Nolan Gray:

Howdy. I'm Nolan Gray, your friendly neighborhood city planner, research director at California YIMBY, and one of the new co-leads of the Metropolitan Abundance Project. Welcome back to the Abundance podcast. In this episode, we chat with Annemarie Gray. Gray is the executive director of Open New York, the state's leading grassroots pro-housing advocacy organization. Prior to that, she spent three years as a senior advisor overseeing land use and fair housing under Mayor Adams and Mayor De Blasio in New York City.

She previously worked for the New York City Economic Development Corporation, NYCEDC, and the Cambridge Housing Authority in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She has a master's from MIT's Department of Urban Planning, excuse me, Urban Studies and Planning, and a bachelor's degree in architecture from Washington University in St. Louis.

In this episode, we dive into the current state of housing and YIMBY advocacy in New York City. I will caution you, we recorded this episode I think almost exactly a week before the governor made the bizarre decision to suddenly cancel New York City's exciting plans for congestion pricing. We're all very sad about that, but we do not address this in the podcast. It was sufficiently important news that we considered re-recording, but there's just so much good material here that I think you're going to like it either way. The progress that they're making in New York City is incredible, and it's such an important city for us to get right for housing.

We're joined in this episode by California YIMBY's CEO, Brian Hanlon. Very exciting, a new first-time co-hosting. So be patient. I think he does a fine job. And before I let you go, of course as always, like, subscribe, leave a review, leave a comment. We value all the feedback that we get and we want to keep improving. With that, on to the show. Annemarie Gray, welcome to the Abundance podcast.

Annemarie Gray:

Thanks for having me.

Nolan Gray:

As much as I lean into the joke, you are not my cousin. We are unrelated Grays. But it's great to be chatting with you from opposite ends of in many ways the country and the

YIMBY movement. Maybe let's do a little bit of table setting. What's the problem, Annemarie? New York City. Super affordable, right? It's famous for its affordability and its great housing and incredible housing quality. Why is there a pro-housing movement in New York right now?

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, New York is famous for no one wanting to live here, for it being really, really cheap to live here, and there being no problems whatsoever. So yeah, it's funny because in New York a lot of people are like, there's so many buildings. If you're not paying attention to housing policy really closely, you'd think that New York is building a lot, and I think we are actually building so little. I mean, you both focus on California. A stat that I often use to talk to New Yorkers who are new to this stuff is in the 2010s, New York City permitted 40% fewer homes per capita than San Francisco, which as you all know is famous for not building housing. So just some of the other stats that we rattle down that really do pop people's eyes about like, no, no, no, just because we have a lot of tall buildings does not mean we're doing this well. Just a couple months ago, it was announced that we have a 1.4% vacancy rate, which is basically zero. A healthy housing vacancy rate is like seven to eight percent. It's been like four-ish percent for the past decade. It's 1.4% right now.

We have a lot of parts of Manhattan that are losing homes, like on net losing homes because people are consolidating and we're not building anything. We built one new home for every three jobs in the last decade. Half of New Yorkers are rent burdened. Quality is a really big problem. Our suburbs Westchester and Long Island are some of the most exclusionary places in the entire country.

So I think that there's a lot of table setting to put in context. Some people respond well to stats. I think other people, you just look at how quickly rents are rising. You look at how many people would love to live here. You look at the migrant crisis, you look at the fact that we have a hundred thousand children in shelters right now. A huge number of public school students live in shelters. So we've got a housing problem.

Brian Hanlon:

I'm curious, Annemarie, so you just went through this whole litany of the consequences of the failures to build housing in New York, which sounds very familiar, sitting here in San Francisco. Why do the YIMBYs of New York, what motivates most of them? Are

there certain aspects of the problem that you just talked about that you find are especially compelling, or is it a different group of folks who are motivated by very different reasons?

Annemarie Gray:

I think people are definitely motivated by different reasons, but I think on one hand you have a lot of people who are just struggling with rent. They're on the cusp of being able to live here at all. And so there are a lot of people that come here for a job, like amazing job opportunities, and being able to actually afford a life here is really, really challenging.

I think then there's also a bucket of people who, you know, New York City's history and its identity and something that people are really proud of, its diversity. It being a place that's open to the world. It is a place where you can come and you can be whatever you want. It's a place that has been able to have that diversity because working and middle-class families can thrive. That's how New York City was built. It's the cultural capital. It's such an exciting place to be.

And you see rents climb. You see people who help build it not be able to afford to live here anymore. You see migrants and immigrants and people of all walks of life want to live here and not be able to. And it's really threatening that core identity. And I think that resonates with a lot with people.

And I think then also you're in politics, you're in policy, you start to learn more about what's happening in other parts of the country and parts of the world, and you realize the solutions are not that complicated and we could actually fix this if we want. And the politics are so challenging.

I think people come at it from different reasons, but I think they fall in some of those buckets. I think you've also seen the places that do have housing growth, especially in the last decade or so. We saw rezoning that was almost predominantly in Black and Brown neighborhoods and this sort of idea that some of the wealthiest, and frankly whitest, parts of the city, which frankly are some of the wealthiest parts of the country, if not the world, are like de facto off limits to letting new people live there in terms of the way the political processes are set up.

And I think that's the origin. That's how I got radicalized into a lot of this. That's how a lot of our members got started. A focus on how deeply exclusionary and inequitable the outcomes were because of the largely political processes that have been in place.

Brian Hanlon:

Sounds really familiar to the origins of the involvement of the YIMBY in San Francisco, other than we can never quite claim to be the cultural capital of the United States.

Nolan Gray:

Well, I mean I'm solidly on Team California at this point, but it's always funny because people say the same type of thing about California and New York City. They're like, "Oh, it's so messed up. It's so dysfunctional. I've given up on it." And I'm always like, you've given up on the largest and most important state? You've given up on New York City, the capital of the universe? What a crazy conclusion to reach. These places are just so important. I mean, especially New York City's historic role as the entry point for folks moving to the country.

We talk about these qualities that places take on. You're never really sorry to Austin and other great cities that have booming tech sectors, there's always going to be something in the air in the Bay Area that makes it most productive for tech, or LA with entertainment and certain cultural qualities. And it's like New York has kind of cracked a code of this is how you take people from country bumpkin folks from the US and then folks from radically different cultures and you slowly turn them into Americans and then you ship them off to New Jersey and then eventually Florida. But these are these places that have outstanding national importance. It's so key to get right and to keep affordable.

Annemarie Gray:

New Jersey these days is doing better at the American Dream than New York because they're actually building housing and you could afford to live there. But yeah, I think you can also make the same argument about the economic importance of New York City to the whole country, the political importance of New York to the whole country. But there really is something of, and I felt this when I first moved here, of it's like the great experiment of can we actually have really different people living together?

And I think you have the examples that people are really proud of, when that does feel true. In New York, you have a lot of examples that we don't like to talk about as much of how it's really not working, but so much of that is just tied to fundamental opportunities

of can people live there and make their life what they want it to be and be whoever they want to be? You could argue forever whether or not how true that is and whether or not it's playing out, but it's an identity that I think people feel very strongly as New Yorkers, but we very strongly feel as I think Americans.

Nolan Gray:

Well, let me ask you this. I love LA, but you ride around LA and you're like, yeah, okay, a lot of stuff could be redeveloped and the city would only get better. A lot of old, tired strip malls and older single family homes. You're like, “cool, lots and lots of housing construction will be great here.” And I think it's partly true, unlike the west side of SF.

A challenge with New York is as you mentioned in your opening comments, parts of New York are massively built up. Parts of New York City are of really, really outstanding historic value. I think people look at it and say, oh, abolishing single family zoning and parking requirements, the standard YIMBY playbook, that doesn't make any sense in New York. And I wonder how do you think about that work and maybe how is the way that you think of pro-housing advocacy maybe different from folks in other contexts?

Annemarie Gray:

And this has actually been something really interesting, especially as Open New York has grown to have more of a state presence and focus more on state policy as well, is I think that in the densest parts of New York City, the challenges are a little bit different. I mean, believe it or not, we still do have parking, mandatory parking requirements in all of New York City that does apply to even some places you would never think it applies to. The idea that New York City is full, it's just not true. There are a lot of places we can go up even in some of the denser areas.

I think that the way we think about historic preservation is very intricately tied to housing, especially in parts of Manhattan. And this is a long-term project we all have to figure out. There are whole swaths still within New York City that actually are not connected to transit and should be, but even the places that are connected to transit, you're not seeing some of the housing density that could be there.

And some of the issues around, just like legalizing more missing middle housing in some of these places, it does still apply. But within New York City, both because of the politics and just the reality that we're dealing with the 12 FAR cap and why you can't

build certain types of building, that feels a little unique. There's a proposal in this current City of Yes proposal of sort of a 20% bump that applies to certain zoning districts.

Some of that doesn't apply quite as much, but when you look at especially the New York City suburbs and all of New York state, the playbook is not actually that different. The fact that Long Island builds kind of the least amount of housing in the country, I mean Westchester, there's been more and more reporting, especially in the last year or two as we've been shifting the conversation to the state, at how some of the most egregious exclusionary zoning patterns in Westchester have a four acre lot minimum and places where you're like 45 minutes from Grand Central and its parking lots as far as you can see. There's the impact of that on the state. There's the impact of that on those places themselves.

But there's also the pressures that get added to New York City I think are not ones that are well enough recognized of why we have to have a state solution and why New York City's housing problems are regional problems in particular. And we have the best regional transit network in the country, and we plan for that regionally and we have zero regional housing planning basically.

