

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND
FRANCHISES

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July 9, 2024
Start: 11:11 a.m.
Recess: 3:36 p.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Kevin C. Riley, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
David M. Carr
Kamillah Hanks
Francisco P. Moya
Lynn C. Schulman

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Amanda Farías
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Kristy Marmorato

A P P E A R A N C E S

Paul Phillips, Borough Director of the Bronx Office at New York City Department of City Planning

Michael Kavalar, Senior Team Leader and Project Lead at New York City Department of City Planning

Nick Molinari, Chief of Planning and Development at New York City Parks Department

Dylan Meagher, Chief-of-Staff of the Bureau of Sustainability at New York City Department of Environmental Protection

Anthony Perez, Bronx Bureau Commissioner for New York City Department of Transportation

Rick Rodriguez, Assistant Commissioner of Intergovernmental Affairs for New York City Department of Transportation

Joseph O'Donnell, Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Transportation Authority Construction and Development

Ken Fisher

Brett Buehrer, representative of the Parkchester Preservation Company

Zach Bernstein, partner at Fried Frank, land use counsel to Parkchester Preservation Company

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Ruben Diaz, Jr., Senior Vice President of
Strategic Initiatives for Montefiore Medical
Center

Nora Martins, Ackerman LLP, Land Use Council to
Baker Development LLC

Leslie Himmel, principal of Himmel and Meringoff
Properties

David Karnovsky

Hobum Moon

Sharlene Jackson-Mendez

Aniya A.

Jack Connors, Research and Communications
Associate at the Permanent Citizens Advisory
Committee to the Metropolitan Transportation
Authority

Bashek Grimes

Michael Kaess

Robert Press

Bernadette Ferrera, President of the Van Nest
Neighborhood Alliance

Brandon Mohammed, Managing Director of Alia Ltd.

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Cathy Cebek

Austin Celestin, graduate urban planning student
at NYU Wagner

Kevin Daloia

Diana Finch

Jim Wright, American Institute of Architects, New
York

Logan Phares, Political Director of Open New York

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Zoning and Franchises
4 recorded by Layla Lynch in the Council Chambers on
5 July 9, 2024.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
7 welcome to the New York City hybrid hearing on the
8 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises.

9 Please silence all electronic devices at
10 this time.

11 Also, please do not approach the dais. If
12 you have any questions, please raise your hand, and
13 one of us, the Sergeant-at-Arms, will kindly assist
14 you.

15 Thank you very much for your kind
16 cooperation.

17 Chair, we're ready to begin.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: [GAVEL] Good morning,
19 everyone, and welcome to a meeting of the
20 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. I am Council
21 Member Kevin Riley, Chair of this Subcommittee, and
22 I'm joined today by Majority Leader Farías, Council
23 Member Moya, Carr, Hanks Online, and Council Members
24 Schulman and Marmorato within the Chambers.

2 Today, we are holding a public hearing
3 regarding the Administration's Bronx Metro-North
4 Rezoning Proposal. The proposal consists of several
5 rezonings within the 46-block area, a zoning text
6 amendment that will map MIH areas and establish the
7 special Eastchester-East Tremont Corridor District,
8 and several proposed changes to the City map mapping
9 new street networks and a pedestrian plaza. Today we
10 will hear and discuss the entirety of the
11 Administration's proposal, but we will hold an
12 additional public hearing later this month regarding
13 the proposed street mapping actions.

14 Today's hearing is being held in a hybrid
15 format. Members of the public who wish to testify may
16 testify in person or on Zoom. Members of the public
17 wishing to testify remotely may register by visiting
18 the New York City Council's website at
19 www.council.nyc.gov/landuse to sign up or, for those
20 of you here in person, please see one of the
21 Sergeant-at-Arms to prepare and submit a speaker's
22 card.

23 Members of the public may also view a
24 live stream broadcast of this meeting at this
25 Council's website.

2 When you are called to testify before the
3 Subcommittee, if you are joining us remotely, you
4 will remain muted until recognized by myself to
5 speak. When you are recognized, your microphone will
6 be unmuted. Please take a moment to check your device
7 and confirm that your mic is on.

8 We will limit public testimony to two
9 minutes per witness. If you have additional testimony
10 you would like to submit instead of appearing in
11 person, please email it to
12 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. Written testimony
13 may be submitted up to three days after the hearing
14 is closed. Please indicate the LU number or the
15 project name in the subject line of your email.

16 As part of the registration process for
17 today's hearing, Council has made and continues to
18 make efforts to facilitate language translation
19 services upon request. A multilingual livestream
20 viewing option is available online at the Council's
21 website at www.council.nyc.gov with audio
22 translations in Spanish and Bengali.

23 For individuals who would like to testify
24 and require translation services, please indicate so
25 on the speaker card. If you are here in person or if

2 you plan on testifying remotely, please request
3 translation services online. Registration form
4 available at www.council.nyc.gov/landuse.

5 We request that witnesses joining us
6 remotely remain in the meeting until excused by
7 myself as Council Members may have questions.

8 Lastly, for everyone attending today's
9 meeting, this is a government proceeding and decorum
10 must be observed at all times. Members of the public
11 are asked not to speak during the meeting unless you
12 are testifying.

13 The witness table is reserved for people
14 who are called to testify, and no video recording or
15 photography is allowed from the witness table.
16 Further, members of the public may not present audio
17 or video recordings as testimony but may submit
18 transcripts of such recording to the Sergeant-at-Arms
19 for inclusion in the hearing record.

20 I will now open the public hearing on the
21 pre-considered LUs relating to the Bronx Metro-North
22 Rezoning and Text Amendment Proposal.

23 The majority of this proposal is located
24 in Majority Leader Farías' and Council Member
25 Marmorato' District. A small portion is also located

1 in Chair Salamanca's District who has just joined us
2 online. This is a proposal by the Administration to
3 provide more jobs and housing around the four new
4 Metro-North stations that are scheduled to open in
5 the Bronx in 2027. These Metro-North stations will
6 finally start addressing the public transportation
7 needs of the Bronx, especially in my District in Co-
8 op City.
9

10 As with the opportunity, both the new
11 stations and proposed upzoning around the Morris Park
12 and Parkchester/Van Nest stations raise a lot of
13 questions. At the top of the mind is the need to
14 address the demand for additional parking that the
15 new station's proposed upzoning will generate. A lot
16 of the people who will use these new stops will drive
17 to these new stations because it is simply not
18 feasible to get around northern or eastern Bronx
19 without a car. Where will all these additional cars
20 park?

21 Also, additionally, stations will be of
22 little use to our seniors if they cannot access the
23 station. In addition to the BX-23 and without
24 reducing frequency of the BX-23, a shuttle service
25

2 needs to be provided for Co-op City that will bring
3 our seniors to the new station.

4 I am looking forward to hearing today
5 from MTA and the Administration about these
6 fundamental issues.

7 Today is also an opportunity to discuss
8 the Administration's planned zoning changes, which
9 will facilitate more than 7,500 new residential units
10 around the proposed new stations at Parkchester/Van
11 Nest and Morris Park. The Bronx does need more
12 housing, but housing alone is not sufficient.
13 Families and neighbors need more than just housing to
14 thrive. If you are going to bring more people into a
15 neighborhood, you need to improve existing
16 infrastructure to address the frequent flooding from
17 heavy southern storms that we are experiencing. More
18 park spaces, schools, and increased funding for our
19 fire and police stations is also needed. The Bronx is
20 open to development, but it has to come with actual
21 sufficient investment in our communities. The City
22 does not invest in the Bronx, and that needs to
23 change, starting with this proposal.

24 Today, we will hear the Department of
25 City Planning along with the MTA, the Department of

2 Parks, the Department of Transportation, and the
3 Department of Environmental Protection about the
4 proposed new housing and the new stations.

5 I encourage my Colleagues and the public
6 to voice our collective concerns about parking and
7 the need to upgrade our sewers, our streets, our
8 parks, and our schools.

9 For anyone wishing to testify on these
10 items remotely, if you have not already done so, you
11 must register online, and you may do that now by
12 visiting the Council's website at
13 council.nyc.gov/landuse.

14 Once again, for anyone with us in person,
15 please see one of the Sergeants to prepare and submit
16 a speaker's card.

17 If you prefer to submit a written
18 testimony, you can always do that by emailing it to
19 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

20 I would now like to give the floor to
21 Chair Salamanca to give his remarks.

22 CHAIR SALAMANCA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
23 will be brief. I think your opening statement hit all
24 of my talking points at today's hearing.

2 One of my concerns that I have, not just
3 in the South Bronx, but in all four Metro-North
4 proposed stations, is the parking situation. There's
5 an ask from my office that the Department of
6 Transportation do a study to identify potential maybe
7 parking lot locations or identify other areas where
8 New Yorkers and Bronxites can park.

9 The other concern that I have is the
10 density in some of these proposed rezonings that's
11 being proposed and the lack of communication to those
12 direct Community Boards for these specific projects
13 so I look forward to hearing from the Administration
14 and the developers who choose to develop at these
15 proposed sites. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Chair
17 Salamanca.

18 Council Member Marmorato.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you,
20 Chair. To the residents of District 13 present here
21 and watching online, I stand before you as your
22 Councilwoman sharing a vision for progress and
23 development for our beloved community shaped by the
24 promise of the Metro-North stations and the
25 transformative opportunities they should bring.

2 However, as we convene to discuss the proposed
3 redevelopment, it is crucial to address several
4 pressing issues. A new plan for development must
5 strike a balance between growth and preservation,
6 ensuring that new construction complements rather
7 than overwhelms the existing environment. The
8 proposed heights of some developments reaching up to
9 25 stories raise valid concerns about density,
10 congestion, and community character. While we
11 recognize the need for increased housing supply and
12 economic development, these heights need to be
13 drastically cut, and we must approach vertical
14 expansion with caution and sensitivity to the
15 existing fabric of our neighborhood.

16 Also, two specific sites on our rezoning
17 have asked to be removed from the proposal, yet they
18 still seem to be a part of your plans.

19 Most importantly, when it comes to this
20 development, we need more homeownership to be
21 incorporated into any project that this rezoning will
22 bring. Homeownership is the key pathway to growing
23 the middle class. By building wealth for my
24 constituents, they will achieve economic stability.
25 It will create civic engagement, lower crime rates,

2 and will increase the health and environmental
3 benefits.

4 Absence of parking mandates presents a
5 significant challenge for many in our community who
6 rely on vehicles for daily transportation. While we
7 welcome the expansion of public transportation
8 options, we must acknowledge for some, private
9 vehicles remain a necessity due to work obligations,
10 family responsibilities, and accessibility needs.
11 Without adequate parking provisions, we risk placing
12 an undue burden on these individuals, forcing them to
13 choose between mobility and livelihoods. We are not
14 there yet as a community to remove such mandates.
15 Also, when it comes to parking, consideration in and
16 around the stations needs to be taken very seriously.

17 Such a large-scale project will increase
18 the demand for essential services, including
19 Department of Sanitation, New York City Fire
20 Department, and our New York Police Department. And
21 as our population grows, so will the need for more
22 frequent waste collection, enhanced fire protection,
23 and the increased police presence to ensure public
24 safety. This heightened demand necessitates careful
25

planning and investment in our infrastructure and service to prevent the strain on existing resources.

Regarding the Department of Environmental Protection, the Bronx has experienced significant flooding issues due to heavy rains, particularly from Bassett Avenue to Williamsbridge Road, between Pelham Parkway South to Silver Street and Pierce Avenue.

This raises concern about the current sewer infrastructure capabilities to handle the increased usage due to new development. Without strategic investment in infrastructure and comprehensive stormwater management systems, we leave our community vulnerable to devastating consequences of flooding, including property damage, economic loss, and threat to public health and safety.

Furthermore, Baker Avenue currently presents a safety hazard as a one-way street, and the increased traffic from new development will exacerbate the issue. Given the expected rise in traffic due to the Metro-North Station's associated developments, I need the DOT to consider making Baker Avenue a two-way street and possibly widening the street to improve safety and traffic flow.

2 Our Parks Department also plays a vital
3 role in maintaining adequate community. The proposed
4 development will increase population density in the
5 Bronx. From the beginning, I have repeatedly brought
6 up that the current and existing open green space in
7 existing parks is not enough for an increased
8 residence, and we must find more open space. Also, my
9 existing parks are due for major renovations.

10 While I remain committed to the vision of
11 progress for our District, I cannot in good
12 conscience support a plan that neglects these
13 fundamental issues. I will fight tirelessly to ensure
14 that our concerns are heard and addressed in the
15 Metro-North redevelopment proposal. I hope that City
16 Planning will work honestly and transparently towards
17 the proposal that embodies the true values of
18 District 13. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
20 Member.

21 I will now call on the applicant panel
22 for this item, which consists of Paul Phillips and
23 Michael Kavalari.

24 Counsel, can you please administer the
25 affirmation?

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Could you please
3 raise your right hand and state your name for the
4 record?

5 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Paul Phillips.

6 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Michael
7 Kavalalar.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Do you swear to
9 truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony
10 today and in response to Council Member questions?

11 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: I do.

12 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: I do.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Counsel.

15 For the viewing public, if you need an accessible
16 version of this presentation, please send an email
17 request to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.

18 Now, the applicant team may begin. I'll
19 just ask that you please restate your name and
20 organization for the record.

21 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Good morning.

22 My name is Paul Phillips. I'm the Borough Director of
23 the Bronx Office of Department City Planning. Good
24 morning to Chair Riley, Chair Salamanca, Majority

2 Leader Fariás, Council Member Marmorato, and Members
3 of the City Council.

4 Today, we are pleased to present the
5 Bronx Metro-North Neighborhood Plan. As you all are
6 aware, part of MTA's Penn Station East Side Access
7 will bring four new stations to the East Bronx, Hunts
8 Point, Parkchester/Van Nest, Morris Park, and Co-op
9 City. Recognizing the extraordinary opportunity to
10 complement these new transit stations with home,
11 jobs, and community amenities, the Bronx Office of
12 the Department of City Planning has worked
13 collaboratively with local residents, City and State
14 agencies, and authorities and elected officials to
15 develop the Bronx Metro-North Neighborhood Plan,
16 which represents more than six years of planning,
17 work, and outreach.

18 I am joined today by Michael Kavalar,
19 Senior Team Leader and Project Lead for the study,
20 who will walk you through the proposal as well as
21 colleagues from the MTA, DOT, DEP, and the Department
22 of Parks and Recreation.

23 I will be happy to answer questions at
24 the conclusion. Thank you in advance for your time
25 and for your consideration.

2 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Good morning.
3 I'll go through this presentation. I know the Council
4 Members are familiar with many of the aspects of it
5 but, for the benefit of the public, and yeah, and
6 then we'll happily take questions.

7 Good afternoon. We're here to present a
8 project overview of the Bronx Metro-North study and
9 the associated zoning map changes, zoning text
10 changes, and City map changes that are part of the
11 proposal. We'll just briefly outline the larger goals
12 of the planning work, and then we'll discuss the
13 proposal as certified. Next slide, please.

14 Here we have a map of existing transit
15 connections. It goes without saying, today the East
16 Bronx lacks these regional rail connections. Next
17 slide, please.

18 New service will mean improved
19 connections and greater accessibility to the city and
20 the region. This means more choices for where
21 Bronxites may choose to work, live, and enjoy
22 themselves as well as significantly improved
23 connections from the region to critical medical
24 research and jobs institutions within the borough.
25 Next slide, please.

2 Here we have a map showing the four
3 stations. New service has also represented an
4 opportunity to plan together to thoughtfully
5 integrate these new stations into the fabric of the
6 communities they'll serve. Over the past six years,
7 the Department of City Planning has worked with the
8 MTA, community members, area institutions, agency
9 partners, and many others to plan around the coming
10 stations. Next slide, please.

11 This work has included developing a joint
12 vision for what it means to create new front doors to
13 these Bronx communities and a world-class entry point
14 to one of the City's most important job centers, as
15 shown in this conceptual rendering of Morris Park.
16 Next slide, please.

17 It also means strengthening job centers
18 by allowing them to grow, while also allowing for the
19 growth of housing and retail needed for the success
20 and growth of our Bronx employers, as shown here on
21 this conceptual aerial sketch. Next slide, please.

22 It means mending seams between
23 communities created by a history of inadequate public
24 infrastructure and facilities, and here we have a

2 rendering showing potential vision at Parkchester/Van
3 Nest. Next slide, please.

4 As well as allowing for a mix of housing
5 and retail near new rail service in areas of the city
6 that have seen little such growth, and here, finally,
7 we have a rendering sketch showing a potential future
8 at Parkchester/Van Nest. Next slide, please.

9 As we can see on this map, the four
10 stations span areas that are quite diverse and
11 distributed. As such, planning work over the years
12 has taken a station-by-station approach. Importantly,
13 while planning work has and will continue to proceed
14 around all four stations, the land use actions
15 contemplated as part of this application relate
16 specifically to facilitating a series of proposed
17 land use changes at the Parkchester/Van Nest and
18 Morris Park station areas. Next slide, please.

19 As we can see on this map, these actions
20 span three Bronx Community Districts, 9, 10, and 11,
21 and would facilitate the development of some 7,500
22 units of new housing, including up to 1,900 units of
23 permanently income-restricted housing in an area of
24 the city that has seen little such growth. These
25 actions will also support the growth of some 2.5

2 million square feet of commercial and community
3 facility uses as well as an estimated 10,000 jobs.

4 Next slide, please.

5 These actions consist of a series of
6 zoning maps, zoning text, and City map amendments
7 that together aim to promote the growth of housing
8 and retail, strengthen job centers, promote
9 industries of the future, and create an improved
10 public realm. Next slide.

11 This proposal builds on a number of
12 principles established over the years. Next slide,
13 please.

14 These principles, in short, aim to create
15 a series of compact districts around new transit, and
16 now I'll step through each of the proposed categories
17 of changes. Next slide, please.

18 Starting with our zoning map amendments.
19 Next slide.

20 Here we have a map of the area of the
21 proposed zoning map changes. The larger study area
22 was further broken down into a series of sub-
23 districts to help structure the proposal and in
24 recognition of unique goals and challenges in each of
25 these areas. These districts include a station

1 adjacent sub-area at Morris Park, where we propose a
2 C4/4 district with an R8 residential equivalent. A
3 transitional residential sub-area meant to respond to
4 the surrounding lower density neighborhoods and where
5 we propose mapping combination of R6A, R6/1, and R7/2
6 districts. A transitional mixed-use area where we
7 propose mapping full C4/3 and C4/4 commercial
8 districts, which also have residential equivalents. A
9 high density residential sub-area near the future
10 Parkchester/Van Nest station where we propose mapping
11 an R8X district. Station adjacent retail area where
12 we propose mapping a C2/4 commercial overlay to allow
13 for a bit more retail near the future Morris Park
14 station area. An automotive sub-area where we propose
15 a minor change in parking regs from the existing C8/1
16 to a C8/2 district to encourage transition over time
17 to neighborhood serving retail uses in those areas.
18 Then finally, one large opportunity site at 1601
19 Bronxdale Avenue where we propose mapping an M1/1A
20 industrial district and an R7/3 residential district.
21 Together we believe these changes will help
22 facilitate the development of vibrant mixed-use
23 districts centered around new transit access in a way
24 that is both respectful of the existing context while
25

2 also leveraging the opportunities for growth
3 presented by this unique and historic addition of
4 rail service in these neighborhoods. Next slide,
5 please.

6 Now, we'll discuss the zoning text
7 amendments. Next slide, please.

8 The Department here proposes the
9 following zoning text amendments. First and foremost,
10 the establishment of the special East Chester-East
11 Tremont Corridor District, the establishment of the
12 R6/1A district, the application of Mandatory
13 Inclusionary, also known as Appendix F, the extension
14 of the transit zone, and the removal of language
15 applying exclusively to C8/4 districts within special
16 plan community preservation district areas. Next
17 slide, please.

18 Here we have a map showing the special
19 district boundaries as well as the sub-districts and
20 sub-area within it. Generally speaking, the special
21 district seeks to promote the growth of housing and
22 employment centers around transit. It seeks to foster
23 an adequate range of services and amenities for
24 residents, workers, and visitors, ensure a lively and
25 attractive urban streetscape around the stations and

2 along major corridors, and create a cohesive
3 pedestrian and public realm network that would better
4 connect future developments with future station areas
5 and surrounding neighborhoods. Next slide, please.

6 There are a number of provisions of the
7 special district text that seek to support
8 residential growth specifically as laid out on the
9 slide here. Next slide, please.

10 There are also a number of special
11 district provisions meant to encourage a lively
12 public realm around the special district. Next slide,
13 please.

14 Finally, a set of provisions meant to
15 support the existing and growing job center,
16 particularly at Morris Park, through a number of
17 provisions. We are happy to discuss any of these in
18 more detail, but for the sake of time. Next slide,
19 please.

