New York for Sale
Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate

Tom Angotti
This book comes out of two decades of my own involvement in neighborhood-based planning in New York City as a professional planner both inside and outside government. I worked with the Red Hook and UNITY (UNderstanding, Imagining and Transforming the Yards) plans in Brooklyn, among many others, and with the Organization of Waterfront Neighborhoods. For six years, I chaired the Pratt Institute Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment and worked with many communities on planning issues. I am a member of the Steering Committee of Planners Network, an organization of progressive urban planners and activists since 1975, and coedit Progressive Planning Magazine. I am also a founding member of the New York City Campaign and Task Force on Community-based Planning and write the monthly Land Use column for Gotham Gazette (<http://www.gothamgazette.com>). This book is thus a product of engagement in practice, and I wrote it primarily to help inform the practice of community planning. I have tried to be faithful to the truth and the facts I have uncovered but make no claims of total objectivity. I remain an unabashed advocate of community-based planning as an instrument for achieving greater social justice. I do not glorify local community planning and make a clear distinction between the inclusionary, democratic practices linked to global struggles for social equality and the exclusionary, elite practices that serve exclusionary local property interests.

This book is written for community planners, both the experts who have no formal professional training but learned by doing and the professionals and students everywhere who do and study community planning. Its purpose is to develop the theory and practice of community planning, community organizing, and long-range political strategies that improve the quality of life and eliminate inequities in urban neighborhoods. I have put references in an end-of-book notes section and a
selected bibliography to help make the narrative more accessible to those who are outside academic communities. While this is clearly an insider’s view of New York, I expect that it will be meaningful to planners and organizers in other cities around the world, especially those with powerful finance and real estate sectors. New Yorkers may be familiar with the stories told here, but I do not think anyone has put them together before and interpreted them in the way I have. And few have made the connections I have made between urban social movements, global real estate and urban planning.

Several escapes from New York during the more than five years it took to complete this work helped achieve some detachment, including five months at the Cornell program in Rome, two months as a Fulbright senior specialist, and two weeks at the Mesa Refuge in Point Reyes, California.

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