

## Post-COVID Cities: Framework for Opportunity

**Program Date:** Wednesday, 8 September 2021, 12:00-2:00pm

[See event page](#)

### Event Description:

This program is the third in the “Post-COVID Cities” series, hosted by the AIANY Planning and Urban Design Committee and the AIANY Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. “Framework for Opportunity” will recast lessons learned after 9/11 by examining the New York New Visions initiative, identifying present-day opportunities for a post-COVID NYC planning framework for outreach, coordinated advocacy, and partnerships.

**Preliminary takeaways from Working Group meetings and Post-COVID Cities program series, presented in a public program.**

### Program Agenda:

#### **Part I: Post-COVID NYC: A Framework for Opportunity**

A synthesis of planning and design considerations, responding to systemic issues further highlighted by the COVID-19 crisis, based on issues identified in previous “Post-COVID Cities” programs.

#### **Part II: New York New Visions: Lessons Learned**

The planning and design community’s organizational response after 9/11 provides valuable lessons as we look to emerge from the pandemic as a more healthy, resilient, and equitable city.

#### **Part III: Post-COVID Partnerships, Advocacy, and Beyond: A Springboard for Action**

At this critical inflection point, as we prepare to emerge from the pandemic as a more equitable, resilient city and as a stronger regional network, the design and planning professions are well-positioned to lead the advancement of built-environment progress stemming from lessons learned during the emergency response to the pandemic.

**Context:** Building on the first two programs in the series (April 23, 2021 – [NYC Perspective](#); June 10, 2021 – [Reinventing World Cities](#)) a working group of experts, along with an advisory committee composed of members of AIANYs Transportation + Infrastructure and Planning & Urban Design Committees, convened regular meetings to advance options and opportunities for a post-COVID NYC.

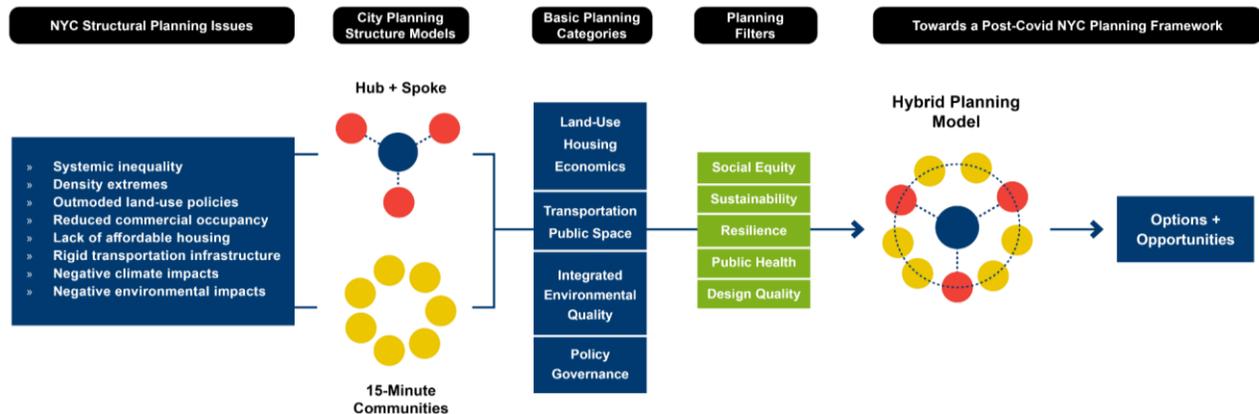
Overall ‘**working group**’ framing categories for **Post-COVID Cities** program series:

- Transportation -- Streets -- Mobility
- Land Use -- Housing -- Zoning -- Economics
- Sustainability / Resilience -- Climate / Environment -- Environmental Justice -- Public Health

In addition to the planning categories outlined, a fourth category called governance emerged as a critical consideration.

## Post-Covid NYC - Planning Structure Analysis

**Context:** Below, a diagram representing the overall concept development process, showing arrival at a "hybrid-planning" model, identifies systemic planning challenges, planning categories, and "filters" through which issues accelerated and/or exacerbated by the pandemic crisis were understood and recognized as a potential for opportunity in near-term and long-term transformative recovery strategies, both with hyper-local, neighborhood-scale focus and with NYC as the central regional economic engine and global hub.



