

## Hope new zoning will save nabe

By Lesley Grimm

With change comes opportunity.

Sunset Park is inching towards rezoning—and so a new community-based group believes now is the time to act on the issue of affordable housing.

The Sunset Park Alliance of Neighbors, or SPAN, hopes that the neighborhood can be rezoned in such a way that it acts as a catalyst for the development of new affordable housing.

The group says this is crucial because the existing stock of housing for low and middle income families is rapidly shrinking.

“Every single day we hear about people being pushed out of the neighborhood because they can no longer afford to live here,” said David Galarza, a co-founder of the organization Sunset Park Alliance of Neighbors or SPAN.

SPAN has organized a neighborhood summit on September 23 where it will seek input and ideas from residents and stakeholders.

“We don’t have all the answers, just ideas. We need to hash them out as a community,” Galarza said.

Ahead of that summit, SPAN has also formed an Affordable Housing Working Group which is made up of key neighborhood planners and housing advocates.

The working group has already met several times to talk about the rezoning and discuss different initiatives that may assist Sunset

# ‘SHRINKING’ HOUSING



Members of the Affordable Housing Working Group discuss the upcoming rezoning of Sunset Park and what it may mean for affordable housing.

## Many hope zoning equals affordability

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Park.

“It is a crisis,” said working group member Julia Fitzgerald, who is also the executive director of Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

Fitzgerald’s Sunset Park-based organization helps low and moderate income residents secure quality housing.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors runs a home

ownership program as well as a tenant program.

“Tenants are getting rent increases that they cannot afford, so they’re getting roommates and doubling or tripling up,” Fitzgerald said.

“In some parts of the community, you’re seeing illegal subdivisions that are dangerous and overcrowded. It’s happening because it’s the only way they can afford the rent.”

The Pratt Center for

Community Development, a prominent planning and advocacy organization, is also participating in the working group.

At a meeting on September 5, planner Paula Crespo said the Pratt Center has begun preparing a report on how Sunset Park should be rezoned.

“We’re probably going to consider some kind of contextual rezoning of side streets to make sure that the built character of