Brian Hanlon:

So you hit on a ton of good stuff right there, from regionalism to state planning to learning the political playbook. But I'm curious to note how you're navigating the historic preservation issue. Because there certainly are beautiful neighborhoods in New York. There are individual buildings of historic merit, and there are certainly a lot of passionate people who really care about making sure that nothing ever changes until they and their children and their children's children die.

So how do you navigate that? I mean, how do you say it's like, well, look, I understand that Bob Dylan once had a cup of coffee at this shop in Greenwich Village, but that doesn't actually mean that it needs to stay covered in amber for all of eternity?

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah. A couple initial ideas on that. One, it's that first, I think in any conversation about historic preservation, we have to wrestle with the fact that certain people's history was preserved and other people's weren't. And if you actually look at a map, especially in New York, of what's in a historic district, there's no way that's the only history that was

interesting to preserve. And you track that to home values, you track that to down zonings, frankly, it's a wealth preservation tool and we have to be upfront about that.

Frankly, some of the biggest opposition that we face in New York, at least that has been organized for a long time, is people who are really, really putting historic preservation and any new supply at odds. And I think you really have to disentangle smart policy choices that can recognize that both of these things can coexist. The SoHo/NoHo rezoning, we did a rezoning that added housing to a historic district. It was one of the first times you've actually really done that. And there was like, how do you work with the landmarks? How do you design zoning in relation to the Landmarks Preservation Agency? And there are some tweaks to work through, but if you recognize that you need to build housing and we also need to take a good hard look at what really does matter to keep preserving, there's got to be solutions.

There's still so much more to go, though. For example, what do you think about specific landmarks versus an entire historic district? Other cities who are far older than New York manage to have old stuff and new stuff next to each other, and it looks great and it works great and people love it. And again, these people with histories that go far, far longer than New York. I think of this every time I go to London or lots of other cities.

And so there is the political problem of how organized some of those people are and the often bad faith opposition of what they're pushing back on. And then there's the real good faith that there are much better solutions of how we could do this and also not build nothing and lose housing units in some of these places. And we have to really recognize the practical impact that we're making when we're saying these places are preserved in amber, because you can see it in the home values and that's true.

Nolan Gray:

Yeah, I mean, I think part of the key here is there's just no path to equitable abundant housing unless every neighborhood is adding some amount of new housing, or certainly in these incredibly high opportunity, centrally located places. I think another important thing is I think folks who maybe haven't spent a lot of time there, they imagine New York and they imagine the skyline and the skyscrapers. Even the most densely built up parts of the city, and SoHo and NoHo are probably some of the densest parts of the city, you'll still have the one story warehouse. You'll still have the McDonald's that somehow got built in the eighties.

I lived in the Upper East Side, and it's like, yeah, the Upper East Side is incredibly dense and that's great. And there's many sites where it's like there's no infill opportunity here.

But there were also many sites where it's like you could build if we didn't make it so incredibly hard to build, and it's like there are massively underbuilt sites that most normal people who would want to protect many buildings in the Upper East Side could still say, "Yeah, that makes sense to build something there," right?

Annemarie Gray:

Right. I think there's both, and just the fact that there are still so many opportunities regardless. One example, another project I worked on that Open New York did a lot of organizing around, this project called 250 Water Street. It was a parking lot in Lower Manhattan in a historic district. And the legally mandated process for the Landmarks Agency to review that site was to only use, it's in landmarks law, was to only use the bounds of the landmark district. Literally this is Lower Manhattan, you're like a couple blocks from Wall Street.

And so that notion was crazy. So it was a complicated process with a lot of bumps to build a building that was still lower than so many of the buildings around it on a parking lot. You also can't consider housing, you can't consider a multitude of goals, and that's the law in the books right now. That project I think really was a great example of how broken some of these systems are and how we need to take a good hard look at them.

Nolan Gray:

Just elevating a couple other things that you're getting at here. So I was a city planner in Queens, and again, people imagine New York, they think of Manhattan. Geographically, the vast majority of New York City's in the outer boroughs. Certainly in places like Queens and Staten Island, but even large portions of Brooklyn and Bronx, you do just have R1 zoning, sometimes with fairly large lots. You do just have really restrictive commercial zones where basically you can only build a strip mall. And that's within the city proper. I think you stress an important point, which is that the in-state suburbs of New York build almost nothing.

And exactly to your point, it's not even like these are places where, oh yeah, they should be building more and there's going to be this transition period where it's going to be tough and everyone's going to be driving. It's like, no, these places have like LIRR and Metro North commuter trains, and they're surrounded by single family homes, and it's like everything is there. This place actually can take on a lot more capacity.

That said, another weird aspect of Long Island NIMBYism is communities opposing sewer systems because they know that they'll need to add density to support it. But my question here is, you raised this earlier, which is the very different dynamic in North Jersey. There's a lot more housing construction happening in North Jersey. Why do you think there's this divergence among these two places that are relatively similar? I mean, urban contexts like Jersey City, but also your typical New Jersey suburb is actually building more housing than your typical in-state suburb. What do you think drives that divergence?

Annemarie Gray:

I'm sure it's a range of factors, but one clear thing that comes to mind is they have actually thought about levers for ensuring housing production at a state level in a way New York has not done yet. Again, my policy director would have a much longer answer to some of the weeds of this question. But the core thing we're wrestling with right now in New York is we are starting from zero in terms of any sort of statewide growth framework coming out of Albany. At least I know this is true in California and at least New Jersey is a little bit further ahead in terms of having some recognition and policy levers at the state level.

I think it's also realized that it's a good thing. There are a lot of benefits to it, right? They're right next to New York City. I mean, how much, I don't have stats in front of me about economic growth in New Jersey that is tied to just letting more people live there and go to work in New York, but I'm sure it's enormous. So that's a partial answer, honestly because I wish there were more ways to actually tackle this with New Jersey, with Connecticut.

I think we are, and it is a challenge that when I say the New York City region, the levers that we're trying to make any traction on are still only the bounds of New York. And so funny enough, it is ridiculous that there aren't quite ways to think about it on a truly regional level, but it's not the challenge right in front of us. It's the fact that Albany is the key to just doing anything, even in the places that are still called New York and are the region.

Nolan Gray:

For all of LA and San Francisco's problems, at least we're in one state, the metros are in one state, right? Yeah, that just turns up everything to 11 that, I mean, you could even say New York's spilling over into PA. So four states, right? I mean, that's crazy.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah. Yeah.

Brian Hanlon:

You raised a good point, though. One of the big differences between New York and New Jersey is that New Jersey has this 40-50 year long history of some form of state housing planning and state housing growth, ensuring that all communities do their fair share. So when you're thinking about what kind of system that you want to see in place in New York, where are you looking? Are you looking to New Jersey? Are you looking to California? Hopefully not too close to California with the system that we currently have.

And then as a separate question, what is most resonant with New York state legislators and other interest groups? Is New Jersey somehow more interesting because, "Oh yeah, they're right there. We're all the same." Or is it, "New Jersey, fuck them. We're New Yorkers. We can't learn anything from New Jersey."

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah. On that latter point, I'll come back to it for a moment -- something that's so funny is in talking about transit oriented development that was part of the housing compact, that I can talk more about, last year, we were looking for examples of how to show towns in parts of Westchester, parts of Long Island, what this would look like. And a lot of the examples were New Jersey, it's just, you're just legalizing a town. You're really just legalizing a town.

This is not, I feel like transit oriented development, especially in a suburb, sounds like it's like huge towers everywhere. And it probably should be, but the actual proposals we're looking at to even start with something, you're just legalizing a town. And so that has resonated with some elected officials and not others. And not to say that there aren't some. Like New Rochelle is actually a really good example in the New York suburbs, but we still have a long way to go.

There was really no basis to start with in New York in terms of a state level planning for housing growth. A lot of other states, you all at least had something on the books that wasn't being enforced well or there was something that needed to be tweaked. We're kind of starting from nothing.

And it was interesting, the first, I was like three months into this job and Governor Hochul announced the housing compact. This was last year. It was the first time you're at least having a conversation. And it was pulling from pieces of a lot of different states. And I feel like it was pulling from some of the best practices from California, but also some of the stuff that you learned and isn't necessarily working well. And it was a combo of setting targets, like builder's remedy if targets aren't met after a certain period of time, and then also just directly legalizing a bunch of stuff because the year before they tried only ADUs. And frankly, there's very strong opposition to ADUs in parts of New York that I think doesn't necessarily even match the benefits and how it's actually played out in other states.

And so it was interesting because it was the first, especially in the state legislature, especially in Albany, it was just the first time people had really heard about any of these ideas. So the level of education that we're starting with and just sort of baseline explaining things, it's just brand new to a lot of people. And explaining that other states have passed it sometimes works and sometimes it's like, oh, okay, maybe this is less scary. And sometimes it's like, no, we're New York. Come on.

The housing compact failed. Nothing passed in housing that session, the governor did not try again. And we ran the first pro-housing bill starting with the legislature this year with a coalition of faith leaders. It was a YIGBY bill that we called, we got some advice to not as strongly associate it with the YIGBY movement, so we called it the Faith-based Affordable Housing Act, which is great. And that's-

Nolan Gray:

And that's YIGBY, the Yes in God's Backyard bill, to allow faith groups to build on their land. Yeah.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, so it was legalizing residential on any land owned by faith-based organizations. It was like, okay, how can we model a more incremental bill that builds a clear coalition

that is really legible to understand with how new some of these things are, that is meaningful and that you're directly modeling that the state can play a role. It made it really far. It had a very different vibe from the housing compact, I think in a positive way, in terms of the really wide range of support.

