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Visions for 'Next NYC' are sublime to strange

Among the 40 proposals put forward for consideration by the next mayor were extending the Number 7 train to Seacaucus, N.J., and pasting spiffy-looking facades on public housing projects. Meanwhile, Dan Doctoroff says he's served his time.

[Matt Chaban](#)



Forum for Urban Design

Dan Doctoroff's dream of a light rail along the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront.

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Dan Doctoroff is not running for mayor—even if it sounded like he was on Tuesday night at a dinner hosted by the Forum for Urban Design.

Mr. Doctoroff and John Zucotti, both former deputy mayors, had come to the 20th floor ballroom of the Yale Club in midtown to discuss Next New York, a [slim pamphlet packing 40 proposals](#) intended to provide the next mayor plans to "tackle the most critical issues facing the city," as the introduction put it.

The pamphlet is full of proposals, some new, some old, some just way out there. They ranged from extending the Number 7 train to Secaucus and offering a one-seat-ride (i.e., no transfers needed) transit link to the airports, to reforming the Landmarks Preservation Commission, embracing modular construction, and pasting spiffy-looking facades on public housing projects.

"Some of these are highly pragmatic while others verge on the fantastical," urban planner and Forum for Urban Design president Alex Garvin said in his opening remarks. "This is not a blueprint. It is meant to spark debate about the future of the public realm."

Both Mr. Doctoroff, the head of Bloomberg LP and the first deputy mayor in the Bloomberg administration, and Mr. Zucotti, chairman of developer Brookfield Properties, who served as Abe Beam's deputy mayor, agreed there was no panacea.

"Most major corporations would leave New York if they had the chance, given the cost of doing business," Mr. Zucotti said. The key was creating housing and good transit to keep the labor pool growing which is why companies will put up with the headaches of being here.

Within reason, of course.

"I think it's going to be virtually impossible to build affordable housing in Manhattan anymore because the price of land is skyrocketing," Mr. Zucotti said.

Mr. Doctoroff disagreed on this point, citing affordable housing created by the rezoning of the far West Side, among others, as a roadmap. He did note that the outer boroughs held the key. He also once again called for a light-rail line along the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront to help spur continued housing development there. "Just like we saw with the 7-train extension, a limited public investment can spark a huge private investment," Mr. Doctoroff said.

Both agreed a one-seat ride from Manhattan to the major airports was critical.

"The 15-minute trip from Heathrow to downtown (London) is transformative," Mr. Doctoroff said, who said the same applied to some kind of congestion pricing scheme. On more prosaic matters, like giving the Department of City Planning control of the city's capital budget they were split. Mr. Doctoroff said it was unnecessary, Mr. Zucotti countered that not all administrations are as savvy as the one Mr. Doctoroff served in.

Toward the end of the evening, after debates on affordable housing, mass transit, rising sea levels, charter schools and other topics that make planners' pulses race, one participant rose to take a mike to "address the elephant in the room: Why isn't Dan running for mayor?"

"I've always said that each year working in government feels like a dog year, which means I spent 42 years at City Hall, and for a dollar a year," Mr. Doctoroff said. He added that everyone should spend a portion of their life doing public service, but he had already served his time.



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