

**Testimony by Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz  
To the City Council Subcommittee on  
Zoning and Franchises  
Regarding provisions related to the establishment of FRESH Food Stores  
October 26, 2009**

I WANT TO THANK COUNCILMEMBER TONY AVELLA AND MEMBERS OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE FOR GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TODAY.

FIGHTING OBESITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN A TOP PRIORITY OF MY OFFICE.

THIS IS ONLY POSSIBLE IF ALL BROOKLYNITES, NO MATTER WHAT NEIGHBORHOOD THEY LIVE IN, HAVE AN AFFORDABLE, FULLY-STOCKED SUPERMARKET NEARBY —

A PLACE THAT OFFERS A WIDE ARRAY OF HEALTHY FOODS, INCLUDING PLENTY OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY ULURP POLICY TO SEEK THE INCLUSION OF A SUPERMARKET AS PART OF MY DISCRETIONARY LAND USE REVIEW —

WHICH IS WHY I APPLAUD D-C-P AND E-D-C FOR SUPPORTING THESE EFFORTS.

IT IS SIMPLY UNBELIEVABLE THAT IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY — IN THE GREATEST CITY IN THE WORLD — THERE ARE NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE RESIDENTS HAVE TO TRAVEL FAR AND WIDE TO GET A PIECE OF FRUIT — SOME VEGETABLES — OR ANY OF THE OTHER NOURISHING, WHOLESOME FOODS THAT WE NEED TO LIVE HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE LIVES.

IN A CITY OF SO MUCH ABUNDANCE, HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT THERE ARE SO MANY BARREN “FOOD DESERTS”?

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT IN THE “BIG APPLE,” THERE ARE ACTUALLY NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE IT IS DIFFICULT TO BUY AN APPLE?

FORTUNATELY, WITH THIS “FRESH” INITIATIVE, WE ARE “SETTING THE TABLE” FOR A FUTURE WHEN EACH OF TOMORROW’S “FOOD DESERTS” IS TRANSFORMED INTO A “FOOD OASIS” — ONE THAT IS SURELY NOT A “MIRAGE”!

BUT ALTHOUGH I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THESE NEW “FRESH” SUPERMARKETS WILL HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES, I DO HAVE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR MODIFICATIONS TO THE INITIATIVE THAT WERE NOT INCORPORATED AS MODIFICATIONS BY THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION THAT I BELIEVE WARRANTS CONSIDERATION BY THE CITY COUNCIL.

WHEN CONSIDERING WHICH STORES SHOULD RECEIVE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES, I BELIEVE THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY SHOULD FAVOR THOSE WHO USE LOCAL BUILDING CONTRACTORS, AND THOSE WHO PURCHASE LOCALLY PRODUCED FOOD.

THE OPERATORS OF THESE NEW STORES MUST BE REQUIRED TO ACCEPT FOOD STAMPS AND W-I-C — TO MAKE THIS FOOD AFFORDABLE FOR CONSUMERS OF LOW AND MODERATE INCOME LEVELS.

THEY SHOULD STAFF THEIR STORES WITH RESIDENTS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD, AND THEY SHOULD PAY THEIR EMPLOYEES A LIVING WAGE, WITH HEALTH BENEFITS.

THE I-D-A SHOULD CLOSELY MONITOR STORES THAT RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE ADHERING TO THESE STANDARDS.

THERE IS ALWAYS THE POSSIBILITY THAT A NEW SUPERMARKET MAY IMPACT SMALLER NEIGHBORHOOD STORES AND “MOM AND POP” RETAIL.

FOR THIS REASON, ELIGIBILITY FOR FINANCIAL INCENTIVES SHOULD BE EXPANDED TO EXISTING STORES, INCLUDING THOSE THAT ARE UNDER SIX THOUSAND SQUARE FEET.

THIS WILL GIVE THESE STORES THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND AND INCREASE THEIR HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS.

WE SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME LANDLORDS MAY DECIDE TO PREMATURELY OPT OUT OF THE “FRESH” INITIATIVE IN ORDER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ESCALATING RENTS.

IF LANDLORDS WHO RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE PROGRAM RENEGE ON THEIR PROMISES, THEY SHOULD BE FORCED TO RETURN ANY FUNDS THEY HAVE RECEIVED.

EATING HEALTHY IS A NECESSARY COMPONENT TO BEING HEALTHY. AND THE ONLY WAY TO EAT HEALTHY IS TO MAKE SURE BROOKLYN HAS ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, HEALTHY, WHOLESOME FOOD — THE KIND THAT CAN ONLY BE FOUND IN FULL-SERVICE SUPERMARKETS.

I KNOW THAT THE “FRESH” INITIATIVE IS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION TOWARD CREATING A CITY WHERE GOOD FOOD IS NEVER FAR AWAY.