

David Owens on: The influence of developers and their lobbyists on land-use decisions.

The only way developers and their lobbyists maintain influence is when our city government allows them to go unchecked. There will always be lobbyists for business interests. The problem is, where are their counterparts representing our interests, the concerns and quality of life for residents of the Upper West Side? Isn't that what our representative on the City Council is supposed to be doing for us? Leveling the playing field on our behalf? Making sure we have a voice in the major developments approval process?

- Every major stage of the development approval process has to be transparent and offer a well-publicized opportunity for public input.
- Public, online access to information about the approval process needs to be greatly improved.
- Decision-makers – city officials, developers and lobbyist – can't be having ex parte communications about major land-use decisions that the community doesn't know anything about until decisions have been made and it's too late.

Bottom line, it's imperative and, frankly, a fiduciary responsibility for our representative on the City Council to make sure the public is involved in every major phase of the development approval process for large, impactful projects.