

Atlantic Yards DEIS Public Hearing remarks by
Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz – Aug. 23, 2006

I WANT TO THANK EVERYONE HERE FOR TAKING THE TIME TO CONTRIBUTE YOUR IDEAS ABOUT BROOKLYN'S FUTURE.

AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, I BELIEVE ATLANTIC YARDS IS THE RIGHT PROJECT AT THE RIGHT TIME IN THE RIGHT PLACE FOR THIS BOROUGH AND THIS CITY.

IT WILL CREATE THE NEW CENTER OF URBAN LIFE THAT BROOKLYN HAS LONG DESERVED, WHICH WILL BRING DESPERATELY NEEDED JOBS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

I GREW UP IN PUBLIC HOUSING MYSELF, I HAVE SPENT MY PUBLIC LIFE FIGHTING FOR TENANTS RIGHTS IN BROOKLYN, AND AS BOROUGH PRESIDENT I DEAL WITH BROOKLYN'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS EVERY SINGLE DAY — WHICH IS WHY I TAKE THIS UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE MORE THAN 2,000 UNITS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE HEART OF OUR BOROUGH VERY SERIOUSLY.

IT ALSO BEARS REPEATING THAT EVERY SQUARE FOOT OF ATLANTIC YARDS WILL BE BUILT BY 100% UNION LABOR — ONE HUNDRED PERCENT! —

WITH AN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF CONTRACTS GOING TO WOMEN AND MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESSES.

AS THIS PROJECT HAS EVOLVED, I HAVE HEARD FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS LIKE ALL OF YOU LOUD AND CLEAR: FROM BALANCED, REASONABLE RESPONSES TO THE KIND OF "IN YOUR FACE" "LOVE MAIL" THAT GIVES BROOKLYNITES OUR WELL-DESERVED REPUTATION FOR BEING SUBTLE, RESERVED, AND SHY.

AND, YOU SHOULD KNOW, I HAVE MY OWN CONCERNS AS WELL. MY OFFICE WILL BE SUBMITTING A DETAILED OFFICIAL RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT.

BUT LET ME SHARE SOME OF THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS NOW:
NUMBER ONE, REDUCE THE SCALE.

THE WILLIAMSBURG SAVINGS BANK SHOULD REMAIN BROOKLYN'S TALLEST BUILDING — MEANING THE HEIGHT OF "MISS BROOKLYN" WOULD BE REDUCED — AND "SITE 5," THE CURRENT P-C RICHARDS STORE, AND BUILDINGS 3 AND 6 IN THE PLAN SHOULD ALSO BE SCALED DOWN.

I BELIEVE WE CAN DO THIS WHILE PRESERVING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS AT ATLANTIC YARDS, WHICH WILL CONTINUE TO BE MY TOP PRIORITY.

BUILD A SCHOOL. FOREST CITY RATNER HAS ALLOCATED SPACE FOR A PUBLIC SCHOOL, AND SHOULD CONFIRM THAT COMMITMENT WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION.

ENSURE PUBLIC SAFETY. I AM RECOMMENDING THAT THE SITE INCLUDE A POLICE SUB-STATION.

GET REAL ABOUT TRAFFIC AND PARKING. I DRIVE THESE STREETS MYSELF EVERY DAY, SO I UNDERSTAND THESE ISSUES FIRST-HAND.

THIS PROBLEM IS VERY COMPLEX AND THERE IS NO SILVER BULLET.

AS THE GREAT CITIES OF THE WORLD HAVE DONE, WE MUST FIND AN URBAN PLANNING SOLUTION THAT CONSIDERS EVERY TRANSIT OPTION SERVING THE LOCATION — BUSES, SUBWAYS, THE LIRR, AND OTHERS.

WE NEED TO ENGAGE THE BEST MINDS ON THIS TOPIC — WHO ARE RIGHT HERE IN NEW YORK — AND BE OPEN TO INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS THAT WILL MAKE ATLANTIC YARDS A MODEL FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND CIVIL ENGINEERING.

THIS IS CRITICALLY IMPORTANT TO THE PROJECT'S SUCCESS.

OF COURSE, PARKING IS A PARAMOUNT CONCERN, AND WE MUST FIND SOLUTIONS THAT WORK FOR RESIDENTS OF ALL DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN NEIGHBORHOODS — PROSPECT HEIGHTS, FORT GREENE, BOERUM HILL, AND BROOKLYN HEIGHTS, AS WELL AS NEW RESIDENTS AT ATLANTIC YARDS.

FOR EXAMPLE, I URGE THAT MY CALL FOR A PARKING PERMIT SYSTEM IN DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN BE REVISITED.

TO COORDINATE THESE EFFORTS, I AM CALLING FOR AN ATLANTIC YARDS TRAFFIC AND TRANSIT TASK FORCE — COMPRISED OF ALL RELEVANT PUBLIC AGENCIES INCLUDING THE M-T-A, ELECTED OFFICIALS, AND LOCAL COMMUNITY BOARDS.

AND FINALLY, MAKE THE OPEN SPACE AS INVITING AND ACCESSIBLE AS POSSIBLE, AND INTEGRATE IT SEAMLESSLY INTO SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS.

THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THE IDEAS I WILL SUBMIT, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO GETTING TO WORK — WITH THE CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY BOARD MEMBERS ON THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH BOARD ATLANTIC YARDS COMMITTEE — TO MAKE FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPLEMENT THESE SOLUTIONS.

IN CLOSING, BROOKLYN IS ON THE CUSP OF BECOMING A WORLD-CLASS CITY UNTO ITSELF, AND WE ARE PROJECTED TO GROW BY SOME 300,000 RESIDENTS IN THE COMING YEARS — WHICH MEANS WE MUST START ACCOMMODATING THIS GROWTH TODAY.

I KNOW THAT OTHER CONSTRUCTIVE IDEAS FROM FELLOW BROOKLYNITES WILL BE PUT FORTH THIS EVENING, AS WE ALL CONTRIBUTE TO A PROCESS THAT WILL HELP CREATE A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR BROOKLYN.

I HAVE ONLY ONE GOAL WHEN IT COMES TO ATLANTIC YARDS, AND IT IS THE SAME GOAL I HAVE HAD SINCE BEING ELECTED BOROUGH PRESIDENT, AND THAT IS MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR BROOKLYNITES.

I HAVE HEARD EVERY MERITORIOUS CONCERN ABOUT ATLANTIC YARDS OVER THE YEARS, BUT THE REALITY IS NO ELECTED OFFICIAL CAN PLEASE ALL THE PEOPLE ALL THE TIME.

THERE COMES A TIME WHEN YOU HAVE TO STAND UP FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IS RIGHT IN YOUR HEART OF HEARTS — WHICH DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN BEING THE MOST POPULAR GUY IN THE ROOM.

AS SOMEONE WHO REMEMBERS WHEN WE COULDN'T GET A PLUGGED NICKEL INVESTED IN BROOKLYN, I CELEBRATE THE POTENTIAL, THE PROMISE OF THIS PROJECT, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO BROOKLYNITES CELEBRATING IT TOO — TOMORROW, AND FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.