

Kelly Carroll for NYPAP

Inspired by Grassroots Stories: Community Architectural Advocacy

Farrah LaFontant, Zulmilena Then and Porscha Williams Fuller – Preserving East New York (PENY)

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Brad Vogel: Okay, welcome to, what is this Kelly? Is the fourth in our new series?

Kelly Carroll: It is.

Brad Vogel: This is our New York Preservation Archive Project series called Inspired by Grassroots Stories: Community Architectural Advocacy. And I'm really excited because this is all about the people who do the work; the people who make a difference when it comes to historic preservation. And our organization, NYPAP, is all about the history of the preservation movement. So, we're looking at why does that historic building, why do those historic districts exist in New York City where everything is changing all the time? How in the world do we still have these bits of our cultural heritage intact telling stories? NYPAP was looking at the history because history is about the people, it's people either individually, or often working as groups who engage in the political system in some way to keep these special things intact. And tonight we have a real treasure with a group that I have come to know over the last several years, and I've actually done programming with Preserving East New York out in East New York.

So, it's always great to continue that relationship, but our host tonight Kelly Carroll--who is an educator and a preservation consultant--is going to walk you through a group oral history with people who were there, who did the work, who continue to do work--this is very much an evolving story. But before we get into it, I did want to give special thanks to a few people, one is Pat Reisinger. The other is NYSCA, the New York State Council on the Arts, both of them for their support to make this happen. And also to the Historic Districts Council because like many of the groups featured in this series--PENY and East New York--was a Six to Celebrate neighborhood that HDC helped move forward with their efforts at preservation. And that to that process and program was actually also funded by NYSCA. So, let's give credit where credit is due, but without further ado, I would like to hand things off to our host this evening, Kelly Carroll.

Kelly Carroll: Thank you so much Brad and NYPAP and Pat Reisinger and our guests tonight, Preserving East New York, the ladies of Preserving East New York. And to Historic Districts Council. I worked with every one of these groups, as I was there for seven years. So, I'm going to introduce our guests tonight and I'm going to start with Farrah Lafontant, who is a born and bred Brooklynite and proud resident of East New York. She happily shares that pride during her walking tours, both formal and spontaneous ones.

Next up, we have Zulmilena Then, who is a native and proud Brooklynite living and working in: you guessed it, Brooklyn. Her love of community and old buildings led her to start the organization PENY, which is an acronym for Preserving East New York.

And then we also have Porscha Williams Fuller, a public historian. As a public historian, she believes that the history we create should be accessible to all. And her words: power to the community!

Right? So, with that intro, my first question for you, for you all, what is one word each that you would describe your community of East New York? One word.

Porscha Williams Fuller: Vibrant.

Kelly Carroll: Vibrant.

Farrah Lafontant: I wanted to cheat, but I won't. I have two words. But I will say the one word: misunderstood.

Kelly Carroll: Okay, great. Zum?

Zulmilena Then: I'm going to use perseverance.

Kelly Carroll: Okay, so we have two very strong words about the community in a positive light, and we have one that's on the fence that we heard from Farrah. So, that's actually great because my next question is: what was what is one word each that may be an outsider would use to describe East New York? Somebody who's never been there, somebody who's only ever heard about it.

Porscha Williams Fuller: Hood.

Kelly Carroll: Hood, ok.

Farrah Lafontant: Dangerous.

Kelly Carroll: Dangerous.

Zulmilena Then: You stole my word, Farrah. Hmm. I would say...hmm.

Kelly Carroll: Like maybe a word that someone said, like "Oh, you're from oh you're from East New York?" Like, what would, like, the next word out of their mouth maybe be?

Zulmilena Then: Worst. Worst. One of the worst, worst neighborhoods.

Kelly Carroll: Okay, so we have a perception about a place, and then we have people who actually live there, or are from there, with a much...with a completely different perspective. And that's really important because when you're making plans for a community--and we'll go into that--it's important to know what the place is really like, and how the people who live there actually view their community.

