came from. As Angotti notes, Williamsburg had “an active Latino community,” and its plan sought “explicitly... to ‘prevent gentrification on the waterfront’”; Greenpoint, with a “large white working class,” “was not as specific” on the issue.⁴⁰ Both plans, though, shared the goal of balanced, reasonably scaled development on the waterfront. The DCP’s proposal for a rezoning in both Greenpoint and Williamsburg was adopted by the City Council in May 2005. It allowed for much larger-scale development than the communities hoped for, including maximum heights ranging from 150 to 350 feet in some waterfront areas.⁴¹ Though the DCP claimed that the 197-a “plans articulated a number of principles that have guided the Greenpoint-Williamsburg Land Use and Waterfront Plan,”⁴² many elements of the rezoning were not well received by the

³⁷ Whitney Kimball, “The life and death of community-based planning in New York,” *Hopes&Fears* (2014).

³⁸ Brooklyn Community Board 1, *Williamsburg Waterfront 197-a Plan: A Matter of Balance; Housing, Industry, Open Space*, §2, 1.

³⁹ Brooklyn Community Board 1, *Greenpoint 197-a Plan*, §2, 8.

⁴⁰ Angotti, 167-168.

⁴¹ City of New York Department of City Planning, “Greenpoint-Williamsburg – Approved!” 2006, 28, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/greenpoint-williamsburg/greenpointwill.pdf>.

⁴² City of New York Department of City Planning, “Greenpoint-Williamsburg – Approved!” 2006, 7, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/greenpoint-williamsburg/greenpointwill.pdf>.

community and the Community Board. In 2004, the Board expressed in a letter that “we believe that this rezoning proposal does not comply with the very basic goals of the 197-a plans.”⁴³ As Angotti describes, the community’s resistance to the initially proposed rezoning (from 2001) led to “several important concessions,” including “inclusionary zoning for affordable housing” and “a promise for a waterfront park.”⁴⁴ However, the board was still opposed to the proposal. Their advisory vote against the plan did not stop it from being adopted.⁴⁵ Though the organized community was able to get some wins, it is clear that the two 197-a plans were not implemented as the communities and the Community Board intended.

Modifications Due to Other Actors

For two other 197-a plans, the role of other significant players doing planning in the same jurisdiction led to major changes in the final, adopted plans.

Manhattan 9’s *197-a Plan for Community District 9: Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville, Morningside Heights* attempted to guide development in the area in a way that would be appropriate to its character and that would not displace the diverse, lower-income, immigrant community. The plan put forth recommendations around rezoning and policy, including affordable housing and economic supports for the existing community. However, Columbia University—also located in the Community District 9—proposed an expansion plan requiring

⁴³ City of New York City Planning Commission, “N 050110(A) ZRK,” March 2005, 53, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/about/cpc/050110a.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 167.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

rezoning, which the CPC reviewed at the same time as the 197-a plan.⁴⁶ The two plans had different visions for the area. The DCP states that “[T]he recommendations in both plans, as modified, were reconciled,” and both plans were adopted in December 2007.⁴⁷ However, Angotti claims that “the zoning changes gave the university almost everything it needed to proceed with its expansion.”⁴⁸ Combined with an expressed threat of eminent domain from “the Empire State Development Corporation,” the changes allowed Columbia to overcome resistance from “tenants and business owners” and “buy up most properties.”⁴⁹ This clearly did not align with the vision expressed by the community in its original 197-a plan. A West Harlem Rezoning approved in 2012, five years after the plan was adopted, included “new contextual zones” and “designat[ed] the Inclusionary Housing Program to incentivize affordable housing,” both of which align with the goals of the 197-a plan.⁵⁰ As such, the plan was not all for naught; this rezoning did appear to support the preservation and affordable housing goals that featured prominently in the 197-a plan. However, Angotti claims that “[b]y approving the [Columbia] rezoning, the City Planning Commission basically nullified the 197-a plan it formally approved.”⁵¹ Because the West Harlem rezoning helped achieve some of the plan’s goals, I do not

⁴⁶ City of New York Department of City Planning, “Community-Based Planning,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 168.

⁴⁹ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 168-169.

⁵⁰ City of New York Department of City Planning, “West Harlem Rezoning – Approved!” 2012, 1, accessed April 24, 2018, http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/west-harlem/west_harlem.pdf.

⁵¹ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 169.

believe that the 197-a plan was completely “nullified”; however, its impact was certainly limited by the Columbia rezoning.

Along similar lines, Manhattan 6’s *197-a Plan for the Eastern Section of Community District 6* coincided with another plan from a private actor; this time, the East River Realty Company (ERRC) wanted a rezoning within the plan’s area.⁵² As in the case with Manhattan Community Board 9 and Columbia, the CPC reviewed the plans concurrently and approved both with modifications. The Community Board’s 197-a Plan, which recommended special district and zoning changes to shape new development, sought to “coordinate the [many proposed and ongoing] separate developments in the context of an integrated community plan.”⁵³ In this case, some ERRC plan recommendations were modified to be more in line with 197-a recommendations. The CPC permitted bulk and FAR in the area at levels lower than what ERRC wanted, and more in line with what the 197-a plan suggested.⁵⁴ The CPC also modified ERRC’s plan to help create affordable housing, including “encourag[ing] the early provision of affordable housing,” per the 197-a plan’s “recommendation that permanent affordable housing should be encouraged in new developments.”⁵⁵ It appears that part of the district is now zoned for Inclusionary Housing, as the 197-a plan recommended.⁵⁶

⁵² City of New York Department of City Planning, “Community-Based Planning,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

⁵³ Manhattan Community Board 6, *197-a Plan for the Eastern Section of Community District 6*, §3, 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, §2, 26.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁶ City of New York, “Zoning Resolution Appendix F: Inclusionary Housing Designated Areas and Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Areas,” 2018, accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/zoning/zoning-text/appendixf.pdf>.