So another thing that's tricky about New York as we learn the pro-housing trajectory in Albany is big policy decisions are decided in the budget process, not necessarily in session, which is a, it's a complicated process to navigate, and it's determined by the speaker, the majority leader, and the governor in a lot of closed door conversations. So exactly the strategy, it's not necessarily a clear whip count, it's not necessarily the governor sort of sets the stage and the legislature responds to it.

And anyway, it got on the table for discussion in the budget. It's gotten into the one House budget it's called. So it was our next test of how we talk about this stuff? What resonates with people? Going the route of setting targets and some sort of builder's remedy, how do you do that in a smart way? Speeding up environmental review and other sorts of processes.

I think the housing compact kind of jammed them all together and clearly was too big and not approached in a way that it had a shot. And so now we're trying to figure out which pieces are going to be the best ones to focus...

Annemarie Gray:

Which pieces are going to be the best ones to focus on as we just need to build what is a much larger coalition, a much bigger just political movement and grassroots movement around a lot of this in the places that it needs it. That was a lot, but yeah.

Nolan Gray:

I mean, a couple of quick thoughts on this. Brian's been at this longer than I have, but it seems like the standard playbook is you introduce a big, beautiful, amazing proposal that would solve everything. This happened in Arizona last year. They had this big crazy omnibus bill that like, okay, you pass it and Arizona doesn't have a housing crisis, it dies. Then it gets a lot of folks thinking about this issue and you can pass it in chunks. I think that's part of the story of California with A27 and SB50, there's these big exciting bills that got people excited and got legislators thinking about it. I will say it would be really funny if your first big win ends up being TOD and then ADUs come years later. This is the

complete reverse of California where it's like ADUs were this early kind of cool win and proof of concept, and it's like we're still tracking down that white whale of serious TOD upzoning.

Brian Hanlon:

I would just say too, the whole SB827 in 2018, and then SB50 a successor bill, which also failed, in 2019 when we did everything we could to pass SB50, and for those who didn't recall that this is a bill that would've allowed by that point negotiate down up to five stories, like your train stations and major bus stops. Would've legalized millions of market feasible homes throughout California. It didn't advance that year. However, we were able to get several other big bills through including two really impactful ADU bills. Our entire strategy during this session was do everything we can to pass SB50. We really earnestly tried to pass that bill.

That said, I sort of knew that was unlikely to happen and we had a number of other bills that we intentionally did no press on and we didn't talk about them outside of the building. When we're in a meeting with a legislator and we're asking us like, "Oh, we think that your district should be upzoned to five stories around every major transit stop. Here's a map and you can see how impactful this is going to be." They're like, "I don't know." I'm like, "Well, okay, I have another bill for you, ADUs, come on." I mean, it's just like, come on. Compared to this, you got to give us something.

Not 24 hours after the end of the legislative year in 2019, I was at a party in Los Angeles where I saw my then ledge director, Louis Mirante, and we didn't know that we were going to this urbanist backyard barbecue party in LA. We get there and we both start laughing immediately and we say, "I can't believe that worked." That strategy of having the big shiny bill and then having these other good, impactful but less sexy bills and just shutting up about them publicly, actually worked. Yeah, there really is slipping to that approach.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah.

Brian Hanlon:

If you run it every year though, people are going to catch on.

Annemarie Gray:

It's true. Or if this podcast goes too wide and everyone sees it. The speed of the narrative shift has been something that we've put a huge amount of work into. I, in my previous role, put a huge amount of work into and we're really seeing. I think it is the necessary precursor to the political momentum you need to see and the policies that can follow that. I think that something, I mean even just this core sort of greater consensus that you need to build more housing and that the housing shortage is tied to the housing theory of everything problems, tied to homelessness, tied to evictions, tied to housing, prices going up, tied to rents, all of that.

Also something that's been really interesting when I came on soon after, right before the housing compact started, we very intentionally took a stance that you need to build more homes and that needs to be part of a broader comprehensive policy solutions like zoning is essential, it's not everything. Tenant protections are a really important piece of this. The tenant movement has a really long and deep history in New York. The opening that provided for people to talk about supply in new ways and for people to talk about supply and tenant production can go together. The examples from other states of that is what happened, right? This is not a new idea, but it was new for New York. No other group had actually taken that stance at all.

The way that that's been able to change people talking about these issues, I think you've seen especially this past session when you did get a little bit of a tenant protection bill called good cause eviction, and then you also got something that the real estate industry had been really pushing of renewing the tax benefit to build multi-family housing. We have an unbelievably broken property tax system and you need that to build anything.

Nolan Gray:

We can say 421A, folks need to know about 421A.

Annemarie Gray:

Okay, cool. One, I both cringe a little bit saying this because it was both a very gutted tenant protection bill and that it is so far from what we need from a supply perspective. You're not actually touching anything with zoning, you're not touching the much wider range of things, but you got people from labor, you got the housing chairs, one of the housing chair and the assembly who had been very resistant and not really taking a stance that supply matters, people saying, "Okay, we need tenant protections, you need supply." It opened up a lot of political space to talk about things in a different way. I think it created a lot of different messengers about how you talk about the need for building more homes of all kinds, that can resonate with a much wider range of audiences. That's only one example, but I think the exclusionary zoning narrative has gotten a lot stronger.

Just the kind of core understanding of some of the facts that we actually really are not building much at all and the much wider range of people saying this in a lot of different places has really, really changed the narrative quite quickly. You're seeing people proactively want to stand up and call themselves pro-housing. That part of it, I always try to both for my own sake, to keep having the motivation to do this and also a broader theory of change, that part of the New York story has both been really promising and I think both myself and a bunch of different roles and then Open New York has been really, really at the center of that. It's encouraging. That is the precursor to seeing the types of change that we really need to be seeing.

Nolan Gray:

I mean, the history of the last few years for me has been seeing states where I was like, "Oh, okay, I'm despairing. They could never have a pro-housing movement there suddenly burst onto the scene." I mean, we had Mountain West states like Montana, and then of course the extent to which you all have changed the discourse in New York, I think is really, really remarkable. I mean, when I was living there, there was no discussion at the state level and this was even years after these conversations had been happening in California. I think the extent to which the narratives are changing and maybe there's some growing recognition of the need for state level action, I think is really valuable.

I mean, I want to pick your brain a little bit more about state action. I mean, New York is a really big and pretty diverse state in terms of economic conditions, affordability conditions. SF and LA are broadly in the same situation as we do need huge, huge amounts of new supply. There are parts of the state where that's not quite so relevant. How does your state level work take into consideration places like Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and many other parts of the state where the dynamics might be different?

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, yeah, it's a great question. Soon after I came on and we started expanding to the state level, we're a membership organization, we have 600 plus members, we have 12 different chapters now, six of those are now outside of the city. It's been really interesting to start to see new chapters because the issues and the questions they're asking us from a policy perspective, the projects that arise to get involved in, and the ways they're talking about this, they're a little bit different. We actually have a member who's doing some really phenomenal organizing work in Rochester. Some of the ways we talk about the history of exclusionary zoning, history of redlining, absolutely resonates with a lot of people there.

There's also the housing quality problems are very different. Investment housing, bringing different types of investment, is a very different conversation. He's learning a lot of that and sort of adjusting in real time. We have a candidate that we just endorsed that we've been doing a lot of organizing in the Hudson Valley. I think especially post pandemic, the housing challenges in the Hudson Valley, I mean, it's a lot of Airbnb, it's a lot of people from the city that came and bought up a bunch of property.

Especially there, especially in the last couple of years, there's a heightening of some of the pressures that came out of the pandemic and then simultaneously where a lot of the narrative of, okay, you care about climate change, you care about environmental preservation, densification is a conservation strategy. In New York City, people's carbon footprint is way lower, but the idea of environmental conservation is just less of a relevant argument in New York City, but in Hudson Valley, it's like I've had conversations with this candidate who's like, "That type of messaging is really, really helpful to figure out how you get some smarter density in downtown Hudson Valley towns," right?

Westchester and Long Island, we're part of a whole coalition on Long Island of people who have been there a really long time. I think the history of Long Island is that there are parts of its history that were very intentionally, "No, we're good. We don't want those types of people there." Some of the opposition from the housing compact that we counter protested in Albany was, I mean, out of a 1960s school desegregation fight and other parts of it. In Westchester, a lot of the conversations we're having in Westchester are people whose kids could never afford to move back there. That is a narrative that really rings true to people.

There's a huge amount of organizing work for us to figure this out. We're also just strategically figuring out where it does make sense for us to focus. It's a big state and

we're still growing. New York City is always a huge pull, right? New York City and New York City region and the political importance of elected officials in New York City, in Albany, it's both something that sometimes people that are upstate or people that are in Western New York are like, "That's a city problem." There's both some, I don't know, resentment, but just, "That's not my issue." New York City gets all the folks all the time, "What about my issues?" We have a couple of champions up there that are really like, "Sure, good. Do whatever tax incentives you need for New York City." That does nothing for us. Absolutely nothing for us. You need New York City votes. Even the perspective of someone like the New York City Council on state level decisions is relevant, where that's not necessarily relevant in a lot of other parts of the state.