20 Here we have a map showing the proposed
21 boundaries for the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing
22 area. In an area of the city that has seen very few
23 Mandatory Inclusionary Housing areas mapped since the
24 program's creation nearly a decade ago and few
25 affordable units produced, the Bronx Metro-North plan

1 proposes the largest mapping of MIH since the Drome
2 Avenue study in 2018. It's worth noting that
3 currently Bronx Community Districts 9, 10, and 11 all
4 rank in the second half of Bronx Districts for
5 housing production. Next slide, please.

6
7 To complement the MTA's work in our own
8 proposed land use actions, DCP also proposes a series
9 of potential public realm improvements around each of
10 the station areas as well as five specific City map
11 actions intended to facilitate aspects of that work
12 and which are part of the proposal before you. Next
13 slide, please.

14 Here we have an aerial sketch showing a
15 potential future at Morris Park. In addition to the
16 wider range of proposed improvements here, three City
17 map actions are the subject of land use actions
18 contemplated as part of this application. Highlighted
19 in pink on this diagram, they include an action to
20 facilitate a future public plaza at Morris Park, an
21 action to facilitate the widening of Marconi Street
22 to allow for sidewalks on its western side, and a
23 mapping envelope to facilitate a potential future
24 extension of Marconi Street to the north to solve for

2 longstanding transportation issues in the area. Next
3 slide, please.

4 Similarly, here at Parkchester/Van Nest,
5 we have an aerial sketch showing a potential future
6 here. Beyond the series of proposed improvements to
7 the public realm, two mapping actions included as
8 part of this application are intended to facilitate
9 aspects of this work. These include a de-mapping
10 action to facilitate public realm improvements and
11 create a more regular parcel, shown in blue on this
12 diagram, as well as a mapping action to extend Pierce
13 Avenue into the large site at 1601 Bronxdale, shown
14 in pink, and meant to provide for public access into
15 the site and a potential third station connection, as
16 well as publicly accessible open spaces totaling some
17 30,000 plus square feet. Next slide, please.

18 With that, we'll just summarize quickly
19 the proposal. Next slide, please.

20 Again, these actions include a series of
21 zoning map, zoning text, and City map amendments in
22 Bronx Community Districts 9, 10, and 11, intended to
23 facilitate the growth of housing, retail, and office
24 uses near new transit, including up to 7,500 new
25 housing units, some 1,900 permanently income-

2 restricted units among them, as well as up to 2.5
3 million square feet of commercial and community
4 facility uses, 10,000 jobs, and a series of public
5 realm improvements. These actions taken together will
6 help to ensure that the future stations are
7 thoughtfully integrated into the fabric of the
8 communities they'll serve, that longstanding gaps in
9 housing production, including affordable housing near
10 the station areas, are addressed, that institutions
11 and employers are poised for growth and success, and
12 that Bronx sites are well positioned to take
13 advantage of these opportunities. Next slide.

14 With that, I would just like to thank the
15 Council Members again for your time, and that
16 concludes our presentation.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much, and
18 I really want to thank you for the outreach you've
19 been doing in our communities as well. We really
20 appreciate the workshops that we've been hosting in
21 collaboration with our Land Use Team. We really
22 appreciate it.

23 As I mentioned in my opening remarks, the
24 Bronx is open to new development, and we need more
25 affordable apartments for our families, but we need

2 more housing for families and housing that families
3 can actually afford so, with that being said, for the
4 affordable housing that will be created, can the
5 Administration require more two- and three-bedroom
6 apartments as opposed to studios?

7 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
8 that comment. We certainly appreciate and hear the
9 need for larger apartments, two- and three-bedrooms,
10 and certainly we'll take that information back to HPD
11 to consider as new development comes online as part
12 of the proposal.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: How will the City
14 ensure that the affordable housing will actually be
15 affordable, because 60 percent AMI, which is
16 approximately 93,000 for a family of four, is well
17 above the medium income for this part of the Bronx.
18 The affordable housing has to be at least 40 percent
19 AMI or lower for it to be actual affordable. Forty
20 percent AMI for a family of four is approximately
21 about 62,000 dollars.

22 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
23 that comment, duly noted. Certainly appreciate and
24 understand the importance for a range of housing
25 types and AMIs and certainly lower AMIs and, again,

2 we will take all this information back, communicate
3 that to HPD, certainly to get that under
4 consideration for all new developments and proposals
5 as part of...

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: And HPD is not here
7 today, right, Paul?

8 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: No, they're
9 not here today.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: They should be. As I
11 also mentioned in my remarks, you cannot just build
12 housing. If you're going to build more housing, you
13 also have to provide more parks, schools, and
14 libraries. You also have to improve the
15 neighborhood's infrastructure and provide more funds
16 for policing and firehouses, so let's address this
17 one by one. Will new Park spaces be created, not just
18 open space on private land?

19 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
20 that question.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Is Parks here?

22 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Oh, they are
23 here.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Can they come up?
25

2 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Sure,
3 absolutely.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: He was about to hit me
5 with the same line.

6 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: No, I had a
7 different line.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Could you please
9 state your name for the record?

10 CHIEF MOLINARI: Hi, I'm Nick Molinari.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Do you swear to
12 tell the truth and nothing but the truth in your
13 remarks today in response to the Chair's questions
14 and other Council Members?

15 CHIEF MOLINARI: Yes, I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: How are you doing,
18 Nick?

19 CHIEF MOLINARI: Good.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So will new Park space
21 be created and not just open space on private land
22 with this project?

23 CHIEF MOLINARI: Thank you, Council
24 Member. As Parks Department, we acknowledge the
25 importance of open space, parks, and plazas. We've

2 been working collaboratively with our colleagues at
3 City Planning to ensure that the open spaces that are
4 part of the plan are as accessible and large as
5 possible and look forward to continuing conversations
6 about open space needs within the Districts.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Will the
8 Administration then be at least improving the current
9 Parks we have in the area?

10 CHIEF MOLINARI: Again, we acknowledge
11 there's a lot of need within the District, and we'll
12 have continued conversations about the needs as part
13 of the proceedings.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Well, we're
15 going to be very passionate about this in the Bronx.

16 CHIEF MOLINARI: Understood.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: We do understand the
18 Bronx plays their part with ensuring that we are
19 building more housing with the land that we have, but
20 we want to make sure that we're taking care of the
21 infrastructure that's around. We have existing parks
22 in those areas. We have existing streets in those
23 areas, schools, libraries, firehouses, police houses.
24 We want to make sure those are taken care of as we're
25 adding this very important project that we all want

2 to see coming to the Bronx. Before I continue my
3 questions, I just want to add that, okay?

4 Have you surveyed the Park spaces around
5 the rezoning and assessed potential improvements in
6 the area?

7 CHIEF MOLINARI: We've been part of the
8 collaborative process with City Planning over the
9 last few years, have been in all of the engagement
10 meetings about open space, and have heard from
11 community members about needs within the existing
12 parks and needs for additional open spaces so we have
13 an open ear and we'll continue to have an open ear
14 through the process. Haven't had a specific on the
15 ground survey that Parks has led though, but we've
16 been very collaborative in this process.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I do have specific,
18 for example, do you have any recommended improvements
19 for Burns Playground, Gibbons Square, and Loretto
20 Park? If not, can you provide those to us as soon as
21 possible?

22 CHIEF MOLINARI: Thank you. We will look
23 into those three sites. You said Burns Playground,
24 Gibbons Square, and Loretto Park.

25 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes.

2 CHIEF MOLINARI: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: And is it your
4 position that the park space in this area does not
5 need improvement?

6 CHIEF MOLINARI: No, I think park space
7 throughout the city needs improvement. It continues
8 to be used and needs improvement, and we look forward
9 to seeing how these spaces can be improved through
10 the process.

11 CHIEF MOLINARI: Thank you, Nick. Has the
12 Administration committed to providing any additional
13 schools within this project?

14 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
15 the question, Council Member. We've been working
16 closely with our partners at the School Construction
17 Authority throughout the planning and environmental
18 review process to identify potential school seat
19 impacts. We have been and will be closely monitoring
20 to identify future school sites and plan
21 appropriately. SCA and DCP will continually monitor
22 development here to track construction activity and
23 project potential future school needs and respond
24 accordingly.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Is it funded and when
3 will it be provided?

4 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
5 the question. We certainly will take that back, and
6 certainly as we move forward, we will provide more
7 details on school planning and funding as part of the
8 process.

9 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Will a new
10 library be provided?

11 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Thank you for
12 the question, Council Member. We're obviously in
13 discussions. As part over the years, we've been in
14 discussions with New York Public Libraries. We're
15 currently assessing their capital needs in the area.
16 There are no current plans for new libraries, but
17 we're working to understand what their needs might be
18 in the surrounding area.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: That was my next
20 question. If there were any new libraries, are you
21 assessing the needs of the current libraries in the
22 area, so you are currently doing that?

23 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: We're working
24 with, yeah.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Do you have an
3 assessment on when do you have that assessment
4 completed?

5 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: I don't have
6 for you right now, but we can get back to you.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right, thank you.
8 Will you be increasing the funding for local
9 precincts and firehouses in the area?

10 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
11 the question. We definitely have heard the need for
12 increased capacity for the precincts so we're
13 certainly in discussions with the Administration and
14 with the agencies, and we will certainly get back to
15 you as part of the process on how that might be
16 facilitated.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. In the
18 rezoning area that you have identified all the areas
19 that flood, what is your plan for addressing these
20 specific areas? And is DEP here? Come on by.

21 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: I'm happy to
22 kind of start and hand it over to Dylan here. I'll
23 just note that DEP takes a very multi-pronged
24 approach to dealing with flooding issues. We've
25 certainly heard the concerns, and we've seen the

1 stories over the years about issues in the area. An
2 important distinction, we just want to make sure
3 those that might be watching are aware of as well,
4 which is there's an important distinction between
5 wastewater and stormwater itself, and so for
6 wastewater issues, DEP does ongoing monitoring of the
7 needs there. That would obviously happen into the
8 future. If any changes generally, the infrastructure
9 for wastewater is in good shape in the area.

10 Stormwater tends to be the issue we hear the most
11 about and concerns with that, and so I'll just note
12 that in addition to some green infrastructure
13 approaches, DEP also has recently updated the 2022
14 Unified Stormwater Rule that requires that more
15 stormwater be managed on site, and just an important
16 point here is pretty much all of the development
17 within the rezoning area predates that rule, and so
18 we can expect that development in the future would
19 perform better in terms of managing stormwater on
20 site, and that's something we certainly expect. I'll
21 also just note that, and I'll ask DEP if they
22 wouldn't mind speaking to them so I don't flub it,
23 but there are a number of programs currently ongoing
24 in the area, which include a cloudburst program
25

2 that's federally funded in the area, a study of
3 ongoing needs for flooding in the area. There are a
4 number of rain gardens, for instance, that have been
5 added stretching all the way from Hunts Point to Co-
6 op City, and also I'll just note DEP is already
7 looking into providing porous paving as well to help
8 with flooding issues in portions of the rezoning area
9 and around the rezoning area, and so those are just
10 some of the many things that DEP is doing so I'll
11 hand that off to Dylan.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So I just want to
13 swear Dylan in first.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Exactly.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Before we do, we've
16 been joined by Council Member Abreu.

17 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: Dylan Meagher.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Thank you. Could
19 you please raise your right hand?

20 Do you swear to tell the truth and
21 nothing but the truth in your testimony today and in
22 response to Council Member questions.

23 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: I do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Thank you.

2 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: I guess to expand
3 on that. Regarding the Universal Stormwater Rule,
4 that will manage 1.5 inches of rain on new
5 development that will either disturb ground or also
6 develop new undeveloped areas, so that is a really
7 important factor of addressing stormwater management
8 across the city and here too where there will be new
9 development. Michael spoke about the green
10 infrastructure across a number of the Council
11 Districts, all the Council Districts that this is
12 touching, so there are hundreds of rain gardens and
13 infiltration basins, which are kind of like rain
14 gardens but under the sidewalk, across the area
15 that's already there. In the near-term plans, DEP has
16 two major near-term plans for addressing stormwater.
17 One is the porous pavement, which is a little bit
18 more on the western side of some of the Council
19 Districts, but we are looking at opportunities at
20 some of the locations that Council Members have
21 reached out to us about regarding flooding to see if
22 the porous pavement can overlap and help with those
23 areas, and the porous pavement there will help manage
24 typical storms, more like up to one-inch storms.
25 Along with that, the porous pavement helps infiltrate

2 stormwater more quickly into the ground, and then
3 there's our Cloudburst program, which some of you may
4 have heard about. We've spoken with a number of the
5 community boards, and I believe the Morris Park Ave
6 BID about it, and this is kind of amplified green
7 infrastructure so using natural systems to generally
8 not put the water into the stormwater sewer system,
9 but to keep it out of the stormwater sewer system,
10 but to manage a larger storm, which is the 10-year
11 storm projecting to 2050, and this is very exciting
12 investments. A lot of it is going to include porous,
13 but also investments in some public properties, and
14 that will stretch from kind of the 6 train down to
15 the 5 train. Anyway, we're happy to give more details
16 to you about that. Then lastly, there's the Morris
17 Park flooding hotspot investment, which is a little
18 bit more of a midterm. So not in the next couple of
19 years, but within the next five years, we're hoping
20 to make another stormwater investment there that will
21 connect, kind of amplify the sewer management of
22 stormwater there.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Dylan, you spoke about
24 rain gardens, and I love them. The issue with them
25 within a lot of our communities is the maintaining of

2 them. Usually when we're calling 3-1-1 or we have
3 constituents that live in our communities that call
4 3-1-1, it's always a fight between agencies on who
5 that specific rain garden belongs to or who's
6 supposed to clean it. To our knowledge, it's supposed
7 to be DEP.

8 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: Yes.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Sometimes DEP says
10 it's DOT, and then we get into that kind of fight.
11 Sometimes it's Parks, depending on the area so, maybe
12 this is a conversation outside of here, but we really
13 want to address that specifically in the Bronx
14 because a lot of those rain gardens have turned into
15 dumping sites. There's a lot of garbage in there so
16 just want to address that. I know my Colleagues will
17 mention that as well.

18 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: Yeah, certainly.
19 We'll be happy to follow up.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I'm just going to ask
21 for you guys to remain on the panel because I know my
22 Colleagues are going to have questions for you as
23 well, and I see my good friend from DOT here as well,
24 so I'm going to call Anthony Perez on down, and I'm
25 going to call Rick Rodriguez on down to get sworn in.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Welcome. Could
3 you please raise your right hand and state the name
4 for the record? Could you please state your name for
5 the record?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Rick
7 Rodriguez.

8 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: Anthony Perez.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Do you swear to
10 tell the truth and nothing but the truth in your
11 testimony today and in response to Council Member
12 questions.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

14 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: I do.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. So parking,
17 parking, parking, a huge issue with this proposal.
18 Equally concerned about parking. A new station will
19 be created just south of Co-op City, and people will
20 be driving to this station. I'm constantly going to
21 building meetings. I'm going to board meetings. I'm
22 going to events in Co-op City. That is one of the
23 major concerns that is being brought to me. A park-
24 and-a-ride lot is a very important component to
25 making this successful new station. What steps are

2 being taken to create more parking around the new
3 stations? I guess you could start with DCP.

4 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
5 the question. I think we certainly recognize and have
6 heard the importance for parking. I think the way the
7 proposal stands today, there are no parking minimums,
8 but we certainly expect private developers to provide
9 parking. I think there are several developers today,
10 and we've even heard testimony at the CPC public
11 hearing from a developer who has publicly stated a
12 commitment to provide parking on site. We certainly
13 see that trend to continue, and I think several of
14 those developers are here can speak specifically to
15 their plan to provide parking on their sites.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Well, thank you, but
17 Co-op City won't be having a development site on it,
18 so is there any way, and I guess this question goes
19 to DOT, will you commit to studying at least a number
20 of car trips to the station once it opens and provide
21 an additional needed parking based on this study?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Really,
23 I just want to answer your question. I also just want
24 to say a pleasure to be in front of you for the first
25 time, and happy birthday.

2 Yes, I think the important thing to know
3 is you're going to hear through line through all of
4 our answers here that we're very, very excited to
5 move this forward, and again, a commitment to making
6 this right. There's going to be a lot of
7 complications, and so, sorry, a lot of interlocking
8 pieces that need to be addressed.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Rick, can you just
10 talk closer to the mic? Thank you.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: There
12 are a lot of interlocking pieces that need to be
13 addressed, and we want to give you a really
14 comprehensive answer so, yes, we affirm that we will
15 be taking a look at this and a whole host of
16 amenities that need to be responded to.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Do you have a
18 timeframe for the study?

19 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: In
20 front of me today, I don't, but I promise that we
21 will be following up.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Is it correct that DOT
23 operates parking lots for the public known as Muni
24 lots?

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Very
3 proudly so, yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Approximately how
5 many? Between 12 to 24, you think?

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: I think
7 that's right. My memory was something like 13, but
8 that sounds right.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Has DOT ever leased
10 space or partnered with private entities to operate
11 parking?

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Not to
13 our knowledge.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay. Is MTA in the
15 house? I got one more chair for you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: This is quite
17 the panel. Thank you.

18 Could you please raise your right hand
19 and state your name for the record?

20 MTA REPRESENTATIVE: (INAUDIBLE)

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Do you swear to
22 tell the truth and nothing but the truth in your
23 testimony today and in response to Council Member
24 questions.

25 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Joseph O'Donnell.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Another issue that is
4 very important to me is how our seniors in Co-op City
5 are going to get access to the station. You see, Co-
6 op City is separated into five different sections.
7 This specific station is going to be in section five,
8 which is going to be a challenge for seniors who live
9 in section one, two, three, and four to commute to
10 the station, especially if we are encouraging them
11 not to drive to the station. With that being stated,
12 my question is for MTA. Will you commit to provide a
13 shuttle service that will bring our seniors from
14 their buildings to the station so that they can
15 actually utilize this station?

16 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Thank you for the
17 question and the opportunity to speak before you
18 today. I can't commit to a shuttle service per se. I
19 can commit to the fact that we are in discussions
20 with our bus operations team to identify need and
21 opportunity to increase bus service to that station.
22 They're actively looking at that now so that once
23 revenue service is up, we're only not even halfway
24 into the completion of the project towards revenue

2 service, so we are studying that now in terms of need
3 as far as local and additional bus service.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So is that a no on the
5 shuttle?

6 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: No, it's not a no.
7 It's we're looking at it.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You're looking into
9 it?

10 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: (INAUDIBLE)

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Thank you.
12 So further discussions on it?

13 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. That's what
15 I'd like to hear. I guess you just answered the
16 recommendations. You're looking into other studies
17 for bus services within there for seniors, but what
18 then is your recommendation for seniors to access the
19 station?

20 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Our anticipation is
21 that the vast majority of folks using all four of
22 these stations, but certainly in Co-op City, too, are
23 folks are going to walk or bike or be dropped off.
24 Certainly not seniors necessarily with the bikes, but
25 who knows? Folks are more active today.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I have some active
3 seniors.

4 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Exactly. There is
5 currently under development as part of the project a
6 kiss and ride location for folks to be dropped off so
7 it is sort of not a park-and-ride.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You said a kiss and
9 ride?

10 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: That's what they call
11 it. Well, not the seniors, but the project team. So
12 it's a drop off location, a cut out, if you will.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: It's a very awkward
14 name.

15 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: But we're also
16 actively working with DOT to identify, especially in
17 Co-op City, in conjunction with that bus development,
18 the opportunity to move or relocate or increase the
19 size of the bus footprint there, too, to accommodate
20 more utilization so all those conversations are
21 ongoing because we're so early on in the project
22 right now.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.
24 With that being said, I think I'm going to hold off
25 on questions now and pass it over to the birthday

2 girl, our Majority Leader, Amanda Farías. You can
3 clap for her birthday.

4 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: A clap for my
5 birthday. This is probably the only time I get claps
6 on a birthday. Thank you, Chair, and thank you,
7 everyone, for giving me the warm wishes.

8 I just have a couple of comments before I
9 jump into my questions on some of the responses you
10 folks already provided the Chair. I wanted to
11 highlight on the area where Chair Riley was
12 discussing about the AMI and the affordability. I do
13 want to hone in and just make a comment that there's
14 a difference between the AMIs that we're looking at
15 for people on fixed income, the people that really
16 built the foundations of a Co-op City and a
17 Parkchester and those of their children and them
18 raising their own families in this District so,
19 obviously, we all are looking at different ways to
20 provide housing for a multitude of mixed families and
21 those salaries and incomes that they are provided,
22 but I do want to hone in on our goal is, yes, to
23 provide housing for families and for people in our
24 communities, but also to ensure that those on fixed
25 incomes are not getting pushed out or cannot live

2 with their kids anymore or not necessarily have to go
3 to a nursing home and instead can live within the
4 community so I do just want to hone in on that.
5 Additionally, I'd love to recommend Westchester
6 Square Library that was defunded in this last budget
7 that is missing a 6-million-dollar capital commitment
8 from the Administration as a library that you folks
9 can jump right back in and ensure that's close and
10 adjacent that the families that we're providing
11 housing for have access to that library.

