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South Bronx rezoning proposal raised during talk of citywide housing, transit plans



The Department of City Planning has been meeting with residents and began conducting a survey in the fall about potential changes to the neighborhood. | Spencer Platt/Getty Images

By Sally Goldenberg

Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration is considering [rezoning an area surrounding Southern Boulevard in the Bronx](#) to create more affordable housing and retail while expanding access to outdoor spaces for neighborhoods bisected by a highway.

The new City Planning director, Marisa Lago, referenced the proposal during a broader discussion on rezonings and transit projects across the city hosted by the New York Building Congress on Friday.

"The city looked at this area, which has been so challenged from a transportation point of view, cut off from the waterfront. It is also a neighborhood with tremendous challenges from a public health point of view," Lago said during the hour-long discussion with Economic Development president James Patchett, moderated by Building Congress president Carlo Scissura.

"If we look at the fact that we have a neighborhood with public health challenges separated by a highway from a waterfront park, if we're able to make the connection, make it easier for people to get to the waterfront to use these recreation spaces, that in and of itself will already be part of a solution to the public health issue," she added.

The Bronx is the [least healthy county in the state](#), with reports of high rates of asthma, diabetes, obesity and smoking.

The Department of City Planning has been meeting with residents and began conducting a survey in the fall about potential changes to the neighborhood, which has more than 17,000 residential units.

During the forum Friday, which focused on projects outside Manhattan, Patchett plugged the city's plan for expanded ferry service and the BQX, a street car that would run 16 miles from Astoria to Sunset Park.

"I think it's an acknowledgment that we're not building subways anytime soon. It took the Second Avenue Subway took over 100 years to complete and the last five years where we actually finished it — I meant it was tremendous, the Second Avenue Subway's great, but it's three stops," he said, taking a jab at one of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's prized accomplishments.

"So that is not the solution to all of our transportation problems. I think what the BQX represents is one way in which we're acknowledging that we have to think creatively about our transportation future and not just look to digging in the ground and building subway tunnels," he added. "Although if the MTA wants to build more subway tunnels, we are supportive."