I think what's interesting is we're now working both at the city level and the state level, and they intertwine a lot. We have state level elected officials coming out for city projects. We have hearing concerns about our state bill from a local city council member because it's like, “well, wait, that's going to change my district.” I mean, it's not that other states don't feel that way, but because it's New York City, the gravity is different if whole parts of New York City are very upset about something or if they're for something and it has absolutely no relevance to whole swaths of the state.

Brian Hanlon:

It is really heartening and exciting to see how much Open New York has grown in the past few years and how you're speaking to a really wide array of constituencies throughout the entire state. As you noted earlier, New York is different from many other states. It's a lot different than California in terms of how big legislation actually moves in the legislature. Where the big three in California, the Speaker of the Assembly, the pro Tempore in the Senate, and the governor matter a ton, especially around budget issues, but yet big policy bills can actually make their way through based on their support, but they don't really have to originate out of a big three deal. In New York, it sounds though, it's kind of the opposite. You actually really knew you needed the big three engaged, so what moves them, right? I mean, if you were able to demonstrate that there's significant support in their caucus, is that what moves them? Do you need to have a really effective political giving operation? What moves these three people so that you can actually achieve your goals?

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah. One of my answers is please do ask me that question again when we've passed a lot more because my answer will be tested. I do think that the way the process works is the governor comes out in January with the governor's budget, it sort of sets the tone and everyone's responding to that. It's due April 1st, it's always late. Sometime in March the other houses put forward each of their versions of their own budget, and then everyone negotiates, right? For April 1st slash last year was mid-May, literally, this year was mid-April.

I think they're all moved by slightly different things, both the speaker of the assembly and the majority leader. Again, this is from a couple of years of this work. I think that there are people who have been in Albany a lot longer than me, and also other issues might work a little bit differently, but this is my experience for the last two years in housing, the importance of staff and the weight of staff in the Assembly versus the Senate work a little bit different. The same with the governor's team. All of our state legislators run for reelection every two years. They're very much like, "Oh, it's an even year. You can't do anything complicated."

There is also kind of how much either the speaker or the majority leader care about seniority or care about different caucuses or take the weight of where every single vote is versus just where the power centers are. They're all a little bit different, and the negotiations are also, they're closed door with a very small number of people that, at least from my experience thus far, even legislators are cut out from exactly what's happening and exactly what pierces through when and why is, there's not, I mean, again, I would love to say there's sort of a clear, we know how to do that and we don't quite know how to do that yet.

I think there's also very much this sense that anything takes multiple years. This is ridiculous when you're in a housing crisis, but we would go up there and be told, "Oh, you just introduced this bill. You're not going to pass that this year." It's like, "Well, we could if we were taking the housing crisis seriously, that's a choice." There's also this, it's politics and figuring out how you can claim the most credit with doing something that gets the least heat is everyone's incentive. There's so much like, "Well, I did everything I could, but this was the process and it was this person's fault," and you can do that in a whole circle and nothing happens.

It's like a combination of all of these things and the fact, and this is why frankly, we launched Abundant New York, a super PAC independent expenditure arm, which is like, we don't have a big enough coalition. We don't have enough political power. We don't have enough weight yet. I think everything, my own interpretation is also through the lens of we're young, we're growing, it's like year two in Albany for us. This issue is still

really, really new to a lot of people. I don't say that to let people off the hook, but it is something that we're really trying to navigate. How do you actually build the champions that you really need? What do they need to be champions? Where do they need to be? What resonates most with them in terms of press, in terms of different audiences? What are their relationships with the governor who's running for reelection? Where's certain caucuses? We're learning a huge amount of that, and it is notoriously tricky, Albany is kind of notoriously complicated.

Nolan Gray:

Well, luckily we don't have any politics in California, so we don't wrestle with that challenge. It is unique. I mean, it seems like you are making a lot of progress. There's definitely a lot of early learning. I mean, it seems there is quite a lot of buy-in though, I mean certainly from the governor, which is a good environment to be working in.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah. Yeah, and again, I don't want to, the fact that the governor introduced the whole housing compact, it didn't have the campaign behind it that it needed, but we are finally having the right fight in New York, and that is recognizing the state has to play a role. The state is the one that grants zoning authority. The state is the one that controls a lot of tax policy, controls a huge amount of money, and there's a lot that they're trying to do. There's a huge resistance to anything that's required, which is anything with teeth, which is sort of a challenge. There are resources and trying to support people who are standing up and calling themselves pro-housing communities or New York City, where right now there's an administration that is doing a lot of really great pro-housing work. We finally lifted the 12 FAR cap this year. That's a really big deal. They've been trying to do that for a decade.

Nolan Gray:

Do you want to talk a little bit about that? It's kind of a unique situation. Do you want to describe that for folks who might not be familiar?

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah. Yeah. It's really strange and sounds so counterintuitive, but basically residential density has been capped at 12 FAR in New York City for a very long time. The effect that has on building design, on where you can build housing at all on commercial conversions has been really huge. It's basically an example of the state artificially determining how much New York City can control its own zoning. It is officially lifted, which actually just means that now the city has to go through a formal rezoning process. Yeah, it's kind of crazy some of those limitations in Midtown Manhattan and the effects that it has. There's a lot written on buildings that we love, that you literally could not build today because of the 12 FAR cap. There's a lot more to say on that, but it's a great one for really wonky zoning people to dig into.

Brian Hanlon:

I wanted to circle back to what you just mentioned about the governor's housing compact because I mean, again, it was this amazing victory. You are a new organization and the governor of the state of New York introduces this really ambitious housing program. It didn't go anywhere, but still getting the governor to put their reputation on the line to some extent and to sponsor this bill was really something. You said it didn't have the campaign behind it that it needed. What do you mean by that and what is it going to take to get an actual campaign that is capable of passing something of that magnitude in New York?

Annemarie Gray:

Right. For the first time, there was actually a package that we had a couple tweaks with . We also thought it should recognize tenant protections more, but in general, okay, we're talking about the right stuff now for the first time in decades. This is like state level action, everywhere has to build something, you need real enforcement and accountability, this is not just New York City, this is everywhere. The coalitions that have to be engaged and part of this and really behind it to run this as a campaign, especially when you're up against the Long Island Republicans. I say I know in a lot of places, this is passed with bipartisan support and we'll see what the version, if that ends up being true in New York, but the Long Island Republicans are a special breed, I think.

Nolan Gray:

Keep your government hands off my R1 zoning type, yeah.

Annemarie Gray:

They had an admittedly catchy slogan of, "Local control, not Hochul control." Those were their signs. Yeah.

Brian Hanlon:

Good one.

Nolan Gray:

Freedom is when the government can tell you the minor details of what you can and can't do with your property, but it's a local tyrant, so it's okay, right? Sorry, the hypocrisy on some of that stuff just drives me nuts.

Annemarie Gray:

I mean, I think you're dealing with a legislature that huge swaths of the legislature are totally fine doing very, very little. I don't want to say everybody, and we're figuring out who we think we can really work with. There are more and more that are really engaged in the issue, and that's all great, but as a whole, that's not where it's been. In terms of how you think of it, I know in California, you think a lot about how you engage labor. Labor is a really important political force in New York. The really wide range of business interests that would benefit from TOD legalizing towns, as I like to say, how do you actually have support of different kinds in different places where there's going to be some opposition? What's the strategy here?

That is not how it played out. There was a void. We were there with other housing groups at least making this a big fight, which felt like it needed to be. We were able to do that, and that was great. We're at least finally having the same conversation. The opposition in the void of a bigger movement was swift and enormous. Again, I think that the fact that we're having the right fight is and we're actually talking about it in the right way, and it did feel like a fight, is something to work from when we were starting from so little.

In terms of exactly how we build that. I mean, that's exactly the work that we need to figure out, right? We are doing a huge amount of us having more of a statewide presence, us having more electoral weight, especially when you have elections every two years, especially when not that many people vote in New York. Thinking strategically about where there are pockets of support, where there's a natural constituency when you can talk about these issues in different ways, where we're putting more of our organizing energy, and then how do we pick different pieces of legislation that can build with the type of coalitions that you need to see in the places where you could have elected officials behind them, that also really do solve the problem or start to chip away at the problem. That's all of the work that we're trying to, we're doing a lot of sort of strategic thinking of how do we chart that out over a couple of years, now that we have two years under our belt of actually running our first bill, seeing how that was received, seeing what the opposition was, seeing how people really resonated.

Frankly, we had for that first, yes, in God's backyard Bill, we had one of the main opponents to the housing compact, we had some folks in Westchester who were also really, really wary of this stuff. We had the entire DSA slate. We had a Long Island Republican for a hot second until I think other Republicans told her she shouldn't be on the bill. It was a really, really interesting test. We had a ton of faith leaders and faith leaders reaching out to their local elected officials. Again, it was a place to start that taught us a lot that this is possible. We can talk about this in different ways. This can resonate differently. You can build true support in the legislature. We already have a governor who at least gets a lot of these ideas. Where do you go from there? Yeah, I wish I had a clear answer, but that's exactly what we're trying to figure out right now.

Brian Hanlon:

Let me ask you one quick follow up question. You mentioned a number of different types of constituencies. You just mentioned the DSA slate. You've also mentioned tenant groups that you worked closely with. I'd be curious to know what your relationship is like with getting some of the more powerful, either regional or state level business groups, on board.