12 Additionally, Parkchester Library can always use
13 additional funding. I did just want to shout out to
14 DEP for their pilot and study that's going on with
15 the porous pavement. We have been circulating it in
16 my District office to get as many people in the know
17 that it's happening and that we're looking at
18 alternatives for folks in the area. Lastly, on
19 comments, I'm slightly not appreciative of the MTA
20 being a bit noncommittal today about either a shuttle
21 bus or anything. We've been in conversations about
22 these stations for several years, years that preceded
23 us, and I understand there's a study coming, but we
24 have a big decision here in terms of a vote. We need
25 some hardline commitments on ensuring that seniors in

2 Co-op City get some sort of way and accessibility to
3 the station so I just wanted to state that.

4 Okay, traffic and pedestrian study.

5 Safeties are serious concerns that could be
6 exasperated by the station development if not
7 addressed significantly. Can you please note specific
8 changes that are being placed and planned for East
9 Tremont Avenue to enhance access to the station and
10 improve safety for all users on the corridor?

11 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah, I'm
12 happy to start this and I'll encourage colleagues at
13 DOT to jump in. Obviously, East Tremont Avenue, we
14 know there are real issues with access, particularly
15 that station and the primary plaza that'll be right
16 there where East Tremont meets Dogwood, basically.
17 The design for those improvements that I believe will
18 follow, similar for our mapping actions. The
19 important thing is to signal them as a priority as we
20 always have with East Tremont Avenue. Particularly,
21 you know this, but the intersection or the distance
22 between, basically, Union Port and Purdy Street,
23 you've got a half mile with no pedestrian crossings.
24 We've been in conversations with DOT. We know there
25 are a number of critical improvements to improve

2 access to the MTA's future station, but also just for
3 people that might not even use the station in the
4 future of the north side of East Tremont. We know
5 there are issues with the sidewalks and we've been
6 there in all different weather conditions and it's
7 difficult to imagine a future with 4,000 to 6,000
8 people getting on and off the train, even today. It's
9 challenging, and so it's certainly been a priority. I
10 don't know if DOT would like to add anything to that.

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank
12 you for the question, and again, to reiterate the
13 concern, we have those concerns as well. I know that
14 we're going to be doing street reconstructions and
15 updates on sidewalks as well as crosswalks. We don't
16 have designs on those things again, but I also want
17 to say we're going to be following on to make sure
18 that we're monitoring how pedestrians are moving, not
19 just pedestrians, but vehicular traffic as well, to
20 make sure that things are moving smoothly and safely.

21 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay. I
22 appreciate that. I know we've sent a bunch of
23 different intersections and thoughts around lights,
24 stop lights, different types of ways to reroute
25 traffic. I do want to hone in on, as many people are

2 not necessarily completely fond with bike lanes, but
3 everyone loves to order DoorDash and Uber Eats, so we
4 have people that are using bikes to actually do their
5 job, and so I want to assure that we are including
6 that in our streetscaping and in our infrastructure.

7 Echoing the Chair's remarks regarding
8 affordable housing, the median household income for
9 the overlapping Bronx Metro-North stops, community
10 districts, is a little over 57,000, well under 60
11 percent affordable median income, which is
12 approximately 84,000 for a household of three. How
13 does the Administration plan to produce the units
14 that are truly affordable for individuals and
15 families currently living here and, two, to preserve
16 the naturally affordable housing that has enabled
17 many to call our communities home?

18 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
19 that question, Council Member. As you know, HPD isn't
20 here today, so some of the details on affordability
21 we'll certainly take back to them. I will also just
22 say they have a number of different programs that
23 address a range of income types and AMIs, and so
24 those are available for developers to take advantage
25 of. They also have several programs related to home

2 ownership. I'll just name a couple. One is HomeFix,
3 which provides loans of up to 150,000 to owners of
4 one- to four-family homes for critical repairs, and
5 this is anticipated to roll out in Fiscal Year 2025,
6 and they also have the Homeowner Advocate Program,
7 and, in addition, they also have the Homeownership
8 Help Desk so those are just some of the resources
9 that are available to existing homeowners and tenants
10 in the area, and they're looking to expand some of
11 those programs, obviously, within the study area to
12 create additional resources for homeowners and
13 tenants alike.

14 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: I appreciate that
15 response. HPD should be here today. As we know, a lot
16 of their programs take anywhere from five, six, eight
17 years to actually be followed through on, while some
18 of the development between my District and Council
19 Member Marmorato's District maybe have the capacity
20 to have that length of time. There's a couple also
21 that do not, but appreciate that answer.

22 As the theme that my Colleagues and I
23 continue to bring up on behalf of our constituents,
24 it is congestion, as big a talk of the town already
25 as it is. We welcome more affordable housing,

2 community space, economic opportunity, and park
3 investments, but we cannot escape the fact that the
4 Metro-North will not simply be for our communities,
5 but for residents from across Bronx and Westchester.
6 I have mentioned the fact that there are currently
7 underutilized surface parking areas directly adjacent
8 to the Parkchester/Van Nest station sites. Are these
9 or any other locations actively being studied for
10 potential public parking in my District? If not, what
11 alternatives does the Administration propose for
12 mitigating the significant issues of traffic
13 congestion and parking loss that the FEIS currently
14 calls out? Anyone can take a stab at that.

15 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: I will start,
16 and then I will have my colleagues from DOT expand.
17 Thank you for the question and, certainly, I think
18 we've heard consistently throughout the years and
19 through public review, parking is a huge concern. I
20 think one of the things that we're, again, we see the
21 private developers as a huge resource to provide
22 additional parking, and I think you'll hear testimony
23 from them today, and then I'll turn it over to DOT to
24 talk more specifically about some of the other things

2 they might do in terms of addressing the surface lots
3 that you mentioned and some of the other issues.

4 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: As for
5 the lots that you're mentioning, we're taking notes,
6 actually, so we'll make sure we'll follow up with you
7 on those pieces, but I also take your question and
8 talk a lot about congestion, and we feel really well-
9 prepared to have our regular toolkit take a look as
10 the project takes shape. We'll be able to provide
11 very specific feedback on the mitigations that we
12 would take but, again, there's sort of known the
13 types of things that we would be doing to help move
14 level of service but also provide optionality for
15 folks, so like we were talking about with bike lanes
16 and bus lanes. Those sorts of things are part of our
17 regular toolkit.

18 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay. Thank you.
19 Would MTA like to consider using some of their
20 capital to look at park-and-rides and private lots
21 that I have in my District?

22 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: We've spoken on this
23 before with regard to that, and the stations
24 themselves do not include parking inside the scope of
25 the project, but that does not preclude us from

2 working with a third-party developer, having
3 conversations about future development of parking,
4 and happy to have a seat at that table.

5 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Great. Then just
6 for DOT also, I know we've walked this literally
7 through rain, sleet, snow, and all types of hot
8 weather already, but I do want to reiterate
9 considering looking at, the station itself will be
10 built up on a hill, as we know, looking at different
11 ways to have angled parking or any other options that
12 we have to increase, even if it's just 5, 10, 12
13 spots on that strip would be helpful.

14 Other infrastructure needs are schools,
15 more park space, and more resources for our local
16 precincts and firehouses. Starting with schools, what
17 grade will it provide and how many seats will it
18 provide, and have any of you started engaging with
19 the developers on the rezoning area about building a
20 school? I already know we were stated that SCA has
21 been in conversations.

22 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
23 that question. Yes, there have been some discussions
24 for a school on a large site at 1601 Bronxdale. We're
25 aware of the requests, and SCA is evaluating

2 currently the site to determine if the location meets
3 the City's site considerations for a school.

4 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: And do you know
5 what's the timeline around getting a response back
6 from SCA? If you ask a principal, it will be a really
7 long time.

8 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: We are
9 actively working and having conversations with SCA
10 and the developer on figuring out what the
11 requirements are and if it fulfills those
12 requirements so we're working on that in earnest.

13 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay, and then
14 moving on to park space, my community needs more than
15 open space within private developments. My community
16 needs more playgrounds, courts, active spaces. Do you
17 have any plans and an actual budget to provide these
18 as part of this rezoning?

19 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: I will let my
20 colleague at the Department of Parks and Recreation
21 respond to you.

22 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay.

23 CHIEF MOLINARI: Thank you, Council
24 Member. Yes, we know that the open spaces in the
25 districts all need some love and are looking forward

1 to having further conversations about those open
2 spaces. We have been, as I mentioned before, part of
3 all the community meetings and have heard a lot from
4 constituents about needs. We've been working on
5 improving the spaces and looking forward to
6 continuing those conversations.
7

8 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: The two parks
9 that I've already provided you folks to look at
10 necessary investments coming in with the thousands of
11 units that are coming into the Parkchester/Van Nest
12 area are in high need and have been in high need that
13 precedes me since previous Council Members so I urge
14 you folks to continue looking at ways with OMB and
15 down the line to make sure both of those parks
16 receive the renovations they need. We need to ensure
17 that kids of all ages can be within those parks, that
18 the schools that are getting more students can equip
19 the parks because some of them are JOPs, and ensuring
20 that they're accessible both with equipment and with
21 pathways into it so I really urge you folks to
22 consider those two parks.

23 CHIEF MOLINARI: And, Council Member, two
24 parks. Laredo was one.
25

2 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: No, that's Taylor
3 Playgrounds and Castle Hill Playgrounds.

4 CHIEF MOLINARI: Thank you.

5 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Those are in the
6 Parkchester Castle Hill area.

7 Another major issue is providing our
8 local precincts and firehouses with resources they
9 need to serve our communities. Do you folks have
10 plans and an actual budget to provide any of this as
11 part of the rezoning?

12 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Thank you for that
13 question. Certainly, we're going to take all this
14 back and we're having conversations with the
15 precincts and others about their plans for future
16 capital and expense for personnel.

17 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, so no as of
18 right now?

19 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Yes, that's correct.

20 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay. I'll wrap
21 there and hand it back to the Chair. I do just want
22 to state it is not lost on any of us in this process
23 that this is supposed to be an Administrative win as
24 well as a Council win. If we want to build the units
25 and we want to make investments in the parks and make

2 investments in our communities and directly to our
3 neighbors, this is our opportunity to do so. It might
4 be one of the few opportunities the Bronx has at
5 least in our tenure as Council Members and as the
6 Mayor within the city so I urge all of you to push
7 back on any pushback that you folks get on the
8 investments that are needed but also that Bronxites
9 deserve for the decades of lack of investment that
10 have happened. Thank you.

11 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Thank you for that,
12 Council Member, and I think we totally hear you and
13 we're working diligently on making sure the proper
14 level of investment accompanies the proposed land use
15 changes, but thank you for that.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Chair
17 Salamanca.

18 CHAIR SALAMANCA: Yeah, thank you, Mr.
19 Chair. Good morning, everyone.

20 I want to start by opening up and talking
21 a little bit about parking. I know that I've spoken
22 to the DOT Commissioner, Commissioner Perez, on this
23 but I just want to get a commitment on the record. I
24 do have issues with parking. I have major
25 construction that's occurring in my District. Also, I

2 have the biggest thoroughfare in the South Bronx if
3 you want to get to any parts of the city, and so I
4 know that underneath the Bruckner, on Hunts Point and
5 Bruckner Boulevard, even though it's under
6 construction, when the construction is completed in
7 the past, we've had a municipal parking lot there
8 that was rented, I would say, or leased to a private
9 developer, a private owner, and we had concerns with
10 the way that that private owner was running that
11 parking lot. I just want to get on the record, are we
12 getting a commitment from the City that we're going
13 to bring that parking lot back to that immediate
14 community?

15 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: Council
16 Member, just to confirm, the State DOT is building
17 the parking lot as part of their work on the Bruckner
18 and, once it's completed and built out, it will be
19 transferred to the City for operations and it will be
20 used as a municipal lot. That lot will have 113
21 parking spots and a quarter of them will be electric
22 vehicle charging.

23 CHAIR SALAMANCA: There were also concerns
24 on Hunts Point, I believe, and that's right where the
25 Metro Bruckner station will be built, that there was

2 some eminent domain, some private property that
3 basically the State negotiated with the property
4 owner, and those parking lots, they have disappeared
5 now. Do we have a commitment from the Department of
6 Transportation, DOT, that you will do a study in that
7 immediate area to identify new areas where there can
8 be potentially new street parking?

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Thank
10 you for the question and, again, keeping it high
11 level, I think whenever we are doing changes to the
12 streetscape, we're going to be monitoring how traffic
13 patterns are affecting both congestion and pedestrian
14 access so we'll be taking a look to make sure that
15 things are moving smoothly, not only beforehand but
16 after the implementation as well.

17 CHAIR SALAMANCA: Again, am I getting a
18 commitment from the Department of Transportation that
19 they will do a study to look for additional street
20 parking in that immediate area?

21 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: Yes, DOT can
22 commit to monitor and evaluate and look at additional
23 street parking, looking at parking regulations in the
24 neighborhood.

2 CHAIR SALAMANCA: Okay, and also, is this
3 a commitment that DOT is making that they will do at
4 all four stations throughout the borough of the
5 Bronx?

6 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: Again, we
7 commit to monitor and evaluate the existing and
8 potential parking regulations around the stations as
9 we do across the Bronx and across the city. As you
10 noted, there are parking regulations that could be
11 outdated loading zones, there could be areas that
12 could be regulated for more parking, and we'll take a
13 look at those and again, monitor and evaluate where
14 we can make additional parking.

15 CHAIR SALAMANCA: Okay, and I just want to
16 be clear, this is a long time coming for the borough
17 of the Bronx, Metro-North station, we've spoken about
18 it in past Administrations. I believe that the former
19 Bronx Borough President is there. I remember having
20 many conversations with him and being a big advocate
21 on making this a reality, so I want to thank the
22 Governor, the State for making this a reality but, as
23 we're getting this new form of transportation, we
24 need to ensure that communities such as ours that are
25 going to be overburdened with new people coming in,

2 that we are prepared to handle that influx of
3 individuals that are coming in.

4 Now, my question is to City Planning.
5 City Planning, what's the cost of this rezoning that
6 the City is paying for because I know that the
7 developers are not paying for this rezoning, the City
8 is paying for this. What's the total cost?

9 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
10 the question, Council Member. I have to get back to
11 you on that. I'm not sure the total cost for the
12 environmental review, but we can get back to you and
13 give you a specific number.

14 CHAIR SALAMANCA: Do you have an idea what
15 an average ULURP costs a developer per project.

16 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: What I would
17 say is that it's really, for each particular
18 development, it's going to depend on sort of the size
19 and scale and scope, and so it's going to vary from
20 project to project so for one zoning map amendment
21 and another zoning map amendment, the fees may be
22 different based on the scale and scope of the
23 project.

2 CHAIR SALAMANCA: Was there an individual
3 environmental impact study done for each individual
4 site that's going to be rezoned?

5 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Yes, a full
6 environmental impact statement was done for every
7 site that's included within the study area.

8 CHAIR SALAMANCA: And it has been
9 completed?

10 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Yeah, it has
11 been completed. Yes, the FES was published on June
12 the 14th.

13 CHAIR SALAMANCA: Okay. You know my
14 concern with this process, I can say in terms of the
15 City Planning part, was that City Planning went and
16 presented directly to Community Boards propose what
17 the changes will be, R7, R8, R7-3, whatever that is,
18 but there was no real presentation made to the
19 Community Board from the specific developer. Can you
20 explain why City Planning chose that approach?

21 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
22 the question. I think this is a city-wide initiative,
23 and so as a lead agency, typically what happens is
24 the Department of City Planning will present the
25 proposal. I will say and note that with the private

2 developers, we've worked with them collaboratively
3 over the years with the proposal on their specific
4 sites, and so that has been done in concert with
5 those private developers, so somewhat in lockstep,
6 but typical process for a city-wide initiative is
7 that the Department takes the lead on presenting the
8 actual proposal to Community Boards and elected
9 officials.

10 CHAIR SALAMANCA: I'm particularly
11 concerned with the Bronxdale location. I met with the
12 developer this week, and there's certain buildings
13 that they're proposing 25 stories, but yet right
14 across the street, the Parkchester buildings, I think
15 they go up to 18, 19 stories. How does City Planning
16 allow in terms of kind of killing the character of
17 the neighborhood?

18 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Sure. I'm
19 happy to take this one, Council Member. So the 1601
20 Bronxdale site, I know you're aware, just for
21 everyone's benefit, this is a very large and
22 irregular site. It has frontage on Bronxdale Ave
23 there, but the remaining sides of the site are
24 flanked either by the Con Ed facility, the rather
25 large Con Ed facility there, or the rail line there

1 as well, so I just want to note that. That site is
2 doing a number of things that I think are just worth
3 discussing because it gets to some of the concerns,
4 and I know there's a strong feeling about the need
5 for City-owned open spaces versus privately-owned
6 open spaces, but there is a paucity of City-owned
7 land in the area, and so as a sort of one of the many
8 strategies in addition to our work with our capital
9 agency partners at Parks and others, and I'll just
10 note also the proposed plaza at Morris Park, which
11 would be open space as well there. At 1601 Bronxdale,
12 we have a site that has the potential to add two
13 publicly accessible open spaces to the, there would
14 be obviously a restriction that would require that to
15 be publicly accessible. It's laid out within the
16 special district text there, and there are a number
17 of requirements that would need to be met to ensure
18 that those spaces are not only legally publicly
19 accessible, but they appear as public spaces and so I
20 just want to note that. In terms of the strategy
21 there, our goal was to provide the opportunity for a
22 development team to provide those open spaces, and so
23 there's a bonus mechanism, and that bonus mechanism
24 is what creates some additional potential density on
25

2 that site, although I'll just note this is all
3 obviously hypothetical until anything were to happen,
4 and we've talked with the development teams over the
5 years. We've certainly heard the concerns about
6 height. We think there's an opportunity for lower
7 heights towards the Bronxdale Avenue edge and for
8 height to step up as it moves towards the back of the
9 site and would be nearer to the Con Ed facility,
10 which is rather large and create something of a
11 buffer there. I think for specific questions about
12 the potential future design of that site, obviously,
13 that would require a conversation with the
14 development team there, who I think may actually be
15 here today, and they would be able to respond better
16 to some of those questions.

17 CHAIR SALAMANCA: I will let Council
18 Member Marmorato continue with those conversations,
19 but I just want to put on the record that I am
20 concerned with the height of some of the buildings
21 that are being proposed at 1601 Bronxdale.

22 Then my final question, what community
23 benefit are these particular communities in which you
24 are rezoning, such as Parkchester, in terms of
25 Council Member Fariás and Council Member Marmorato,

2 what true community benefits are you proposing? See,
3 I've been around for some time now. A real community
4 benefit is not, oh, we're going to look to see if we
5 can upgrade or provide funding for a park, or, no,
6 we're going to see if we can build a new school. No.
7 A real community benefit commitment is, you know
8 what, there's an open space here. These are the plans
9 to build this new green space in this new park. Down
10 the block, you have a school. This school needs a new
11 roof, needs new technology. We're committing to give
12 this school exactly that. So can you explain what
13 true community benefit the City is actually
14 proposing?

15 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
16 the question, Council Member. Duly noted. We are
17 actively working. We have our capital agencies here,
18 so we're actively working and have been over the
19 years on what you alluded to as community benefits so
20 on a number of things, and so we're looking forward
21 to having detailed discussions with yourself and the
22 other Members of the Council on what those final
23 capital investments would be and what those community
24 benefits would look like.

2 CHAIR SALAMANCA: All right. Well, I want
3 to thank you, and I want to put it on the record, I'm
4 really excited to have you, Philip, and Anthony Perez
5 as Commissioners and the Director of DCP in the
6 Borough of the Bronx. It's a pleasure working with
7 you gentlemen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you,
9 Council Member.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Chair.
11 Council Member Marmorato.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you,
13 Chair Riley. Hi, guys.

14 Now is when the tough questions are going
15 to come. I know you answered most of them, but we
16 really got to like dig into a lot of these answers.
17 I'm going to start with DCP. When DCP went public
18 with the Bronx Metro-North study area draft scope of
19 work in the fall of 2023, the estimate for added
20 housing units was 6,190 units. The estimate for added
21 housing units today is 7,500. Can you please explain
22 how we got to this number and why did it increase at
23 certification?

24 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Sure. Thank
25 you for the question, Council Member. I'll note a

1 couple of things. Part of the scoping process is we
2 receive public comments during that period. It is our
3 responsibility as an agency to take those back to
4 review what we've received, and there are naturally
5 some changes that come out of that, and that could
6 account for some of that. We'd be happy I'm sure to
7 meet with you and discuss those in more detail. The
8 other thing I want to note is that as we were moving
9 towards entering the public process, the details of
10 the citywide text amendment, City for Housing
11 Opportunity became clear, and for our environmental
12 review purposes, we felt it was important that our
13 proposal and our environmental work reflect
14 accurately the potential combined changes that would
15 come, and so that is reflective of that. The good
16 news there is that the environmental work does
17 account for both of those, including all of the
18 impacts that we've discussed, such as on different
19 assets in the community and so forth.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. When you
22 were reading your slideshow, you had made mention
23 that you modified the FAR for C4-4 and C4-3. What
24 direction did you go in?