The extent to which FAR changes for specific proposed buildings have been implemented is harder to tell.

The most recent plan, Brooklyn 7's *New Connections/New Opportunities: Sunset Park 197-a Plan*, was the product of a low-income, immigrant community that relied on waterfront industry. The plan has a distinct focus on the waterfront, in terms of industry, access, and open space; the plan also has recommendations regarding jobs, housing, and especially the environment, including the proposal of a "Sustainable Industrial District."⁵⁷ The CPC points out in its consideration of the plan that "much of the waterfront property that is the subject of the 197-a plan is city-owned and under the jurisdiction of the Economic Development Corporation (EDC)."⁵⁸ The EDC, which published its own *Sunset Park Waterfront Vision Plan* in 2009, "fully supports the objectives in the 197-a plan."⁵⁹ Among all eleven plans, this appears to be the only case where two separate organizations with plans in the same jurisdiction were in such agreement. It does not appear that this plan generated any specific rezoning, though it did express support for a September 2009 DCP rezoning.⁶⁰ Some other recommendations of the plan were already being implemented when it was adopted and have been completed since. These include the Bush Terminal Piers Park, whose construction was "planned" when the plan was adopted in 2009⁶¹ and

⁵⁷ Brooklyn Community Board 7, *New Connections/New Opportunities: Sunset Park 197-a Plan*, §3, 19-24.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, §2, 7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

which opened to the public in November 2014.⁶² The extent to which other recommendations have been implemented is less clear. It is clear that significant development has occurred on the waterfront in Sunset Park, including the new Industry City development, which appears to be a harbinger of gentrification.⁶³

⁶² NYC Parks, “Bush Terminal Park,” The City of New York (November 12, 2014), accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/bush-terminal-park/pressrelease/21263>.

⁶³ Rebecca Baird-Remba, “Inside Industry City’s Big, Controversial Industrial Expansion Plan,” *Commercial Observer* (February 28, 2018), accessed April 24, 2018, <https://commercialobserver.com/2018/02/inside-industry-citys-big-controversial-industrial-expansion-plan/>.

5. Analysis and Evaluation of the 197-a Method

The primary question of this thesis is: How meaningful and effective is the 197-a plan as a method of community-based planning? In this chapter, I analyze the information gathered in Chapters 3 and 4 and answer several questions that lead me to answer the primary question. In Chapter 3, I presented summaries of the eleven Community Board-sponsored 197-a plans. I focused on four key areas for each plan: background and demographics, goals and scope, recommendations, and public participation. These categories are used to get a sense of where the plans came from, which population's needs and interests they were serving, and how they sought to accomplish their goals. The public participation element is important. In order for a plan to be meaningfully community-based, it must represent and be a product of the community, which has come together to discuss what is important and build consensus. Without public participation, this is not possible. In Chapter 4, I discussed what has come of the eleven plans, including whether they have been implemented or not. I discussed the factors that have influenced their implementation (or not). This also ties back to the key question: although there is value in the process of creating a plan, a plan cannot really be considered effective or meaningful if it is not implemented.

I presented a few key questions in Chapter 1:

- What makes a 197-a plan likely to be adopted? Which types of neighborhoods, community groups, and/or topics areas are suited to 197-a plans?

- What makes a 197-a plan likely to be implemented? What were the results of each plan? Did the plan lead to a rezoning, a policy change, other change, or no change at all?

In this chapter, I answer these questions, and use those discussions to answer the primary question.

What makes a 197-a plan likely to be adopted? Which types of neighborhoods, community groups, and/or topics areas are suited to 197-a plans?

There is no single factor that makes a 197-a plan likely to be adopted. This has important implications in terms of answering the key question and in terms of policy recommendations. Because no single factor makes a 197-a plan likely to be adopted, it is clear that the 197-a process, at least in the beginning, can accommodate a range of communities and needs. In terms of both scope and topic area, plans vary considerably. Geographical scope is as narrow as a single site (*Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan*) and as broad as a full community district of over 100,000 residents (*197-a Plan for Community District 9*). Likewise, some plans are comprehensive in topic area, covering a wide range of topics including land use, housing, transportation, environmental issues, and more.¹ Other plans are narrower in topic area: Manhattan 4's *Chelsea Plan* and Bronx 8's *River to*

¹ Section 4.010 of the *197-a Plan Technical Guide* states that "A plan may take the form of a comprehensive or master plan for a neighborhood, community district, borough or other broad geographic area of the city. Such a plan would combine elements related to housing, industrial and commercial uses, transportation, land use regulation, open space, recreation, community facilities and other infrastructure and service improvements which promote the orderly growth, improvement, and future development of the community, borough or city." (City of New York Department of City Planning, *197-a Plan Technical Guide*, 1997, § 4.010a.)

Reservoir Preservation Strategy focus primarily on rezoning, and the geographically narrow *Stuyvesant Cove* and *Queensboro Bridge Area* plans are also narrow in topic, emphasizing open space and waterfront access.

The variety of backgrounds and goals for these eleven plans, as presented in Chapter 3, reflects another important point: the plans represent a significant range of histories and attitudes towards development. In stating their goals, many of the plans seek to ensure that development is appropriate to neighborhood context. But this means different things for different communities, depending upon their history and contemporary status. For wealthier communities, such as Bronx Community District 8, contextual development would mean preserving neighborhood character and keeping the wealthier populace comfortable and intact. But for lower-income communities with a history of disinvestment, contextual development might protect the existing communities from being displaced by rapid, out-of-scale development, and might help ensure that development was actually beneficial to the existing communities. For example, Red Hook’s plan sought to “Promote new residential development *in the context* of an economically socially, and physically integrated community” and “*Guide* future development in a way that *minimizes conflicts* between industrial and residential communities” (emphasis added).² Williamsburg’s plan sought to “Conform waterfront development to adjacent neighborhoods.”³

² Brooklyn Community Board 6, *Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration*, §3, 5.