I think there's a lot of pressure, especially in the progressive advocacy, to build the coalition that you think ought to be powerful enough to win, not that is powerful enough to win. That creates a lot of perverse incentives, I think, especially among progressive activists. I got to tell you, while bills like SB50 didn't make it, I will never forget the sight of the lobbyist for the California Association of Realtors almost literally twisting the arm

of a member who had stepped out the floor who hadn't yet committed which way they were voting. This was a member in a district that YIMBYs weren't particularly powerful in. Neither really were organized NIMBYs, of course, she was concerned like, "Well, they could happen." Having that kind of business ally on the bill was really the only way that we were going to get a member like that to even consider voting for a controversial bill.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, honestly, we are really talking to an extremely wide range of people and of groups. I think that right now we're doing a lot of organizing around the City of Yes proposal that the mayor's put forward, it's a whole slew of pro-housing bills just within New York City.

Annemarie Gray:

... a whole slew of pro-housing bills just within New York City, but you're finally, again, rather than sort of one-off toxic rezoning fights, we're talking about some city-wide changes that would really make an incremental difference, that frankly lots of other places have already passed. We're having a lot of conversations with different bids, with different... You know, I'm talking more and more to the heads of major companies who frankly have to pay their entry-level staff so much more if they want to come here.

Some of those folks are literally finding us and being like, "This is a problem for us as entry-level staff, right?" It's definitely a problem for a company as a whole, and frankly, if they want to at all stay in New York City, that's a really big problem that they should be a lot more invested in. So I'm having a lot of behind-the-scenes conversations with just all of the people that should be very invested in this, because it is frankly very existential for New York City and for the state, and if it's existential for New York City and the state, it's existential for the country in so many ways. Not to be too New York is everything, but...

Brian Hanlon:

New York matters.

Annemarie Gray:

At least economically, that's true, and culturally. So yeah, and I think this is actually another place also where there are the business users that matter in New York City and then there are what are the key economic sectors in other parts of the state that matter a lot, right? There's like, you're going to have a focus on a new state economic development initiative, where they're trying to locate, and there are a couple examples of this right now ,they're trying to grow whole sectors in parts of the state that don't exist. Where are people going to live?

So anyway, it's definitely part of the calculus. I think it's something that is really growing and awareness in New York City right now, especially because this admin is leaning more into a lot of pro-housing legislation or pro-housing policy changes, and it's New York. I mean, I have a lot of folks that are kind of interested once they start to really learn about it and see us. It's newer. We're still quite young in this space. I mean, I think in the context of how long some folks in New York politics have been around, even from what's happened in other states, how much more organizing you guys have done. You're a number of years ahead of us in terms of getting those types of people on board.

But I mean, a lot of them, the second I talk about all of this, they get it and they see it. So just one other addition to that, I'm thinking more of business leaders in terms of companies that are centered here, major healthcare institutions, for example, whose nurses don't have places to live. I think you did mention there are particular dynamics of the real estate industry in New York and the landlord lobbies, and I think that there's just... It was interesting to see that play out, especially with the housing compact of who did not actually care, or who was actually opposing it, because they were making lots of money off of New York City having a lot of housing scarcity, in terms of some of the landlord lobbies, in terms of frankly, some of the small homeowners that you see.

And you did see those dynamics play out in terms of people carving themselves out of bills, in terms of, frankly, we do not have a particularly strong constituency right now for small- to medium-scale home builders, because we have not been doing that. You know, I get called a real estate shill all the time, the politics of the building industry, everywhere has their own version of that, but they're also trickier, because we actually don't have, especially in different parts of the state, you don't have interests that are actually sort of ready to build some of the smaller-scale stuff, because it's not how the industry has been organized for a while.

Nolan Gray:

Yeah, no, that's a common experience. YIMBY groups and pro-housing groups there, the enemies cast them as real estate shills, and they're like, "I actually can't get some of those people who you think we work for to do anything for us," which is kind of ironic. And also too, it's like, I know this might sound crazy, but there actually are just normal people with no financial interest who are like, "I don't want to live in this horrible housing shortage." In any case, I want to talk more about the city element. We've been talking a lot about the exciting stuff at the state level. I want to talk to the city, I want to talk about your background and a little bit more about Open New York, but Brian, do you want to do a lightning round before we turn back to some of that?

Brian Hanlon:

Sure.

Nolan Gray:

All right, let's do it. I'll kick it off. Most underrated neighborhood in New York City?

Annemarie Gray:

Oh, underrated... Oh, man. Yeah, I need to prep on this. The first thing that came to mind is Red Hook. It's actually where I live, and I really love it, but I don't know if I counts as underrated, because a lot of people actually do love it, but I feel like people love it at certain times of year and they don't actually come there during the winter, because it's a little harsher, but it's great.

Nolan Gray:

I've been away from New York long enough that I have my finger back on the pulse of normal people. I don't think a lot of normal people outside of New York know about Red Hook as a cool neighborhood.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, that counts? Okay.

Nolan Gray:

I think Jackson Heights is a little bit too well known now, too posh? I don't know, Jackson, I mean, what an incredible food neighborhood.

Brian Hanlon:

Jackson Heights is not that well known outside of New York.

Annemarie Gray:

Oh, really? Oh, if you're asking outside of New York, I mean, Jackson Heights is incredible. Jackson Heights is up there, but it is definitely well known from a where do people want to live in New York City perspective. But I mean, that's also a fantastic answer if it feels underrated to other people. It's amazing.

Brian Hanlon:

What is the best place to take a normie tourist in New York?

Annemarie Gray:

Eating food in Jackson Heights. Yeah, you can eat like you were in so many different countries, and it's incredible, and the food is amazing. That is the first answer. I don't know. Again, normie tourists, I feel like you tend to not leave some of the central parts of Manhattan and Brooklyn, and there are really, really amazing things to walk around in there, so I don't want to go down some of those places. If you're a normie tourist, you stay in Manhattan, and wander through the Lower East Side, it's amazing. There's a candy shop there called Economy Candy that I really, really love. It's been around forever, it's fun.

Nolan Gray:

I remain a Times Square lover. Times Square gets a huge amount of hate, but it's like, come on. It's Times... Sometimes, things are a tourist trap for a reason. They're actually just genuinely kind of awe-inspiring and cool, and I don't know. I remember when Andrew Yang was running for mayor, and some news outlet asked him his favorite transit subway stop, which, A, I just thought was a weird question, but B, he said Times Square. And everyone was like, "Ah, it's so fake. What a tourist." And I'm like, "I don't know. Transferring through Times Square is kind of exciting. I don't know. You get this, like..."

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, or Central Park. Central Park is amazing. Maybe that's a better answer as more normie, but it's like, yeah, I don't know. Those places, they don't exist anywhere else, and that's what makes them really exciting. Maybe I misinterpreted the normie question, because I don't know. There's so many really, really great parks and really, really great waterfronts everywhere that are wonderful, in particular.

Nolan Gray:

Might have to go to Central Park and see the tourists lining up to take a photo with the supertalls that are destroying New York, right?

Brian Hanlon:

Well, that's a great segue. I was going to say my favorite thing to do when I visit cities like in New York is to go up on really tall buildings, and get these insane views that you just cannot get anywhere else.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, take the Staten Island Ferry. The Staten Island Ferry is awesome. Things like that.

Brian Hanlon:

The People's Yacht.

Annemarie Gray:

People's Yacht. Great view of the Statue of Liberty, if that's what you want to see, it's great.

Nolan Gray:

What's your favorite book? Could be fiction, could be nonfiction, about New York.

Annemarie Gray:

The first book that comes to mind that I actually am reading now, because I hadn't read it when it came out during the Pandemic, is N. K. Jemisin's The City We Became. Honestly, I would have to think about... There's other answers to that question, but that is one that I'm actually reading right now. It's about New York.

Brian Hanlon:

What do you love most about living in New York?

Annemarie Gray:

I love that you can be here and be whatever version of yourself you want to be, and frankly, at any given time as well. There's always a place to be that. I think I actually did not realize that until I lived here, because there is some pocket to be whatever you want to be, and that's just not true in other places.

Nolan Gray:

That's a really, really cool answer. I mean, the one thing I miss is people are just down, like they're just down to hang out, and meet, and do things in a way that, like... I think it's just the ease of transportation around the city. I remember the joke I always tell is, in

New York you say, "Hey, do you want to go get a drink?" And they say, "Sure, what time?" In LA, they say, "Yeah, when are you free next week?" Right?

And there's this kind of New York... I don't know. And I think this actually helped with early open New York advocacy that you could just say, "Hey, we're going to meet and discuss zoning in New York City," and somehow two dozen people show up, and they're just down. I miss that. There's this public-spiritedness of people, of like, "Yeah, I want to go out, and get involved, and do things, and meet people," that is just so... Yeah, it's like the most fully realized urban culture, I think, in a lot of respects in the US.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, and the fact that you can get pretty much anywhere by trains and walking. I also bike a lot, but you go anywhere else, and you realize how much is lost when you don't have a really good public transit system. And again, we don't have a great public transit system by so many other standards, but by American standards, it's really hard to imagine living without that, because it's such a better quality of life to have that.

Nolan Gray:

Let's step outside of New York for a moment. What's your second favorite city? Could be US, could be international.

Annemarie Gray:

I lived for a while, before grad school, in New Orleans, and I have a part of my heart in New Orleans, so that comes to mind first.

Nolan Gray:

Oh, New Orleans is so great. Increasingly not this time of year, but yeah.