2 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah. In what
3 is sub-district B1 over at Morris Park, sorry, B-1 is
4 the sub-area, sub-district B, which is you have an
5 area that's adjacent to the station at Morris Park.
6 It's sort of buffeted from the surrounding
7 communities by the large medical campuses and health
8 educational campuses, Montefiore, Einstein, and
9 Jacobi, and then on the east side, you have, of
10 course, the Hutchinson Metro Center. There, we've
11 modified, in the special district text, the
12 residential equivalent to be that of an R-8 district,
13 and so that is reflected in the proposal.

14 I apologize. I think I've missed part of
15 your first question, Council Member.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: The FAR was
17 going to increase or decrease with this modification?

18 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah. The FAR
19 increased for the C4-4.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: How much? How
21 many? What's the number?

22 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah.
23 Apologies. I do have it here in front of me. You
24 probably don't have the special district text in
25 front of you, but there is a table on what would be

2 page 17 of the associated report for this particular
3 land use action so the R8 would, apologies, it's
4 actually not there, but it's a 7.2.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And what was
6 it?

7 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Well, the R8
8 FAR wasn't changed.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

10 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: The FAR
11 equivalent was changed.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

13 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

15 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, and with
17 the added density, there are additional concerns
18 about existing infrastructure, open space, city
19 services. What specific changes to the proposal has
20 the Administration done to address the increase in
21 density? We're going to break every single piece of
22 that down anyway, but with the increase in density,
23 did you make any specific proposal to help with the
24 infrastructure?

2 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: I think that,
3 so it's a great question, and I think we did in full
4 environmental review and I think, as you see here, we
5 have our agency partners here so knowing that
6 increased density was coming to the area, we've
7 engaged with our sister agencies on potential capital
8 investments, and I think that's part of what you
9 heard here today, and we'll continue to have those
10 conversations on what the appropriate level of
11 investment for infrastructure and for needs related
12 to open space and other things, commiserate with the
13 proposal and the increased density.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. So this
15 is just like something on the side. I know that we
16 keep talking about having conversations, having
17 studies. What are the timelines look for these
18 things? Because I want to be able to be comfortable,
19 not the morning of a vote and walking in there and
20 saying, okay, you have not shown me what I needed to
21 see. I want to know when are these conversations
22 going to start? I mean, once a week, I need to know
23 when am I going to see the results, not just the
24 conversation.

2 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: That's a great
3 question. I don't want to speak on behalf of the
4 agency partners who may want to speak more
5 specifically to timelines, but I will just say
6 publicly that we're committed to working with you and
7 the other Members of the Council on getting the right
8 level of investment that's appropriate to your
9 satisfaction, and I don't know if any agency partners
10 want to speak more specifically on timelines.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Oh, we'll get
12 to them. Don't worry.

13 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Oh, okay.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. On the
15 large sites such as 1601 Bronxdale, what does DCP
16 incorporate into the proposal to make sure that it is
17 part of our community rather than exclusive
18 neighborhood that is all on its own because I feel
19 like we have two different communities on each side
20 of this development.

21 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah, I'll
22 take this one, Council Member. I think that's an
23 excellent question. Here I'll point to 1601 Bronxdale
24 as an example. We were also concerned about a site
25 that would seem closed off from the community so we

2 have a mapping action, which is actually technically
3 filed by the property owner there, which would extend
4 Pierce Avenue to the western extreme of the site and
5 then, within where that would end, the mapping action
6 itself also contemplates a rather large space to
7 accommodate the future proposed western plaza there.
8 That is all defined within the special district text
9 so for the property owner there to take advantage of
10 the bonus, there are actually quite exhaustive
11 provisions that include everything from seating to
12 things like water fountains and lighting and things
13 like that. They would be required to provide that,
14 and those spaces would have to remain functionally
15 public. The street at some point, some of these
16 details follow, but the idea is that the street would
17 go into the possession of DOT and so then it would be
18 fully a public street and the spaces themselves would
19 remain under those restrictive deeds for public
20 access.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Do you
22 feel that the two buildings on the front side on
23 Bronxdale Avenue, I think they're coming in at 11
24 stories, do you think that that's a massive change
25 from the two-story buildings across the street?

2 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: So definitely
3 it is a change. I think one of the things that we
4 looked at for the proposal is really to strike a
5 balance looking at where we could locate higher
6 densities which are closer to the stations and then,
7 as we moved away from the stations, trying to respond
8 to neighborhood character and lowering some of the
9 density and the heights as part of the proposal so we
10 do think that through several years of outreach,
11 etc., we do think that the proposal strikes a balance
12 between neighborhood character but also creating
13 capacity for new housing and other uses as part of
14 the proposal.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: You do realize
16 this is going to be a neighborhood in itself and
17 there's going to be no access from the people of
18 Morris Park Avenue, right? You're creating an entire
19 neighborhood in this one development and, with the
20 large buildings in the front of the property, it is
21 going to deter my constituents from coming in and
22 using the facilities and using...

23 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Well, I think
24 you make a really good point. I think the devil is in
25 the details and I think the development team is here

1 and I think they're open to having discussions about
2 how the site can be designed, but I do think we think
3 that there's great value in this site. This site also
4 has the potential to create a third connection to the
5 station. As we also mentioned, Michael talked about
6 those public accessible open spaces. Those would be
7 designed and created to park standards and certainly
8 I think through the Parks Department and Design, we
9 can commit to working with you and constituents to
10 making sure that it's a development, a proposal that
11 meets community satisfaction.
12

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

14 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: And
15 apologies, Council Member, just to build on that. I
16 just want to note that the site plan shown for that
17 site which prescribes where those open spaces would
18 need to be and the text prescribes their size,
19 there's an entry open space that's prescribed as part
20 of that, and that was intentionally placed on the
21 Bronxdale side so that that public space would be
22 visible and accessible from Bronxdale Ave and clearly
23 a part of the larger community.
24
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: The front
3 building is still massive and the height needs to
4 come down a little bit on that, but we'll get there.

5 What tools has your team created to
6 ensure the developers at the site would bring down
7 the existing community everyday necessities such as
8 open space, schools, and expand the city services?

9 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: I'm sorry.
10 Could you?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: What tools has
12 your team created to ensure developers at the site
13 bring the existing community everyday necessities
14 such as open space, which we discussed, schools, and
15 expand the City services?

16 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
17 the question. That's a great question. I think we
18 talked about some of the tools that we have put in
19 the special district provisions to create additional
20 open space. I think on the schools conversation,
21 again, we're in active conversations with SCA and the
22 development team at 1601 Bronxdale to see if this
23 site would actually meet the criteria for SCA in
24 terms of a school site here.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. I'd like
3 to sit down and be a part of that conversation
4 because I have some concerns about the school in that
5 location.

6 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Absolutely.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Your team, the
8 MTA, and the 1601 Bronxdale development team has
9 discussed the possibility of creating a
10 Parkchester/Van Nest station access bridge directly
11 from the site to create greater access for the
12 commuters coming along the north side of the new
13 station. Where do those discussions stand and how can
14 we confirm that this important connection will be
15 created?

16 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Thank you for
17 the question, Council Member. I think better than us
18 to respond to the current status would probably be
19 the development team there. I'll just note that our
20 goal has been on the City side to make sure that
21 there was a public street that got to that back
22 corner for that potential eventuality which is the
23 subject of both our mapping action and our special
24 district test.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. MTA?

2 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Yeah. Oh, sorry. I
3 don't have anything additional to add to that. I know
4 those conversations are ongoing, but the status of
5 them is...

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: So whose
7 responsibility is it to create the station there on
8 the Van Nest side?

9 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Well, it would be
10 ours to create the station in conjunction with the
11 third-party developer, but the conversations are not
12 finalized. They're ongoing.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. All
14 right. A major concern my constituents have
15 consistently raised is public safety and security.
16 What does the Administration have to increase the
17 capacity of our NYPD and the FDNY partners?

18 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
19 the question, Council Member. We are aware of that
20 request, and we're currently having conversations,
21 and we'll take that back to both the agencies to have
22 further discussion, then we'll get back to you on
23 what that might look like in the future.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: So just for the
25 record, the 49th Precinct has gone up 35 percent in

2 crime in the last two years, and they are only down
3 to 72 officers currently, and that is nowhere near
4 where they should be so, if we're going to get this
5 whole redesign and development, we need to have the
6 appropriate amount of officers. They're struggling
7 already. Also, as far as a new police station, I know
8 I've had a conversation with Commissioner Perez about
9 East Chester Road, where the police station is. The
10 officers park along the street, on the sidewalk,
11 because there's no room for their vehicles to get in
12 and out of the property. I think that there needs to
13 be a complete redesign of the station so that it is
14 safe for the people walking along East Chester Road
15 and in the community when they have to run out, jump
16 out, get in their cars, and take off so I need that
17 to be really considered.

18 Now, as far as the MTA, the new stations,
19 what kind of security measures are you going to put
20 in at these stations?

21 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: All of the new
22 stations, all four of them, will have dedicated
23 access points, help points. There are several
24 elements that will be underneath the purview of the
25 MTA as well as those that are underneath the purview

2 of NYPD so managed by Metro-North. There will be a
3 video surveillance system, electronic access control
4 system, the elevator management system. All of these
5 stations will be ADA accessible, so there will be
6 vertical circulation elements. All of those elements
7 will be electronically linked to a central station,
8 which will be monitored, remote maintenance and
9 monitoring, and a public address system. Further,
10 additionally managed by MTA, PD, and FDNY will be a
11 fire alarm system and the emergency help point
12 intercom system that I mentioned.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Good. Thank
14 you.

15 All right. My favorite, parking mandates.
16 This application proposes to remove parking mandates
17 across the whole rezoning. Given the added density,
18 why does your team feel like this is appropriate, and
19 I'm talking about the parking mandates for the
20 additional housing.

21 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Understood. So
22 understood parking is a huge issue. We've continued
23 to hear it. I think the proposal put forward doesn't
24 prevent future developments for providing parking. I
25 think we've talked about that. I think what we're

2 looking at is a balance and sort of choosing between
3 housing and also parking. I think the other piece
4 that I will also just mention that in terms of
5 creating transit-oriented development, we want to
6 encourage people to take public transit but, that
7 being said, we certainly understand the need and
8 value for parking and parking strategies, and so
9 we'll continue to work with yourself and DOT and
10 others to find additional tools and strategies to
11 address the parking needs in the area.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: We need
13 parking. We are very reliant on our cars. Maybe in
14 the future, we can come up with consideration to the
15 parking mandate but, as of now, we need that for the
16 housing that we currently have. If we start taking
17 away parking and building, even if we build a little
18 bit of additional housing, we still need some kind of
19 parking because another thing is, Jacobi, with your
20 development on their property, with the zoning
21 changes, more jobs are going to be created, and with
22 the hopes of these jobs, they'll go to local Bronx
23 residents so the reality of them traveling on this
24 Metro-North line from New Haven or from Penn Station
25 is not really likely. Hopefully, it's going to be the

2 local people within the community, and the only
3 access they really have to this hub is going to be
4 most likely through car or bus.

5 Now, on the proposed site of New York
6 Health and Hospitals, it's zoned a C4-3/R6-1 on the
7 current existing parking lot. The community that
8 borders this hospital is already struggling with
9 parking all in and around the community. How do you
10 propose to fix this already congested parking issue,
11 and will H and H supplement the parking that it will
12 absorb with any new construction on the site and
13 create it within the building that they're making?

14 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
15 that question related to parking. Our plan in and of
16 itself will not impact Jacobi's parking needs. After
17 several discussions that we've had between DCP and H
18 and H, including a walking tour that we did this
19 winter, we understand the critical operational needs
20 for parking for both employees and for patient
21 parking so any future plans for development on the
22 site would address the needs of Jacobi, including
23 employee and patient parking, and those plans
24 ultimately would require approval by the H and H
25 board.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Would you
3 commit to saying that any parking that is absorbed
4 will be duplicated, if possible, maybe three times as
5 many spots within the structure?

6 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: I think we're
7 still in the early phases, like nothing has been
8 developed on that site, but we completely understand
9 the need to maintain that parking on that site and
10 probably produce additional parking for any future
11 developments on that site.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.
13 Furthermore, your team has responded to our
14 persistent call to address the congestion and parking
15 constraints that will come not only from added
16 density but also expanded Metro-North service. The
17 Administration acknowledges that many commuters will
18 drive to the new stations to take advantage of the
19 new express rail station to Penn Station, yet no
20 Park-and-Ride or no new municipal parking lot is
21 being proposed. What is this rationale?

22 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: I will start
23 it and I will turn it over to my colleagues. I think
24 a couple of things. One, we are leveraging regional
25 transit service and create a transit-oriented

2 development so we recognize certainly the need for
3 parking, but we also wanted to create an environment
4 where we're supporting transit-oriented development
5 and we're looking at making improvements to
6 streetscape, access to the stations, those things
7 which we think are critically important.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: We have two
9 portions of my District. We have Pelham Garden,
10 Allerton Avenue that can actually use the Metro-North
11 station, and then we have folks in Throgs Neck that
12 would be more than happy to take advantage of this.
13 If we can do some type of study to create a Park-and-
14 Ride or figure something out along those lines, I
15 think that's a big necessity because I think it will
16 open it up to the entire District.

17 All right. Now, the area in the Morris
18 Park station is being proposed is currently privately
19 owned, and what is the plan for acquiring this land
20 for the plaza?

21 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah, thank
22 you, Council Member, for the question. The parcel,
23 two parcels, in fact, in question on the south side
24 of Morris Park Ave that are the subject of the
25 associated mapping action. Just a little on process

2 is the mapping action itself just essentially sets up
3 the authority for future acquisition. We've been in
4 conversations with the property owner together with
5 our partners at EDC and fellow agencies and, at a
6 future point, there would be an acquisition. The
7 vision there is that that space would flow to the
8 larger plaza between Eastchester Road and Bassett
9 Ave. That does a couple of things that we think are
10 quite important. One of those is just a larger space,
11 and we've certainly heard a lot about the need for
12 open space in the area. We also think it would
13 improve and facilitate users getting to and from the
14 station, therefore making it more likely as well that
15 some would choose to commute via train in the future.
16 But importantly, also, the Metro-North station, due
17 to the engineering considerations and where it ends,
18 we were concerned about it being hidden behind a
19 future building, and so that's part of the intent.
20 But again, the mapping action before you sets up the
21 authority to pursue those conversations around
22 acquisition, and those would come later.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Is there
24 an alternative if the private property owner does not
25

2 want to give up the space, and what kind of
3 incentives are you giving this individual as well?

4 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah, it's a
5 very good question. We're hopeful that we'll come to
6 a mutually agreeable way forward here. We have
7 included an incentive in the special district text so
8 that incentive allows for the property owner there to
9 transfer the development rights that they would have
10 otherwise had on that site, and that's prescribed,
11 again, within the special district text so that's the
12 incentive mechanism there.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Do you have a
14 percentage or a number for that?

15 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: It's a rather
16 small number because the lots are rather small, so it
17 would be essentially the R8 equivalent, the 7.2
18 multiplied by those very small lots there. I don't
19 have it off the top of my head, to be honest, but
20 it's pretty modest.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Can you get me
22 those numbers?

23 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Will the public
25 be included in the final design of this plaza?

2 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: I will just
3 note that we're not there yet to even a more
4 preliminary design. Obviously, we've had some
5 sketches, but I'll defer to my colleagues at the
6 Department of Transportation, perhaps, to discuss
7 more generically how that typically happens with such
8 spaces.

9 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: As part of any
10 capital improvement infrastructure, we do include
11 presentations to the community boards and elected
12 officials so that would be treated the same.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. They
14 would definitely like to be a part of that. You know
15 that. Thank you.

16 Can the Administration and DEP commit to
17 the study of sewer system capacity and flood control
18 throughout the Morris Park rezoning area, but with
19 special attention to the immediate station area and
20 Bassett area?

21 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: Thank you,
22 Council Member. In Morris Park, we have our flooding
23 hotspot study area that we're planning already, and
24 to the east of that, I believe, is the area that
25 you're speaking about. Currently, the sewer system

2 drains to a different kind of trunk sewer, which is
3 like the main sewer, and that sewer system is being
4 monitored and modeled to see what the flows are there
5 for that. Currently, the modeling suggests that it's
6 within capacity. As far as stormwater, your office
7 has sent us a couple of locations and appreciate that
8 and a couple of pictures, and our Commissioner is
9 planning to meet you in the field on Friday. I think
10 we can speak about those specific locations that
11 you've sent us, and maybe we can send your team just
12 to reiterate those locations to be sure that we have
13 them correctly and talk about opportunities in those
14 specific locations.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

16 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: And we have been
17 working with the communities, too, on the cloudburst
18 investments, too, so we have been engaging them.
19 Although I know that's a slightly different area than
20 what you're asking about.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. All
22 right. Thank you. What road changes should my
23 community expect to facilitate the plaza and station
24 access? Railroad there going to be changes? I think
25 you had mentioned demapping or mapping by the plaza?

2 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: Yeah, so the
3 proposed action there is a mapping action. So
4 typically for plaza spaces, we thought it was
5 important that it be under the jurisdiction of DOT in
6 the eventual future, and so the mapping action would
7 essentially extend Morris Park Ave into that sort of
8 triangular lot that would open up the view to the
9 station there.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Will the
11 plaza be complete before the Metro-North station
12 service begins at Morris Park?

13 SENIOR TEAM LEADER KAVALAR: In terms of
14 the timing around the plaza, I'm not able to give you
15 a timeline where this is the action that sets us up
16 for that future conversation so I'll just note that.
17 I don't know what's typical, if there's a typical
18 answer for that. We know the stations are coming
19 soon, and we've been focused on doing everything we
20 can to ensure that the neighborhoods are ready for
21 them, but I don't know if DOT would have anything
22 they'd like to add.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: With COVID, has
24 it pushed back the whole project, and when do you
25 guys plan on opening the station?

2 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: With regard to the
3 Metro-North service, I can speak to that. The COVID
4 didn't have any impact on the project or the plans
5 itself. The original anticipated opening was our
6 start of revenue service was 2027. We're currently
7 evaluating the effectiveness of that first long-term
8 outage that we had negotiated with Amtrak last year.
9 We're in the midst of our second long-term outage
10 with them so we're going to be re-baselining that
11 schedule based on the effectiveness of those outages
12 so more to come on that, but end of 2027 was always
13 the anticipated opening.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. All
15 right. Being that I have you here, so as far as
16 price-wise, a fare from the Morris Park Van Nest
17 station, how much would that cost a commuter?

18 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: So slightly premature
19 on that. Again, that'll be determined by Metro-North
20 once we get to that point of revenue service, but one
21 of the things that we hear all the time is that we
22 need to make sure that this service is doable for the
23 folks in the area, that it's a fare that they can
24 reasonably accommodate, so we are looking at things
25 like, when I say we collectively, the Metro-North and

2 MTA, looking at things like CityTicket now or
3 Atlantic Ticket that's currently enjoyed by Metro-
4 North and Long Island Railroad so there will be an
5 inner city discount type of fare that's looked at,
6 but it's not been determined yet.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Now, in the
8 future, if you decide to develop along this line,
9 will the prices in the Morris Park, Parkchester Van
10 Nest, Co-op City stations, would they decrease
11 because now that you're adding more lines along the
12 line?

13 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Well, any fare
14 increase or decrease requires a board action and
15 public input so all of that would be studied and
16 advanced at that point but not at this time.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. All
18 right. Thank you.

19 In Community Board 11's recommendation,
20 they pointed to the lack of community centers such as
21 library access and inadequate community spaces for
22 youth outside of schools and are concerned that the
23 rezoning would elevate these existing issues. How is
24 the Administration planning to address the lack of
25 community investment through this proposal?

2 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
3 that question, Council Member. Duly noted. So
4 currently, no plans for new libraries or community
5 centers in either Council District 13 or 18, but the
6 study is engaged with NYPL, as I think we mentioned
7 earlier, to understand existing capital needs.
8 Additionally, we've also engaged with DYCD around
9 requests for community centers. It is common for
10 discussion and identification of such facilities to
11 happen as part of conversations between development
12 teams, potentially, and HPD for projects that seek
13 additional funding in exchange for affordability
14 agreements so that's a mechanism where we could
15 certainly explore if they entertain an HPD term sheet
16 to locate a community center in one of those
17 developments. Again, the study team has flagged this
18 as a priority for HPD and looks forward to future
19 conversations as concrete development plans develop
20 and emerge for sites throughout the study area.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. For the
22 record, Van Nest lost their library in 1998, and I
23 think now would be a really good time to get that
24 back, especially with the increase of people at Baker
25 and Bronxdale Avenue.

2 The residents of Community Board 11
3 requested the removal of two sites located, one at
4 the corner of Seminole and Morris Park Avenue, and
5 they had concerns about removing the R6-1 on
6 Eastchester Road and Stilwell Avenue. Would you
7 consider removing these sites or at least adjusting
8 their height requirements?