So, before PENY even got started, there was a loss in your neighborhood. I understand that the East New York Savings Bank was demolished, and I know that that was kind of a sign for things to come. And then there was the first rezoning ever in this--these community rezonings that have been the hallmark of the de Blasio administration--was announced for East New York. So, when this news was announced, how did you guys hear about a rezoning...was it via a flyer? Did you read it in a paper? How did you each hear about this change that was coming to your home?

Porscha Williams Fuller: I guess I'll start off, I believe that I heard about it on the news like in passing. You know, we didn't get any flyers in the neighborhood, nothing was posted. I was still, I don't want to say kind of new in the neighborhood, but you know I wasn't involved in the community board meetings.

So, it's not like I went to a community board meeting and heard you know, about the plans for rezoning. You know, with East New York being like the first neighborhood under de Blasio's plan.

Zulmilena Then: And I learned about the rezoning through media, on the Internet via Brownstoner and other websites. I didn't know what it was so you know, I started, you know reading about it, and at that point, I understood, along with the news of the demolition for the East New York Savings Bank that things were going to change drastically.

Farrah Lafontant: For me, I remember getting an email--I'm not even sure which listserv or where it came from--but it was an email announcing like a special community meeting that would be helping to decide, you know, East New York's future. And so I went to it, and a couple of the...really just a few people, I want to say, less than 20 people came. And urban planning was there, and two of the other attendees are like "This is a joke, you know. This is like, a total joke. They already have a plan for our neighborhood. They're just coming to tell us what it is, they're not coming to ask us, they're just coming to tell us."

And I didn't know anything about rezoning—nothing! So, I was just like, why are they so like angry? And as the weeks went on, I was like oh, I see where they were angry. I get it.

Kelly Carroll: Yeah. So, I understand that you all met at these at these community meetings. And that, so prior to knowing each other, when this when this like thing, this rezoning was coming down the pike, did you all feel...how did you feel? Did you feel alone in this fight prior to meeting each other, and when you met, what did those conversations sound like when you all connected?

Porscha Williams Fuller: I think I want to go last, because I was the last out of the three of us, I was last to join the crew. So I'll go last.

Zulmilena Then: I'll start. So, when I read about the news online on Brownstoner, that there was you know, the East New York Savings Bank was going to be demolished. And when I saw that a rally was covered to stop the demolition by the residents of East New York I felt hopeful. I felt hopeful because I understood that, even though you know landmarks wasn't a priority, you know within our neighborhood, that we understood what a special place is in our neighborhood and the unique buildings that make it a special place. So, you know, when I read about the rezoning, you know I felt like there was an opportunity to start a conversation and bring awareness about preservation in East New York. So, you know, I felt hopeful when I saw the rally because I felt like I wasn't alone.

Even though people—outsiders--might have thought that you know, nobody really cares about East New York, East New Yorkers really care about their neighborhood. So, you know, know that the rezoning was going to start anytime soon, like that really pushed me to start the you know, the group and start creating awareness. Even though I was by myself at the moment, but I was hopeful that along the way of this journey that, that people would join the organization. And you know, and as I was going into public spaces and communicating preservation that's where I slowly...I started meeting the members of the group. And you know at one of the first public hearings at Borough Hall, I met Farrah and that was like the first time that I that I spoke about like you know, what it means to be...what East New York meant for me, like means to me and what the East New York Savings Bank meant for me and what would that mean for other buildings with the rezoning. So, every time I would speak that speech that I

prepared, I saw Farrah in front of me like, “Uh huh! Uh huh!” and I looked at her like, oh my God, like there's another person in this big room that feels the same way as me.

And like, after we got home, we connected through Facebook and started chatting. And that was a story between Farrah and I in the beginning, and then we'll see her piece. So yeah, I just love that you know, I started by myself and I knew that I would find the other members, you know?