³ Brooklyn Community Board 1, *Williamsburg Waterfront 197-a Plan: A Matter of Balance; Housing, Industry, Open Space*, §2, 3.

The Bronx 8 rezoning plan and, to a lesser extent, the Chelsea plan are preservation-oriented and might be seen as anti-development or exclusionary for this reason.⁴ The Bronx 3 *Partnership for the Future* and the plans for Red Hook and Sunset Park, on the other hand, emphasize the opportunity to revitalize and grow. The Chelsea, Manhattan 9, and Williamsburg plans all seek to preserve affordable housing. This means that a fairly wide range of communities saw the 197-a plan as an opportunity, and as a tool appropriate for their needs.

The plans run the gamut from wealthy communities looking to preserve neighborhood character or create open space to low-income communities seeking investment and revitalization. Three of the four plans in Manhattan—*Stuyvesant Cove*, *Queensboro Bridge Area*, and *Eastern Section of Community District 6*—and the Bronx *River to Reservoir Preservation Strategy* come from wealthier neighborhoods. The *Chelsea* plan appears to be the only one from a district that was decidedly median income at the time of plan adoption. The six other plans are from districts that were lower-income when their plans were adopted: Bronx 3, Red Hook, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Manhattan 9, and Sunset Park.

One notable trend is that seven of the eleven plans relate to the waterfront in some significant way.⁵ There is an environmental justice component here: the waterfront areas in some of these plans have housed noxious uses in the past.

Angotti makes the connection here: “Many of the current generation of community plans arose from the struggles for environmental justice in the 1980s

⁴ Angotti specifically refers to the “exclusionary goals” of Bronx 8’s 197-a plan (Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 181.)

⁵ *Red Hook, Stuyvesant Cove, Williamsburg Waterfront, Greenpoint, Queensboro Bridge, Community District 6, Sunset Park.*

and 1990s that arose because of the high concentrations of environmental and health hazards in low-income communities of color, and a concurrent concern with displacement resulting from gentrification.”⁶ Angotti also notes that “in some areas of the city community improvement of any kind... was thwarted by the presence of environmental hazards... Many of these neighborhoods were located in older industrial waterfront districts, and all of them were low-income communities with large populations of people of color.”⁷ Noxious uses on the waterfront in Williamsburg, Greenpoint, and Red Hook helped mobilize the communities there. And the decline of “maritime industry” due to “containerization”⁸ led to job loss and negative economic impacts in both Red Hook and Sunset Park,⁹ which in turn drove the need for revitalization and reinvestment. As Angotti notes above, gentrification is a concern, as well. When waterfront areas are not environmentally hazardous but prices remain low, people will want to take advantage of the location. The economic and environmental impacts on communities situated on the waterfront thus helped get communities organized, which in turn led them to seek the 197-a plan. The *Stuyvesant Cove*, *Queensboro Bridge*, and *Manhattan 6 Eastern Section* plans all have a waterfront focus as well, but primarily because they wanted to establish more open space in areas already full of investment and development—development that sometimes cut off communities from accessing and enjoying the waterfront recreationally.

⁶ Angotti, 131.

⁷ Angotti, 132.

⁸ Brooklyn Community Board 6, *Red Hook: A Plan for Community Regeneration*, §2, 16.

⁹ Brooklyn Community Board 7, *New Connections/New Opportunities: Sunset Park 197-a Plan*, §3, 33.

With all this in mind, location on a waterfront is not exactly the factor that drove these communities to make 197-a plans; rather, the environmental, economic, and or/industrial situations that come from a waterfront location drove the plans.

It is also worth noting here that two of New York City's five boroughs, Staten Island and Queens, did not have any 197-a plans adopted. A Queens 197-a plan was disapproved in 1999;¹⁰ no Staten Island plans appear to have been submitted. Because this thesis only examines plans that were adopted, it is beyond the scope to explore why these two boroughs did not seem to pursue 197-a plans, but that question is worthy of further research.

In summary, it appears that, in terms of adoption, the plans are fairly widespread and equitable. Encouragingly, only one of the plans seems to have exclusionary intentions. Six of the eleven adopted plans came from areas with racially diverse, lower-income populations. New York is a city of a wide range of communities, geographic conditions, industries, and needs. The various 197-a plans that have been adopted reflect this wide range. The next question is whether the way the plans are *implemented* continues to reflect this wide range.

What makes a plan likely to be implemented? What were the results of each plan? Did the plan lead to a rezoning, a policy change, other change, or no change at all?

If the answers to the first few questions in this chapter were encouraging—indicating that 197-a plans came from communities with a range of

¹⁰ City of New York Department of City Planning, "Community-Based Planning," <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

backgrounds, ethnicities, and incomes—the answers to these questions are less encouraging. Based on the results in Chapter 4, I categorize only four plans as “mostly implemented”: *Stuyvesant Cove*, *Queensboro Bridge Area*, *Chelsea*, and Bronx 8’s *River to Reservoir Plan*. A few important trends emerge from this group.

