



# METROPOLITAN PARK CAN POTENTIALLY DISPLACE OVER 50,000 RENTERS IN FLUSHING AND CORONA

Statement of  
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before the

Metropolitan Park Community Advisory Committee,  
New York State Facility Location Board

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\* The views expressed are my own and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

Assemblymember Hooks and members of the Community Advisory Committee, my name is Vivian Liu, and I am a researcher at the Urban Institute, based in Washington, DC. The Urban Institute is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research organization. I specialize in housing research and work with various local governments and community organizations across the country on affordable housing and anti-displacement projects. The views I express today are my own and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

Earlier in 2025, I wrote an article about the potential negative effects of the Metropolitan Park casino development proposal.<sup>1</sup> This article has been cited in various news outlets, such as Documented and World Journal. Specifically, it highlights the following:

1. The Metropolitan Park proposal could displace almost 16,000 renters who spend more than half of their income on housing in Corona and Flushing.
2. A casino could increase poverty and gambling in the area, which is mostly Latino and Asian, as people living near casinos in other cities like Philadelphia were 66 percent more likely to gamble than those who did not.<sup>2</sup>
3. An additional 13,750 units of parking could worsen air quality and health outcomes for the area's mostly Latino and Asian residents.
4. Examples of how state and city policymakers can use this land in a way that benefits all residents include creating community land trusts, a park (based on resident feedback), and worker-owned small businesses.

Most importantly, many Corona and Flushing residents who live nearby already struggle to pay housing costs and are very vulnerable to displacement.

## **An \$8 billion casino project is a huge development, so what does research tell us about projects of this scale?**

Large developments like this often drive up nearby rents and property taxes.<sup>3</sup> An example is the High Line in Manhattan. After it opened in 2009, nearby rents jumped by 67 percent.<sup>4</sup> That kind of increase forces residents who can no longer afford the rent to move out, a process called displacement.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, small businesses that cannot pay higher rents would also have to shut down.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vivian Liu, "How Developing a Casino on Public Land in Queens, New York City, Could Displace Nearby Residents," *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, April 29, 2025, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-developing-casino-public-land-queens-new-york-city-could-displace-nearby-residents>.

<sup>2</sup> Moira Conway, "Vulnerability Modeling of Casinos in the United States: A Case Study of Philadelphia," *Applied Geography* 63 (2015): 21–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2015.05.015>.

<sup>3</sup> Diane K. Levy, Jennifer Comey, and Sandra Padilla, *In the Face of Gentrification: Case Studies of Local Efforts to Mitigate Displacement* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2006), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/50791/411294-In-the-Face-of-Gentrification.PDF>.

<sup>4</sup> Katie Jo Black and Mallory Richards, "Eco-Gentrification and Who Benefits from Urban Green Amenities: NYC's High Line," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 204 (2020): 103900, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2020.103900>.

<sup>5</sup> Karen Chapple, "Displacement: The Misunderstood Crisis," *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, August 31, 2015, <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/displacement-misunderstood-crisis>.

