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NYU

**NYU PUBLIC POLICY
MAJOR SENIOR
SEMINAR PROJECTS**

SPRING 2017

**WAGNER
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCE**

ABOUT THE PUBLIC POLICY MAJOR

Established in 2014 by NYU Wagner and NYU College of Arts and Sciences, the Major in Public Policy prepares students to play roles in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of policies that address today's most significant domestic and global challenges. Taught by top faculty from multiple disciplines, the major offers a diverse and rigorous curriculum designed to give students the tools and expertise they need to translate their passion into real change.

FACULTY DIRECTORS

Anthony Bertelli, Professor of Politics of Public Policy

Nathaniel Beck, Professor of Politics

ABOUT THE SENIOR SEMINAR

The Senior Seminar serves as a capstone experience for the Public Policy major. Over the course of one semester, students apply the analytical methods and substantive knowledge of the policy process they have gained to a critical and relevant policy issue. Under the guidance of a faculty member, students conduct an in-depth analysis, engage with key stakeholders, and recommend a policy solution in a formal presentation.

This booklet is a summary of the Senior Seminar projects from Spring 2017 which includes the inaugural class of Public Policy major graduates.

**PUBLIC SERVICE IS
THE HIGHEST
GOOD,
HONORABLY
AND WELL,
THE MOST REWARDING.**

ROBERT F. WAGNER,
MAYOR OF NEW YORK CITY
1953-1965

BUILDING WITH LAW: ZONING CHANGES TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

TEAM MEMBERS:

Jeremy Cheung,
Aaron Reuben,
William Wang,
Tiffany Wong

An undersupply of affordable rental units has exacerbated the rent burden of New Yorkers: 50% of New Yorkers spend over 30% of their income on housing. Modifications to the NYC's Zoning Resolution will spur the development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), a residential unit added to an existing building or property in backyards, basements or garages. Specific zoning modifications include decreasing the minimum distance required between residential buildings, classifying ADUs as permitted obstructions, waiving new residential unit parking requirements, and re-calculating the required open space and floor area mandates for participating lots. The majority of the properties in R1-R5 areas (low to mid-density residential areas) already contain open space in their backyards, providing ample opportunity for ADU development. Based on a 15% take-up rate of potential ADUs, these zoning changes will provide approximately 75,000 units throughout the five boroughs. If the Mayor can implement these modifications within the next three years, he will be able to establish nearly 40% of the 200,000 affordable housing units he has pledged to be preserved and created by 2024.

REZONING NYC SCHOOL DISTRICT 3

TEAM MEMBERS:

Sarah Bratman,
Jonah Harris,
Breana Roberts,
Marc Starvaggi

We sought to tackle disparities in ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic composition of NYC public elementary schools that lead to unequal outcomes for students and social inequalities. We studied seven schools across Manhattan's School District 3 and developed a rezoning plan with the help of ArcGIS mapping software, census data, and other tools. We settled on rezoning after considering and rejecting several possible alternatives such as increased school choice and magnet schools. We are confident our rezoning plan should lead to less ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic segregation as well as improved test scores.

EXPANSION OF THE MENTAL HEALTH COURT SYSTEM FOR MENTALLY ILL DEFENDANTS

TEAM MEMBERS:

Natalie Tormo,
Palak Mittal,
Amanda Robinson

Defendants with mental illnesses receive sentences an average fourteen months longer than their counterparts convicted of the same crime, all else being equal. Our policy solution is to increase the number of mental health courts in NYC by 3 and instituting them in the neighborhoods which they are most needed (East Harlem, St. George and Stapleton, and Rockaway Port). In addition, we propose an increase in funding to the programs that support these courts as well as more collaboration between the courts themselves. The benefits of our solution are that more individuals will have access to the courts as well as insure that the best treatment is made available to them in order to ensure their success.

SODA TAX IN NEW YORK CITY

TEAM MEMBERS:

Michael
DaCruz, Naomi
Friedlaender, and
Natalie Petrulla

Overconsumption of soda and other sugary-sweetened beverages is linked to obesity and other diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. In addition, the populations that consume the largest amount of these beverages are of lower socioeconomic status, making them more vulnerable to these diseases. Our policy proposal is to implement a 1 cent-per-ounce tax on sugary-sweetened beverages where the funds are allocated to health programs that help those of lower socio-economic status. The goal of this policy is to reduce consumption while simultaneously generating revenue for programs that improve the health of the populations most affected by overconsumption.

R.I.S.E (REENTERING INDIVIDUALS SUCCESSFULLY THROUGH EMPOWERMENT)

TEAM MEMBERS:

Rebecca Laden,
Alex Liao, Sarah
Weck

The scope of our research has shown that past supportive work programs have been ineffective at reducing recidivism in incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals under 27 years of age. This age group is our focus in our policy recommendation for R.I.S.E, a holistic reentry program that brings educational, mental health, and personal growth initiatives together with employment in order to aid under-27s through the prison system and into a successful career. From an economic standpoint, our program would save the prison system in our geographic target of New York State money in the long term. More importantly, RISE would positively impact the lives of young formerly incarcerated individuals and their families, reducing the stigma they carry and empowering them to choose personal health, growth, and education in the next steps of their lives.

LOWER EAST SIDE/TWO BRIDGES DISTRICT 1 REZONING POLICY PROPOSAL

TEAM MEMBERS:

Olivia Rich, Uthara
Ramesh, and
Harris Mateen.

District 1 is home to some of the most segregated and underperforming schools in Manhattan, and has an open-choice policy for elementary schools. We examine three schools-P.S. 20, 140, and 142-and their surrounding neighborhoods and demonstrate how school choice is causing self-segregation, as the neighborhood is quite diverse. We also note that District 2, which borders District 1 and has a similar neighborhood composition, has significantly more integrated schools that are also higher performing. We propose the zoning of these three schools, positing that it will increase integration and can be done in a politically feasible way.

CREATING MORE INCLUSIVE COLLEGE-LEVEL PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAMS

TEAM MEMBERS:

Barbara
Bontempo, Faiza
Haq, Monica Millay

While college-level prison education programs (PEPs) seem to benefit those who are able to participate, the classes are not accessible for all segments of the incarcerated population. We identified a racial disparity in the rates of attendance of college classes in prisons nationally-- holding all else equal, incarcerated people who self-identify as Latinx are less likely than their peers to attend college-level courses. We recommend that the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, in order to address this racial disparity, create bridge programs that focus on preparing incarcerated individuals for post-secondary education programs. The bridge programs will make college-level PEPs more accessible and equitable, by supporting students as they obtain their high school diploma equivalent, write their admissions essays, conduct interviews, and study for entrance exams.

A CONTROLLED CHOICE POLICY FOR INTEGRATING & EQUALIZING DISTRICT 3 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

TEAM MEMBERS:

Paula Sevilla,
Emma Sterling,
Sarah Ng, Annais
Lopez Sanchez

The segregation in District 3 schools leads to unequal educational opportunities. We propose controlled choice, which takes into consideration parents preferences but also socio-economic status to assign each family a school. This policy will foster a more equitable distribution of resources among schools. We also suggest offering busing, expanding Family Welcome Center hours and providing individual counselors for all parents, along with a strong advocacy campaign to encourage acceptance of the policy.