Trends Among Mostly Implemented Plans

The *Stuyvesant Cove*, *Queensboro Bridge Area*, and *Chelsea* plans are all quite narrow in focus. *Stuyvesant Cove* and *Queensboro Bridge Area* both have a primary focus on a single site in their respective districts. Their recommendations both feature the construction of a new park built at a specified site; in both cases, that park was built. *Stuyvesant Cove* Park opened in 2003, about six years of the plan’s 1997 adoption. Andrew Haswell Green Park in the *Queensboro Bridge* area has been built out in phases; the first opened in 2013 (about seven years after plan adoption) and the most recent opened in 2017. *Chelsea* focuses on contextual zoning recommendations for a few specified areas within Manhattan Community District 4, as well as density increases in appropriate areas. As noted in Chapter 3, the plan actually needed to be made more general because it was too specific; the CPC’s Neighborhood Planning Framework was used for this purpose. As discussed in Chapter 4, the first rezoning fulfilling this plan was approved in 1999, only three years after plan adoption; the second, which included affordable housing elements, was approved in 2005, nine years after plan adoption. The first *Chelsea* rezoning according to the plan happened remarkably quickly. The other

Table 13: Plans and Median Household Income by Geography¹¹

<i>Abbreviated Plan Title (Data Source)</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Adopted</i>	<i>Data Year(s)</i>	<i>Community District</i>	<i>Borough</i>	<i>City¹²</i>
Partnership for the Future (§3, p. 3)	Bronx 3	November 1992	1980	\$7,455	[Unknown]	\$16,818
The Chelsea Plan (§3, p. 31)	Manhattan 4	May 1996	1990	\$31,600	\$32,262	\$29,823
Red Hook (§3, p. 18)	Brooklyn 6	September 1996	1990	\$9,443	\$25,684	\$29,823
Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan (§3, pp. 72-c and 72-d)	Manhattan 6	March 1997	1990	\$45,912	\$32,262	\$29,823
Williamsburg Waterfront 197-a Plan (§3, p. 24)	Brooklyn 1	January 2002	1990	\$19,891 (Study Area: \$16,409)	\$25,684	\$29,805
Greenpoint 197-a Plan (Williamsburg §3, p. 24)	Brooklyn 1	January 2002	1990	\$19,891	\$25,684	\$29,805
CD 8 2000 (§3, p. III-1)	Bronx 8	November 2003	2000	\$40,500 (1998)	\$27,611*	\$38,293*
197-a Plan for Community District 9 (§3, p. 177)	Manhattan 9	December 2007	2000	\$29,743	\$47,030*	\$38,293*
Sunset Park 197-a Plan (§3, p. 54)	Brooklyn 7	December 2009	2000	\$34,434	\$32,135	\$38,293*
197-a Plan for the Queensboro Bridge Area	Manhattan 8	August 2006	2006- 10	\$112,206*	\$71,920*	\$55,405*
Eastern Section of Community District 6	Manhattan 6 & ESRA	March 2008	2006- 10	\$106,864*	\$71,920*	\$55,405*

In Table 13, blue cells represent community districts with median household income higher than that of their borough and the entire city. Red cells represent districts with median household income lower than that of both borough and city. The “mostly implemented” plans have their titles in green.

¹¹ Except where noted with an asterisk (*), data are from the plans, with specific page numbers noted in parentheses in the leftmost column. All additional data sources for this table are noted in Appendix A.

¹² The Williamsburg and Greenpoint plans present a different 1990 citywide median income level than noted in other plans; this may be due to weighting done by the district.

interventions based on the plans—the two parks, and Chelsea’s second rezoning—took a few years longer. It is clear that the 197-a process is not a fast one, but few city planning processes are. These three plans all seemed to benefit from the specificity of their recommended interventions.

Another important commonality: except for the Chelsea plan, the other three plans that were mostly implemented came from wealthier, Whiter neighborhoods, as noted in Tables 13 (above) and 14 (below). Manhattan 6, the source of the Stuyvesant Cove plan, had a median household income of \$45,912 in 1990,¹³ well above the 1990 median household income for Manhattan (\$32,262) and New York City (\$29,823).¹⁴ In 2006-10, Manhattan 8, which includes the Queensboro Bridge Area, had an extremely high median household income of \$112,206, and its population was 79.6% White.^{15,16} In 1998, Bronx 8 (\$40,500) had a considerably higher median household income than the Bronx (under \$30,000), and slightly higher than New York City’s (under \$40,000).¹⁷ Bronx 8’s population was 59% White at the time.¹⁸ The Bronx 8 plan, which was a comprehensive plan addressing both zoning and policy for the full district, was

¹³ *Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan*, §3, 72-c-d.

¹⁴ Manhattan Community Board 4, *The Chelsea Plan: CB4 Chelsea 197-a Plan: A Contextual Zoning Proposal to Create Housing Opportunities*, §3, 32.

¹⁵ ¹⁵ NYC Population FactFinder, “Demographic Profile: 1 PUMA | Manhattan: Upper East Side - 3805 (approx. Manhattan CD 8),” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed April 29, 2018. <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/513/demographic?mode=change>.

¹⁶ NYC Population FactFinder, “Economic Profile: 1 PUMA | Manhattan: Upper East Side - 3805 (approx. Manhattan CD 8),” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed April 29, 2018. <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/513/economic?mode=change>.

¹⁷ New York City Department of City Planning, Population Division, “NYC 2000: Results from the 2000 Census: Socioeconomic Characteristics,” accessed April 24, 2018, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/data-maps/nyc-population/census2000/sociopp.pdf>

¹⁸ Bronx Community Board 8, *CD 8 2000: A River to Reservoir Preservation Strategy*, §3, III-1.

implemented extremely quickly. The plan was adopted in 2003, and four zoning initiatives and a desired text amendment protecting natural features were approved by October 2005.

These results indicate that 197-a plans were more likely to be implemented if they were more specific/narrow in focus and/or if they came from a Whiter, wealthier area. The implications of this finding are discussed in more detail below and in Chapter 6.