Farrah Lafontant: Yeah, oh um, I guess, like the first immediate feeling that came...it came over me when I started to notice like, things are going to change. I felt powerless actually. Like, I felt like what do we do? How do we stop this? And I felt like in like the grand scheme of things, of all that our neighborhood has to contend with, like preservation would be like forgotten, and no one would do anything about it.

So, I really was feeling a bit deflated, and I think it was at probably one of my most deflated moments that I made like, I made a prayer. And I was in front of a building that Zu knows, and it's like one of our favorites. It's called...we call it The Castle. And so, I was in front of this building and I had no experience with preservation--didn't know anything about how to get something land--none of it. This is completely a new space for me. And so, sitting in front of this building, I did like in my car, and I just said a prayer. And I was like “God, if you send me someone, I will help them.”

And I remember like, I don't know how many weeks after that prayer, but I remember it with Zum was talking at Borough Hall, I was like “Someone was sent!” So, I was just kind of like, this is so cool. It's like finding your people. So, because I would talk about East New York and its history--like ad nauseum--to anyone. And so, I talk about spontaneous tours like...I would just talk about it and people would just be like, “Uh huh, uh huh.” But when I would talk to Zu about it, or she would, we would just have like this energy. Like, we would be just so excited about you know, just the things that we loved about our neighborhood, and so it was just a great feeling. And as more members started to join, and more people started to help, that feeling continues, and I think it's just beautiful.

Porscha Williams Fuller: And for me, in the end I found out about Preserving East New York in school. So, I was in my graduate school program. I went to St. John's University for public history and I was graduating soon--or I just graduated--and was looking for opportunities to you know, show off my new talents to get the work you know, to put on all of this training and this practice to work. And Zulmilena's face popped up like on Google and it spoke about East New York. And I said, well wait a minute, that's my neighborhood! I'm like, okay, and just read about her efforts with the East New York Savings Bank and I said, I have to meet her. Like, I have to you know, I have to work with PENY. Like, this is it, this is what's going to happen. So, I believe I messaged her on Facebook and then I met up with her at one of the first tours--well my first tour--here in East New York and it was just history from that, from that point.

But I will say I am not a native Brooklynite. I am a native New Yorker. I'm from across the border. I'm from Queens, but I moved into East New York. My husband is from Brooklyn. And I've always been just fascinated and wanting to lend a hand and do my work as a New Yorker, as Black woman, as a historian to share the history and find out why neighborhoods like East New York or like a Far Rockaway, South Jamaica or a South Bronx, like, how these neighborhoods became in the position that they are in, right now. Disinvested neighborhoods. You know, I wanted to know about the history of the neighborhoods. How did it start? You know, when was the turning point? When did all of that happen? So, that just

fascinated me, you know, all around New York City. So, in the end that's how I began with PENY and have a sisterhood with these ladies, and just like a family and a fellowship with the other members of PENY.

Kelly Carroll: Yeah you touched on a lot of great points and I don't want to, I don't want to skip ahead about why, why did these neighborhoods end up like this? You know, they didn't just get that way one day, right? And we'll talk about that a little bit later. So, before we do...so, PENY was formed. Zulmilena is the founder of PENY. She found you guys. So, Google sent her to Porscha, God sent her to Farrah. All that matters is that you got together.

So, when you were in these meetings, like when was the...like you said, other people said like, we know they had a plan. And that's also, by the way, a very preservationist thing to say, is like "Oh, we know what they want to do and they're just you know, stringing us along." What was the "a-ha" moment for you guys when you were like wait a minute, they're planning to preserve absolutely nothing. When did that become like apparent, and that's when you guys really got to work? And you went to the farmers market, you did all these tours. Like, you made it known that there were preservationists in the building. So, what were some clues that, you're like all right, we're really gonna have to make this a thing because it's not if we leave it up to them?

Porscha Williams Fuller: The bike lanes. It's kind of like, you know, when you see the bike lanes coming into the neighborhood. That it's usually...it's not for the people that are already living in the neighborhood. It's for the future residents of the neighborhood. And when that happens, sometimes you know, most of the times when that happens, buildings are torn down, and you know, just to make space to make space and that was a sign for me, the bike lanes.

