

February 19, 2025

Council Member Julie Won

Lin Zeng, Director Queens Office, Department of City Planning

Comments on OneLIC: Comprehensive Community Planning

Dear Councilmember Won and Director Zeng,

We are writing to offer comments on the OneLIC plan currently being conducted by your offices. Staff and board members from our organization have attended many of the public meetings held over the past year and a half about the project and also communicated with a number of stakeholder groups and organizations about the plan as well.

CONTEXT AREA

While our organization does not typically comment on proposals and redevelopments in areas not directly adjacent to the Creek, which in this case would include the Preliminary Study Area and the East River shorelines, we would like to comment specifically on the Context Area that has been mentioned numerous times since the beginning of the process. As defined by City Planning, the Context Area is the larger surrounding area for analysis and for City investments and programs. As defined (see map below, used most recently in January 25, 2025 public presentation) the Context Area includes the Dutch Kills tributary of Newtown Creek, many of the blocks to the West, East, and North of the tributary (Sunnyside, and Blissville), as well as the northern shore of Newtown Creek from the East River to Greenpoint Avenue.



This Context Area is significant and we applaud the City's stated interest in examining these areas in regards to opportunities for public investment.

IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

Since 2002, the Newtown Creek Alliance (NCA), has advocated for improvements to our waterway and the surrounding areas, including investments in community health, habitat restoration, public access, improvements to water quality, and vibrant commerce. The Dutch Kills tributary is one of the most unique areas in regards to the opportunities to correct the course of environmental injustices and deliver public benefit for a large and diverse population. The tributary is surrounded by a vibrant mixed-use community where local students (29,000 total within half a mile), workers, and residents have a severe lack of open and green space and no formal public access to the waterway.

We believe that investments in Long Island City should not just benefit residents (existing and new) but also the students and workers in the areas near Newtown Creek. In many cases these populations are underserved and being the most impacted by environmental burdens such as lack of open space and poor air quality. LaGuardia Community College, for instance, is located within the context area and despite a student population of 24,000 total students, has severely limited open space for students and faculty to utilize. In regards to demographics, the enrolled student population of LaGuardia Community College is 89% non-white; 46% have an annual income less than \$25,000; and 73% receive financial aid.¹

In regards to workforce, according to the Long Island City Partnership's 2024 Annual Report, there are 24,184 industrial workers in LIC at 1,788 different businesses. This is a significant population that works both with the OneLIC Preliminary Study Area, as well as the context area.

PUBLIC INVESTMENTS

In asking NYC to examine public investments within the Context Areas near the Newtown Creek we offer a few starting places for project opportunities. Below are a handful of visioning and planning projects that NCA has been involved with, or is aware of, that may offer guidance for public investments relating to open space and environmental improvements.

¹ <https://www.laguardia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/institutional-profile-2023.pdf>

Dutch Kills Loop

[The Dutch Kills Loop](#) concept comprises 1.4-mile of walkways, bridges and open spaces designed to revitalize the Dutch Kills tributary of Newtown Creek in Long Island City. The project seeks to restore and connect neglected segments and enhance waterfront access, emphasizing ecological restoration and accessibility. Central to this initiative is the transformation of underutilized parcels in Queens CB2, namely the defunct [Montauk Cutoff Rail Line](#), the [29th Street shoreline](#), and the [Borden Avenue Street End](#). All three of these sites are owned by City and State agencies, and a well planned investment as part of an adjacent rezoning would go a long way in providing significant community benefit.



Proposed Shoreline Design for 29th Street

Newtown Creek Vision Plan

In 2018, NCA, Riverkeeper and Perkins+Will completed the [Newtown Creek Vision Plan](#). The 150 page document outlines over 85 project ideas across the entirety of Newtown Creek, including many within the Context Area. Some of the project are more aspirational, put all ideas provide benefit across the guiding principles of Resilience, Remediation, Recreation and Restoration. We encourage City Planning to examine the Vision Plan for relevant background and public investment opportunities within the context area.

Newtown Creek Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Storage Tunnel Project

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is [currently undergoing planning for 50 million gallon CSO Storage Tunnel](#), that will include significant work within the

OneLIC Context Area. The project's core focus is to reduce CSO and improve water quality conditions in Newtown Creek and will require the acquisition/easements of a number of public and privately owned parcels, including some near the Dutch Kills tributary. There is opportunity to enhance these planned City efforts by incorporating additional public benefit, namely waterfront access, open space, ecologically beneficial plantings, with the acquisition/easement properties. An adjacent rezoning, can be an ideal opportunity to enhance the existing CSO Storage Tunnel Project happening within the Context Area.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments and continued dialog about the OneLIC plan, especially as it pertains to the Context Area and significantly under-resourced and under-invested in areas near Newtown Creek. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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CC:

US Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez

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NYS Senator Kristen Gonzalez

NYS Assembly Member Claire Valdez

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Kenneth Adams, President of LaGuardia Community College

Charles Yu, Long Island City Partnership

Blissville Civic Association