Table 14: Plans and Race/Ethnicity by Community District¹⁹

<i>Abbreviated Plan Title (Data Source)</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Adopted</i>	<i>Data Year</i>	<i>% White</i>	<i>% Black /African American</i>	<i>% Asian (if noted)</i>	<i>% Hispanic/Latino (of any race)</i>
Partnership for the Future (§3, p. 3)	Bronx 3	November 1992	1980	3	70		27
The Chelsea Plan (§3, p. 31)	Manhattan 4	May 1996	1990	68	7		21
Red Hook*	Brooklyn 6	September 1996	1990	55	16		26
Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan*	Manhattan 6	March 1997	1990	81	4		7
Williamsburg Waterfront 197-a Plan*	Brooklyn 1	January 2002	1990	46	7		44
Greenpoint 197-a Plan* (Study Area: §3, pp. 16-18)	Brooklyn 1	January 2002	1990	46 Study area: 73.2	7 Study area: 3.5	Study area: 3.5	44 Study area: 21.8
CD 8 2000 (§3, p. III-1.)	Bronx 8	November 2003	2000	44	12		37
197-a Plan for Community District 9 (§3, p. 15)	Manhattan 9	December 2007	2000	18	31		43
Sunset Park 197-a Plan (§3, p. 44)	Brooklyn 7	December 2009	2000	23	4	18	52
Queensboro Bridge Area*	Manhattan 8	August 2006	2006-10	80	3	9	7
Eastern Section of CD6*	Manhattan 6 & ESRA	March 2008	2006-10	74	3	13	8

¹⁹ Except where noted with an asterisk (*), data are from the plans, with specific page numbers noted in parentheses in the leftmost column. All additional data sources for this table are noted in Appendix A.

Trends Among Other Plans

This category contains plans that were implemented to varying degrees; the commonality is that they cannot be considered “mostly implemented.”

A few plans in this category had at least some important recommendations implemented. These include the plans for the Eastern Section of Manhattan 6 and Sunset Park. Though they differ widely in income level and ethnic makeup, and had very different goals, both plans had at least some of their goals substantially met. Based on the work of the Manhattan 6 plan, new construction and development in the area was limited by stricter bulk restrictions, and an Inclusionary Housing zone was implemented. Based on the Sunset Park 197-a plan, the Bush Terminal Piers Park opened in 2014. In both cases, the Community Board was not the only organization planning in the area. In Manhattan 6, the East River Realty Corporation was planning, too; in reconciling the two plans, the CPC favored the Board’s restrictions and affordable housing recommendations. In Sunset Park, the Board actually benefited from having another organization planning: the Economic Development Corporation supported the 197-a plan’s goals, and seemed to lend legitimacy.

The five other plans had their recommendations at least partly ignored, as discussed in Chapter 4. For Red Hook, Williamsburg, and Greenpoint, zoning that did not align with the 197-a plans’ goals and recommendations was passed after the 197-a plans were adopted. In these cases, the opportunity for waterfront development appeared to outweigh the expressed desires of the community. In Manhattan 9, Columbia University’s expansion plan appeared to be valued more

highly by the DCP than the 197-a plan. Williamsburg, Greenpoint, and Manhattan 9 all did get some wins in the process, as discussed in Chapter 4. As such, it is hard to say that their plans were entirely unsuccessful, but it is clear that the plans did not have the impact the sponsors hoped for.

Bronx 3, the first of the plans, is a bit of an outlier. Its goals were seen as not implemented mainly because new housing developed by the city was built at a much lower density than the plan recommended; in the cases discussed above, higher density than desired was typically the issue.

Interestingly, the amount of public participation involved generally does not appear to be a factor in the extent to which the plans are implemented. This relates to the nature of 197-a plans as advisory. The DCP proceeded with the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning against the wishes of the two areas despite the approved 197-a plans for Williamsburg and Greenpoint, which would not have allowed such a rezoning if they were followed; the robust public process that went into them; and expressed community opposition to the rezoning as voiced by Community Board 1. The only case where public participation seemed to work against the 197-a plan's success was in Red Hook, in which members of the business community successfully lobbied against the recommendations reached by other members of the community.

Discussion

One important conclusion from this analysis is that there appears to be a relationship between population, scope, and implementation of plans. The plans

that were narrowest in focus tended to be mostly implemented. Among plans that had a wider, more comprehensive scope, the plans that had the most successful implementation came from Whiter, wealthier districts. There seems to be a connection between population needs and scope of plan. Lower-income communities of color are likely to have experienced more planning-related hardship and to have been less represented by the planning process. The plans that come out of these communities are likely to be more comprehensive in scope because they must address a wider range of issues, including environmental hazards, affordable housing, industry, and more. Having a broader, more comprehensive plan, which is advisory (non-binding) and which requires the work and collaboration of multiple city agencies, makes it less likely to be implemented than a more focused plan, even an advisory one.²⁰ As such, there is something of a vicious cycle at work here. The relationship between population and scope can make 197-a plans from lower-income communities of color harder to implement. When these plans are not implemented, the needs may go unaddressed, and continue to require a multitude of interventions that could benefit from a comprehensive approach. Wealthier communities have the benefit of having fewer needs that go unaddressed; when issues such as a desire for more open space arise, these communities are able to create targeted plans that city agencies can more easily implement.

²⁰ About Greenpoint, Widman notes that, “According to the Brooklyn Office of City Planning, the plan’s breadth most likely resulted in the City Planning Commission striking down many parts of the plan” (Widman, “Replacing Politics with Democracy,” 188).

How meaningful and effective is the 197-a plan as a method of community-based planning?

In terms of having a community shape the priorities and goals of a plan, the 197-a process seems somewhat effective—with the exception perhaps of Red Hook, the communities that submitted plans came together and reached some significant level of consensus about what issues were most important to them and about how to address those issues. In terms of having a plan shape action by city agencies, however, the 197-a plan is not very meaningful nor effective. Only eleven plans went through this process, reaching a fairly small portion of New York’s population. This means only certain communities are represented. Among those communities, the adopted plans actually do represent a wide range of people and interests—and thus have value as a way of expressing the voices of people who have been historically ignored in the planning process. And the consensus reached seems to be positive. However, few of the plans were implemented in the way the communities intended. Some of the plans that were implemented in this way tended to come from wealthier, Whiter communities—the types of people that are historically well-represented and that might have a less urgent need for an alternative method of expressing their voice than do underrepresented communities. Plans that were less implemented or that were followed by contradictory zoning tended to come from lower-income, more racially diverse communities.