Farrah Lafontant: That is interesting, Porscha. I'm starting to think about that too. But for me, I think I want to say it's when they tore down the bank. Like when they tore down the bank, I was like they don't like...they don't care! Like, it was beautiful! And they tore it down. But I think what really kind of solidified it for me was after we did a presentation to LPC and they were kind of like, oh really impressed and they, you know, loved what we shared and then they were just kind of saying, "Oh yeah, we noticed that these buildings are landmark worthy." But beyond that, it was like crickets. Like, they just noted what was landmark worthy but made no other kind of statement about like what plans of action, or what they would suggest should be done. It was just kind of like "Yeah, we agree with you."

But, and that was it, and so I was like okay you agreed with us. All right. But then we just got to do the work. And that's when I felt like okay, now we're gonna go in and go in hard, because you already agreed with us. So now what you're gonna do? And I hope...I still hold on to that, even though we were you know, we got one landmark that we worked really hard for and we're so thankful that people who weren't from the neighborhood saw the same--saw that beauty, too, because they definitely spoke to it. And we were able to kind of continue to run with it. And I appreciate that, but it's kind of like it feels though we just got one when you notice that there were several more. And so, that just you know, gives me clues as to what battle we're up against.

Zulmilena Then: For me, I think I realized that they were going to approve the rezoning without any landmarks agenda was when every time we would show up at the public hearings and we testified against it, you know, and every public hearing, there was no response regarding the landmarks agenda, you know? There was no talk about, "Yes, we're gonna save all the buildings that you're testifying for",

you know? And as soon as the rezoning was approved in April, like you know, I was just in disbelief, but at the same time, I was, you know, expecting that it was going to be approved--the rezoning plan--just because I mean, without the landmarks plan. Just because you know, landmarking would go against the development plan that was the rezoning.

So, you know as soon as soon as the landmarks--as soon as the rezoning plan was approved, we got together and brainstormed about how to how to bring attention, you know? That there's some buildings in jeopardy that are within the rezoning and you know, how we could connect to people to talk about it. And one of the things that we decided to do was to present ourselves at the farmers market and set up a table, you know? Whether historic books, with pamphlets, and information and petitions and you know, people just started visiting our tables. A little bit confused in the beginning, because we weren't selling anything, right? We weren't selling you know produce, or like fruits and vegetables, but we were giving out free information about the community and how they could get involved. And you know, thanks to those efforts of being outside and connecting to people, we were able to collect petitions to save the only landmark that the city considered to save: the Empire State Dairy. So, yeah.

Kelly Carroll: Yeah. So, you got...you mentioned that you got one. You got one landmark after the fact. And I want to, I want to thank Preserving East New York, I want to thank the community of East New York, because unfortunately, you were the guinea pig. Not that you had a choice, but you allowed all the other neighborhoods that had to go through this--like you guys were the blueprint--and so, when we did work in Gowanus, East Harlem--the rallying cry was: you need to give us landmarks prior to any rezoning/land use change. And the city got better, and that's because of you guys. So, thank you. Do you think...so my next question is, do you think if it wasn't for PENY that you would have even gotten one?

Porscha Williams Fuller: No. I can confidently say no. It wouldn't have happened. It takes perseverance, it takes a group effort. It takes members like ourselves; a diverse group of members. Diverse--diversity in our backgrounds, in our careers and our cities, the way that we feel about our neighborhood. It takes all of that to make some moves, especially in a neighborhood like ours.

Farrah Lafontant: I thank you, Porscha for saying those so confidently, because I was thinking the same thing too, but I didn't want to you know, I was like let me not say that. But I really do want to echo a lot of what Porscha was saying. I can't speak, like, I don't know if I have the words to express how amazing PENY and the members are. Like, it's just incredible like just like what Porscha was saying, everybody brings something different to the table and all of those things are like amazing strengths that helped to propel us forward.

