



11/18/2025

My name is La'Shawn Allen-Muhammad, and I am the Executive Director for the Central Brooklyn Economic Development Corporation. In its 36-year history CBEDC has been a leader in community development in Brownsville and is also a founding member of the NYC Equity and Environmental Justice Center.

Because of our proximity to Broadway Junction, we have been actively involved for the past several years working with the developer of the Herkimer-Williams project, Totem, to create a Green Economy Institute located in East New York. We see this planning as a long-term economic development strategy that would create linked environmental justice hubs – the first one in Brownsville at the forthcoming B'Ville Hub and the second at Broadway Junction, which would support local job seekers, industrial businesses, and the broader East Brooklyn community through a combination of workforce development training, supply chain development and capacity building, networking and mentorship opportunities, professional programming, and access to affordable workspace.

In service of this vision, the development team has acted as a catalyst for CBEDC to collaborate with other community-based organizations to maximize synergies and enhance the support we can provide our local job seekers and small businesses. Furthermore, Totem has connected us to city agencies that might help fund our efforts and also spent many hours working alongside our teams to apply for grants to help fund this collaboration. This kind of diligence is rare from a developer – and speaks to the character of the team behind the Herkimer-Williams project.

I truly believe the Herkimer-Williams project heralds a potential transformative shift that extends well beyond Broadway Junction and will help ensure the community directly benefits from economic development on par with the prosperity enjoyed by wealthier neighborhoods in the borough. I urge you to support Herkimer-Williams and aid our efforts to lay the groundwork for a more inclusive and prosperous Brooklyn for all.

Sincerely,

La'Shawn Allen-Muhammad

Odessa Fynn
Brooklyn Community Board 5
Land Use and Housing Committee, Co-Chair
127 Pennsylvania Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11207

November 25, 2025

Chair Kevin C. Riley
Subcommittee on Zoning & Franchises
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Greetings Chair Riley and members of the Subcommittee on Zoning & Franchises,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the proposed Herkimer–Williams rezoning. My name is Odessa Fynn, Co-Chair of the Brooklyn Community Board 5 (CB5) Land Use & Housing Committee, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the CB5 Chairwoman Alice Lowman, Executive Committee, and full Board.

After extensive review, multiple public meetings, community feedback, and detailed analysis, Brooklyn Community Board 5 votes NO on the Herkimer–Williams rezoning as currently proposed with the following recommendations:

Restrictive Declaration (RD). This specific recommendation is a necessary condition and without its inclusion should not allow for a Herkimer-Williams rezoning to take place. A restrictive declaration that is recorded against all of Totem's properties must be implemented by the developer to ensure that:

- a) all of the residential units constructed are affordable as per HPD term sheets (this is essential given that public financing has not been secured for the entirety of the phased-construction proposal by the developer)
- b) usages such as hotels, casinos and shelters are forbidden
- c) the levels of rental affordability or "area medium income" ranges cited in this document are included
- d) the quantity of rental units with studios, 1-, 2-, and 3- bedroom mixes cited in this document are included
- e) binds the community facility space usage to an institution of higher education, a trade school, a public health facility, a child care center, and/or a recreational space
- f) allows for small businesses to lease parts of the retail space at below market-rate rents.

This restrictive declaration must be anchored and therefore enforced by a community-based organization (CBO) or coalition of CBOs that are located within CD5. Any expenses incurred by the CBO(s) for overseeing the conditions of this restrictive declaration (such as legal fees) should be paid by Totem.

Calvary Unified Free Will Baptist Church. The church located at 1520 Herkimer St is a party to this proposed rezoning. The church will benefit by being granted a C6-4 zoning designation and therefore an ability to build higher or more densely in comparison to its current M1-2 zoning. Our main concern is that the church will be granted this ability without a guarantee that they will build affordable units or anything that truly benefits our community. As this is the case, Calvary's property must also include a restrictive declaration, also enforced or anchored by a CBO or CBOs located within CD5. This declaration must mandate the construction of affordable homeownership units (programs such as HPD's Open Door Program and HCR's Affordable Homeownership Opportunity Program can help make this financially feasible). Overall, this rezoning lacks housing with equity-based options and this site offers that very opportunity. If the church proves to be indecisive in its commitment to build affordably then its land parcel must be carved out of the rezoning.

Reducing Commercial Office Space Footprint. The current Herkimer-Williams proposal calls for a total of 440,000 sq ft of commercial space to be built within Building E through a M1-6 zoning designation. Although we appreciate Totem's reduction of ~330,000 sq ft of commercial space from its original proposal, nowhere in East Brooklyn can you find such a high concentration of commercial office space in a single building as is still being proposed. We find it necessary for Totem to further reduce the commercial space footprint by a major extent, and as an alternative, replace it with more light industrial space in Building E.

Reducing Building Heights. The current rezoning proposal calls for 20 stories in building B, 24 stories in building C, 29 stories in building D, and 22 stories in building E. Totem must redistribute residential units among buildings to summatively reduce the heights of the buildings to be closer to 20-stories which is the size of the tallest buildings found in CD5 (i.e. Starrett City or Linden Plaza).