9 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
10 that question and comment. I think certainly we want
11 to be responsive, so we certainly, I think, would
12 entertain and consider those changes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, because
14 it's very important.

15 A specific need that CB11 highlighted and
16 that the final environmental impact statement
17 confirmed is for additional school capacity,
18 especially at the primary level. How does the
19 Administration plan to address this need and,
20 specifically, is your team committed to building a K-
21 8 school as I have advocated for?

22 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
23 the question, Council Member. Obviously, we know that
24 school seat and school needs are critically
25 important. At this particular juncture, as I

2 mentioned before, we're exploring the possibility of
3 a school on the 1601 Bronxdale site, but we'll
4 certainly take back your request and consideration
5 for K-8, and we'll get back to you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yes, because if
7 these people are going to live right there, they
8 can't go to one school and have to go to a middle
9 school down the block and then daycare in another
10 location. If we kind of get that all in one facility,
11 that would be really helpful to the District.

12 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Understood.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you. CB11
14 also specifically called out the need for STEM
15 schools. How can we ensure that STEM-educated is
16 integrated into student curriculum here in District
17 13?

18 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you.
19 That's a great question. I think one of the things
20 that we do know is that there is a possibility, or
21 not a possibility, there are plans for a STEAM school
22 in Morris Park, and those plans will be forthcoming.
23 I think additionally, we certainly can explore
24 additional opportunities to incorporate that into
25

2 curriculum, potentially in a new school or into
3 existing schools.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, and has
5 the Administration identified alternative sites to
6 1601 Bronxdale in the scenario that the private
7 developer decides not to redevelop?

8 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: That's a great
9 question. We're exploring all possibilities for a
10 school site, so yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: All right.
12 Parks. Hi. All right. One of the main concerns I've
13 had from my constituents in this rezoning impact on
14 our already limited parks and open space. The concern
15 is further highlighted by the final environmental
16 impact statement, which finds that the proposed
17 actions would result in adverse significant impact in
18 total passive and active open space in a residential
19 study area. How does the Administration plan to
20 address this glaring issue?

21 CHIEF MOLINARI: Thank you for the
22 question, Council Member. We're aware of the open
23 space impacts disclosed in the environmental review
24 and are working in collaboration. As I mentioned, we
25 have been part and parcel to the conversations

2 related to the open space, as you discussed, at the
3 private site in terms of making those more inviting,
4 larger, and connected. We're also looking forward to
5 having further conversations about improvements to
6 existing park sites.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, and given
8 there's so little public land for new park,
9 significant upgrades are needed at multiple parks in
10 my District, including Loreto Park, Brady Park,
11 Bufano Park, Pelham Bay Park Ballfields, and Muliner
12 in Van Nest. Muliner, I think, is right outside of
13 Baker Avenue site. Can you please detail the
14 improvements needed for each of these parks, and can
15 you kind of give an estimate cost for these
16 improvements at each of these parks?

17 CHIEF MOLINARI: Thank you, Council
18 Member. I have the list that you just gave me. I will
19 look into it. I know we have further conversations
20 pending about open space impacts and a conversation,
21 I believe, on Friday so we look forward to having
22 those conversations.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Without
24 the Van Nest Park, I think it was about 34 million
25 for a total upgrade for all of those parks.

2 Will the Administration commit to fully
3 funding and performing the needed investments to the
4 parks just discussed?

5 CHIEF MOLINARI: We're looking forward to
6 having further conversations. At this point, we don't
7 have the investment for those sites, but we're
8 looking forward to having those conversations to see
9 how we can prioritize amongst lots of needs.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, and will
11 the Parks Department actually increase the trash
12 pickup services within each of these parks now that
13 there's an increase in residents?

14 CHIEF MOLINARI: Thank you again, Council
15 Member. Our expense impacts are important. Luckily,
16 we did just get second shift staffing restored to
17 help with some of those impacts across the city, but
18 we'll take that back and look at those sites and the
19 impacts.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. All
21 right. DOT, you're up. All right. The final
22 environmental impact statement finds that there
23 should be significant adverse traffic impacts at 40
24 study area intersections during one or more analyzed
25 peak hours. Can you explain how the Administration

2 and DOT plan to address these adverse impacts?

3 Anyone?

4 BOROUGH DIRECTOR PHILLIPS: Thank you for
5 the question. I think we've identified those impacts.
6 I think we are working collectively with our partners
7 at DOT for mitigations for all of those and, also
8 just to point out, and you're aware of this, also
9 improvements at many of those intersections so those
10 conversations are ongoing. We'll be happy to talk in
11 more detail about like what those will look like as
12 we move through the process.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. One of
14 the projected sites is Baker Avenue near White Plains
15 Road, an intersection and neighborhood street that is
16 already dangerous due to the awkward design and one-
17 way traffic. Can you briefly describe DOT's
18 examination when significant projects are proposed in
19 each area?

20 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: Sorry, can you
21 repeat the last part of your question?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Can you briefly
23 describe DOT's examination when significant projects
24 are proposed in these areas?

2 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: We work with
3 our communities, our elected officials, our community
4 boards to hear what's going on on the ground. We
5 obviously also look at traffic data as it is
6 collected. We take a look at how many vehicles are
7 coming in peak hours, where there are particular
8 areas of congestion, and our streets are almost a
9 living thing. We are constantly improving them as we
10 can. Every single year, we have street improvement
11 projects that take into account improving safety as
12 the neighborhoods change and as they are dynamic, and
13 we'll continue to have that commitment around these
14 stations as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, and while
16 the Morris Park station is welcomed, it is an
17 increased congestion in the streets as direct
18 significant repairs. How will the Administration plan
19 to redesign and repair Eastchester Road, Stilwell
20 Avenue, and Bassett Avenue, just to name a few
21 critical stations? Eight adjacent streets already in
22 glaring need of repair.

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah,
24 just to piggyback on what Commissioner Perez just
25 said, we're going to be consistently reevaluating as

2 those treatments are made and those strategies for
3 improvement are made, and we promise that we will be
4 in conversation with both you, the community boards,
5 and the community writ large to make sure that we're
6 getting it right.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

8 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: I'll just add
9 that as part of the presentation noted, there are
10 also improvements that are planned on Eastchester, on
11 Tremont, on Bassett that will reconstruct roadbeds,
12 increased sidewalk space, and other amenities to make
13 it easier to transverse via feet, by car, by scooter,
14 or however.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And I would
16 like to do a walkthrough with you by Baker Avenue in
17 the future at some point, just so you guys can kind
18 of like, I'm sure you've been over there and surveyed
19 the area, but just to really get a good feel as to
20 what's happening.

21 BUREAU COMMISSIONER PEREZ: We'd be happy
22 to do that, Council Member.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you. All
24 right. The Community Board, neighborhood
25 associations, my office, and several other electeds

1 have consistently raised the issue of sewer capacity
2 concerns and flooding in the Morris Park area,
3 especially near the incoming station. Will DEP commit
4 to transparent study of our sewer capacity and flood
5 risk ahead of the station's completion?
6

7 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: Thank you for
8 that question, Council Member. Our experts can get
9 back to you on that. We did analysis of the rezoning
10 and the impact of the added dwelling units to the
11 sewer and, at least for the sewer, there's capacity
12 under our analysis and, as the development expands
13 and builds out, we will monitor that to see where the
14 flows are going in terms of capacity. That will help
15 direct our capital planning. For stormwater, we're
16 currently making a large amount of investments to the
17 west of that area, I believe that you're talking
18 about, in the range of many, many millions of
19 dollars, and we can speak to some more details on the
20 actual numbers that there for those investments and
21 when they're going to come online so that's going to
22 make an important impact to Morris Park. Towards the
23 east, we're going to have to study the stormwater
24 impacts to that area in an ongoing basis.
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: How long does
3 your monitoring last?

4 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: Well, for the
5 monitoring for the sewers?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Mhmm.

7 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: That's from the
8 household water, wastewater. The modeling takes into
9 account the current capacity of the sewers and the
10 current population of the area and then projects
11 forward the number of housing units to then predict
12 the amount of wastewater coming through the sewers,
13 and then we're expanding the use of in-sewer sensors
14 to sense the actual levels of the sewer systems so
15 the intent that that would be continuous when they're
16 installed, and that's being rolled out.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: So this will
18 always be monitored?

19 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: Yeah, we will
20 continue to monitor it when we get the sensors in
21 there, yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And what about
23 for stormwater?

24 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: For stormwater,
25 so we have our large investments for the cloudburst

2 area and for the flooding hotspot in Morris Park. For
3 other areas there, the street investments will help,
4 and then also we have a model of the whole city,
5 which includes area of stormwater impacts and
6 flooding impacts that look at current conditions and
7 conditions in 2050 and 2080 so that consider the
8 increase in intensity in stormwater, and that's
9 really important for helping direct our further
10 stormwater investments along with 3-1-1 complaints
11 that we do continually monitor, and our staff also
12 monitors kind of social media complaints too, because
13 sometimes people complain on social media, but they
14 don't complain on 3-1-1 so, especially for large
15 storms, we do monitor that and map that on a dynamic
16 map that we continue to analyze.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Has DEP placed
18 aside any capital funds for completing the
19 improvements needed for any kind of repairs with the
20 already existing infrastructure because I know at one
21 point the sewer along Eastchester Road was repaired.
22 I mean, that was only 25, 30 years in the making, you
23 know, so have you guys set aside any other capital?

24 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: For the sewer
25 investments, we'll have to get back to you on that

2 with the details. If there are specific areas that
3 are of concern to your constituents, we'll definitely
4 look into that, but I don't have those numbers off
5 the top of my head.

6 For the stormwater, yes, we have capital
7 commitments, and we're in the planning phase for
8 these stormwater investments along with the over 200
9 rain gardens that are in your District too so we're
10 focusing on that too and expanding that capacity for
11 stormwater.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. As we've
13 seen year over year, flooding in the city does not
14 merely impact the 100-year flood plan. How is DEP
15 working in the communities of the East Bronx to
16 ensure that areas inside and outside of the 100-year
17 flood plan are adequately prepared for future storms
18 and in-climate weather?

19 CHIEF-OF-STAFF MEAGHER: Okay. For the
20 flood plan, that's coastal flooding, I believe that
21 you're speaking about, and then there's also 100-year
22 storms so I can talk about both of those a little
23 bit. For the flood plan, we work closely with our
24 colleagues at DOT, Office of Emergency Management,
25 and other offices to get information out about large

2 coastal storms that come into the city, and so that's
3 a really important aspect of that. We also are
4 expanding the Bureau of Resilience, which DEP took
5 on, and that is working on coastal resilience. For
6 more details on that, we can get back to you on the
7 coastal aspect of that in your District.

8 For stormwater, for the 100-year
9 rainstorm, that's pretty close to what we've modeled
10 in our map. It's a public map and anybody can view it
11 and see the different scenarios going forward, and
12 we'd be very happy to share that with you and your
13 staff to see where we see flooding. Then the
14 investments that we're making and continue to make
15 are to address those concerns.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, thank
17 you. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Riley.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
19 Member.

20 Just a couple more questions for MTA. The
21 MTA has previously stated that the new stations will
22 come online in 2027. Could you please briefly
23 describe the work that still needed to be done to
24 accomplish 2027 implementation?

2 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Sure. Thank you for
3 the question. As I mentioned previously, we're
4 currently evaluating the success of the long-term
5 outage that we had previously negotiated with Amtrak.
6 If you recall, Amtrak is the owner and operator of
7 the right-of-way. This project is being largely built
8 with inside their right-of-way so we're beholden to
9 Amtrak for access and the ability to do our work. We
10 had negotiated the first long-term outage which took
11 place last year and we're in the midst of a second
12 long-term outage. We're presently evaluating the
13 success and efficacy of those two long-term outages
14 to see where things shake out so we'll have a better
15 idea how close we are to that 2027 anticipated
16 revenue service date sometime later this year at the
17 result of that evaluation.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: For many in our
19 communities, the new access to Manhattan and
20 Westchester suburbs is exciting, but for many access
21 means more than simply a new train service. Can your
22 team commit to reduce fares for riders who take
23 service within NYC limits or for those residing in
24 the Bronx?

2 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Yeah, as I mentioned
3 earlier, that's a great question because obviously we
4 want folks to use this service, right? We want to
5 make it attractive for them to utilize so fares
6 similar to Atlantic Ticket or the CityTicket
7 currently utilized by Long Island Railroad to inner
8 city locations and to Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn,
9 for instance, would be contemplated when we get
10 closer to revenue service. Those fares will
11 ultimately be established by Metro-North closer to
12 the start of service, but a discounted fare similar
13 to those is in consideration.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Furthermore, can you
15 describe how these new stations will be accessible
16 for riders regarding ADA accessibility components?

17 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Sure, so all four of
18 these new stations will have ADA accessibility
19 elements. They'll all have elevators and stairs as
20 well, but those stairs will be ADA accessible for
21 someone who does not maybe need an elevator, but
22 needs wider ADA capacity for stairs.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Many in Co-op City and
24 throughout our collective East Bronx communities, I'm
25 pretty sure you addressed this, but just for the

2 record, have voiced a need for better connections
3 between MTA buses and incoming rail networks. Can you
4 please describe how MTA will facilitate these
5 connections?

6 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Yes. Thank you for
7 that question. As previously discussed, we're
8 currently evaluating and continue to evaluate the
9 ridership needs based on busing. We just recently
10 completed a Bronx overall network bus redesign, but
11 we're going to continue to evaluate as we get closer
12 to revenue service what the anticipated utilization
13 and need will be and then tweak it accordingly.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Your team has
15 highlighted a possible northern access point to the
16 Parkchester/Van Nest Station directly from 1601
17 Bronxdale. Can you quickly discuss where those talk
18 stands are and what needs to be done to confirm that
19 the important connections will be facilitated in the
20 future?

21 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: As previously
22 mentioned, I don't personally have the status of
23 those conversations right now. They're between our
24 TOD team and the developer, but they're ongoing and I
25 can certainly get back to you on that or the

2 developer may actually have more on that. All right.
3 Majority Leader.

4 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: I just wanted to
5 ask a follow-up question regarding the potential
6 fare. I know I heard it earlier that there was going
7 to be potentially a public process or a public
8 hearing. I just wanted to verify in order to have a
9 rule come out for the MTA on any of the fares, does
10 that mean we have to have an entire public hearing
11 process? What does that hearing process look like?
12 Generally, in terms of the State processes, I'm not
13 too familiar and want to make sure that at whatever
14 point we need to incorporate our constituencies, we
15 know.

16 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: Right, so there would
17 be a public process to change or alter the fare,
18 whether it's up or down. There was a contemplation of
19 potentially moving it down at some point if there was
20 additional stations and more utilization so any
21 change in the fares would need to have a public
22 process and a board action so we're not there yet.
23 Obviously, we haven't even established the initial
24 fare, much less a change but, if we were to do that,
25 then it would be a public process.

2 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, and that
3 typically involves like a public hearing where people
4 can come and testify and recommend a price, or is it
5 something that the agency then proposes first and the
6 board takes action on that recommendation?

7 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: It would be a
8 proposal and then commentary on that proposal and
9 feedback on the proposal.

10 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Typically, how
11 long does that take that we've seen in the past?

12 DIRECTOR O'DONNELL: I don't know off the
13 top of my head. I'd have to get back to you on that.

14 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Sorry, let me
15 just skim through really quickly.

16 Actually, I think that was my only
17 additional question. Chair, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Majority
19 Leader. I don't think we have any more questions for
20 this panel. I really appreciate your time today. I
21 really just want to make sure you guys heard a lot of
22 our concerns about this project, and we'll get back
23 to us with a lot of the details that you weren't able
24 to provide today.

2 With that being said, this applicant
3 panel is now excused.

4 Counsel, are there any members of the
5 public who wish to testify regarding the Bronx Metro-
6 North rezoning and the text amendment proposal
7 remotely or in person?

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Yes, Chair. We
9 actually have Borough President Gibson who is online
10 who would like to testify so we will start with the
11 Borough President and then we will follow it up by
12 four panels of in-person testimony and then, after
13 that, we will go to several individuals who have
14 signed up online.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. For members
16 of the public here to testify, please note that the
17 witnesses will generally be called in panels of
18 three. If you are a member of the public signed up to
19 testify on the proposal, please stand by when you
20 hear your name being called and prepare to speak when
21 myself calls you to begin. Please also note that once
22 all panelists in your group have completed their
23 testimony, if remotely, you will be removed from the
24 meeting as a group and the next group of speakers
25 will be introduced. Once removed, participants may

2 continue to view the live stream broadcast of this
3 hearing on the Council's website.

4 Members of the public will be given two
5 minutes to speak. Please do not begin until the
6 Sergeant-at-Arms has started the clock.

7 Borough President Gibson, are you there?

8 BOROUGH PRESIDENT GIBSON: Yes, I am, Mr.
9 Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right, you may
11 begin.

12 BOROUGH PRESIDENT GIBSON: All right, good
13 afternoon, Chair Kevin Riley. Thank you to you and
14 your Colleagues, the Members of the Zoning and
15 Franchises Subcommittee. It's good to be back
16 virtually at the City Council and to all of my
17 Colleagues who were there. Thank you so much to the
18 Administration that just testified. I want to
19 recognize DCP, DEP, DOT, Parks, the Mayor's Office,
20 and the MTA.

21 I am excited that today's hearing is
22 happening and we are moving forward on what I believe
23 is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will
24 dramatically increase transit access for the Bronx
25 and the City of New York as well as parts of our

2 upstate region, providing for the future development,
3 both residential and commercial, for many of our East
4 Bronx communities.

5 I want to start my testimony by, of
6 course, recognizing our Chair, Kevin Riley, as well
7 as my colleagues in the Bronx delegation, Majority
8 Leader Amanda Fariás, Council Member Rafael
9 Salamanca, Jr., Council Member Kevin Riley, and
10 Council Member Kristy Marmorato. These four elected
11 officials have been working closely with our office
12 and our team on the Metro-North proposal. So I'm
13 grateful to be here. I also want to recognize our
14 Chair, Dan Garodnick, at the Department of City
15 Planning as well as our Commissioners at the City
16 Planning Commission.

17 I am here to express my support for the
18 transformative Metro-North expansion project,
19 particularly focusing on the crucial additions
20 planned for our borough through the Penn Station
21 Access Project. This project is not just about
22 transit and transportation equity, but it really
23 represents an incredible and enormous opportunity to
24 expand our communities and drive economic and smart
25 growth. The prospect of linking Co-op City, Hunts

2 Point, Morris Park, and the Parkchester/Van Nest
3 communities to regional train services is really
4 monumental. It has never happened before in the
5 history of our borough at such a profound time for us
6 in the history of our borough and the city. Residents
7 and families of these neighborhoods have long been
8 supportive of bringing transit and train access to
9 their communities, and this project will help address
10 transit equity for our East Bronx communities, many
11 of which are transit deserts today. This new rail
12 access will save up to an hour on trips to Penn
13 Station and 75 minutes to Connecticut on the East
14 Side, returning valuable time to many of our
15 commuters, fostering community engagement as well as
16 personal well-being. These new stations promise
17 economic vitality with this project projected to
18 generate about 10,000 jobs, 7,500 residential units,
19 including 1,900, which will be permanently
20 affordable, and we hope and anticipate affordable for
21 low-income working families, older adults, and our
22 veterans as well as homeownership opportunities. I
23 have long advocated every opportunity I get. I'm
24 always talking about opportunities for homeownership
25 for Bronx residents and families, and this project

1 can really be a pipeline and a pathway to prosperity
2 for many of our working-class families. This proposal
3 will also add about 1.2 million square feet of
4 commercial space and nearly 1.3 million square feet
5 of community facility space, underscoring our
6 commitment to inclusive and holistic growth to
7 support our neighborhoods, our residents, families,
8 and our businesses.
9

10 Current residents must truly, truly gain
11 benefits from this development before we add
12 development and bring on new residents. I stress that
13 this proposal must add value to our valuable
14 communities already. In addition to the new transit
15 access, we know that we intend to accomplish goals
16 around local jobs, local hiring, stimulating the
17 economy, and creating access to M/WBE contractors and
18 businesses that truly want access to jobs and
19 programs and contracts.

20 Now I want to specifically address
21 quickly considerations for some of the broader
22 community impacts on this project. For Morris Park,
23 aligning development with job centers like the
24 Hutchison Metro Center, the Montefiore Einstein
25 Medical Campus, Mercy University is truly essential.

1 I support strategic growth along many of our key
2 corridors like Eastchester Road and Stillwell Avenue,
3 fostering a vibrant business and commercial hub. The
4 one concern I do have in this area is the C4-3
5 district by Seminole and Tenbrook Avenue really
6 should be removed as it's not contiguous with the
7 largest study and it doesn't make sense to rezone an
8 area without a planned project. I also put this in my
9 recommendations to CPC as well as to the City
10 Council. I'm incredibly supportive of the future
11 Marconi Street to Pelham Parkway connection that I
12 believe will alleviate congestion and traffic from
13 the local streets, which is one of the top concerns
14 that we consistently hear from our civic associations
15 as well as residents and families. This connection is
16 a game changer and we need to prioritize this as a
17 major capital commitment for the Parkchester/Van Nest
18 changes along East Tremont Avenue, Bronxdale Avenue
19 and White Plains Road, we believe will help to spur
20 development that meets our local needs. The future
21 growth of the area through transit-oriented
22 development must be aligned with infrastructure
23 improvements that all of my colleagues have
24

2 consistently talked about that are vital for
3 accessibility and livability.

