

Columbia University
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
PLA 6216 - Fall 2014
Mondays, 6-8PM
201 Fayerweather

NYC Land Use Approvals: Where Politics & Planning Meet

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Course Description

The course will take a real-world approach in examining the various land use approval processes in New York City. Students will review the ULURP public review process, the Board of Standards and Appeals variance process, the Landmarks Preservation Commission procedures, and other elements of governmental approval processes. Students will attend public hearings, review past cases, and critically analyze what gets approved, what does not, and why. By following current and past development projects through these processes, students will get an understanding of the interplay between planning and politics.

Sessions

Session #1 - Sept. 8th:

Introduction - What does public review in NYC mean; Discussion will focus on the history and creation of NYC's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) and background information on the structure of City government, makeup of City Council, Community Boards, City Planning Commission, Board of Standards and Appeals, & Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Reading: NYC Charter - Chapter 8, Section 197-c; Chapter 70

Session #2 - Sept. 15th:

Pre-Certification Process, Community Board Hearings, Borough President Hearings; Discussion will focus on hurdles to Certification and the crucial steps of Community Board/BP Hearings

Reading: ULURP Docs, City Planning Commission Report for Kingsbridge Armory project

Session #3 - Sept. 22nd:

City Planning Commission, City Council Hearings; Discussion will focus on the dynamics involved in presenting to and getting positive votes out of these governmental bodies

Session #4 - Sept. 29th:

Walton Rezoning Case Study

Reading: CB, BP, CPC resolutions

Session #5 - Oct. 6th:

Board of Standards and Appeals; BSA process will be discussed, including BSA's role, the required findings, and the general approaches used to obtain variances, special permits, etc.

Reading: NYC Zoning Resolution Section 72-20

Session #6 - Oct. 13th:

Board of Standards and Appeals; W. 28th St. variance application case study will be discussed.

Reading: W. 28th St. case file

Session #7 - Oct. 20th:

Landmarks Preservation Commission; Discussion will focus on LPC's role in NYC development.

Reading: LPC case files

Session #8 - Oct. 27th:

Landmarks Preservation Commission: Discussion will focus on LPC's role in NYC development.

Reading: East Village, UWS historic district docs

Session #9 - Nov. 10th:

Influential factors outside the formal processes; Discussion will address the very real impacts of certain factors that are not officially in the public review process - Community Benefits Agreements

Reading: NYC Bar Association report on CBAs, Kingsbridge Armory docs

Session #10 - Nov. 17th:

Influential factors outside the formal processes; Discussion will address the very real impacts of certain factors that are not officially in the public review process - Restrictive Declarations

Reading: Williamsburg affordable housing RD, IH Commitment letter, Rose Plaza RD

Session #11 - Nov. 24th:

Flex Day - Zoning Lot Mergers, Development Rights Transfers; Discussion will address the as-of-right/non-ulurp mechanisms to increase development potential.

Session #12 - Dec. 1st:

Presentations

Session #13 - Dec. 8th:

Presentations

Reading

NYC Charter & Zoning Resolution are available online

DCP, BSA, and LPC case files will be provided

CBA report and RD's will be provided

Assignments

In addition to the weekly reading assignments and class participation, students will be asked to make a presentation during the final class sessions discussing their experience and observations from having attended two or more public hearings. It is strongly preferred that both hearings cover the same matter. Students can attend one or more Community Board, Borough President, BSA, City Planning Commission or Landmarks Preservation Commission public hearings.