Annemarie Gray:

Correct, correct. It's a place to go the rest of the time of year.

Brian Hanlon:

What do you love most about cities in general, beyond New York, beyond the self-actualization?

Annemarie Gray:

What do you mean, beyond the self... Like, just-

Brian Hanlon:

Well, because you were talking like, New York lets you be whatever version of yourself that you want to be. And I think you're right, that it's a bit cliché, but I think it's true. And I don't think that's nearly as true in other cities, and certainly not other suburban or rural areas. But you answered New Orleans, one of America's most unique cultural cities. Incredible, incredible culture, incredible music history, incredible food scene. And so it seems that part of what you most love about cities isn't as much... It's not like the buildings, it's not even the cool trains and all the rest. It's the fact that you have all these creative people who are able to embrace that fully, and do it in community, and create something new that they could never do on their own. So I'm not trying to answer your question for you, but that's exactly like where it was going in my head when you answered New Orleans.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, yeah, and New Orleans similarly has a really rich, and also very complicated history, of just lots of culture sort of jammed together. And actually, the other answer that I was thinking about that I also lived in right after I graduated college was Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. And these are all places where you just have full, and messy, and complicated, and beautiful, and also ugly, just humans trying to live in the same place, and everything that comes with that. And I think especially of Rio and New Orleans, and I think also of New York, though, also people work all the time in New York. They're really good at joy. You're really good at just like, "What does it mean to be alive? Let's all be alive together." Not to get too meta on it, but like-

Nolan Gray:

You're starting to sound like a Californian, Annemarie. Be careful.

Annemarie Gray:

There's a whole other version of my life where I live in California. But yeah, I mean, I think you guys are probably better at joy, too, because unfortunately, I love so many parts about New York, and also, New Yorkers work way too much. And that's also real.

Brian Hanlon:

I don't know that San Francisco is much better these days.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, yeah.

Nolan Gray:

Okay, the set is cities you've never been to. Where do you most want to go next for the first time?

Annemarie Gray:

I have never been to Tokyo, and I've never been to Japan in general. And it's been something, I know maybe that's too cliché of the urbanist story, but I am so curious from like, "Oh, my God, this is so many more people jammed together. How do they make it work?" that I'm really, really curious about experiencing. I also feel this way, I spent some time, but I still want to go back and explore more parts of India, because I think also just the culture, so many people jammed together, what comes of that was really, really incredible. The first time I went, it was one of the strongest reactions of that that I have had, and there's just so much more to explore. So those two come to mind.

Nolan Gray:

I mean, Tokyo is the real deal. Tokyo is maybe the only place outside of New York City where I'm like, "Oh, this is fully realized urban living. It's all here." Incredible, and the transit is so good. I mean, it's impressively good.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah.

Brian Hanlon:

I was literally wearing my Maglev hat yesterday that I got from the Japan Railways Museum when I last visited, yeah.

Nolan Gray:

Why don't we talk a little bit about some of the stuff that's happening at the city level? So I mean, for a lot of really good reasons you raised that the attention has focused to the state level, but it seems like, from the outside looking in, exciting things are happening. The mayor announced this City of Yes agenda. What's going on with that? What are some of the core components of that reform package?

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, so it's the first time in a while we're seeing an actual sort of city-wide approach to how do we add a little bit of housing everywhere? And it's actually something that I sort of worked on in the early phases of when I was still at City Hall that grew out of a lot of the Fair Housing work, which is really great. And honestly, what's so funny to talk about it with people that work in housing elsewhere, it's stuff that so many places have already passed, just New York City hasn't yet. So it's getting rid of parking mandates, it's ADUs, in huge blocks of the city where that actually would apply.

There's sort of an added bonus for affordable housing in a lot of the denser parts of the city, that's a really big deal. There's some modest TOD in some places, it's like a whole swath. It's also just sort of cleaning up weird things about zoning that have just

restricted housing supply for a long time. So it's really cool that, for the first time in a long time, there is a city-wide conversation where everyone needs to do something. We are in a housing crisis. There are proposals that actually make sense for every single neighborhood that are tailored to what makes sense for that neighborhood. And this is, I think we're cautious that this does not, on the whole, solve the housing crisis, and everyone needs to remember that. It is also a really important step, and it's a whole set of things that frankly already should have happened, and it's pushing the city-wide conversation in a good way.

So it started what's called the ULURP process, the city's land use review process, last month. Right now, it is going to every single community board, which is a lot of community boards. It's over 50 community boards. And we have a lot of members that are both on their local community boards or just active and attend them. And so we're in a moment right now, it's going to every community board multiple times, sort of for the initial review and then future votes over this month and next month.

So we have literally, every single night, members going to their community boards. We've been doing a lot of trainings, we have a buddy system of members who are newer to have someone to go with, and have the whole city mapped out, and really paying attention to what happens there. And so yeah, there's that process, and then it will go to the borough presidents, to the city planning commission, and then City Council has the final vote, and that's how the New York City land use review process works. So we're in the first couple months of a seven-ish month process.

Nolan Gray:

That's super cool. I mean, yeah, so there's 59 community boards, and they all have 50 members. It's kind of like this cartoonishly extreme version of local democracy. Yeah, and so what's your sense? I mean, does it seem like there's actually something of a consensus here? What kind of stuff are you all hearing at community board meetings or with council staff?

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, I mean, again, the narrative has changed so much more in the last couple years that, and you're actually seeing the speaker has really leaned into fair housing in a way that's really promising. I think there's a consensus to not be opposing this stuff, at least from a much wider swath of people. It's also, as expected, it's not super easy. And it's,

right now, a lot of our members... It really depends on what community district. There are places where you actually have more folks in community board leadership or like, "Okay, yeah, we got to do something. Let's really look at this."

There's also, I mean, there are a couple... You go to some community boards and it's literally, there are people running around calling this an extinction level event, to get rid of parking mandates, extinction level event, totally reasonable, and a lot of scare tactics of what it's actually going to do. And New York City neighborhoods, they look really different. A lot of them look really different from each other. So we have weird talking points that are tailored to different districts. We have different approaches for different districts, depending how their response is going to be.

In general, we don't have members in every single community district, I wish we did, but it is really that people are going to their own community boards and reflecting on what makes sense in their own neighborhoods, especially for something like this, where it's the first time you're having a citywide conversation. And we're having a lot of conversations behind the scenes of how do we have enough people really band together, enough council members really band together? And we got to do something about this. This is really reasonable stuff.

And also, when they pass it and be like, "You're not done," but it's both, I don't think I could do this work without being an optimistic person. And I do think that the fact that we have leaders at every level of government actually talking about this stuff in a very different way, in a very promising way. And this is a key example of them following through on this, right? So we'll see. I mean, I'm sure it is not going to be easy, but I'm glad. We got to start tackling this in different ways.

I think, and it's both the story of Open New York, it's like the story of a lot of projects that I worked on, but until really the last couple of years, the conversations around housing were one-off neighborhood rezonings or one-off site rezonings. We are so far away from the scale that we needed. Frankly, we still are quite far away from the scale we need with City of Yes, but at least we're getting somewhere in terms of a city-wide conversation, and especially a state legislature conversation. And that's the last two years, and so that's a big deal.

Brian Hanlon:

Yeah. What does the coalition politics look like for the City of Yes? You mentioned some of the process it needs to go through before it could be considered to become law. In my experience in California, a mayor would only introduce something like that if there

were already a large coalition behind them, even if they maybe didn't quite have the votes on the city council yet.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, there's a really large coalition behind this that's growing. We're sort of on the steering committee of something called the Yes to Housing Coalition, that is a group called the New York Housing Coalition, that's kind of this big umbrella group. I mean, there are like 120 plus groups. Everyone from AARP, to a lot of homelessness providers, to non-profit developers, to a bunch of housing advocacy groups, to architects, to a lot of support, social services groups. And you got a lot of folks that are actually working on the city side that have just like, they've been through battles, they know what they're doing, they know what they're taking on.

And I think you have a lot of city council members that we've been working with a lot of them to really show that being for projects in your district can be good politics. And we have more and more examples of this. And I am talking to elected officials constantly on specific projects, and trying to just figure out how you both create a narrative, and you create the press opportunities, and you create the backup, and you create even a band of elected officials themselves to give some cover when some of this is hard, because a lot of them, they really get the practical case for this, the progressive case for this. The just really baseline, "Do we care about New York City and it being livable?" case for this. I mean, I think even labor folks have been involved. So there's a lot of movement that I think it's setting off on a positive foot, and they've been talking about this for a while. This did not at all get sprung on anybody, and it helped.

Nolan Gray:

So still waiting for some big wins to be realized. It does seem like things are on a really, really positive trajectory. I want to talk about Open New York specifically. So I was involved at the early stages, when I was living in New York in the early 2010s. And it was essentially, for a long time, a glorified happy hour of people who kind of hated exclusionary zoning. And there's nothing wrong with that, but it's just mind-boggling to me that, in the years since, you all have really helped to change the discourse and are really, really driving change. And I think a lot of folks are probably listening to this thinking like, "Wow, what is the trajectory for leading in a way that Open New York has led?" What advice would you give for folks who are maybe thinking about starting local

chapters, or maybe they have a local chapter and they're thinking more about state-level involvement?

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, so I mean, again, I learned about Open New York, I covered land-use and housing policy at City Hall. So I was the one behind the scenes pushing the SoHo rezoning, the Gowanus rezoning.