4 I will continue working with our Majority
5 Leader, Amanda Farías and her team on the added
6 height for the Parkchester Preservation Corporation's
7 parking garages on East Tremont. This conversation is
8 still ongoing and I want to thank our Majority Leader
9 for engaging with the shareholders and homeowners at
10 Parkchester condominiums that have truly been
11 concerned about height growth and the impact it's
12 going to have on their everyday living. We're
13 listening to people, we're having engagements on the
14 ground, and we want to make sure that everyone's
15 voices are really a part of this conversation. Thank
16 you, Majority Leader and your team.

17 Co-op City, Section 5, the unique
18 challenges there demand innovative solutions from
19 parking strategies to public private partnerships,
20 shuttle service, Council Member Riley that you talked
21 about is absolutely critical to this work, ensuring
22 that robust bus connections and prioritizing the
23 zero-emission transportation for our buses aligns
24 with our commitment to environmental justice. We hear
25 a lot from our Co-op City residents as well as Chair

1 Riley and his conversation so we do want to make sure
2 that we are prioritizing some of their needs. When
3 we've had meetings on the ground, folks have been
4 very consistent about what they believe they deserve
5 to take on a Metro-North station in the Co-op City
6 community.
7

8 In Hunts Point, down in the South Bronx,
9 we must prioritize pedestrian safety amid increased
10 traffic, Bruckner Boulevard, the local streets,
11 service road, and the main road. Additionally,
12 investments in electric vehicle infrastructure will
13 really help mitigate air pollution, benefiting the
14 residents of this vibrant yet underserved community.
15 I want to recognize all of our community boards,
16 Community Board 2 down in Hunts Point who really was
17 involved in having dialogue on the ground with
18 organizations like The Point, CDC, and many others.
19 We are excited about the opportunities in the Hunts
20 Point Food Distribution Center as well. All of these
21 projects that are happening simultaneously are even
22 adding more value to our neighborhoods as we look to
23 see our new Metro-North stations.

24 Across all station areas, affordable
25 housing is really a cornerstone of our work,

2 development, investments in schools, as the Council
3 Member talked about, 3K, UPK, adding school seats to
4 our local school district, addressing healthcare,
5 public safety, the local precincts that represent
6 these areas, green spaces, open spaces are absolutely
7 essential to sustaining our residents today as well
8 as our residents and families of tomorrow. The Hunts
9 Point and the Morris Park communities, as many of you
10 know, two of the top 10 business hubs in the entire
11 City of New York, while Co-op City and
12 Parkchester/Van Nest communities are home to some of
13 the largest planned community-driven projects that we
14 have today, and we want to ensure that these
15 communities have the infrastructure investments that
16 they need right now that we're already talking about
17 before this project is approved because we want to
18 make sure that residents are hearing us when it comes
19 to some of their needs.

20 What I'm excited about, the Hutch Metro
21 Center, Montefiore Einstein, Mercy, I'm excited about
22 the planned site of our Bronx STEAM School, Science,
23 Technology, Engineering, Architecture, and Math, and
24 you all know I'm adding a second M, which is for
25 music. Since we are the birthplace of hip-hop, we

2 want to make sure that we are training our young
3 people with career pathways. We're focusing on
4 healthcare, life sciences, research, and we're really
5 building on our young people's talents and skills and
6 giving them the opportunities that they deserve.

7 The capital investments are going to be
8 critical in this moment, and so I'm calling on my
9 delegation and my colleagues to make sure that the
10 communities are not forgotten when it comes to
11 schools, recreation, community centers. We have to
12 make sure that these investments are a part of this
13 conversation.

14 I would be remiss if I did not
15 acknowledge the five public info sessions that we
16 held in partnership with our Council Members, with
17 the Majority Leader, with then-Council Member
18 Marjorie Velázquez, Chair Kevin Riley, Council Member
19 Salamanca, one for each station, and we did two
20 remote. I thank everyone, hundreds of people that
21 came out to testify, both in person as well as all of
22 our host partners. Thank you to Montefiore Einstein.
23 I want to recognize my predecessor, the 13th BP,
24 Ruben Diaz Jr., and his team at Montefiore Einstein,
25 Dr. Philip Ozuah, and everyone who has been a part of

2 this conversation because we see this as a mutually
3 beneficial project that will transform our economic
4 hubs, our residential.

5 I want to also thank the business
6 improvement districts because many people have been a
7 part of these conversations from the beginning.

8 In conclusion, as I wrap up, I want to
9 say thank you again for the opportunity. I'm
10 recommending approval of this proposal anchored in
11 our shared commitment and aspirations to develop our
12 neighborhoods, support our families, and make sure
13 that the Bronx stays as a global destination for all
14 to live and work and raise our families. Again, it's
15 an important historic moment. Let's seize this
16 opportunity. Thank you so much, Chair Kevin Riley,
17 and to all my Council Members. I appreciate the
18 chance to testify this afternoon. Thanks so much.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Madam BP.
20 Council Member Marmorato, do you have any questions?
21 All right. Thank you, BP. Your excused.

22 BOROUGH PRESIDENT GIBSON: Thank you.
23 Thanks, everyone.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next panel I'm
25 going to call up in person is Ken Fisher, Zachary

2 Bernstein, and Brert Buerher. Excuse me if I
3 butchered your name.

4 All right. To the panel, while you set
5 up, we're just going to take a two-minute pause so I
6 can use the restroom real quick. Thank you.

7 Okay. The first panel we're going to hear
8 from consists of Brett Buerher, Zachary Bernstein,
9 and former Council Member Ken Fisher. Nice to see you
10 here today. You may begin.

11 KEN FISHER: Good morning. I was just
12 asking if we should wait for the Majority Leader.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: She said we could
14 start. She should be right here.

15 KEN FISHER: Good morning. My name is Ken
16 Fisher. I represent the owner of 1880 East Tremont
17 Avenue, which is the intersection of East Tremont,
18 Union Port, and White Plains Road. My client acquired
19 the property in 2015. It was a brownfield, and the
20 current zoning doesn't really support any development
21 on the site. The site has been remediated. It's
22 cleared. It's ready for construction, assuming that
23 all of the pieces come together, most importantly,
24 this rezoning. Under the prior Administration, we
25 participated in some of the planning charrettes and

2 subsequently engaged with the Department of City
3 Planning, particularly the Bronx office, who we think
4 they did a great job, and then more recently with
5 Council Member Fariás, the Land Use Staff, and her
6 Staff to talk about the potential for the site. One
7 thing that was clear through all of these, oh, and I
8 should mention that we participated in the Council
9 Member's community forum a few months ago and
10 specifically focused on what I'm about to share with
11 you now. This site can be a sense of place for the
12 neighborhood. We have one small request that we've
13 asked for modification. I've given the Sergeant-at-
14 Arms testimony, we'll submit it for the record, but I
15 think this one graphic tells the whole story. Under
16 the height limit that was established in the proposed
17 zoning, we get basically a solid wall along one side
18 of the property. If we're able to get a modest height
19 increase to 215 feet, then it'll be able to have a
20 better urban design, a better experience for people
21 using the public plaza that we intend to create and,
22 again, advance the sense of place for the
23 neighborhood. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Hold on one
25 second. Can your team briefly discuss the difference

2 between the development potential under the proposed
3 R8X zoning district versus the alternative R8
4 district, and what benefits would R8 zoning provide
5 both your team and, in your opinion, the wider
6 Parkchester community?

7 KEN FISHER: The zoning designations are
8 very similar. The amount of FAR is the same. The
9 principal distinction is that the proposal from City
10 Planning has 175-foot height limit. Whereas if we
11 were to do an R8X, it would be able to go higher. I
12 think it would actually go as high as 230, but we're
13 not seeking that so, whether it's done technically
14 through a modification of the R8X or a different
15 zoning designation with some type of limitation in
16 the text, I would leave to your distinguished Council
17 but, effectively, that's the only difference. It's
18 the height limit.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I'm going
20 to turn it over to the Majority Leader for a
21 question.

22 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Thank you, Chair.
23 Thank you, folks, for being with us here today at the
24 hearing. The existing Parkchester garages provides
25 both everyday utility for many Parkchester residents

2 who rely on it for parking and historical
3 significance, given several unique terracotta
4 sculptures along the façade. If the site were to be
5 redeveloped, what would your plan be for parking, and
6 would you commit to providing parking for the current
7 Parkchester residents?

8 KEN FISHER: Council Member, I think those
9 questions are associated with the Parkchester garage
10 site.

11 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Oh, sorry, guys.
12 Pinnacle. Hello. Sorry, I'm going in number order of
13 pages. Sorry about that, folks. Okay. Chair, sorry.

14 Many of my community have consistently
15 raised the need for senior housing and affordable
16 homeownership. Is your team willing to explore the
17 potential for either senior housing or homeownership
18 options?

19 KEN FISHER: Yes.

20 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, and I know
21 we've stated that before so I appreciate that. Your
22 team has publicly discussed providing space for a
23 potential community center. I know we spoke about
24 this several times, kind of going back and forth on
25 what was square footage space necessarily need, or is

2 that a leasing space? Is your team committed to that
3 use and to working with my team and the greater
4 Parkchester community to find a proper tenant for the
5 space?

6 KEN FISHER: Yes.

7 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: You have
8 discussed providing public open space within the
9 development. Can you briefly describe what such open
10 space could look like, and you and your client, are
11 you folks able to collaborate with the Parkchester
12 community to design any public open space that may be
13 created under the proposal?

14 KEN FISHER: The testimony I submitted,
15 and we'll submit it again electronically for the
16 record, includes some renderings of what the space
17 could be like. As we envision it, it serves two
18 purposes. One is to welcome people who will be using
19 the train station into the community and activate
20 that block. The other is that we heard at your
21 community forum for many of the residents that they
22 would like some variety in retail and more shopping
23 opportunities to be determined so, as we see it, the
24 plaza provides an area for circulation. It breaks up
25 the bulk of the ensemble of buildings, provides some

2 additional shopping and, again, contributes to the
3 sense of place. I just want to note, though, this is
4 uncharted territory for all of us. You all are making
5 a bold commitment to the future of the Parkchester
6 neighborhood. The market is untested, and so our
7 ability to actually be able to finance and build
8 something is going to take some amount of effort.
9 We're open to the possibility of homeownership as
10 part of the restricted income component. Senior
11 housing is more complicated because of the way the
12 buildings would be established, the funding streams,
13 and other things, but we're absolutely open to
14 meeting with HPD to discuss these things and we're
15 also absolutely committed to providing a community
16 space as you discussed in collaboration with your
17 office and the community.

18 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, thank you.

19 We have heard about the high number of jobs that will
20 be created if this rezoning is approved. Do you plan
21 on hiring locally and using union labor for the
22 construction of the development of your site?

23 KEN FISHER: I think for us, both of those
24 are to be determined. The ownership of the property
25 are not developers per se. We have been looking for

2 an appropriate development partner. That was
3 inhibited in some ways by the expiration of 421-A,
4 the certainty of 485-X, and when the zoning is
5 adopted, will allow us to go back into the market to
6 find a developer, but we would certainly communicate
7 to our potential development partners the fact that
8 the question has been raised.

9 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: And in terms of
10 the potential commercial space, how will those retail
11 commercial rents be determined?

12 KEN FISHER: Well, I guess the textbook
13 answer is by the market.

14 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Yeah.

15 KEN FISHER: So it'll depend on what kind
16 of stores retail. Retail is a very confusing sector
17 right now. I asked one developer client what are you
18 going to put in the retail, and his answer was
19 anything you can't get on the Internet so what the
20 needs are in that particular community, I think
21 remains to be seen, but obviously retail has a lot of
22 options these days and they're not necessarily going
23 to pay above what they think the space will support.

24 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Sure. My only
25 concern is that we already see some vacancy rates

1 within the Parkchester campus that has with 12,500
2 units and has about 40,000 people. There are some
3 spaces that just can't keep a restaurant no matter
4 who goes there or can't have a storefront so just
5 want to keep that at top of mind when those
6 determinations are being made, even if the market
7 maybe says something a little different.

9 The final environmental impact statement
10 finds that under the proposed R8X zoning, a small
11 portion of the existing Parkchester apartment complex
12 would witness significant adverse shadow impact from
13 your site. Can you speak to the ways your team would
14 commit to mitigating that impact through the building
15 design?

16 KEN FISHER: It's not something that we've
17 focused on up until this point, but I'll certainly
18 take it back to the project architect who
19 unfortunately couldn't be here today. There may be
20 some ways to mitigate that. I think, I'm not sure
21 which way the shadows, whether there would be a
22 significant difference between the shadows at 175
23 feet and 215 feet. There may be some ways to mitigate
24 it, but it's not something we've studied.

2 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, well, love
3 to talk offline about that as we continue on.

4 My last question, does your team have an
5 estimated timeline for development? Many folks in the
6 Parkchester community have seen this block and lot
7 vacant for a long time so any timeline update?

8 KEN FISHER: It's not going to be the day
9 after the Council approves the, if you do.

10 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Darn.

11 KEN FISHER: We're unfortunately not in a
12 position, other developers in the rezoning area may
13 already have been further advanced with their
14 building permits and construction drawings and the
15 like. We're at the stage where when the rezoning, if
16 the rezoning is approved, we would ramp up. We're
17 already starting to do it. Our search to find an
18 appropriate development partner, finalize the
19 program, have the consultations with you that we
20 discussed, and then move forward with the Department
21 of Buildings process, which as you know, can be
22 rather lengthy. The only thing I can tell you is this
23 property has been sitting there since 2015. They've
24 invested a significant amount of money in cleaning up
25 the brownfield condition, and I get a call, I would

2 say probably once a month, now once a week, from the
3 client saying, when is this going to be approved?
4 They want to move forward with it. This is not a land
5 banking for them. This is a development site.

6 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Okay, great.
7 That's really great to hear. I mean, since 2015
8 sounds about right. Folks would agree in the
9 community that they want to see something finally
10 come through so thank you so much for those
11 responses.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Majority
13 Leader, and I would have to agree. Parkchester is
14 like a second home to me, like I always share with
15 the Majority Leader. I was actually just sending a
16 message to a friend so he could tell his mother that
17 we're actually figuring out what we're going to do
18 with that big lot that has been abandoned for so much
19 years so thank you so much for this.

20 There being no other questions. Okay. Did
21 you guys have to present or? Okay, so you can go
22 ahead.

23 BRETT BUEHRER: My name is Brett Buehrer,
24 representative of the Parkchester Preservation
25 Company, the owner of two garage sites at 1990 and

2040 East Tremont, located along the south side of East Tremont Avenue at the north end of the Parkchester neighborhood. Our company has been an owner in Parkchester over 25 years. The Bronx Metro-North rezoning is a positive step towards achieving several longstanding community and citywide goals, and we thank all the elected officials and agency staff that have been involved in this process. Our sites are occupied by two garages and an office building, both of which are very old and I'd say obsolete in today's environment. These sites are separately owned from the rest of Parkchester residential buildings, which are owned by individuals and entities through a condominium form of ownership. An affiliated entity of our company recently opened Parkchester Gardens, which is a 221-unit low-income affordable housing, senior housing development in the Parkchester neighborhood. We appreciate Majority Leader Fariás' dedication to the needs of the Parkchester residents and are working with her team and her staff and our condominium boards on the needs within the greater Parkchester community though we are here today to talk about parking garage sites. Over the last several years, our team is engaged with

1 various community stakeholders and throughout these
2 conversations, we have heard that there is a need for
3 zoning to unlock greater increases in affordable
4 housing, parking, retail and neighborhood
5 connectivity and street activation along the
6 Parkchester garage sites. At recent community
7 outreach sessions led by the Majority Leader, we
8 heard generally positive feedback from local
9 residents who viewed a scale model of our development
10 and rendering such as these that we've shown here.
11 Parking was the number one issue that was expressed
12 by the residents. These renderings depict varied
13 architecture and a total height of 260 feet in scale
14 versus 175 that's currently within the zoning text.
15 We believe that this height is needed to accommodate
16 the parking needs of Parkchester, the parking needs
17 that will be generated by the new development and the
18 train station as well as creating activation along
19 Tremont Avenue and building a meaningful amount of
20 affordable housing. We intend to continue to work
21 with the Majority Leader and her staff on these
22 issues. Thank you for your time.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

2 ZACHARY BERNSTEIN: Thank you, Chair
3 Riley, Majority Leader Fariás. I'm Zach Bernstein,
4 partner at Fried Frank. I'm land use counsel to
5 Parkchester Preservation Company, the owner of the
6 garage sites. I joined Brett in commending the
7 Majority Leader and her Staff for their engagement
8 with the communities surrounding the City's rezoning
9 area. We support the City's proposals with
10 recommendations to take into account the unique
11 configurations and redevelopment needs of these
12 garage sites. The garage sites are very long and
13 relatively shallow. Within the 175-foot height
14 limitation currently proposed, new development would
15 create very long building walls, obstructing visual
16 and pedestrian access through this site. The limited
17 envelope would not accommodate the parking sought by
18 the community, together with the full housing
19 potential envisioned by the rezoning. The site plans
20 you see in front of us, prepared by Beyer Blinder
21 Belle Architects, thoughtfully mass buildings on
22 these sites that balance a range of goals for the
23 site. On-site parking, including parking for existing
24 residents and expected commuters, transparency and
25 activation along East Tremont Avenue, new pedestrian

2 circulation between the Parkchester community and
3 East Tremont, creating better connectivity to the new
4 Metro-North Station directly across East Tremont from
5 the site. These programs are accommodated in a
6 building form that has a strong presence on the
7 street while stepping back from the street and the
8 heating plant as the building rises. The proposed
9 modification to the building height and the zoning to
10 achieve these goals has received significant support
11 to date from area stakeholders. The Department of
12 City Planning has been supportive of the site plan
13 shown here today and has confirmed that a change to
14 the height limit would be within scope. We again
15 thank the Majority Leader, Chair Riley, and Committee
16 Members for your consideration of modifying the
17 City's proposals to achieve the goals outlined today.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much.

20 Just a few questions then I'm going to turn it over
21 to the Majority Leader. Well, just one question. The
22 existing Parkchester garages provides both everyday
23 utility for many Parkchester residents who rely on it
24 for parking historical significance, given several
25 unique terracotta sculptures along the façade. If

2 this site were to be redeveloped, what would be your
3 plan for parking, and would you commit to providing
4 parking for current Parkchester residents?

5 BRETT BUEHRER: Yes, I'll answer that. You
6 know, we've spent a lot of time talking with the
7 Parkchester community. We are an owner of condominium
8 units within the Parkchester community and are very
9 aware of the needs of the residents that rent from us
10 as well as the residents that own their own units
11 within Parkchester. The current garage that's
12 actively used at Parkchester has 490 licensed spaces.
13 It right now is not at full capacity. We have engaged
14 Philip Habib.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL VIDAL: Can you say that
16 number one more time? I'm sorry.

17 BRETT BUEHRER: 490.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: 490.

19 BRETT BUEHRER: 490. It is not at full
20 capacity currently. We have engaged Philip Habib's
21 office to do a study. I'm expecting that study back
22 this week to look at what the engagement is. We had
23 done an engagement study just prior to COVID and so
24 we wanted to update it with real time data. Our
25 intent is to build replacement parking at the 1990

2 location first for the parking that's currently used
3 at 2040. We do intend to create a mechanism that
4 would give priority preference to current Parkchester
5 residents within that parking garage and, ultimately,
6 I appreciate what I heard today in the prior
7 conversation about the need for parking and how to
8 facilitate that. We're working on how we would
9 capitalize this project because we are developers. We
10 intend to build something here, and how do you
11 capitalize parking in today's environment, and I
12 think that you need public-private partnerships in
13 making that happen in the community.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Do you currently have
15 the number that's occupied in parking? You said 490.

16 BRETT BUEHRER: That's what I'm trying to,
17 we were at about, I would say 75, 80 percent
18 occupancy pre-COVID so I'm just trying to get the
19 updated numbers and I'm happy to share that when we
20 have them.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Majority
22 Leader?

23 BRETT BUEHRER: And the only thing I would
24 say is the plan that we're presenting creates more
25 parking than what currently exists in that location.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay, thank you. Hold
3 up, before I go, so you say your plan currently would
4 not interfere because you're not at max, but does it
5 affect how much parking you will have with this new
6 project being that you're not at max at your other
7 parking garage for parking?