But, at the core of the work that we do, just like the core of everyone in the group is like this love for the neighborhood, right? It's not you know, like we had sometimes, where people tried to you know, join and participate in what we're doing and they had like maybe other motives, you know? Because they just recognize that for whatever reason, you know there would be stories about us, or you know whatever the case may be. And they would want to leverage that, for whatever reason.

But for the most part, those who are at the core of the group really love the neighborhood and I find that to be just like the most amazing and beautiful thing, and anyone who meets us can't deny that. Like, we really love East New York. So, if they didn't give us the one landmark it would have been like shamed, the optics would have been bad. Because of the diversity of the group, there's different energies. I'm the one that brings a little bit more of the heat, but Zulmilena is definitely like a very

endearing person. So, like it would have been like, how do you...how would you explain that? Like, could you really walk away from it, you're bad. Like, how could you deny such a nice person? So yeah, for sure.

Kelly Carroll: She is hard to say no to.

Zulmilena Then: I don't take advantage of that, just in case. Like you know, I think that we showed up at the right time. Because you know, if we didn't show up for the neighborhood, it would have been forgotten. You know, East New York has a history of being neglected, so you know if we weren't present during the rezoning process then you know the city would just go ahead and do...you know run its course with its agenda. But because we showed up--and preserving buildings is about community support and showing that support--we proved that you know, we are interested in keeping the uniqueness of the neighborhood. And for us to be present at the time, to garner you know, evidence and support from the neighborhood and to bring back all this, all these documents and things back to the table and in their faces is like, hold up you know?

We know you already approved the rezoning, but we got documents, like you got to do something about this. You know, I just I just feel like...I just feel like it's an injustice for the city to come into a neighborhood and neglect, you know the special places of the neighborhoods. And us being there to sort of you know, right their wrong, you know? It's like, I just feel like we were present at the right time to at least have the Empire State Dairy Building saved.

Kelly Carroll: And I'm so glad you were there. And this is going back to, we've touched on it a few times. You know this is a community that was that was left behind. And that for many complex, systemic reasons, it was left out of the buffet, while the rest of...while other neighborhoods in Brooklyn you know, were thriving.

As a community, how did that, how did that make you feel when things weren't as best as they could be for you all, to have the city come in and put another layer of a burden on you? Do you think that's why you fought so hard? Or was it just 'enough is enough,' or was it more like you just happened to be in this special place where you decided to just, you felt that it was wrong? And I know that that was like a complicated question but try your best.

Porscha Williams Fuller: Go ahead.

Zulmilena Then: No, I was gonna say that it's like a combination of being at the right place, but it's also been part of our history to always fight the hardest to get what we want. You know, we always have to ask until...until our lungs collapse. Like, we always have to you know, we ask and they hear us, but we always have to go beyond and repeat ourselves. So, it's like, it was like a combination of like enough is enough, and we are here to tell you that it's enough. You know, you have to work with us to you know, preserve the special places of the neighborhood.

Farrah Lafontant: I totally agree, I also would have to say that the rezoning definitely like, definitely lights a fire under you because you know that you're dealing with some real, real deadlines in terms of just like the process of it all. But first and foremost, I always am like driven by the just the concept that the narrative of East New York is incomplete. There's only half the story that's ever shared about our community and our neighborhood, and it's always like the negative narrative that is shared. And so always it's kind of like I'm gonna...I want to...kind of all of us want to impart a more complete narrative of our neighborhood.

We were not like, we definitely didn't get the same amount of services and resources as other neighborhoods would, but we were not barren, you know? Like it's not like we're dodging bullets on a daily basis in East New York. There are definite assets and beauty and just tremendous things happening in our community that do not get included in our narrative, for whatever reason. So, it's like twofold. One, we want to protect the places that mean a lot to the residents that have been here a long time through it all, and also, we want to provide a richer narrative than what is perpetrating you know, mass media.