## Post-Covid NYC Hybrid Planning Model - Key Characteristics

- Regional CBD connected to polycentric neighborhood nodes
- Linked to accessible public transportation and mobility networks
- Active, mixed-use, socio-economically diverse neighborhoods
- Equitable allocation of public resources to support economic opportunity
- Vibrant parks and open spaces in every neighborhood
- Integrated, efficient energy systems that support zero-carbon goals

## Post-Covid NYC - Options and Opportunities

### // REBALANCE LAND-USE / HOUSING AND ECONOMICS

- **Increase land-use density in borough / regional hubs outside Manhattan CBD** to support sustainable, transit-oriented development
- **Eliminate single-family zoning city-wide** to allow appropriate accessory units in single-family homes
- **Encourage commercial and residential growth** through public investment/private incentives in **second-tier nodes and neighborhood hubs**
- **Balance central office occupancy with hybrid remote work** options to provide flexibility and support of active, mixed-use neighborhoods

- **Encourage office-residential conversion, where appropriate**, to respond to commercial market changes while supporting affordable housing development and diversifying CBD uses
- **Reinforce existing and cultivate new vital ‘main street’ commercial/retail hubs** in all neighborhoods as they adapt to shifting work patterns
- **Diversify the economy to reduce risk from over-reliance on dominant sectors**
  - **Prioritize support for social infrastructure networks** – health care system, social service system, schools, libraries, community organizations – through investment in built environment assets and their connections
  - **Support small businesses and retail uses** with sustainable, mixed-use neighborhood development and support services
  - **Support cultural and recreational job opportunities and experiences** for the creative industry, residents, and tourists
  - **Cultivate emerging innovation sectors** through public policy strategies and incentives
- **Remove barriers to the development and preservation of market-rate and affordable housing city-wide**
  - **Encourage market-rate housing development** to relieve pressure on rents and home prices
  - **Create and preserve affordable housing options** for all eligible population segments
  - **Enforce income regulations** to ensure that subsidized housing serves those in need of it
  - **Develop more effective housing voucher programs** to ensure housing affordability and stability
  - **Invest in energy-efficient rehab of all NYCHA public housing** and support facilities
- **Leverage community investment to counteract displacement while encouraging responsible development** in all neighborhoods
  - **Encourage community land trusts** to provide community ownership and neighborhood value capture
  - **Encourage community partners in development projects**, requiring those with public funding

## // FLEXIBLE PUBLIC SPACE / TRANSPORTATION

- **Improve public transit service and coverage** by reimagining system service model
  - **Focus on reinforcing neighborhood hubs and increasing service to underserved** neighborhoods by providing more reliable, flexible bus networks
  - **Develop affordable, flexible mobility options** (shared, on-demand, etc.) to supplement rail/bus transit
  - **Harness communications technology to integrate fare structures and facilitate service access** across range of public and private mobility service options
- **Reimagine road/street network with a hierarchy of usage intensity**, ranging from regional to neighborhood to hyper-local, ensuring access and service while preserving neighborhood safety and quality-of-life conditions. **Focus on active streets that minimize vehicle impacts.**
- **Expand road pricing and other traffic management tools** to discourage unnecessary vehicle trips, reduce traffic congestion, and provide funds for public transit
- **Encourage flexible work schedules, where feasible**, to reduce peak commuting congestion and utilize transportation infrastructure more efficiently

- **Build on success of complete streets initiatives to rebalance usage of street and public space assets**, according to city-wide and neighborhood-specific needs and priorities
  - **Create and execute city-wide Streets Master Plan with mobility mode priority policy of pedestrians→ bikes→ emergency/service vehicles→ public transit→ commercial vehicles→ private automobiles** when designing streets, sidewalks, public spaces
  - **Balance commercial use of public streets and open space** through street management strategies, targeted regulations, and appropriate user fees
  - **Implement freight delivery policies that balance consumer demand and business needs with quality-of-life protections.** Develop infrastructure for rail, maritime, and micro-delivery options as an alternative to truck-based systems.
- **Develop multi-functional public realm infrastructure** that strengthens social capital while simultaneously mitigating the risks of climate change and flood risk
  - **Expand and improve park spaces throughout the city**, with a focus on equitable distribution of resources for planning, construction, and maintenance in disadvantaged communities
  - **Support development of connected public open space networks**, to include time-of-day usage around schools, markets, recreation, and culture
  - **Engage local communities in park and open space design and programming**
  - **Balance active landscapes with the support and restoration of local habitats and ecological systems**
- **Apply public safety and security solutions for public spaces with consideration for inherent and unexpected risks**, while maintaining high-quality design goals and outcomes
  - **Create secure neighborhoods through proactive community engagement, outreach services, and equitable resource distribution**
  - **Develop solutions that are contextually and culturally sensitive**
  - **Utilize a broad spectrum of solutions, including physical and technological strategies, that recognize human dignity, right to access and assembly, and privacy**
  - **Avoid security practices that reinforce biases and erode positive community cohesion**

## // INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

- **Commit to leading-edge sustainability and resilience goals for existing and new development**
  - **Achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050** (or sooner - 2035?)
  - **Transition to clean, renewable energy production and consumption**
  - **Build on and reinforce provisions of NYC Climate Mobilization Act (2019)**, including Local Law 97
- **Rebalance public investment from over-reliance on climate mitigation to adaptation models**
  - **Revise zone district designations and preemptively acquire property to incentivize future sustainable, development above year-2100 flood levels**
  - **Develop strategies to relocate the most vulnerable populations to more sustainable neighborhoods**
  - **Invest in natural systems for ecological approach to physical development and landscape initiatives**, including vulnerable shoreline areas
- **Support a more circular approach to production / consumption cycles**
- **Incorporate comprehensive public health standards in public and private development**

- **Prioritize environmental justice policies for new development / restorative development**

## // RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE / PLANNING

- **Encourage policies and programs that emphasize equitable and sustainable economic growth**
  - **Emphasize generational-targeted policies and programs** to support families and community stability
  - **Involve communities as primary stakeholders/partners** to inform local and city-wide policies
  - **Ensure that public resources and services are provided equitably** according to neighborhood needs
- **Encourage short-/medium-term PlaNYC-type process for interagency planning, implementation, and coordination**
  - **Use this process to coordinate ongoing topical plans against city-wide and regional principles**
  - **Establish responsibility for coordination in Mayor’s Office and implementation-focused agencies such as EDC and HPD**
  - **Institute regular, metric-driven public evaluation of policies and projects** with course-correction adjustments
  - **Encourage innovation by the public and private sectors**
  - **Leverage temporary responses to disruptions and disasters**, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, to reimagine status-quo assumptions and policies
- **Establish a more flexible, long-term comprehensive planning process** that balances city-wide and community issues through incentives and regulation
  - **Establish an iterative planning process** that creates a city-wide framework of principles and goals; incorporates community input through locally-based workshops involving public, private and civic groups; and consolidates recommendations and strategies in a city-wide comprehensive plan.
  - **Define short-term actions, medium-term strategies, and long-term scenarios**
  - **Update city zoning based on results of planning process**
  - **Establish regularly-scheduled evaluation/plan revision/development actions** and strategies based on agreed metrics
  - **Provide design and planning support to Community Boards, BIDs and other city or community organizations** that have a role in shaping the city
- **Reduce overly restrictive or counterproductive regulatory bottlenecks** to support existing businesses and accelerate beneficial development initiatives that align with city-wide public policies
- **Reorganize NYC’s sustainability policy development, budgetary, implementation and agency coordination responsibilities under the Mayor’s Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability**
- **Reform CEQR environmental review process**
  - **Coordinate environmental reviews with comprehensive planning goals** to expedite approvals for preferred development initiatives
  - **Require environmental impact disclosure documents to fully assess the underlying stresses / community impacts of climate and environmental factors**, including urban heat island effects, and how projects would exacerbate them
  - **Build mitigation measures upfront into large-scale planning, zoning, and development initiatives**

- **Ensure that “design excellence” is a core value in the development of future planning and design initiatives.** Embed enhanced design quality assessments in public review processes, recognizing that successful planning, design, and development outcomes are based on authentic human experiences.

### **Next Steps**

These considerations form the basis for developing an outreach strategy as we move into a period of administrative transition. The intent is to utilize this potential platform as a ground to further develop organizational partnerships with shared built-environment goals.

### **Working Group Respondents**

- Janice Barnes, PhD, AIA, LEED AP
- Christian Braneon, PhD
- Joshua Foss
- Mark Ginsberg, FAIA, LEED AP
- Elijah Hutchinson
- James Lima
- Margaret Newman, FAIA, LEED AP
- Carol Tan

### **Advisory Group**

- Mike Aziz, AIA, LEED AP
- Ernie Hutton, FAICP Assoc AIA
- Jessica Morris, Assoc AIA
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- Allen Swerdlowe, FAIA
- Jim Wright, AIA

**END (draft 9/1/21)**