Mixed Income Affordability. Totem should be able to provide the following affordability through the Department of Housing and Preservation Development's Extremely Low & Low Income Affordability (ELLA) term sheet or other viable term sheets. Despite Totem's project being based on phased construction, we recommend that Building B (the first 231-units of affordable housing to be erected) and the rest of the project (769 units), or all of the buildings built, to embody the totality of these compositions of income ranges. Herkimer-Williams must consist of:

- 60% of the affordable units at below 50% AMI (or an income of less than \$81,000 for a family of four)
- 40% of the affordable units above 50% AMI with a cap at 100% AMI (or an income of \$162,000 for a family of four)

New York City's Area Median Income (AMI) ranges for the year of 2025 must be solely relied upon for these affordable housing units.

Unit Sizes and Composition of Units. Studio apartments should be no less than 400 sq ft as we perceive apartments with square footage less than this to be nondignified housing for

community district 5 residents. The project should have the following breakdowns for the first 231-units and the rest of the units:

- No more than 20% of the units should consist of studios
- 75% of the units should be of 1-3 bedroom sizes
- 5% of the units should be 4-bedroom sizes

Home Ownership. As stated earlier, this project lacks any equity-based housing options or affordable home ownership. The residential footprint of Eastern Brooklyn is made up mostly of homeowners and yet this is becoming less and less of a possibility for Black and Brown people in the borough of Brooklyn due to the high costs of homes. Where possible, including through the development of Calvary's land, this project must include creation of affordable homeownership units. If the church fails to sign off on a restrictive declaration to create affordable homeownership then one of the buildings within Totem's project must be reserved for affordable home ownership; in other words, this rezoning cannot fail to produce affordable home ownership and this onus falls on 1) Calvary through an RD that if not signed off on then requires 2) Totem to produce said ownership units.

Affordable, below-market-rate rental space for small businesses. The Herkimer-Williams rezoning proposal contains 114,000 sq ft of commercial retail space. Given the development efforts occurring altogether at Broadway Junction and should this rezoning proposal pass, it will be a difficult task for small businesses to find affordable commercial spaces to continue their operations; this being so because the value of real estate will altogether increase near and around Broadway Junction. We therefore find it necessary for Totem to provide below-market rate rental space for small businesses within their commercial retail space footprint. Totem should carve up and reserve spaces of no less than 1,500-2,000 sq ft of commercial retail space within its retail ground floor for these small businesses.

Residential Parking. The Totem rezoning will create large amounts of human activity near the Broadway Junction area and although located near a transit hub some people (especially those working within these sites) will rely on cars to commute. Although Building E is said to host 70 parking spots, we recommend those parking spots to be solely for residential parking. We also recommend Totem to create an additional 40 parking spots for residents (offering a total of 11% of the families living in the 1,000 units to have an opportunity to park).

- Residential Parking Revenue: Any income gained through fees for residential parking should go to a Community District 5 based CBO to help cover their operational expenses. This income stream should be paid to the CBO in perpetuity and must be cemented within the restrictive declaration signed off by Totem.

Public or City maintenance of Van-Sinderin-Herkimer St Plaza. This same recommendation was made by CB5 as it pertains to the Economic Development Corporation's (EDC) proposal of creating two public plazas, one that will run contiguously adjacent to the open space plaza that Totem is proposing. These plazas must altogether be upkept or maintained by the City and not by Totem; the plazas consist mostly of public space (square footage-wise) and the City should not be absolved of their responsibility of maintaining these sites.

Anti-Displacement Fund. The feasibility of this recommendation depends on the income cash flow of this project (especially income generated from any and all commercial spaces). Totem must contribute to allowing long-term homeowners and their tenants to stay within the neighborhood and for further creation of permanent affordable housing. A portion of the net-positive cash flow from this project, including a percentage of the developer fee to be obtained from Totem, should be used to develop a permanent anti-displacement fund that allows homeowners in need of repairs to access funds to implement much needed repairs that will help them stay put. Likewise, this fund must help local CBOs with land acquisition and ultimately permanent affordable housing creation by allowing them to obtain the land of property owners that will try to “cash-in” (i.e. sell their properties and profit from increasing assessed land values) on the real estate boom near and around Broadway Junction. We also recommend this anti-displacement fund to be memorialized within the restrictive declaration by Totem.

General needs near and around the Broadway Junction area. Putting aside Totem’s rezoning proposal for a brief moment, we know that Broadway Junction is receiving multi-million dollars of public and private investment which will ultimately displace and threaten the homes of predominantly Black and Brown people by consequently raising property values and rents. We therefore find it necessary for the City and State government to provide anti-displacement funding or resources to assist with this area. That funding should be secured within the respective budgets of each and should consist of resources for tenants and homeowners to be organized or provided assistance (i.e. Partners in Preservation and the Homeowner Help Desk), property tax relief, freezing of rent for all renters, and a fund for community acquisitions. These resources should cover at least a 2-mile radius from the Broadway Junction area.

The Herkimer–Williams rezoning—if adopted as currently written—would accelerate displacement, fail to meet community affordability needs, increase speculative development pressures, and leave East Brooklyn households vulnerable.

However, with the implementation of the full set of recommendations and legally binding protections outlined above and in our attached document, the rezoning could serve as a genuine community benefit.

Thank you for your consideration and the work of the Subcommittee on Zoning & Franchises. Brooklyn Community Board 5 remains available for follow-up and further clarification.

Respectfully submitted,
Brooklyn Community Board 5
Land Use & Housing Committee



BROOKLYN

Community Board 5

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Borough President:	Honorable Antonio Reynoso
Board Chairwoman:	Alice Lowman
District Manager:	Melinda Perkins

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