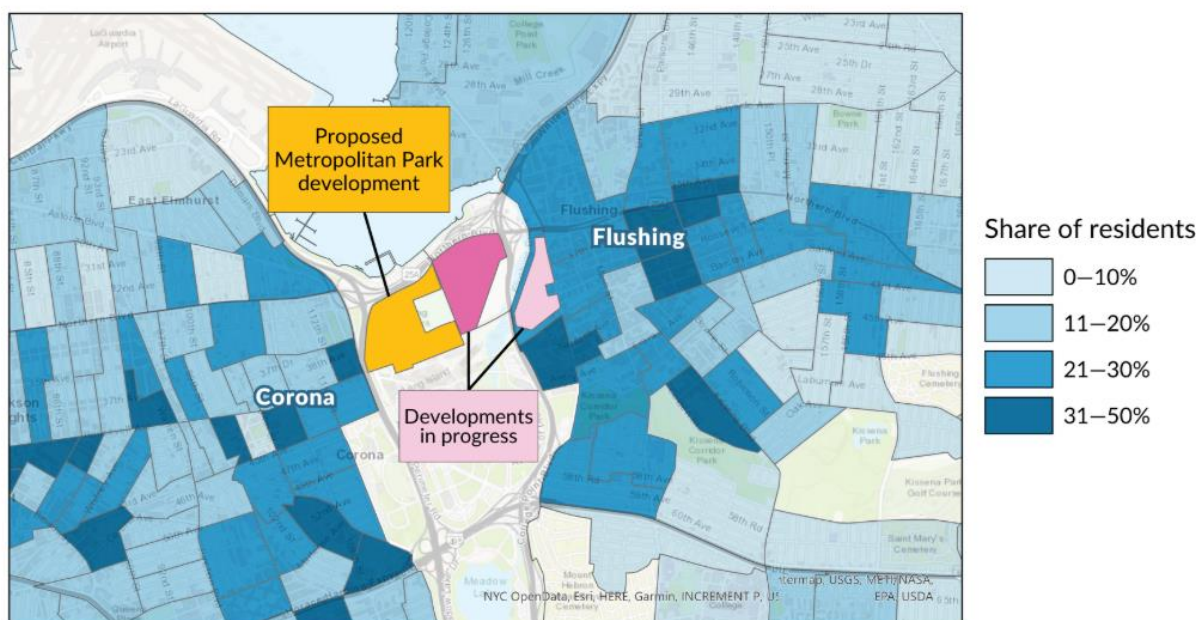
<sup>6</sup> Mychal Cohen, Kathryn L. S. Pettit, and Diane K. Levy, "Turning the Corner: Implications of Neighborhood Revitalization for Public Safety, Small Businesses, and Capital Investments" (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2019), <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/turning-corner-implications-neighborhood-revitalization-public-safety-small-businesses-and-capital-investments>.

To understand the risk of displacement to residents, I analyzed national data from the 2023 American Community Survey and created the map below:

- The yellow area is the proposed Metropolitan Park casino development.
- The blue areas show where people who are already paying more than half of their paychecks on rent live.
- The darker the blue, the higher percentage of renters.

## Many Residents in Corona and Flushing Spend More Than Half Their Paycheck on Rent

*Share of residents who spent more than half of their income on rent, 2023*



**Sources:** 2023 American Community Survey 5-year estimates and the New York City Special Purpose Zoning Districts Dataset, accessed April 16, 2025, <https://www.nyc.gov/content/planning/pages/resources/datasets/gis-zoning-features>.

**Notes:** Developments in progress are Special Willets Point District and Special Flushing Waterfront District. The latter includes 1,725 luxury condominiums and has raised concerns about displacement. See <https://www.guardiansofflushingbay.org/special-flushing-waterfront-district>.

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As you can see, the darker blue areas are in Flushing and Corona, right next to the proposed casino development. In both neighborhoods, more than 75 percent of residents are renters.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, over 15,800 renters in these neighborhoods struggle to keep their housing, putting more than half of their paychecks toward rent.

<sup>7</sup> US Census Bureau, “American Community Survey 5-Year Data (2009–2023),” December 12, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html>.

If a large development like Metropolitan Park causes housing costs to rise, landlords may raise their rents. Higher rents may force residents and small businesses—particularly those who are cost-burdened—to move out and find a cheaper place.

Despite the scale of this \$8 billion project, Metropolitan Park developers have committed to funding just one affordable housing building and putting just 2 percent of their total budget toward community organizations. That is not enough to prevent displacement of the many renters at risk. Developers have not published an evidence-based plan to prevent the risk of displacement of renters in these neighborhoods.

## What does an evidence-based plan to prevent displacement and foster responsible development that increases community wealth actually look like?