Nolan Gray:

And thank you for that. I mean, Gowanus was great. I mean, what a great little thing to get there, huh?

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, yeah. It was super exciting. I threw everything ahead into those. The perch of City Hall for this type of stuff is definitely a fascinating one, and they all almost died multiple times. But it was interesting to be in the seat of like, you're supposed to be in the halls of like, "You can dictate the agenda," and the fact that there was more stuff we wanted to do, and we did not have the movement, or the coalitions, or the political leaders, the movement wasn't there. And so I was really excited to take the helm at Open New York when it was just like, I was saying this, but I wasn't just saying this even just because it's a good talking point. It's like, that was needed more than anything else that I saw.

And I was sitting in the middle, at the top seat, I mean, at least within City Hall, under deputy mayor, and under deputy mayor who was under Vicki Bean, who was a national expert on a lot of this stuff. But we just did not have the movement and the political environment behind you to do the stuff that we even wanted to do. And I think what was really cool, I met Open New York members, just watching these volunteers who cared so much and are spending so much of their time really showing up, really doing the work, or really being on the ground, to try to become a counterforce, especially in some of these most exclusionary neighborhoods. And I think the narrative of SoHo kind of feels pretty black and white, and the way it played out was a good sort of flashpoint to get a lot of people engaged. So I do think that we still do... I've talked a lot about citywide policy, a lot about statewide policy. It's still really, really core that we are policy, a lot about statewide policy. It's still really, really core that we are still working on local

projects. This works the best when people are just engaged in projects they can see, they can understand. It's wonky stuff to really get into the policy and the further away you get in abstraction in terms of the policies you're trying to solve, I think it feels a little less relevant for people. And that's not totally true. We have lots of members that come on buses with us to Albany, but I think we are really figuring out how we have sophisticated strategies at the levers of government that we absolutely need so that you're not fighting this project by project because we would never, ever get anywhere. But not losing the fact that a lot of people enter the movement by just this one example of this parking lot in their neighborhood that should be housing. You understand what's needed and you see that and you go to a meeting and you see what's happening and it just clicks.

I think a lot of people have been really radicalized by individual projects. I think as we grow, we are really still making sure that we keep those examples. And frankly, I think sometimes we need to be choosy about which projects we throw a lot more into also, especially from the staff level side, but they're also, they remain really good examples for a lot of people of like, "Oh my God." Even if you understand what's happening, you understand the bigger macro issues, you still can't get this one tiny project through. That's ridiculous. I think that's one piece of learning.

I think the other one is we kind of just started doing it at the state level there. I think there's been so much learning really quickly and just sort of, it's we're just going to figure it out. We put out an agenda. We started going to Albany. Our first trip to Albany, we're just wandering around because we're not exactly sure where you go to have certain offices or where everyone hangs out in the evenings.

Just I think about not being afraid to try. Again, I imagine, this is definitely true in New York. I think it's also, I imagine it's true everywhere, when you're really engaged and you're really paying attention, the worlds that actually influence a lot of these decisions get a lot smaller. I think the majority of people are just not really paying attention. That's also fine. Not everyone should spend all their time doing this, but I think that we've been able to grow really quickly by just hustling and just showing up and just being there. I think that's true of the early days of Open New York and as we grow and professionalize, that's also just true in some of those spaces in Albany. Not to say we're clearly at a place where we're a massive force passing stuff, but we're just sort of trying. I think being really, both trying and also being thoughtful of how much there is to learn because of the people who have run campaigns for years and years. I guess trying and hustling, but what's pretty clear is that there are reasons this stuff is hard.

Brian Hanlon:

That is really well said and I love your emphasis on, yeah, just show up. Just try to do the thing. Don't be afraid. Circling back, if I could give my younger self advice, it would be exactly that.

It is, we don't actually need the perfect plan and the perfect pathway forward in order to achieve the thing that you want to achieve. Sometimes if you can't see it, you'll gain new clarity, to use the phrase that our governor likes, by just starting out. Start hustling. Start doing it.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah. I'll go back and add that to my answer too. I think you learn about these ideas and the big picture, just so I answered your question. You learn about these concepts, ideas in school and I do think, and this is actually why I get a lot of... Someone asked me in a fancy dinner I was in recently, what gives me hope? And I was like, "I get a lot of hope from our members who just, a lot of them, sometimes we get members who just show up, they literally don't know anything about this stuff." They're just like, "This sounded interesting. Cool. I'll go to a community board meeting with you." They work in something totally different and I feel like I've spent over a decade, we've been planning in policy and politics.

At some point it's just the people that keep showing up are the ones that people have to respond to. And I think the problem is the ones that have the time to do that and the incentives to do that are the wrong incentives and you have time for maybe reasons that are not representative of the problems that we have to solve. But I do think that it's good advice for frankly anyone in any sort of political or activist space. And it also is just, I don't know, it's a good mantra to try to live by.

Nolan Gray:

Yeah, I mean the people who, everybody on this call is kind of professional, full-time housing advocate, but the really committed volunteers, those are the ones. We have our annual lobby day where we bring a lot of folks up to Sacramento to speak with their representatives. I mean this is dozens of people taking a day off work and getting themselves up to Sacramento, sometimes with a scholarship but usually not and

making these impassioned, and learning about legislation that, again, we have the luxury of spending all day thinking.

And that, to me, makes me feel a certain sense of added obligation. I'm like, "Wow, this person's just volunteering and doing this and finding time for it." Okay, we need to be going above and beyond. This added sense of obligation. I mean, I think another aspect of this though that was really valuable for early YIMBY and pro-housing organizing in New York, I experienced it firsthand in New York, but as I understand in California as well, is building these communities.

I think people are partly looking for a cause that they can believe in and it can give meaning to some of their work, but they're also looking for friends and people to hang out with and people to talk to. I think one of our strengths is that you go to a YIMBY meetup... There's always discourse about, "Oh, housing politics on Twitter is very combative."

And it's like, yeah, that's discourse on Twitter. You go to a pro-housing group meetup and it's a bunch of cool, optimistic, friendly people who are learning about this wonky subject and you have a community baked in.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, yeah. Honestly, I think keeping the social aspects and doing, we had a pickleball club form, we had just what keeps people excited and really connected to each other matters a lot. I had another really good point that I forgot. Just the fact that again, I think, so we just had 10 more of our members. We already had between 10 and 20 before that appointed last week to be on their community boards. Again, this is still volunteer work. This is really a hyper local government, a hyper local politics and has an advisory role in the land use process and plays a really big role.

We had 10 more people appointed to their community boards and it's just the civic energy and people just, they're spending their time just being really, really engaged in local issues. The whole “all politics is local” thing. I don't know, you start to see when you take one issue that you can focus on in more depth, you start to really trace the line of how much of a difference you can actually make if you're just really engaged locally with the awareness and hopefully in the case of Open New York, continuing to professionalize and grow with the infrastructure of people who can full-time spend their time on exactly how do you navigate Albany politics. At some point, you cannot do everything only on the local level only with scale.

But I think something that I'm really conscious of as we're trying to grow and take on bigger state level fights is you can't lose that energy. That energy is what it's really based on. And I really do, every time I hang out with our members, I'm just like, "Oh man, okay, I got to work even harder." These people are just here on their own time because they're like, "This sucks. Life could be better if we actually just built more housing."

And those are also the members who can even come to our meetings. I think there's also not even to mention the people who are really being hurt by scarcity the most. Anyone with resources figures out some sort of way and it just should be better. We're not even talking as much about the people who are just hurt by scarcity the most, that need a voice and need a representation fighting even harder for them.

Nolan Gray:

I want to pick up on part of your background. So, you were working in the mayor's office on this issue. One of the things I'm always trying to think through is from that experience, how can advocates be helpful to pro-housing folks who are probably in their local government already? I mean we had a panel on this at YIMBYtown, a panel of pro-housing planners. In many cases there are folks in city council or in a mayor's office or in the planning department or the transportation department trying to do good things and they could benefit from advocates. The core of the question here is how can they be most helpful and how should they think about that relationship?

The flip side of this is as somebody who was on the inside, I think a lot of planners listen to, they think, "Well, I am administering some of this stuff, but I think we really need to change these rules." How do folks on the inside think about being advocates? I don't know, there's six different questions there, but I'm curious about that relationship that you had with your work.

Annemarie Gray:

Yeah, it's funny. I remember having a conversation with someone who was really deep in zoning and really, "We have to do it this way." And I was in the city hall seat trying to pass SoHo or something like that, and I remember there was some comment of how one of the volunteers, one of the members or one of the advocates just didn't really get the zoning weeds and framed something wrong. And I'm just like, "It doesn't matter. That's your job." We need so many more bodies just writ large saying this thing is good because we have the default is a bunch of people saying this thing is bad. And a bunch

of people who probably don't agree with them, who just, whose voices aren't heard in a lot of different ways.

I mean, a lot of the examples for, and the reason this is the core of a lot of our training for members is to show up to your local community board. How do you testify and support something? Honestly calling your elected offices. People notice that stuff. I think just being engaged and knowing enough of the process that we then of course help navigate. Honestly, thinking a lot back to the city holidays. I think that when you're in, and I was in government in a bunch of different agencies before then, my whole background was a decade in government before all of this.