Porscha Williams Fuller: Everything that Zulmilena and Farrah said is true. It's about you know, enough is enough. We--it's not a barren neighborhood. Thank you, Farrah, for highlighting it and for saying that it's not a war zone. It doesn't have to be razed, leveled and then turned into something else. And I think that that was a fear of a lot of residents. Even now, to this day, when people hear about rezoning like you know, like what's going to happen? Why, you know, are they just going to just like destroy everything, push us out and then rebuild it for someone else?

So definitely an attitude in a sense of like, you all need to listen up and listen to us now. We have something to say. It's valuable. It's of importance and you know, that we're taxpayers out here also. We're registered voters. We're residents of New York City. Residents of this borough. Like, it's time that our elected officials and anyone else who's in office that's supposed to serve the public listen to us, because we are a part of this city.

Farrah Lafontant: And, thankfully, the numbers don't lie. Like, if you look at a map of Brooklyn and the landmarks you can see, you could...it's right there! How could you explain to me...I want people to explain to me the disparity in a way that makes sense. So, it's kind of like enough is enough, we have receipts, you need to fix it.

Porscha Williams Fuller: And another note, not to...because this is a, this is a sensitive subject. And it's like, Black people, Latinos, like we all appreciate historic items. We love beautiful buildings. We care about history, preservation, all of these things. We don't have to be on the other side of Brooklyn in order to appreciate and to see the value in those things, and you know, we want it too. So.

Kelly Carroll: That statement like, "we want it too" comes up over and over and over again in communities of color when it comes to landmarks. Or the or the statement like "we want that too" you know, this isn't just for people in Cobble Hill or in Park Slope. Like you know, East 25th street was all about that. Like, we're just in East Flatbush, we get to have that too, you know? And they luckily they--not luckily--through hard work, they got it.

So, this is going to bring me into like a little bit of the last part. So, it's been it's been five years right? So, it's half a decade since the rezoning already. So, do you want to speak to what has changed? So, you know they had these grand plans, the rezoning went through, how has the neighborhood changed?

And the other half of that question--just to think about--is what's next for PENY? Because I would say one landmark per neighborhood per decade...those numbers aren't looking good to me. And like Farrah said, they're not looking good on the map either. So, what are your thoughts on that in 2021, five years in?



Farrah Lafontant: I'm sorry, I was just saying to myself, I can't believe it's five years. Wow. Half a decade. Goodness, I don't even know where to begin. Oh, I will definitely say that there's more in store for PENY, we haven't given up.

So, what does the neighborhood look like now? I think there was like accelerated movement and changing the face of the neighborhood for like...it could be more aggressive, but it was kind of just like whoa, this building is gone. Well, what's happening here? You know, you see these things 'specially down Atlantic Avenue. Many buildings were demolished. So, I noticed that, but then Covid.

So, Covid really put a pause on a lot of that, or like the intensity and the rate at which it was going decelerated a bit, but I imagine that it will start back up again. And, like I wouldn't say I don't recognize Atlantic Avenue yet, but I probably won't in like another year and a half. It'd be like whoa, this is different than what I used to experience. And that's kind of like, bummed about it, but many of those buildings were you know, kind of like sold and transferred ownership. And so, all of that I can't even begin.

I will also say that there is a newfound appreciation also that's happening, like the narrative is getting richer about our neighborhood, so I get more and more people who are kind of you know, a little bit more wiser in what they say about East New York, instead of like, "Oh it's dangerous!" You know, I'll hear other things, more so than I did in the past, so I'm not sure if that's really good yet, but I do notice that more people are seeing some of the beauty that I appreciated for a long time.

Kelly Carroll: And the dairy is on Atlantic Avenue, so one can only imagine--given what has sprouted behind it--what would have happened on Atlantic to your only landmark had that not been saved.

Zulmilena Then: Go ahead, Porscha.

Porscha Williams Fuller: I think that. Well, first of all, five years, like it doesn't feel like five years. I've definitely seen buildings come down but in like the side and like the back blocks. Because you know, East New York is such a huge neighborhood. It's really a massive neighborhood, the size of like some small towns and cities. But it's our neighborhood, and Atlantic Avenue and it's the major thoroughfare. And it's like two parts to like East New York, three parts. I'd like to say you have Atlantic Avenue, and that kind of like separates Cypress Hills from Eastern New York, and then you have like Linden Boulevard that separates you know, one part of East New York from the other. So, it's like broken up into like three different sections.

