

the influence of developers and their lobbyists on land-use decisions

The influence of real estate money in politics distorts our land-use decision making process and leads to worse outcomes for New Yorkers. Helen has never accepted a dime of developer money, neither in this election nor in 2013. This independence has had results, as Helen has fought to reform a Department of Buildings that too often favors developers and to ensure that our land use system as a whole better reflects the needs of all New Yorkers. Her accomplishments in office show a strong record of fighting to put tenants and neighbors on an even playing field with the real estate industry. She has introduced legislation to create an Office of the Tenant Advocate within the Department of Buildings, which would transform the bureaucratic process to ensure that tenants always have their voice heard to fight back against unsafe and unlivable construction as harassment. She is also a key supporter of the Stand for Tenant Safety package of legislation to further reform the Department of Buildings, including introducing legislation to crack down on landlords who do illegal construction work. She has also worked to reform our land use system as a whole. Helen was an effective advocate for Upper West Siders during the negotiations over the Zoning for Quality and Affordability and Mandatory Inclusionary Housing zoning amendments in 2016. She worked with her colleagues in the Council to refine the citywide effort to make it easier to build affordable housing as opposed to market-rate housing, including successfully preserving protections against so-called sliver building development and strengthening the law's affordable housing requirements. Helen's vision is one of a development process in which all New Yorkers truly have their voices heard. Right now, the deck is stacked so that only developers with expensive lobbyists and construction expeditors are able to navigate the complicated bureaucratic process. That bureaucracy has to be reformed to put New Yorkers first, and Helen has put important ideas forward toward achieving that.