



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Testimony Delivered by:

Deputy Brooklyn Borough President Diana Reyna

On behalf of:

Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams

Wednesday, March 7, 2016

Good morning.

My name is Diana Reyna and I'm the Deputy Brooklyn Borough President, here to testify on behalf of Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams. Together, we represent the 2.6 million Brooklyn residents who call this great borough home.

I want to thank the New York City Council for giving me the opportunity to provide comments at this public hearing on the East New York Community Plan.

On December 30th of last year, Borough President Adams submitted a Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) recommendation to disapprove with conditions of an application submitted by the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) to amend the zoning of approximately 200 blocks in the neighborhoods of Cypress Hills, East New York, and Ocean Hill. The response was issued following months of dialogue with local stakeholders and community activists, including a public hearing he held in the courtroom of Brooklyn Borough Hall on Monday, November 23rd. Borough President Adams has recommended a number of measures to ensure the proposal achieves a meaningful creation and preservation of affordable housing, including greater resources to combat resident displacement as well as increased efforts to build very-low and low-income units on previously unstudied lots. Additionally, his recommendations address the need to document the City's commitment to the holistic community development outlined in their plan, including the establishment of a post-approval follow-up body with local representation. According to the recommendation report of the City Planning Commission, there has been much progress in the furthering of commitments associated with the overall plan.

Recognizing the added rental pressures that the proposed rezoning will have on existing residents living in housing not subject to rent regulation, Borough President Adams has expressed the importance of achieving permanent affordability for affordable housing units created through the East New York Community Plan, beyond the proposed 25 percent requirement of any new

residential development with more than 25 units. In particular, he has focused on achieving agreements of permanent affordability at the City-owned Dinsmore-Chestnut Urban Renewal disposition site and scattered New Infill Homeownership Opportunities Program (NIHOP) sites, as well as the City-financed former Chloe Foods site — where Phipps Houses has now been on record that its approximately 1,000 units will be permanently affordable.

Borough President Adams has called for accountability to put in place and sustain the anti-displacement initiatives the City has proposed in their East New York Community Plan, including code enforcement by the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and funding for free legal representation in housing court for all tenants facing harassment — which is now a firm commitment by the Administration. He has also expressed concern regarding the potential for displacement on additional sites — identified through an analysis by our office — which may be attractive for future development. Efforts he proposes include the potential implementation of anti-harassment areas, creation of tax incentive options for small property owners in return for indexing rental unit lease renewals to increases by the Rent Guidelines Board (RGB), and cataloguing of government-assisted housing with expiring affordability requirements to proactively protect affordable housing units — with HPD now being proactive with outreach to owners where affordability requirements are soon to expire.

In addition, Borough President Adams has recommended implementing further measures to address the current and potential future displacement of local residents. He has outlined a proposed commitment of 50 percent preference for new area housing to residents of Community Districts 5 and 16, inclusive of former residents who were previously displaced, with targeted educational resources and marketing outreach. He has also encouraged the City to increase the supply of very-low and low-income affordable housing through new opportunities that have not been under consideration thus far, including the Grant Avenue Field municipal parking facility, the site previously considered for the Brownsville Community Justice Center, as well as development rights possessed by local NYCHA properties and the PS 178 St. Clair McKelway annex. Borough President Adams has highlighted that this effort should be extended to houses of worship with development rights, following the successful engagement with clergy across the borough as part of his Faith-Based Property Development Initiative; HPD is, in fact, engaged with entities of two such faith-based properties. His anti-displacement strategy also includes zoning text amendments to encourage deeper and more flexible bands of affordability in new housing, a study of proposed residential districts to better match the allowable zoning — including the potential for targeted downzoning to combat displacement — as well as a codification of the minimum threshold for family-sized units on HPD-owned and HPD-financed sites.

Regarding commercial development related to the rezoning proposal, Borough President Adams has reiterated his general displacement concerns and asked for an assurance of access to Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH Zone) grocery stores, ensuring that any lost supermarkets are replaced on site. His recommendations highlight the need to support local entrepreneurs and artisans who provide quality local jobs, impacting his call for a restriction on big-box retail in the rezoned area and financial incentives to prevent commercial displacement. In particular, he has noted the need to strengthen and preserve the East New York Industrial Business Zone (IBZ), inclusive of promoting new urban agriculture uses and \$20 million toward financing an industrial development fund for the East New York IBZ. In keeping with his past ULURP recommendations, Borough President Adams has articulated 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). HPD has subsequently committed to promoting MWBEs in the developments it subsidizes.

Because a number of the holistic community development measures outlined in the East New York Community Plan are not directly stipulated in the City's land use application, Borough President Adams had advocated for the documenting of efforts to address issues that will accompany an increased population, such as:

- Access to jobs: HPD has since committed to connect local residents to job training and job opportunities in developments it subsidizes.
- Sufficient school seats: In addition to Dinsmore-Chestnut, DOE has replacement of the trailers in its five year plan.
- Quality open space: City Line Park redesign's community outreach will begin this Spring.
- Reliable transportation, and
- Upgraded stormwater/wastewater green infrastructure: DEP now has 116 bioswales in its pipeline.

Other strategies that Borough President Adams has offered include:

- A potential CUNY Innovation Lab
- Neighborhood-based siting of a new Workforce1 Career Center: SBS has now committed to opening the center.
- Establishment of remote locations for local access to City agency services: In response to this, HPD has moved forward to conduct mobile van outreach and tenant resource fairs.
- Relocation of government offices from Downtown Brooklyn to Broadway Junction: Borough President Adams will be calling for explicit agency relocations through his response to the Citywide Statement of Needs, which would subsequently result in improved commercial development and quality of life initiatives.

To ensure accountability for these efforts, in addition to other aspects of the final plan, Borough President Adams is calling for a post-approval follow-up body to be established that would include appropriate agencies, Community Boards 5 and 16, local elected officials, community-based development organizations, and representative community organizations.

The Office of the Brooklyn Borough President continues to monitor this process closely. We look forward to working with the residents and stakeholders of East New York to make sure the aforementioned recommendations are upheld as well as hold the administration accountable. As the stewards of this great City, we must demand what will not only be beneficial to the environment, our local and regional economy, and our quality of life, but an East New York Community Plan that will benefit generations to come.

Thank you.

###