I think it's the common story, especially of people who went to policy or planning school that I just feel you start out interested in the policy, you realize most of the problems are just the political problems and you're so constrained when you're in city government of the things you can actually say and the party line that you, because you're always reporting to some elected official that has massive ego and whatever they want to run for next and the things you're allowed to say or not, especially in city hall. But then you're also just in this massive ship where 50 people have to look at anything that goes public.

I think that there was something that's so cool that I'm honestly still getting used to now that I'm on the advocate side of just, you can just say the thing, you can just be honest about something and it's really refreshing. Frankly, a lot of times you're sitting there in government being like, and someone just is real about something and says, "What's the problem?" Which I could actually never say if you're a voice in this particular political system. People just want people who are real about what those problems and solutions often are.

And again, I think that Twitter is its own thing. And so I feel that falls into a little different category, but at least in one to one-on-one conversations when I'm just meeting people for the first time and talking about it when I'm just doing testimony just, how do you just be real and say what the problem is and just try to just be a real human about it? Because I think that that is something that some people in government are better than others, but it is structurally harder to do that when you're in some of those seats. I feel there are a lot of answers to that question, but for some reason that's kind of one of the first ones that comes to mind.

Nolan Gray:

Yeah, no, I mean that's showing up and having a presence there and saying the things that the local planner or the civil servant can't say. I mean from the other end, I think I'm

pretty firm if you're a planner, certainly if you're an AICP planner, you have agreed to an ethical compact of, I have an obligation to build communities that are affordable and equitable. And I think maybe an older approach to this work would've been like, "Well, I'm just the administrator. I'm just the mediator. I'm not supposed to have any views on this."

And I'm like, "No, I totally reject that." And you got to be savvy about it and you have to be deferential to the elected officials who actually have democratic legitimacy, but it's also okay to just plainly state things and it's okay to talk to advocates and give them publicly available facts about projects and say, "Hey, this is how the process works. This is when this hearing is."

I was working at the Department of City planning when I was first hanging out with the Open New York crew. And of course you never say anything that's not public, but if you're a planner or a civil servant, you might have expertise about the process or elements of a project that's a matter of public record and it's perfectly valid to share with advocates and to reach out to those folks. So it's a very fine line. It's tough, but I don't know. I do see a lot of great planners from the inside saying, "Look, I'm not going to do this value neutral mediator thing. I'm an actor in this ecosystem."

Annemarie Gray:

And yeah, I think some of my answer was coming from what I always would appreciate what an advocate would do when I was in that seat. But I think that there's also, there are so many, even though I'm not in this role anymore, I feel so strongly about the civil servants who figure out how to navigate messed up systems to get good things done, there is so much incredible work that comes out of that. Some of it never sees the light of day. I feel that way about certain work that I did that I'm really proud of, and no one totally realizes how crazy some of the decision-making processes were and why certain decisions happened or not and why you were able to get this thing through. But people that can navigate that and just do genuinely good things, I don't know.

There are a lot of unsung heroes, especially in lower levels of city government who just kind of figure out how to navigate the system without not... You're seeing it clearly, but you kind of figure out how to get stuff done and put your head down and are doing it for the right reasons. You're surrounded with people with huge egos. I guess everyone is in a lot of circles, but I have a really deep... And just some of my best friends are the people that I was in the trenches with doing that type of work. I was also in city hall during the pandemic, so it was just a completely bonkers time in so many aspects. But you need all of it, and I actually really appreciate having worked in government.

I really appreciate growing muscles more in different spaces because you actually need pieces in every part of the ecosystem that really get it, that are real. They're doing it for the right reasons, that are savvy, that are clear-eyed and that just stay doing the work and just stay optimistic enough without being naïve that you just keep going.

Brian Hanlon:

No, I mean absolutely right. We do love our YIMBY deep-staters, those who are working anonymously in the bowels of government. I would add though, one really valuable thing a lot of civil servants have been able to provide me isn't just to help me better understand public information to tell me, "Hey, this is how you and your organization and YIMBYs in general can be helpful here."

Oftentimes they may be working for a boss, maybe a politician, maybe a political appointee who wants to do the right thing, but they're cross pressured. There are other forces either in government or very often outside of government who don't want to see this project see the light of day, and they can often provide incredibly helpful and detailed information for this is how you can best exercise your power in order to help this project go forward.

Annemarie Gray:

Oh, definitely. I've done that on both sides of the aisle for sure.

Nolan Gray:

Well, and circling back to something you said earlier, I'm glad that you all are still doing the project by project advocacy. For me, I felt the two projects where I was like, "Oh, Open New York is, it's real," was the Haven Green Project, which was a beautiful project for folks coming out of homelessness, LGBT seniors that just faced the most insane pushback. And then SoHo NoHo, which was like, "Oh, that's one of the neighborhoods you're not allowed to touch."

We'd just done all these rezonings in New York that were all fairly lower income places that wanted a little bit of development or there wasn't political opposition. SoHo, NoHo and Haven Green, you were like, "We beat some heavy hitters on that." And it was a real community building thing, and I think it actually helped to change the discourse. I

actually totally didn't realize that you were working on SoHo NoHo on the public sector side, so I'm sure that was just smooth sailing all the way. Right? Totally no opposition.

Annemarie Gray:

I was one of the keys, I was like, "We're going to do this." Me and Vicky, and there were a couple other people. Man, if this weren't a public podcast, I have so many stories I would tell. I have to draw a line somewhere, but exactly how we got the mayor on board for it, exactly. Some of, just moving decisions that are on the edge of what feels that is a little bit risky and all of the factors at play that got that to be something that the city then took on. It was really cool and it was very hard, but the ability to actually finally, for a bunch of people to realize, "Oh, this isn't off limits anymore. We can talk about this."

And some of the articles that got written about it, the fact that it took on an outside sort of symbolic presence, but rightly so. Haven Green, funny enough, that project literally last week, one of the lawsuits finally got dismissed. It's been stuck under multiple lawsuits for so many years. It's really crazy. Yeah, it's been really cool. There's been a lot that's shown that we can at least start to move the needle on some of these things and that once you start doing it, a lot of people really do, "Oh yeah, this is the right thing to do," and it feeds on itself in an interesting way.

Nolan Gray:

Yeah, so it's been incredibly rapid growth in recent years. What's next? What do you see as the horizon, both maybe at the state and city level? What gets you excited about the next few years for Open New York?

Annemarie Gray:

I'm definitely excited. I mean, some of our continued statewide expansion is really exciting. I think figuring out how to have chapters, how to have elected champions, just how to tackle that, just sort of all of the pieces that go with building a statewide strategy, trying to figure out how we pass real stuff is huge. I think that we launched this Abundant New York super PAC independent expenditure committee to just be like, "If you're good on this stuff, we're going to make this good politics," and really try to show that being pro-housing, what that can actually mean from an electoral perspective. So we came out with a first slate of candidates. We're doing direct spending in a couple of

races, and also just sort of growing both, we have people on the ground growing the capacity to put real money behind certain races when we need to.

Also being able to hold folks accountable and being able to really elect for housing leaders and frankly take out for housing folks that aren't really showing that they're able to do that, and just growing that muscle and just not being afraid to play politics without it becoming our entire identity. I think we are doing that as a tool that we can use when we need to, but we're still... It's not distracting from growing the organizing base and actually running more and more legislation. I mean, honestly, sometimes I get jealous about hearing folks around the country, how you're debating the certain weeds of certain policies and how they did and how you tweak it next year. The reality is we're just actually not there yet. So much of this conversation has been about the politics, about the narrative, about higher level stuff, because that's just where we are in New York right now. I mean, that's not true, totally true. You could have a conversation about some of the wonky details, but that's not the front and center barrier.

And so, I think that that part of it, it both sometimes feels a little more nebulous and a little harder to nail down, but also, it's all of the pieces that feel like you're building a movement that is going to last. And so that stuff feels really cool. Our session just finished. We're figuring out exactly how we keep working on the faith-based bill next year, but also just how we start to chart more of a multi-year path on some of the bigger bills that we know that we need at the state level.

There's a huge amount of organizing on CAVS and then I think just a huge amount of work to do in the city, just figuring out more and more ways to keep our members engaged and excited and really plugged in locally, getting more of them onto their community boards. We got a couple projects that are just really good, sort of classic. There's a project called Arrow Linen that a bunch of our members are organized around in Windsor Terrace South Slope that I've been having a lot of conversations about recently. And just not being afraid to lean more into the politics and just kind of being out there talking about the stuff all the time with everybody. And so, yeah, it's a lot. It's a lot, but it's good. It's the work.

Nolan Gray:

Specifically, I remember the community board thing, that was something that came up. This must have been in 2018, 2019, and I think a half dozen of us or so tried to get on community boards, and I don't think anyone got on. It was this dream aspirational

project. So it's cool that people are getting on these things and actually hopefully helping to shape the conversations there.

Annemarie Gray:

Oh, we got 20-something on them and a bunch of them that are now growing into leadership positions on the community boards. Some of the longtime community members do not love this, and this has been something we're wrestling with.

Nolan Gray:

Cool. Well, Annemarie Gray, thanks for joining and thanks for your continued work on a city that's really near and dear to my heart. I mean, New York City is of course so important for so many reasons to get right, but yeah, it's just been remarkable to see the growth of Open New York and we look forward to having you back on here after some of these campaigns start materializing in big wins. I think the case in Open New York, as in so many other states, is that pro-housing folks underrate the extent to which you really can achieve radical positive change in a short period of time. I think that the work that you all are doing in New York reveals that. So thank you.

Annemarie Gray:

Thanks. Yeah, I hope so.