6. Conclusion, Recommendations, and Limitations

Summary

This thesis has examined the 197-a planning process in terms of its history and in terms of the eleven 197-a plans sponsored by Community Boards that have been adopted between 1991 and 2018. I find that the adopted plans came from a fairly wide range of communities in terms of income and ethnicity; that the plans were the results of long, inclusive community engagement processes; and that more often than not, the plans were not implemented in the way the sponsors hoped. The plans for which implementation was the closest to the sponsors' goals and intentions had a narrow focus, came from a wealthier, Whiter area, or both. As such, the 197-a process is fairly representative of the variety of New York City communities in terms of the 197-a plans that were adopted, but less representative in terms of how those plans were implemented.

Conclusion: How meaningful and effective is the 197-a plan as a method of community-based planning?

The 197-a plan, in its current form, is not a very meaningful or effective method of community-based planning. This is more a product of failure on the part of city agencies to implement the plans properly than it is a failure of the processes that created the plans themselves. For this reason, there is something redeemable about the 197-a process. Considering the high bar for entry for these plans—given the threshold standards and years of planning and consensus-building that they require—it is remarkable that Community Boards went through

this regulatory process eleven times. It reflects a strong desire on the part of communities to guide their communities' development over time, and a commitment to following through on edits and revisions in dialogue with the City Planning Commission.

For four of the plans—*Stuyvesant Cove*, *Queensboro Bridge Area*, Bronx 8, and *Chelsea*—the 197-a plan was indeed a meaningful and effective method of community-based planning. In each case, the community came together, built consensus through public participation, created a targeted plan, and had major elements of the plan implemented by city agencies. For the seven other plans, challenges in implementation meant that the 197-a plan was less meaningful and effective (to varying degrees). There are important policy implications from both the success of the planning process and the successes and failures of plan implementation.

Below, I present some additional conclusions about the 197-a process, followed by recommendations based on these conclusions.

Democratic and Social Value:

As demonstrated, the 197-a process led by Community Boards brought communities together and built consensus over time. This thus process has value in fostering active, democratic citizenship, and likely in creating new connections among previously distinct parts of the community. Though similar activism and connections do emerge from other community organizing efforts, the direct connection with Community Boards—i.e., governmental bodies—adds unique value to this element of the 197-a process.

“Locality Knowledge” Value:

Especially in a city as large and diverse as New York, it is important to have pathways for decentralized, local knowledge to reach centralized decision-makers. To be effective, planning should respond to local needs and contexts. The 197-a plan, through the operations of the Community Boards, provides a clear pathway for this “locality knowledge,” as Jane Jacobs calls it. Especially in a city that often defers to real estate and development interests, it is important for local residents’ desires to be represented, as Angotti presents eloquently throughout *New York for Sale*. The 197-a process faltered in the implementation of plans, but the plans that *were created* largely expressed the knowledge, needs, and priorities of communities.

The Problem of Non-Binding Plans:

From examining the (non-)implementation of 197-a plans, it is clear that the element that most undermined the process was the advisory (i.e., non-binding) nature of the plans. If the plans had been binding, the city would not have been allowed to implement some of the rezonings that it adopted in Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Red Hook, and more. The advisory nature of the 197-a plans makes them too easy for the Department of City Planning to ignore or overrule, and thus undermines the time-intensive, challenging process of creating the plans. Given that no 197-a plans have been initially submitted (i.e., have started the process) for eleven years (since 2007), and none have been adopted since 2009, the 197-a process appears to have effectively ended. In a 2017 interview, Angotti attests to

this idea: “I spent a good part of my career working with communities to develop these 197-a plans and submit them to the city planning commission for approval... Nobody calls me anymore. And if they do, I tell them, ‘Don’t waste your time...’”¹

The fact that 197-a plans are non-binding reflects a challenge in New York City and State (and in roughly half the states in the United States): these are “non-plan states”; i.e., they do not have a comprehensive plan to guide localized planning and zoning. The opinion in *Udell v. Haas* presents the essential problem:

...the comprehensive plan is the essence of zoning. Without it, there can be no rational allocation of land use. It is the insurance that the public welfare is being served and that zoning does not become nothing more than just a Gallup poll.²

In a plan state, proposed zoning changes are required to demonstrate their relationship to the comprehensive master plan. In a non-plan state like New York, there is no such requirement. As such, community boards seeking to create plans lack an essential guiding document, and the plans that they create can be (and have been) easily dismissed, as they are not legally binding.

The 197-a process was a tremendous opportunity that was poorly executed. It allowed people to formalize and express their vision for their communities, based on their own lived experiences and needs. Their input deserves to be an essential part of the planning process, especially when the tax-

¹ Tanvi Misra, “New York City Has Been Zoned to Segregate,” *CityLab* (January 25, 2017), accessed April 27, 2018, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/01/new-york-city-has-been-zoned-to-segregate/514142/>.

² *Udell v. Haas*, 21 N.Y.2d 463 (1968).

generating motives of city government can lead it to prioritize development over community needs.

There was real enthusiasm around the 197-a opportunity, as expressed by the eleven plans that made it through the process. There were seven other instances in which community boards started the 197-a process but did not make it to plan adoption.³ It is clear that there was interest in this community-based planning opportunity. As Angotti references (“Don’t waste your time”), this option is no longer utilized because it is not worth the tremendous time and effort required. Indeed, the 197-a process constitutes a sort of false promise: communities spent years coming together, reaching consensus, expressing their vision for their community, and having their plans modified by the City Planning Commission, only to have many of their recommendations ignored.

Recommendations and Policy Implications

As stated above, the 197-a process appears to have ended as a planning option utilized by New York’s communities. At this point, city government has a few options: they could theoretically formally end the 197-a process; they could leave it as it is, knowing that communities are no longer utilizing it in its current form; or they could change the 197-a process. This thesis has shown that there are important positive elements to the 197-a process, and that its key fault is the fact

³ Angotti, *New York for Sale*, 171-2 and City of New York Department of City Planning, “Community-Based Planning,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

that the plans are advisory and not binding. With this in mind, I offer the following policy recommendations.

