



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Testimony

Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams

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I want to thank the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) for giving me the opportunity to provide comments at this public hearing on the proposed Fountain Avenue Land Use Improvement and Residential Project.

Unfortunately, Brooklyn's success has led to displacement pressure on longtime residents, many of whom can no longer afford to live in their own neighborhoods or are only remaining while being housed at an unsustainable rent burden. Therefore, creating affordable housing is a central interest to my borough presidency. It is my policy to support land use actions that provide much needed affordable housing opportunities. The State's former Brooklyn Development Center campus at 888 Fountain Avenue, in the Spring Creek section of East New York, has been conditionally designated to Fountain Seaview Limited Partnership, according to a proposed General Project Plan, to result in a significant number of affordable housing units. This project is anticipated to facilitate the construction of approximately 1,169 affordable housing units, 200 set aside for seniors, contemplated for construction in 2017, with all units completed by 2028, as well as approximately 120,000 square feet designated for commercial use.

The broader East New York community has been a safe haven for many of those displaced in recent years, as well as for long-term residents who have called this community their home for many years. However, without rent stabilization protection for more than 20,000 area apartments, residents of East New York are unlikely to be immune to the pressures of the real estate market, as more people are drawn to the area. As a result, many residents are struggling to remain within the community as they exhaust their life savings just to keep up with day-to-day living. Providing regulated affordable housing through such developments offers opportunities for those displaced, facing displacement, or living with rent burden.

In my November 2014 report, "Housing Brooklyn: A Road Map to Real Affordability for Brooklynites," I advocated for developing this State land for the creation of affordable housing. I reconfirmed my commitment to these affordable housing units in my December 30, 2015 Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) recommendation submitted in regards to the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), which just adopted the application to amend the zoning of approximately 200 blocks in the neighborhoods of Cypress Hills, East New York, and Ocean Hill.

Recognizing the added rental pressures that the proposed rezoning will have on existing residents living in housing not subject to rent regulation, I expressed the importance of achieving affordable housing through the use of the State's former Brooklyn Development Center campus.

In that regard, I view community preference affiliated with this project as being very important to ensuring that existing residents are able to continue living in their community and not having to be pushed out due to increasing housing costs. This is especially important because residential neighborhoods of Cypress Hills and East New York contain a substantial amount of small buildings that are not subject to rent protection laws. While these communities have had stable residential populations in recent history, as more people consider relocating to a neighborhood, rents typically climb in the many unregulated apartments, ultimately displacing long-time residents. There is a community concern that such an upward trend in market rents would be amplified by the anticipated developments resulting from the recently adopted rezoning.

For that reason, I seek for this project to play a role in addressing the current and potential future displacement of local residents with a commitment of 50 percent local preference for residents of Brooklyn Community District 5, including former residents who were previously displaced. In addition, each phase of the development must be supported by adequate awareness and housing lottery readiness so that such opportunities would be effectively utilized as an affordable housing resource with targeted educational resources and marketing outreach.

Too many residents of Brooklyn are unemployed or underemployed. Double-digit employment is a pervasive reality in many of Brooklyn's neighborhoods, and more than half of our community districts have suffered poverty rates of 25 percent or higher, according to averaged data from 2008 to 2012. Therefore, prioritizing local hiring is integral to addressing this employment crisis. The development of affordable housing is a form of economic development and is an essential employment opportunity that must include participation by community residents. New construction projects provide a means to ensure that local residents will be able to benefit from the added job capacity in the area.

The importance of local hiring and promoting Brooklyn-based contractors and subcontractors — including those who qualify as Minority- and Women- Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) and especially those who are designated locally-based enterprises (LBEs) — cannot be understated. New construction provides opportunities for future developers to retain Brooklyn-based contractors and subcontractors, especially those who are designated LBEs. Promoting MWBEs in such developments should always be part of a strategy to provide access to jobs, including connecting local residents to job training and job opportunities in developments on government parcels. It is also important to provide community residents with resources to not only find good paying quality jobs within their neighborhood, but to also provide the necessary training that will help to improve their overall quality of life.

This site is a part of the Brooklyn/Queens Demand Management Zone, an area whose infrastructure has been identified by Con Edison (ConEd) as inadequate to support current energy demand. ConEd has determined that the area will require a new substation within the next two years. Considering the significant amount of additional demand that will be generated by the growing population, this development has a responsibility to be energy efficient, green, and healthy. I urge the developer to advance sustainable energy measures such as solar panels, blue/green/white roofs, and Passive House design principles.

In recognition of the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Jamaica Bay Tributary and Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) and operation of the 26th Ward Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP), which would be affected by this development's resulting sanitary- and stormwater waste during extending periods off intense rainfall, incorporating steps such as bioswales, permeable pavers, and green/blue roof strategies are efforts the developers should take steps to advance DEP's green-water, stormwater goals to achieve consistency with the LTCP.

Finally, regarding potential impacts of the development, I urge the developers to consult with the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to ensure the provision of adequate, publicly-funded child care facilities and that New York City Transit (NYCT) provide additional bus service as demand warrants more service for the B13, B83, and Q8 routes. In addition, I believe that there is an opportunity to better serve this community by extending the terminus of the IRT 3 train service, integrating a station as part of the rail decking over Linden Boulevard between Elton and Linwood streets.

Thank you.

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