In the more residential area away from like the major thoroughfares and the business district, I'll see on smaller—I like to call them side blocks--like maybe like down Belmont Avenue or Glenmore, there are where a lot of older like apartment buildings or maybe like abandoned lots would be, there are developments. I mean there are apartment complexes that are going up. And within the past, I want to say, from the beginning of January until now I've seen about three of them go up already. And they vary in size. I'm not sure if anyone has like the stats on that off the top, of how many stories they're allowed to go up, but you can start to see some of the cohesiveness in the neighborhood is going away with some of the designs of these new buildings that are emerging.

I don't...I try to keep hopeful. I try to be optimistic about you know, what is coming to the neighborhood. Are these buildings really being built, and will the people in the neighborhood be able to afford it three or four years down the line, as the area median income starts to raise? Because East New York, it's one

of the last neighborhoods in Brooklyn where the rent is relatively affordable. So, as people with higher incomes start to move into the neighborhood, you know, just looking for a deal--not necessarily someone that's gentrifying the neighborhood in the wrong way--but you know, someone looking for something affordable, you know, will the buildings that are being built now, will they still be here for the residents that are still...that are currently living in East New York?

So, there are changes, you see that coming up, but I mean I don't want to get like long winded or anything, and I know that in certain pockets, there are you know, positive things that are happening on grassroots movements. Different organizations that are here that are serving the residents that are here, but the development, it's here. Like Farrah said, that it was a lot more aggressive in the beginning, and I feel now as other neighborhoods throughout the city are going through rezoning, things are starting to like slow down a bit.

Maybe like the beautification of East New York that was spearheaded by the resulting projects. Like Atlantic Avenue, you know, it does look different now. They're trying to make it more pedestrian friendly, and I appreciate that. They do have traffic signals and walkways so that people can you know, safely cross Atlantic Avenue at different points, and that's pretty because of flowers' bloom and it does look nice, so I like that, but I mean we'll see what happens.

Zulmilena Then: Porscha, when you were talking about the three buildings going up. Like, you're reminding me that, like I've seen buildings going up and they may not be new buildings, they could just be buildings that, you know, are taking advantage of the moment. And they're you know, being sold and bought and flipped and let's say decorated in a different way, where it's like insensitive to neighboring buildings. And I like to put them under the category of the middle finger architecture style.

Porscha Williams Fuller: Yes.

Zulmilena Then: You know, like I seen blocks that that were cohesive and then like in the middle there's a building that got painted or stuccoed gray with the with the fancy light fixture. And like you know, it just shows that it's being changed and it's probably being marketed for another type of tenant, maybe not necessarily one that already exists within the community. So, you know the rezoning has cons, you know, changes within the neighborhood. There may be, you know neighborhoods are always ever changing, but with the rezoning in place, it definitely has changed the speed of that change--of that incoming change--to a faster speed.

I'll say, to answer the question about you know, what's next for PENY. You know, what's next is what happened with the other thirteen buildings that LPC considered as landmark worthy? So, we're in conversation about how to move forward with those thirteen buildings, and we put it back on their table. And so, you know, we're working together, and also PENY is looking at strategizing how to move each one of those buildings like one step forward into the process of being preserved before you know, before it's too late.

Kelly Carroll: I'm really glad to hear that, especially with the agency--the Landmarks Preservation Commission--beginning this year announcing that they were releasing an "equity framework" to address issues of parity in certain neighborhoods. So, they absolutely should be dusting off those East New York buildings. Okay, you know and there, and you got, East New York is in the best hands it possibly could be

because of PENY. So, I think we're gonna wrap and we will, I think we might have a little time--correct me if I'm wrong, Brad--for a few questions if our guests will oblige such requests.