A model this proposal could follow is the 11th Street Bridge Park in Washington, DC. This project aims to redevelop a park in a mostly Black neighborhood with the goal of not displacing residents by working with the community to preserve land before development even starts. Developers first conducted meaningful community engagement with the goal of creating a development that increases community wealth and addresses systemic barriers. They asked more than 3,000 residents what they wanted from the development and published a 34-page evidence-based plan to preserve the neighborhood.<sup>8</sup> They created a community land trust, buying land and properties for residents to control, so that housing on that land is kept permanently affordable, no matter what is built around it.<sup>9</sup> Over 2,000 residents also received training on tenant rights in case nearby landlords try to increase rent prices. As a result, the community land trust has preserved 252 units of affordable housing that will be under resident control.<sup>10</sup>

There is a real opportunity to do the same here. As the Community Advisory Committee, you can consider alternative uses of public land to address community needs. Through partnerships with mission-driven or nonprofit developers, NYC and NYS governments can develop this land to increase permanently affordable housing and build community wealth. To do so, development plans can include alternative models, such as the following:

- **Create a community land trust:** A community land trust allows the community to collectively own the land, which can ensure that housing built on that land remains permanently affordable. This approach would directly address the displacement risks facing Corona and Flushing by preventing landlords from raising rents and giving residents control over their housing.
- **Expand worker-owned small businesses through the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative:** More than 200 lawsuits have been filed by workers in Flushing and Corona, claiming they have not been paid fairly.<sup>11</sup> To ensure that more workers are treated fairly, NYC has launched an initiative to create more worker-owned small businesses, called the Worker Cooperative Development Initiative.<sup>12</sup> In these businesses, workers split the profits and have a say in business

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<sup>8</sup> Building Bridges Across the River, *11th Street Bridge Park's Equitable Development Plan* (Washington, DC: Building Bridges Across the River, 2018), [https://buildingbridgesdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Equitable-Development-Plan\\_09.04.18.pdf](https://buildingbridgesdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Equitable-Development-Plan_09.04.18.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Douglass Community Land Trust, "Community Ownership of Land," accessed September 16, 2025, <https://douglassclt.org/how-do-clts-work/>.

<sup>10</sup> Building Bridges Across the River, "Investing in Our Community," accessed September 16, 2025, <https://buildingbridgesdc.org/communityinvestments/>.

<sup>11</sup> Documented, New York Wage Theft Data, accessed September 16, 2025, <https://www.nywagetheft.com/map?inputBusiness=&inputIndustry=&inputZipCode=11355>.

<sup>12</sup> NYC Department of Small Business Services, "Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative," accessed September 16, 2025, <https://nyc-business.nyc.gov/nycbusiness/business-services/initiatives/worker-cooperative-business-development-initiative>.

decisions. Including this model in the development plans in Queens and collaborating with this initiative can increase workers' pay and improve their working conditions.

- **Preserve public land for a 65-acre community park:** Residents have expressed strong support for transforming the Metropolitan Park development site into a large public park instead of a casino. In a community survey conducted by State Senator Jessica Ramos, 84 percent of Corona residents favored a park.<sup>13</sup> Meaningful community engagement would look like multilingual town halls, collaborating with trusted community organizations and incorporating the input of community members into final development plans.

Overall, Flushing and Corona are two working-class, Asian and Latino neighborhoods, where 75 percent of residents are renters. Developing a Metropolitan Park casino has the potential to negatively impact many of their residents and cause displacement. Rather than fueling gentrification, the land could be used to generate community wealth through alternative development approaches, such as building public parks or community land trusts—investments that would benefit, rather than displace, the residents of these neighborhoods.

I appreciate your time and the opportunity to testify today. I welcome any future opportunity to share research and data with the Committee.

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<sup>13</sup> Katie Honan, "Pol's Poll Shows Low Support for Citi Field Casino," THE CITY, April 1, 2024, <https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/04/01/poll-casino-citi-field-jessica-ramos-steve-cohen/>.