First and foremost, New York City should make 197-a plans legally binding. I believe that given the previously expressed interest in the 197-a plan and the many challenges that neighborhoods throughout the city continue to face, communities would be interested in using this option if they knew that the final result was a legal, binding plan.

Additional formal standards and review processes that the city might deem necessary in order to accommodate binding plans, as opposed to advisory ones, should be implemented. Bressi,⁴ Widman,⁵ and the Municipal Art Society of New York⁶ all note the limited technical and financial support provided to Community Boards for 197-a and/or recommend that more support should be provided. I fully agree with this recommendation. Providing more support in terms of funding and technical assistance would make the process more equitable, helping Boards and communities with limited access to resources submit effective, well-designed plans.⁷ Doing so would also make the process more efficient: eight of the eleven plans discussed took two years or more between the time they were first submitted to the City Planning Commission and when they were finally adopted.

⁴ Todd Bressi, "Digging into the grass roots: New York's community planning process hasn't always lived up to expectations," *Planning* 66, no. 3 (2000): 10-13.

⁵ Amy Widman, "Replacing Politics with Democracy: A Proposal for Community Planning in New York City and Beyond," *Journal of Law and Policy* 11 (2002-2003), 180-181.

⁶ The Municipal Art Society Planning Center, *The State of 197-a Planning in New York City*, (New York: The Municipal Art Society of New York, 1998), 20, <https://communitybasedplanning.files.wordpress.com/2007/11/full-report.pdf>.

⁷ This aligns with Widman's discussion of Greenpoint vs. Vinegar Hill (Widman, "Replacing Politics with Democracy," 180-181).

Bringing more city-provided technical assistance into the 197-a process would likely reduce the time needed for revisions.

Making 197-a plans binding would guarantee implementation of the plans. Knowing that their plans could not legally be ignored would motivate Community Boards to enter this intensive process and would thus increase the presence of community voice in New York City planning. Based on the analysis and findings of this thesis, it seems very likely that making the 197-a plan binding would make it a meaningful and effective method of community-based planning.

Limitations

There are multiple limitations to this thesis. The first and most important limitation relates to the methods used to analyze plan implementation. When evaluating the extent to which plans have been implemented, it is more challenging to measure policy implementations than zoning changes. Information about some of the zoning changes driven by 197-a plans is posted on the Department of City Planning website and is thus easily accessible;⁸ information about other zoning changes, and about the creation of parks (relevant for some of the 197-a plans), is easily searchable. On the other hand, policies—for housing, economics, job creation, and more—come from a much broader range of agencies than only the Department of City Planning, so information about their implementation is less centralized. As such, I relied on the limited literature to help determine the extent to which non-zoning elements of plans have been

⁸ City of New York Department of City Planning, “Community-Based Planning,” <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/community/community-based-planning.page>.

implemented. For this reason, my assessment may be biased towards undercounting the amount of policy interventions that were produced by 197-a plans.

As I discuss below, this area is worthy of further research.

Another important limitation is also related to the methodology behind the thesis. I analyzed the eleven 197-a plans in detail, including the original plans and the City Planning Commission's comments and modifications. I looked to New York City documents and other resources to understand the extent to which plans have been implemented. Elements from academic literature and from more recent city documents informed my understanding of the plans and their implementation and provided some insight into how people feel about the 197-a process.

However, I did not conduct any interviews. I believe interviews could have helped me understand how both Community Boards and the City Planning Commission approach(ed) 197-a planning, could have provided information about policy implementation (as noted above), and could have led to greater understanding of potential positive externalities of the 197-a process beyond implementation of plans—for example, whether communities seemed to forge new connections in the planning process.

Suggestions for Further Research

This investigation of the 197-a process raised some questions that were beyond the scope of this thesis, but whose answers would create a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the 197-a process in the past as well as its potential going forward.

Based on the limitations noted above, more research into policy implementation (or non-implementation) as a result of 197-a plans would be beneficial. This would give a more complete picture of the plans' impact than this thesis was able to create.

Community Boards clearly played an essential role in the 197-a process, and I recommend above that they do so going forward, as well. It would be worthwhile to research the political, racial, and socioeconomic makeup of Community Board members compared with residents in their Corresponding Districts towards an understanding of whether the Community Boards are representative bodies, and how they might be more representative. This research could include the Community Board members and leaders that helped generate the 197-a plans discussed in this thesis, though this would likely be challenging due to the time that has passed since some of the plans were created and adopted.

As also noted in the limitations above, it would be worthwhile to conduct interviews with Community Boards, the City Planning Commission, and the Department of City Planning to learn their perspectives on the 197-a process and how it might be improved.

Finally, the unit of analysis of this thesis was fairly narrow, focusing only on the eleven adopted 197-a plans that were sponsored by Community Boards. Further research might include a comparison with other community-based planning methods in New York, to recognize the benefits and challenges of other approaches as well as to better understand how to target 197-a plans. Likewise, further research could include comparisons of the 197-a process with other cities'

community-based planning efforts, in the United States and elsewhere. It feels remarkable, given New York City's role in American society, culture, and politics, that City leaders have not yet found a truly effective way to allow communities to plan for themselves. Other cities have had more success in this endeavor and could provide lessons for New York.⁹

⁹ Seattle, Washington's coordinated, citywide neighborhood planning leading into the 21st Century has been widely cited as a successful example of community-based planning; both Angotti (*New York for Sale*, 242) and the MAS Planning Center/Community-Based Planning Task Force (*Briefing Book*, 411) note Seattle's successful work. Rochester, New York and Minneapolis, Minnesota are also cited in the *Briefing Book* (and Rochester in *New York for Sale*, 242) as having implemented widespread, successful community-based planning efforts (413-416).

