

**TESTIMONY BY BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT MARTY  
MARKOWITZ TO THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGARDING THE FOURTH AVENUE SPECIAL ENHANCED  
COMMERCIAL DISTRICT  
SEPTEMBER 21, 2011**

I want to thank Chairperson Burden and members of the City Planning Commission for allowing me to testify today on the Special Fourth Avenue Enhanced Commercial District.

I feel strongly that a percentage of ground floor space on all future buildings along Fourth Avenue should include retail, an idea that I first shared with the Department of City Planning in my February letter to the agency. This requirement would foster lively mixed-use neighborhoods and a positive streetscape experience for pedestrians, and prevent future developments from adding to the Avenue's unattractive corridor of blank masonry walls. The result would be a key component in the transformation of Fourth Avenue into a vibrant "Brooklyn Boulevard" stretching from Atlantic Avenue to the Atlantic Ocean, a grand thoroughfare worthy of the great neighborhoods it traverses.

Last month, at Borough Hall, I hosted a long-term planning meeting regarding the transformation of Fourth Avenue, something I first proposed in my 2009 State of the Borough Address. I announced the formation of a task force, chaired by my chief of staff, Carlo Scissura, to oversee the details of the project—including tree planting and the use of a newly expanded Times Plaza (the intersection of Fourth Avenue, Atlantic Avenue, and Flatbush Avenue). I have also allocated two million dollars in capital funding to contribute toward the effort to restore the historic façade of the Fourth Avenue/Ninth Street subway, re-open an entrance to the station that has been closed for decades, and open retail space.

The creation of the Special Enhanced Commercial District will go a long way toward helping our task force take what is now just a plan on paper, and transform it into an exciting new reality for the future of Fourth Avenue and all of Brooklyn. By guaranteeing more retail and requiring developers to incorporate enhanced streetscapes and landscaping with each new project, we are bringing together all of the elements needed to make Fourth Avenue what it was always intended to be: a majestic, user-friendly, economically viable and safe thoroughfare for all Brooklynites, New Yorkers, and visitors to enjoy. Task force members are looking forward to gathering outside input on the plan.

I urge the City Planning Commission to adopt the proposal by the Department of City Planning as part of its contribution to the overall plan—with two changes that I have recommended. First, the Commission should modify the proposal by prohibiting trade schools, business schools, and medical and dental labs from being located within the mandatory commercial use portion of the ground floor level. I believe they don't lend themselves to a lively and engaging environment and are not necessarily even pedestrian-friendly.

Second, we should take a page from the Special Downtown Brooklyn District, and require that the maximum sill height of transparent "show" windows be two-and-a-half feet above the curb,

rather than four feet, the figure in the current proposal. This height would allow better views of merchandise for pedestrians walking down the Avenue.

By incorporating these changes, I am confident that the Commission will foster an even better environment for development. Enacting the Special Enhanced Commercial District along with my other recommendations for the City—including improving landscaping, subway grates, and enhanced pavement plans that will require additional plantings for new developments—will take giant strides toward achieving my comprehensive vision.

In addition to mandatory retail, I have called for the Department of City Planning to conduct a zoning analysis that would lead to more residential development on the west side of Fourth Avenue between Douglass and Sixth Streets, and south of the Prospect Expressway to 24th Street, as well as zoning incentives for affordable housing south of 15th Street being applied to the blocks to the north and sufficient parking requirements within the Enhanced Commercial District.

I look forward to this commission having the opportunity to weigh in on such proposals, and as the Commission brings us one step closer toward establishing Brooklyn's first enhanced commercial district, I also look forward to adapting this mandatory retail model to several other shopping corridors throughout Brooklyn.

Once again, thank you for supporting this unique opportunity to take a street once known primarily for gas stations and auto repair shops, and turn it into the kind of grand boulevard worthy of Brooklyn.