8 BRETT BUEHRER: No, no, the intent would
9 be is that we'd build our new building at 1990, which
10 is closer to the train station. We would build the
11 replacement parking in that before we would ever tear
12 down the active garage that has the 490 spaces. You
13 did have a second component to your question, which
14 was related to the terracotta statuarities. It is a
15 very expensive process to restore and replace the
16 terracotta statues on the buildings. It's greater
17 than a 100,000, 200,000-dollars number when one of
18 those has to be removed. In the process of
19 demolition, we would remove those and we would save
20 those like we have with other ones that have been
21 removed by the condominium associations. In this
22 situation, we would own those rather than the
23 condominiums because they're on our buildings, but we
24 would do the same thing and try and work with the

2 City. The City has reached out in how we might reuse
3 these to be respectful to the history of Parkchester.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay, thank you.

5 Majority Leader.

6 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Thank you. If the
7 rezoning is approved, does your team have an estimate
8 timeline of development, and can you just go over
9 again for the record their timeline of leaving one
10 garage open to move it to the other building?

11 BRETT BUEHRER: We have two development
12 parcels. One is currently occupied by an office
13 building and a vacant garage that hasn't been
14 utilized in 20-plus years because of its structural
15 integrity. Our intent would be, and we've already
16 started the process to create relocation spaces for
17 the existing office uses that are in the garage, and
18 we would intend to do that and make those relocations
19 over the next 18 months. Our intent would then be to
20 tear down the 1990 location and construct our new
21 building on that, which would include parking and
22 housing and retail. We would do that prior to
23 decommissioning the 2040 site so the new replacement
24 parking for the 2040 location would be created in the
25 new building, which would then free up the ability to

1 tear down that parking garage and build more parking
2 and housing on that site. We've had conversations
3 with HPD because we intend to do the first phase of
4 this as 100 percent affordable building. We have put
5 together a base model on that development. It is our
6 understanding that HPD is going to be coming out with
7 new term sheets any day now. We will update our
8 models based on the updated term sheets and then re-
9 engage with HPD for that component of it. We would
10 appreciate any assistance we could get to engage some
11 of the other stakeholders that were here today on how
12 we might finance the garage portion of the
13 development, and we are long-term operators of retail
14 in Parkchester and throughout the country, and we'll
15 work very hard to bring the appropriate retail to the
16 community that could be supported at this site.

18 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Thank you. Just
19 to go over that again, I think there has been some
20 confusion that I think we've all been trying to push
21 back on in the community with the garage itself. So
22 just for layman's terms and to re-clarify, the first
23 phase of development would be in the 100 percent
24 affordable building that will then have what
25 hopefully is, what is the already used spots and

2 hopefully additional spots and commercial space.

3 While that development is happening, the parking lot
4 that is currently there is still going to be open for
5 utilization, right?

6 BRETT BUEHRER: Correct.

7 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: And then once
8 that phase is done, that's when the primary parking
9 garage will then close because we will have all the
10 spots that were already utilized and hopefully, and
11 then some, and then that garage will be turned into
12 hopefully development, correct?

13 BRETT BUEHRER: Correct.

14 MAJORITY LEADER FARÍAS: Okay. Just want
15 to make that clear for the record, for the residents
16 watching. The parking garage will still exist and so
17 will the spots.

18 I was pleased to host multiple community
19 engagement sessions last fall and this spring to
20 inform my community about the Bronx Metro-North
21 rezoning and this site specifically. One of the major
22 discussion points regarding Parkchester Garage's site
23 remains height. Can you speak about the trade-offs
24 between height and different development scenarios
25 you may be pursuing?

1 BRETT BUEHRER: Well, we spent a lot of
2 time analyzing the existing 175 versus what we think
3 brings in a more ideal development program to Tremont
4 Avenue, and in order to incorporate parking, retail,
5 and housing within the existing 175 envelope, the max
6 we could do is about 60,000 square feet less so
7 that's maybe 80 units of affordable housing less, and
8 that would create this massive block where we have
9 complete connectivity along the 765 feet of frontage
10 on Tremont Avenue. The concern that we have under
11 that is it creates what's there currently even
12 higher, right, and it creates this block of wall 765
13 feet long along Tremont Avenue with zero
14 connectivity. We've been in Parkchester for 25 years.
15 This has been a very uninviting area along Tremont
16 Avenue. People don't like walking there at night.
17 It's kind of a scary place to be. And that's even
18 with our police force operating their camera systems
19 right there within the block, and so our intent is to
20 create a development that creates connectivity
21 between Parkchester, creates a good access point
22 across Tremont Avenue to access the train station and
23 creates I would say liveliness and engagement on the
24 street through retail offerings and the connectivity
25

1 of the housing and the parking so we want to create a
2 safe, secure, engaging environment along that portion
3 of Tremont Avenue, and we think the end result is a
4 good plan quality development there will be good for
5 the residents of Parkchester through increased values
6 of their own investment and their condominium units
7 there.
8

9 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: I appreciate that
10 answer. I think for both of the developments that we
11 are looking at for the Parkchester community, what we
12 don't want, and I think what people are worried about
13 is the creation of a separation of, and I think if we
14 are not looking at development that has open space,
15 that breaks up buildings, that creates pathways,
16 which then creates lighting and creates walkable
17 streets, that's how we end up with a distinctive
18 delegation of who's actually being put into what
19 place, and I definitely don't want that for the
20 community so I appreciate that context.

21 The final environmental impact statement
22 finds that under the proposed R8X zoning, a small
23 portion of the existing Parkchester apartment complex
24 would witness significant adverse shadow impact. This
25 concern has been raised by several Parkchester

2 residents as well to my office. Can you speak about
3 ways your team would commit to mitigating that
4 impact, especially in terms of how the building
5 design can respond to the concern?

6 BRETT BUEHRER: Well, I think we have done
7 some shadow studies, and we're happy to share some
8 information based on what we would like to be able to
9 do. I think that an important aspect of the
10 development that we'd like to see is something that
11 creates this step back approach, and so as the
12 building gets taller, it gets narrower. We believe
13 that, one, that creates better access for light and
14 air. I know there's been concern about breezes and
15 the flow of air, and we believe that a more open
16 development that creates these openings for air to
17 pass through will allow for more airflow within
18 Parkchester and in particular the North Ball Field,
19 which is a recreation area that the condominium has
20 there. We believe that that's a more effective way
21 rather than having this massing that doesn't allow
22 really for air and light to pass through to the
23 Parkchester development.

24 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Thank you. How
25 does your team seek to weave this development into

2 the fabric of the existing Parkchester community?
3 What benefits would this development bring to those
4 already living there? We can talk about retail,
5 community amenities you're planning to include, or
6 like the housing and parking being provided.

7 BRETT BUEHRER: I think there's a number
8 of things. One, we believe that this development will
9 bring about improvements along Tremont Avenue and
10 make Tremont Avenue, this area that we've talked
11 about, 765 feet of really dead zone along
12 Parkchester. In renderings that we've shown, we've
13 identified locations for restaurants with outdoor
14 seating that would create areas where people could go
15 and congregate. We've planned for some community
16 facility space. We're open to adjustments in that
17 depending on what the need is, and I think that's
18 driven partly by the community and what the community
19 needs are so we're open to looking at potential uses
20 within Parkchester. We've been a long-term landlord
21 for R.A.I.N. so we've operated a senior center in
22 Parkchester for years. We just built the senior
23 housing in Parkchester so we're committed to the
24 greater community. We've also been a financial
25 supporter of the NORC within Parkchester for, I don't

2 know, 15, 18 years now so we're committed to giving
3 back to the community and participating in the
4 community, recognizing that this development is
5 separate. It's not part of the condominium
6 association. It will be capitalized and constructed
7 under HPD guidelines and we'll have tax credit
8 investors that invest in the development because
9 that's a requirement of capitalizing at that type of
10 a development.

11 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Great. What's
12 your timeline for redeveloping the Parkchester
13 garages? Are there any other approvals you need from
14 the City or from Parkchester Association North or
15 South?

16 BRETT BUEHRER: Well, I think once we have
17 the zoning in place, we know what we are prepared to
18 engage our architect to create actual design
19 documents. We have had initial meetings with HPD.
20 Ultimately, it is driven by HPD giving us funding for
21 the development so we're in a queue just like
22 everybody else at HPD trying to get their development
23 to get its allocation of tax credits, but we are
24 prepared to invest our money on the design process
25 immediately once we know what we're able to design.

2 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Do you have
3 funding available for the development project
4 already?

5 BRETT BUEHRER: We have funding available.
6 We own our land. We've owned it for a long time so we
7 own our land. We have funding allocated in our budget
8 for this investment to pay for pre-development
9 related costs for it. Ultimately, when we go into the
10 development phase, depending on what that
11 capitalization looks like, we're prepared to either
12 put in our dollars or secure the funding necessity to
13 do that so I think really the biggest thing is when
14 can we get in HPD's allocation for us to be able to
15 go forward. That's going to be probably the largest
16 constraint to us.

17 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, and either
18 one of you can answer, but can you further explain
19 the connection, if any, between the new development
20 and the existing condo complex? Would there be any
21 effect to the Parkchester Condos' finances and any
22 existing capital needs?

23 BRETT BUEHRER: Well, I think that there's
24 not necessarily a direct impact as a result of these
25 two developments.

2 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Right. Well,
3 that's what I would like explained. I think there is
4 a larger...

5 BRETT BUEHRER: There is a third
6 development parcel that we're not discussing that the
7 condominium owns. The steam generation plant is
8 within this rezoning.

9 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Sure.

10 BRETT BUEHRER: And it is a potential
11 development parcel that the condominium owns so the
12 condominium ultimately, the plant's 80 years old. We
13 invest a significant amount of money in maintaining
14 it. It runs efficiently, but at the end of the day,
15 the boilers are 80 years old, well-maintained. If we
16 had modern boilers, we'd have to replace them 40
17 years ago, probably, but the reality is that at some
18 point in time, and we've done studies through the
19 associations on how we would upgrade the heating
20 plant for the greater Parkchester community, which
21 serves 12,271 apartments, right, and so at the time
22 that that happens, Parkchester community could have
23 the benefit of the value created on that parcel.

24 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, great. I
25 think sometimes there's a bit of confusion. I know

2 we've had a lot of these discussions around this
3 where people feel as if some of the larger capital
4 needs that we have on the general campus of
5 Parkchester are not necessarily being met, and they
6 cannot comprehend how we can create new development
7 while still having some of the more complicated
8 capital issues that stakeholders and tenants are
9 living with and so, if you can, I just want to make
10 sure for the record that there's like a distinction
11 between what a new application actually means in
12 terms of your operating expenses or what the boards
13 are paying into versus however we can help give that
14 distinction.

15 BRETT BUEHRER: There's really no
16 connectivity. When these associations were formed in
17 the '70s and early '80s, the New York Attorney
18 General approved those offering plans. Units were
19 sold through those offering plans and two different
20 offering plans and, as PPC, we own the unsold units
21 that didn't sell. We operate those as rental units
22 within the community. We pay our common charges just
23 like everybody else. I'm speaking as an owner of
24 condominium units at Parkchester, although I've been
25 on the boards for 25 years, I don't think it's

2 appropriate for me to speak for the board here
3 because I haven't asked permission for that, but I'll
4 speak as an owner of units and in that role. The
5 condominium is always balancing what they can pay
6 through common charges to do capital improvement
7 work. They spend upwards of close to 20-something
8 million dollars a year on capital items every year
9 and that's a reoccurring item. We pay our share of
10 that. We had some meaningful common charge increases
11 a number of years ago because we embarked on an
12 aggressive capital improvement program and that
13 continues. We sponsor separately within our own
14 units, invest when we do a renovation with the new
15 lead laws and all the other things, we put 28,000
16 dollars a unit into upgrading our units with
17 kitchens, baths, and complying with the various
18 regulations within those units, and so we're
19 constantly doing that as well within the units that
20 we individually own. That said, there is no
21 connection between these properties other than the
22 heating plant property. There's no connection between
23 these properties and the associations. There's no
24 legal connection and there's no financial connection.
25 There's no financial obligation for the condominiums

2 to do anything here and the same with us. There are
3 some agreements between the condominium association
4 and the sponsor as it relates to these parcels, but
5 those are access agreements and things, but there's
6 no financial because they serve both. They work in
7 both directions.

8 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Okay, great.
9 Thank you for that.

10 The last question I have just to be sure,
11 will you folks commit to returning back to the
12 Community Board, the Parkchester Association, the
13 Council to inform us on any project updates, engage
14 on final design, community benefits prior to
15 implementation?

16 BRETT BUEHRER: Oh, definitely, and we're
17 active discussions with you.

18 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: I know we talk
19 all the time.

20 BRETT BUEHRER: And we will continue that.

21 MAJORITY LEADER FARIÁS: Awesome. Thank
22 you. Thank you, Chair, for the additional time.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. No
24 additional questions. This panel is excused.

25 KEN FISHER: Thank you.

2 BRETT BUEHRER: Thank you.

3 ZACHARY BERNSTEIN: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next panel I'm
5 going to call is Ruben Diaz Jr., David Karnovsky,
6 Leslie Himmel, Moon Hobum, and Nora Martins.

7 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: Good afternoon.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Former Borough
9 President, you may begin.

10 RUBEN DIAZ, JR.: How are you, Mr.
11 Chairman? Good afternoon. Chairman Riley, my
12 Councilwoman Amanda Fariás, and Council Member
13 Marmorato, and of course, all of the Members of the
14 Committee. My name is Ruben Diaz, Jr. I'm a Senior
15 Vice President of Strategic Initiatives for
16 Montefiore Medical Center, and I'm here today in
17 support of the Bronx Metro-North Area Study. With
18 nearly 8 million patient interactions a year and over
19 35,000 employees, Montefiore Health System is the
20 largest healthcare network in the Bronx, Westchester,
21 and the Hudson Valley. Moreover, Montefiore continues
22 to be a prominent leader in biomedical research and,
23 as such, we have an opportunity to expand that where
24 it enhances better healthcare and economic
25 opportunities for the neighborhood. We have a prime

1 opportunity to build a, what I call a wellness
2 village, a life sciences and biotech hub that will be
3 a model and example for the nation. To achieve this,
4 we must ask ourselves, how do we create an area that
5 is conducive to attracting the best and brightest to
6 the neighborhood and our campus? Our vision is to
7 have a new hospital environment where technology
8 meets hospitality for our patients and employees. We
9 envision an environment that promotes both health and
10 healing. In addition, through a 1-billion-dollar
11 donation from Dr. Ruth Gottesman, the largest gift
12 made to any medical school in the country, except the
13 other day we heard an announcement from Bloomberg,
14 Einstein Medical School will provide free tuition in
15 perpetuity, which will attract students from a
16 diverse set of backgrounds and experiences,
17 regardless of socioeconomic status. In turn, it is
18 critical for Montefiore that the public investment in
19 Morris Park be inclusive, thoughtful, and
20 sustainable. This includes improvements to the public
21 realm, the construction of affordable housing, retail
22 and office space and recreational opportunities for
23 both residents and visitors. This will be a transit
24 hub in a much-needed public transportation desert.
25

1 The proposed station will create easy access between
2 Connecticut, Westchester, Manhattan, opening economic
3 opportunities for the region at large with jobs,
4 housing, office space and economic development for
5 the entire area. We at Montefiore strongly support
6 upzoning the adjacent area to the new Morris Park
7 Metro-North Station. These proposed zoning changes
8 are intended to spur growth and services throughout
9 mixed-use development near the new station. In short
10 term, Montefiore's proposed new high acuity hospital
11 pavilion is expected to require an expansion of the
12 existing large-scale facility and development related
13 land use actions. It has recently come to our
14 attention that the C4-3 zoning district proposed by
15 the Morris Park Metro-North Station area plan creates
16 an inconsistency with the zoning resolutions
17 definition of large scale. Strategically, we look to
18 provide, we look at the East Campus to provide a new
19 high acuity specialized tower. These facilities will
20 work in concert to best capitalize on our
21 partnerships with researchers and practitioners, but
22 we will not stop there. We want to create a pipeline
23 for our Bronx students and residents through a STEAM
24 center working with the DOE and the Borough
25

2 President, she mentioned this earlier, with future
3 generations so that tomorrow we can benefit from
4 research facilities and life sciences on our campus.

5 In conclusion, we encourage the development of a
6 sustainable community that benefits all Bronx
7 residents. We believe that the Metro-North Station
8 plan coupled with our new facilities will achieve
9 this goal so, on behalf of our patients, faculty,
10 medical students, and neighbors who have provided
11 significant input into this project's vision, we
12 encourage you to vote in favor of the Morris Park
13 Metro-North plan area plan and, for that, we thank
14 you. I will submit a more detailed testimony as we
15 have done to the Planning Commission and, if you have
16 any questions, I'm here to answer them as best I can.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Nora
18 Martins.

19 NORA MARTINS: Good afternoon, Chair Riley
20 and Council Member Marmorato. My name is Nora Martins
21 from Ackerman LLP, Land Use Council to Baker
22 Development LLC. I'm giving this testimony today in
23 support on behalf of Arjan Jushi of Baker Development
24 LLC. Baker Development LLC is the owner of several
25 lots assembled into an approximately 1.7-acre

development site within the area of the proposed Bronx Metro-North Station area study. Our property is in the Van Nest neighborhood on the block bounded by White Plains Road, Baker Avenue, and the railroad tracks, just a five-minute walk from the proposed Parkchester Van Nest Metro-North Station. We strongly support City Planning's Bronx Metro-North Station proposal. If this proposal is approved, we plan to redevelop our property, the majority of which has been historically vacant, with a mixed-use development that includes new housing, including at least 25 to 30 percent permanently affordable under the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Program and potentially home ownership opportunities. We also plan to include local commercial and/or community facility uses, such as a supermarket along White Plains Road, which, as you know, is a very wide street at 100 feet wide and has been lacking that kind of local services historically in this area. We will also provide on-site accessory parking, even if it is not ultimately required by the zoning, as well as green open space, both of which we know are important to the surrounding community. While we're still early in the design process, our strategy,

consistent with the proposed R6-1 and R6-A zoning districts, is to locate taller portions of the development along White Plains Road with lower, less dense development situated along Baker Avenue and Garfield Street. This would allow for a transition from White Plains Road and the more built-up areas surrounding the new Metro-North Station to the lower density one- to three-family homes that make up the Van Nest neighborhood to the north and west. We look forward to continued engagement with Council Member Marmorato, local organizations and City agencies to ensure that our development provides value to and is respectful of the surrounding community. This includes working with the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance as we proceed with our pre-development planning and with DOT to address concerns about traffic patterns, on-street parking, and the current width of Baker Avenue. We believe this initiative holds tremendous potential to provide much needed services, critically needed new housing, and economic opportunity within transit-oriented developments such as ours. We respectfully request that you approve the proposed Bronx Metro-North areas study. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I'm sorry
3 for mispronouncing your last name.

4 NORA MARTINS: Oh, no problem.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, we'll hear from
6 Leslie Himmel.

7 LESLIE HIMMEL: Good afternoon. I am
8 Leslie Himmel, and thank you for having me here. I'm
9 principal of Himmel and Meringoff Properties. We are
10 owners of a nearly eight-acre site at 1601 Bronxdale
11 that's located within the City's proposed Metro-North
12 rezoning. This site is currently occupied by an
13 active warehouse. I'm here along with my colleagues
14 and team members who have been working on this
15 project since 2019, David Karnovsky of Fried Frank
16 Zoning Council and Hobum Moon from FX Collaborative.
17 The proposed rezoning represents a once in a
18 generation opportunity for the Bronx and for the City
19 and for our site. This is an ideal location for the
20 development given the proximity to a brand-new
21 commuter train station that will deliver a direct
22 connection to Penn Station and the capacity to
23 deliver almost a third of the total potential housing
24 units possible within the rezoning's boundaries, and
25 you've heard today an awful lot about the Metro-North

1 station. When we purchased this property back in
2 2019, we were in the umbrella rezoning of City
3 Planning and were delighted to be a part of such an
4 important infrastructure project, being able to
5 deliver a fast-track train from the Bronx to Penn
6 Station. We now have an opportunity to transform this
7 very old industrial site into potentially 2,300 units
8 of housing, including nearly 700 affordable housing
9 units built under the MIH Option 2, as well as a
10 pedestrian connection to the new Metro-North station
11 that will cut people's time to walk to the station
12 from 12 minutes to four minutes or less, one acre of
13 publicly accessible programmed open space, and a
14 brand-new public school as well as a brand-new
15 supermarket for the neighborhood. We also have a 90-
16 foot-wide new city boulevard. Our firm has been long-
17 term owners of properties, and we own things for over
18 40 years. We want to work with the City and embrace
19 the City, the neighborhood, and the City Council to
20 deliver on this desperately needed housing along with
21 all the other community benefits and amenities I've
22 outlined above, which come at a significant cost.
23 That Metro-North pedestrian connection, the creation
24 of the new 90-foot City boulevard, and the public
25

2 open spaces are estimated to cost nearly 40 million
3 dollars. In order to deliver these community benefits
4 and make the mixed-use development of our site
5 viable, we need the height and density proposed by
6 the City. We'd like to help the city deliver on this
7 once-in-a-generation opportunity. We thank you for
8 your time, attention, consideration, and support.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I'm just
10 going to ask a few questions then I'm going to turn
11 it over to Council Member Marmorato.