Appendix A: Data Sources for Tables 13 and 14

Table 13: Plans and Median Household Income by Geography

<i>Plan Title (Abbreviated) and Data Source</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Adopted</i>	<i>Data Year(s)</i>	<i>Community District</i>	<i>Borough</i>	<i>City</i>
Partnership for the Future (§3, p. 3)	Bronx 3	November 1992	1980	\$7,455	[Unknown]	\$16,818
The Chelsea Plan (§3, p. 31)	Manhattan 4	May 1996	1990	\$31,600	\$32,262	\$29,823
Red Hook (§3, p. 18)	Brooklyn 6	September 1996	1990	\$9,443	\$25,684	\$29,823
Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan (§3, pp. 72-c and 72-d)	Manhattan 6	March 1997	1990	\$45,912	\$32,262	\$29,823
Williamsburg Waterfront 197-a Plan (§3, p. 24)	Brooklyn 1	January 2002	1990	\$19,891 (Study Area: \$16,409)	\$25,684	\$29,805
Greenpoint 197-a Plan (Williamsburg §3, p. 24)	Brooklyn 1	January 2002	1990	\$19,891	\$25,684	\$29,805
CD 8 2000 (§3, p. III-1)	Bronx 8	November 2003	2000	\$40,500 (1998)	\$27,611 ¹	\$38,293 ²
197-a Plan for Community District 9 (§3, p. 177)	Manhattan 9	December 2007	2000	\$29,743	\$47,030 ¹³	\$38,293 ¹³
Sunset Park 197-a Plan (§3, p. 54)	Brooklyn 7	December 2009	2000	\$34,434	\$32,135	\$38,293 ¹³

¹ United States Census Bureau, “MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN 1999 (DOLLARS) [1]: Bronx County, New York,” accessed May 1, 2018, https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_00_SF4_PCT089&prodType=table.

² New York City Department of City Planning, Population Division, “NYC 2000: Results from the 2000 Census: Socioeconomic Characteristics.”

197-a Plan for the Queensboro Bridge Area	Manhattan 8	August 2006	2006-10	\$112,206 ³	\$71,920 ⁴	\$55,405 ⁵
Eastern Section of Community District 6	Manhattan 6 & ESRA	March 2008	2006-10	\$106,864 ⁶	\$71,920 ⁴	\$55,405 ⁵

³ NYC Population FactFinder, “Economic Profile: 1 PUMA | Manhattan: Upper East Side - 3805 (approx. Manhattan CD 8),” City of New York Department of City Planning.

⁴ NYC Population FactFinder, “Economic Profile: 10 PUMAs [Manhattan],” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/142/economic?mode=change>.

⁵ NYC Population FactFinder, “Economic Profile: 55 PUMAs [Manhattan],” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/142/economic?mode=change>.<https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/802/economic?mode=change>.

⁶ NYC Population FactFinder, “Economic Profile: 1 PUMA | Manhattan: Murray Hill, Gramercy & Stuyvesant Town - 3808 (approx. Manhattan CD 6),” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed April 29, 2018, <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/389/economic?mode=change>.

Table 14: Plans and Race/Ethnicity by Community District

<i>Abbreviated Plan Title (Data Source)</i>	<i>Sponsor</i>	<i>Adopted</i>	<i>Data Year</i>	<i>% White</i>	<i>% Black /African American</i>	<i>% Asian (if noted)</i>	<i>% Hispanic/Latino (of any race)</i>
Partnership for the Future (§3, p. 3)	Bronx 3	November 1992	1980	3	70		27
The Chelsea Plan (§3, p. 31)	Manhattan 4	May 1996	1990	68	7		21
Red Hook ⁷	Brooklyn 6	September 1996	1990	55	16		26
Stuyvesant Cove 197-a Plan ⁸	Manhattan 6	March 1997	1990	81	4		7
Williamsburg Waterfront 197-a Plan ⁷	Brooklyn 1	January 2002	1990	46	7		44
Greenpoint 197-a Plan ⁷ (Study Area: §3, pp. 16-18)	Brooklyn 1	January 2002	1990	46 Study area: 73.2	7 Study area: 3.5	Study area: 3.5	44 Study area: 21.8
CD 8 2000 (§3, p. III-1.)	Bronx 8	November 2003	2000	44	12		37
197-a Plan for Community District 9 (§3, p. 15)	Manhattan 9	December 2007	2000	18	31		43
Sunset Park 197-a Plan (§3, p. 44)	Brooklyn 7	December 2009	2000	23	4	18	52

⁷ New York City Department of City Planning, Population Division, “Demographic and Household Characteristics [Brooklyn Community Districts],” October 2004, accessed May 1, 2018, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/data-maps/nyc-population/census2000/demo_cd_bk.pdf.

⁸ New York City Department of City Planning, Population Division, “Demographic and Household Characteristics [Manhattan Community Districts],” October 2004, accessed May 1, 2018, https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/data-maps/nyc-population/census2000/demo_cd_mn.pdf

Queensboro Bridge Area ⁹	Manhattan 8	August 2006	2006 -10	80	3	9	7
Eastern Section of CD6 ¹⁰	Manhattan 6 & ESRA	March 2008	2006 -10	74	3	13	8

⁹ NYC Population FactFinder, “Demographic Profile: 1 PUMA | Manhattan: Upper East Side - 3805 (approx. Manhattan CD 8),” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed April 29, 2018. <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/513/demographic?mode=change>.

¹⁰ NYC Population FactFinder, “Demographic Profile: 1 PUMA | Manhattan: Murray Hill, Gramercy & Stuyvesant Town - 3808 (approx. Manhattan CD 6),” City of New York Department of City Planning, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://popfactfinder.planning.nyc.gov/profile/389/demographic?mode=change>.

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