Abstract

Julian L. Ferraldo, “Zoning For Exchange: Creative-Industrial Incubators In North Brooklyn And The Formalization Of Innovation.” Advisor: Dr. Elliott Sclar

Despite its stated purpose, land use zoning has struggled to respond and proactively shape the dynamic processes that create vibrant and diverse urban spaces. Emerging from nuisance protection and deliberation, land use zoning has historically aimed to create a more efficient regulatory framework. In removing the conflict between noxious industrial uses and residential development, it reduced the threat to economic growth and improved overall public welfare. However, with recent improvements in industrial environmental regulations, and a shift in manufacturing processes, the industrial-residential conflict needs to be re-evaluated.

The North Brooklyn creative-industrial sector is a vibrant and essential part of New York City’s economy, building cultural capital through agglomeration and exchange. However, it requires particular spatial organization and social interactions to thrive. A broad perspective on these issues is gained though interviews with city planners, manufacturing policy analysts, industrial real estate developers, and small-scale manufacturers. A close look at the land use changes that followed the 2005 Williamsburg-Greenpoint rezoning as a Special Mixed Use District shows the weaknesses of zoning as a mixed-use facilitator. If city planners intend to address the contemporary conflicts between residential, manufacturing, and other commercial land uses without hindering the positive exchanges that arise from their interactions, regulatory and support mechanisms outside of the current zoning framework need to be applied. Planners need to remove restrictions on interactions, while strengthening the networks where they occur. They need to level the playing field through financial incentives, institutional support, and infrastructure development. Most importantly, planners need to actively promote an increase in the types of spaces, primarily multi-story loft buildings, where these interactions thrive.