



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Testimony

Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams

Wednesday, July 27, 2016

I want to thank Chair Carl Weisbrod and members of the New York City Planning Commission (CPC) for giving me the opportunity to provide comments at this public hearing regarding zoning map and text amendments and the disposition of City-owned property to facilitate commercial and residential development at 141 Willoughby Street.

On July 20, 2016, I submitted a Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) recommendation to disapprove with conditions a zoning map change application submitted by 385 Gold Property Investors, LLC, approve with conditions a zoning text change application submitted by 385 Gold Property Investors, LLC, and approve with conditions a disposition of City-owned property submitted by the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), all related to the facilitation of developing 141 Willoughby Street in Downtown Brooklyn into a 49-story, 372,000 square-foot commercial/residential mixed-use building with nearly 95,000 square feet available for office space and approximately 43,000 square feet for retail uses. The response was issued after a dialogue with local stakeholders and community advocates, including a public hearing held in the community room of Brooklyn Borough Hall on Monday, June 13, 2016.

I requested several modifications to the project, including disapproval of a request for an unprecedented floor area ratio (FAR) in the borough's central business district. Alternatively, to allow for the creation of the proposed development's presented floor area, I am recommending the sale of municipal air rights at a New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) building located at 295 Flatbush Avenue Extension, along with zoning text changes to result in the development being inclusive of cultural space and new school seats. Additionally, I urge that the affordable housing units be sized to support families and be reasonably priced for very-low income senior citizens.

Development in Brooklyn, especially projects with a component of community review, must meet a high standard that addresses critical local needs and objectives. In Downtown Brooklyn, and indeed across our borough, we face serious affordability concerns that present challenges for our seniors to remain in Brooklyn. Our efforts on behalf of our seniors remain a measure of the

foundation of our societal success as well as our efforts to support families who seek to build the next chapters of our communities' growth. To ensure that this neighborhood is a safe place to raise healthy children and families, we need to be creative and aggressive in pursuing affordable housing for them alongside places to learn, play, shop, and work. Holistic development can and should be the standard our City meets at every opportunity we have to shape the future of the five boroughs.

I am concerned that the project's proposed 18 FAR has the potential to set a precedent that could have unintended consequences, including the risk of losing much-needed office space elsewhere in the Special Downtown Brooklyn District (SDBD). This special district was created in 2004 to encourage greater commercial development. We should not be short-sighted in reviewing this attempt to secure nearly 95,000 square feet of office space without greater insight of understanding the fuller implications of proceeding pursuant to the requested rezoning.

For commercial and/or residential development, I recommend capping any change in zoning at 141 Willoughby Street to the maximum standard established by the SDBD. To essentially obtain a similar buildout at 141 Willoughby Street without the requested rezoning, I have called for the utilization of unused development rights from the City health clinic located at 295 Flatbush Avenue Extension as an alternative means of completing the project, along with public school floor area exempt from zoning and a floor area bonus for cultural and dance use. I have proposed a series of zoning text amendments, along with the sale of the City's "air-rights," that lay out a vision for the site to contain affordable housing units suitable for both families and very low-income seniors, including providing more opportunities to promote affordable housing in the SDBD, cultural facilities, public school space, and all of which are needs for the area that I have outlined in recent policy reports.

In keeping with my past ULURP recommendations, I continue to advocate for the importance of local hiring and the retention of Brooklyn-based contractors and subcontractors, especially those who are designated locally-based enterprises (LBEs) and minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBEs).

Thank you.

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