12 I'm going to start with Baker Avenue. The
13 zoning proposed for your site will allow up to 12
14 stories. Does your team plan to develop to that
15 height and how would that fit into a Van Nest
16 neighborhood of largely three- to four-story
17 residential buildings?

18 NORA MARTINS: Yes, so the maximum would
19 be permitted up to 12 stories, although that is the
20 maximum height. The base height, I believe, is only
21 65 feet, so six stories, so that is a significant
22 setback before you can go up to the 12 stories. Right
23 now, we're still massing potential development at the
24 site. I believe we will only reach the 12-story
25 height on White Plains Road. The highest the

2 buildings would be on the lower density streets,
3 which is Baker Avenue and Garfield, adjacent to those
4 residential communities would be nine stories so
5 there would be a step down, and we're looking at,
6 after getting feedback from the community and from
7 the Councilwoman, how we can further reduce the
8 height and the impact of any height on those
9 communities.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Reducing the height,
11 does that limit the units that you're able to have,
12 and do you know how many units that were limited to?

13 NORA MARTINS: Yes, typically. A
14 significant reduction would not be likely because it
15 would reduce the number of units, but we're looking
16 at how we can set the building back farther or
17 articulate the buildings to make sure the impact is
18 limited and, as I said in my testimony, really
19 concentrating the bulk of the development on White
20 Plains Road.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay, thank you. Now
22 moving over to Montefiore. Morris Park has been
23 advertised throughout this process as a growing life
24 science hub, and you talked about the STEAM Center
25 that's coming. Really excited about that. Can you

1 speak to how this rezoning would help Montefiore
2 facilitate this growth, and can you speak of how any
3 concrete plans your team has for the future of
4 Montefiore in the greater Morris Park neighborhood?

5 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: Yeah, let me try the
6 latter before the former. Unlike what you've heard
7 from the other presenters here today and previously,
8 we do not have a concrete actual plan, but we do have
9 a vision. Dr. Ozuah has a vision. The vision, number
10 one, is to create a high-acuity surgery tower. High-
11 acuity meaning that when we want people with
12 specialty surgeries, organ transplant, brain surgery,
13 so on and so forth. We also have a vision, he has a
14 vision to increase under this plan because the high-
15 acuity tower is a different application that we would
16 submit after this application, a smaller one but,
17 under this footprint, we would love to expand and
18 create a one-stop shop with our cancer center. The
19 way that the Metro-North Station would help out is in
20 a number of ways. It would create an opportunity for
21 us to invite patients from beyond the Bronx, from
22 beyond the immediate area. We can expand the region
23 from Connecticut, from Westchester, from Manhattan.
24 Not only patients, we could also have doctors,
25

2 physicians come to us and work in our facilities and
3 then, if you heard my testimony, we had a huge
4 announcement not so long ago. One of our board
5 members, Dr. Ruth Gottesman, donated a billion
6 dollars so that the students at Albert Einstein
7 College of Medicine will have free tuition in
8 perpetuity. That means that we will be inviting
9 people from all over the nation, students, regardless
10 of their socioeconomic status. With that, their
11 families will come and visit so what this would do is
12 it would provide for us the ability to expand and to
13 expand the pool of patients, physicians, scientists,
14 and students that would come. We really, really can
15 become the national paradigm for wellness, for life
16 sciences, and for healthcare. We could be the Silicon
17 Valley to healthcare for this region.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. In addition
19 to that, with this Metro-North Station, has the City
20 made any commitments to Montefiore's infrastructure
21 issues or any capital upgrades to Montefiore?

22 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: Not at this moment. At
23 this moment, we're just hoping that as part of
24 passing this application, we can deal with a minor
25 inconsistency that I mentioned earlier and, of

2 course, we're working with the City so that moving
3 forward as we put in an application for a smaller
4 portion of the footprint so that we can build our
5 high acuity tower, but we would welcome the City and
6 the state and the federal government to help with us
7 as well as the overall infrastructure of the area.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Which is very
9 important because there are machines at the facility
10 that could use upgrades, and we really want to make
11 sure we're providing the best facility for our
12 residents so thank you so much.

13 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: Absolutely.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: And over to 1601, what
15 is the total cost of the pedestrian connection to the
16 new Metro-North Station?

17 DAVID KARNOVSKY: We estimate the total
18 cost at about 15 million dollars. There are three
19 components to this, just so you understand how it
20 will work. The first is that the platform of the new
21 train station has to be designed to accommodate the
22 footings for the future pedestrian overpass, and we
23 have funded that work already and it's being designed
24 by the MTA. Then the MTA will build a platform with
25 the capacity to install those footings included in

2 the base design, and that we estimate is about 2.8
3 million dollars. Then finally, the overpass itself
4 would be constructed at a later date and that would
5 be the remainder so that's the way the process would
6 work, and we are engaged with the MTA. I think it was
7 said earlier by the MTA that they weren't sure if
8 we're engaged. We are, in fact, engaged with the MTA.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: How many units of
10 housing can 1601 Bronxdale Avenue provide, and what
11 ratio is that of all the potential housing units that
12 MN rezoning can deliver?

13 DAVID KARNOVSKY: We believe that the
14 total number of units is somewhere in the vicinity of
15 2,300. That is about a third of the total number of
16 units that City Planning has estimated can be
17 provided under the area wide rezoning.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: 1601 Bronxdale is an
19 industrial area now. Would you consider continuing it
20 as industrial use if the heights were cut to 15
21 stories equivalent with the proposed zoning for
22 Parkchester? Would the land still make sense for
23 residential mixed-use development?

24 LESLIE HIMMEL: We would really hope to
25 make this a residential, a badly needed residential

2 expansion as per our meetings with CPC and the City
3 Administration since 2019 but, if it was cut so
4 dramatically, we couldn't afford to do the 40, 50
5 million dollars of amenities and raise the money to
6 build this large project so we would have no choice.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: All right. Council
8 Member Marmorato.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: In the original
10 draft scope of work, DCP proposed an R6-1 zoning
11 district for this large site, which is considerably
12 less density than the current proposal R7-3 district.
13 Can you please describe both districts briefly and
14 explain why your team and DCP decided on a R7-3 and
15 why it was warranted?

16 DAVID KARNOVSKY: You're right that in the
17 scope, the R6-1 was described as the district. It had
18 a FAR of 3.9. The R7-3 has a base FAR of 6. The
19 reason for this change is really that in between the
20 initial scoping and being here today, it was decided
21 that this site would have this large, 90-foot-wide
22 boulevard running through it that it occupies about
23 100,000 square feet of lot area. A street does not
24 generate floor area so by mapping the street, there's
25 a significant loss of floor area. To adjust the

2 amount of floor area to reach what was originally
3 proposed, there was a change in the district
4 designation, which has a higher FAR, and that's the
5 reason for the difference.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And this
7 doesn't adjust height of the building with the change
8 in zoning. It's just an FAR change?

9 DAVID KARNOVSKY: The City Planning then
10 went on to develop the R7-3 rules under the special
11 district, and those height rules, I assume would have
12 been the same for the R6-1, but we never saw them
13 because it didn't get to that point with the R6-1.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, and can
15 you please describe, I don't know, 1601 currently has
16 operational businesses on site. What is the plan for
17 those businesses, and do you have expected timeline
18 to start the redevelopment in the rezoning?

19 LESLIE HIMMEL: Parts Authority has been
20 in the property for quite a while. They have a lease
21 that goes for approximately another seven years. They
22 have multiple other locations and, if we are able to
23 help the housing stock by developing on this
24 property, they will have other options in plenty of
25 time. We'll help them find that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, and when
3 we met in the past, you've showed renderings of
4 buildings up to 25 stories. Can you please explain
5 how these buildings are possible giving in the max
6 for an R7-3 district is 185 feet.

7 DAVID KARNOVSKY: The rezoning does two
8 things. It includes a base height of 185 feet, and
9 then it establishes the ability to increase the
10 height in connection with the provision of the open
11 spaces, the construction of the street, and other
12 elements of the program so, in other words, there's a
13 bonus attached to providing the open space in the
14 street in particular and, with that, you can reach
15 higher heights as shown on the plan that we showed
16 you yesterday.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Can you
18 explain how your team thinks development of this
19 scale would fit within the existing Van Nest and
20 Morris Park community?

21 HOBUM MOON: This development is from the
22 street perspective, you will see eight 13-story
23 buildings and we have setbacks after eight 13 stories
24 and the towers are further stepping back so, from the
25

2 eye level perspective, it will not look like a 25-
3 story like a wall look like buildings.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Would you think
5 an 11-story building is appropriate right at the
6 front of the property when across the street is only
7 like a two-story building.

8 HOBUM MOON: We expect that all the
9 properties along Bronx Avenue will be also up-zoned
10 to the 13 to 15 stories, and we matched our height to
11 that new development, and we also studied across East
12 Tremont Avenue currently have 18 stories.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Does your
14 team provide a plan for any open space and, if so,
15 what type of open space will it actually have on
16 playgrounds, courts, and places for kids to use?

17 DAVID KARNOVSKY: The zoning requires as a
18 condition of the bonus I described that there'd be
19 five open spaces. I think City Planning mentioned
20 two, but they're actually five. The two that were
21 mentioned by City Planning are the large spaces at
22 the entrance at Bronxdale Avenue and the large space
23 towards the end of the site, which adjoins the future
24 pedestrian connection, but there are also three other
25 spaces which are more neighborhood-like small pocket

2 parks so altogether they're five. The zoning
3 specifies the standards for the provision of those
4 spaces in terms of seating and planting, etc. Now you
5 have pointed out that there is no provision for play
6 space, and we are looking at that in order to mix
7 play space with the type of passive recreation that
8 the zoning originally contemplated.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. How can
10 neighbors get involved in helping to ensure these
11 vital open spaces fit the needs of our community?
12 Will you have outreach?

13 DAVID KARNOVSKY: I think similar to the
14 way others have described their long-term plans for
15 sites that aren't immediately available for
16 development, we see a process of engagement along the
17 way with respect to elements such as the open space
18 so, for example, before providing City Planning with
19 designs for the open space for purposes of
20 eligibility for the bonus, we would expect to share
21 them with the community to get feedback, to make
22 adjustments, and to engage in a dynamic process.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Is your team
24 committed to building a school on this site and,
25

2 specifically, is your team committed to building a K-
3 8 school on this site?

4 LESLIE HIMMEL: The answer to that is yes.
5 We've been meeting with the School Construction
6 Authority for years already. Originally, I think it
7 was just K-6 or K-5, and they've have recently asked
8 us to expand it, and we know desperately that the
9 schools are needed and we're happy to accommodate
10 that. We think it's a good use and a very important
11 item for the community.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. I'm a mom
13 in the neighborhood so I've been to plenty of drops-
14 offs at different schools. Would you consider moving
15 the school to the front of the property instead of
16 having it all the way in the back? I know the purpose
17 of the school is for the residents within the
18 buildings, but a lot of outside residents will come.
19 Would you consider putting it in the front of the
20 property?

21 LESLIE HIMMEL: We can look at it.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, because
23 it becomes very crazy with cars and parents and buses
24 and drop-offs.

2 Many parts of the district are
3 essentially food deserts. Would your team consider
4 finding a large grocery tenant to be a part of this
5 development and, if so, what brands have you actually
6 reached out to already?

7 LESLIE HIMMEL: Definitely on our radar.
8 We know there's not enough good and large
9 supermarkets. We haven't reached out to anybody yet
10 because if this is a five or six-year plan, you can't
11 sign a lease today for that but, certainly, some of
12 the larger groups that can do well and service fresh
13 produce and good foods, we will be talking to.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you. What
15 community benefits could my constituents expect from
16 this development? Are you going to provide any
17 daycare programs, after-school programs within the
18 school? Are you going to help fund these things? I
19 understand green space is important, and I appreciate
20 that, but there are other things that communities
21 need.

22 LESLIE HIMMEL: I think as we get more
23 involved with the School Administration and have the
24 plans approved, we can start talking to the school as
25 to providing some after-school programming.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. A great
3 need in the Bronx is homeownership. Would your team
4 be willing to provide condos or co-ops as a part of
5 your development project, and would you be willing to
6 go as high as 50 percent homeownership?

7 LESLIE HIMMEL: I think we would
8 definitely include some homeownership, and I haven't
9 really studied the numbers to be able to comment to
10 that.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Would you also
12 consider placing senior housing on your property?

13 LESLIE HIMMEL: Not opposed to that. I'm
14 getting up there.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: While we
16 recognize that the development site may not come for
17 many years, if the rezoning is approved, my community
18 deserves to be informed about along the way. How does
19 your team commit to providing updates and engaging
20 the community during this design?

21 DAVID KARNOVSKY: I think that we can look
22 towards the creation of some kind of a group, call it
23 a task force, call it a committee. There are many
24 names that can attach to it, but the idea being to
25 create a structure around that where community

2 members are involved on an ongoing basis as we
3 develop designs, as we develop open space designs and
4 so forth and so on. It's going to be a long road and
5 a long process but, for that reason, I think we need
6 some kind of a structure around that and it can be
7 done.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay. Now, in
9 the beginning, when Council Member Riley asked you a
10 question, you had mentioned that if you don't go
11 above 15 stories that you're basically not going to
12 proceed with the project?

13 LESLIE HIMMEL: I think the scale of the
14 public amenities, the cost of the road, the cost of
15 the attachment for the Metro-North Station of 50
16 million dollars, can't be amortized over a very small
17 number of units and, therefore, it becomes
18 economically not viable.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And then what
20 would you do at that point? Sell the property or
21 maintain it?

22 LESLIE HIMMEL: Well, keep it as a
23 warehouse. You know, it's an old warehouse and that's
24 fine. We think, since this is a generational
25 opportunity, I mean, the City has been so slow in

2 building new train stops that with eight acres, it
3 would really be a shame not to take advantage and to
4 help the future development so 5, 10, 20, 30 years
5 from now, it looks better.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: So you're
7 basically saying that you invested 50 million dollars
8 of your own money in order to help create the train
9 station, the train stop?

10 LESLIE HIMMEL: Well, we went through
11 that, I thought, before in details. The road is very
12 expensive. The train stop platform and attachment is
13 also very expensive.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Aren't these
15 things that the MTA and the City should be funding?

16 LESLIE HIMMEL: Please go speak to them
17 for us. Yes, thank you.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: So this is
19 money that you put forward on your own time?

20 DAVID KARNOVSKY: The MTA has taken the
21 position that we need to fund it. We need to maintain
22 it.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And they
24 thought the same for Morris Park as well?

2 DAVID KARNOVSKY: I don't know the answer
3 for Morris Park.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And the other
5 train stations? You should find out because that
6 would be very helpful.

7 All right. Next, I'd like to speak to
8 you, Nora, if possible. Besides the rezoning, when
9 you had mentioned, what was the height of the front
10 building?

11 NORA MARTINS: Not fully designed yet, but
12 the maximum could be as 125 feet.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: So that's
14 about, you said nine stories. How many?

15 NORA MARTINS: 12 stories.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: 12 for... (CROSS-
17 TALK)

18 NORA MARTINS: On White Plains, right.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: On Baker? There
20 were two buildings, right?

21 NORA MARTINS: Yes, yes, sorry. I'm
22 talking about the White Plains Road building. You're
23 asking about the Baker Avenue building?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yes.

2 NORA MARTINS: Yes, that would be nine
3 stories.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Nine stories,
5 okay. All right. Besides the rezoning, what other
6 actions does your team still need to pursue to
7 facilitate your proposed development? Would there be
8 any displacement as a part of your plan? I know there
9 were three properties in the front along Baker Avenue
10 that have not been acquired. Do you have plans of
11 still acquiring them?

12 NORA MARTINS: Yes. So, I mean, ideally,
13 we would acquire those properties. However, the
14 development could move forward without them.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: You can?

16 NORA MARTINS: Yes, because the
17 development already is considering separate buildings
18 being developed. We would move forward with the White
19 Plains Road development first, as an initial phase,
20 looking to acquire the other properties, but we are
21 not intending to push out anybody that wants to
22 remain so we can build around.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Of course. Do
24 you have any plans for replacement for the
25 individuals that are currently renting in the houses

2 that are there? Do you have any, like, relocation
3 opportunities for them?

4 NORA MARTINS: Yes, we're happy to discuss
5 that for sure.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, and would
7 you guys consider making that front property
8 homeownership?

9 NORA MARTINS: Yes, that's something that
10 the owner will investigate and see if that is
11 feasible.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Great, thank
13 you. Parking is, again, one of my concerns at this
14 site, especially given that DCP is proposing no
15 parking minimums. Would parking still be a part of
16 your project?

17 NORA MARTINS: Yes, absolutely.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And what number
19 are we looking at?

20 NORA MARTINS: It depends, again, on
21 whether we have the full block or not and whether the
22 parking is attended or self-parking, but it would
23 likely be around 200 parking spaces.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, and would
3 you be willing to create a community space for the
4 residents of Van Nest?

5 NORA MARTINS: Yes, something else that we
6 are looking into with the owner is whether we can
7 make, the way the building is currently designed, we
8 have a lot of open space and we're trying to create
9 some community space in the building that would
10 connect to the open space and that could be offered
11 to the community for use.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, great,
13 thank you. What about your green spaces for the
14 project?

15 NORA MARTINS: Yes, because the site is
16 large, we are able to provide a large open space
17 along the railroad tracks at the rear of the
18 development site. We're looking to have that be a
19 combination of passive and active open space with
20 some children's play equipment.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Sprinklers?

22 NORA MARTINS: Yes, and some sprinklers.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, good, I
24 like that. All right, thank you.

2 Former Borough President, so I am excited
3 about Montefiore building in our community.

4 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: So am I.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: I feel like our
6 hospitals are so stressed out and we really need the
7 infrastructure, especially with the other proposed
8 development coming here within our District so I look
9 forward to what you guys build and if I could help in
10 any step of the way, I'd be more than happy to but,
11 again...

12 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: We appreciate it.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you. I
14 just, being at the Montefiore Medical Park by the
15 green glass building, I know they are overwhelmed
16 with parking and I know that you'd like to build all
17 along, I think it's the C4-4 area. Would you consider
18 incorporating parking within your structure that you
19 build or if maybe, because I know there are
20 presently, I think, two lots over there. I don't know
21 if Montefiore owns them or not, but if you're going
22 to build and develop, would you consider
23 incorporating some kind of parking?

24 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: So the short answer is
25 yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay.

3 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: One of the big lots on
4 Eastchester Road is owned by Jacobi. You and I have
5 spoken about this, and the community is always asking
6 about parking. We have a leasing agreement with
7 Jacobi for a 99-year lease. We do not intend to build
8 anything immediately in the immediate future there so
9 that will remain, but what I would also say is that
10 we will, and whatever piece of property that we own,
11 where we will build, we want to accommodate the
12 faculty, the patients when it comes to parking. I
13 don't know about providing parking for the general
14 population. I'm talking more for like the Jarrett
15 Avenue section kind of up behind the glass building.

16 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: By where Blondel is?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yes, where
18 you'd like to possibly, the cancer center?

19 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: We would like to do the
20 cancer center.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yes.

22 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: So the answer is yes, and
23 we are looking to put it in writing for you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you.

25 Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I know

2 dealing with patients for a very long time, I know
3 that when people are not feeling well, they just want
4 to get in their car, go home...

5 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: Absolutely.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: And come back
7 and make their life as easy as possible so thank you.
8 I appreciate that.

9 All right. Thank you, Chair Riley.

10 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Council
11 Member.

12 There being no more questions, this panel
13 is excused.

14 RUBEN DIAZ JR.: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The next panel I'm
16 going to call up is Sharlene Jackson-Mendez, Aniya
17 A., and Jack Connors.

18 Okay, we will begin with Ms. Sharlene
19 Jackson-Mendez.

20 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Okay, good
21 afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of the City Council.
22 My name is Sharlene Jackson-Mendez. I'm a homeowner
23 that resides in the Van Nest section of the Bronx. I
24 am here speaking to you as an individual. However, I
25 am very active and devoted to my community. I serve

1 as the Vice President of the Van Nest Neighborhood
2 Alliance, and I'm also a member of CEBCA, the
3 Coalition of East Bronx Community Associations. I am
4 deeply concerned about the Bronx Metro-North upzoning
5 because it will entail the addition of 7,500 new
6 units of housing and more than 20,000 new residents
7 to our small community with no provision for
8 additional police, schools, or infrastructure. We are
9 daily made unsafe in our communities because of the
10 lack of available police officers. This massive
11 amount of upzoning does not include the thousands of
12 additional units of housing that will accompany the
13 City of Yes Housing Opportunity Program. We are told
14 that there will be no substantial impact on our
15 environment, but this assertion strains the
16 boundaries of credulity. As law-abiding, taxpaying
17 citizens, we are made to suffer because of the ill-
18 advised, top-down central planning driven by
19 progressive elites that does not represent the wishes
20 of ordinary, hardworking people that form the
21 backbone of the city. Sadly, the Metropolitan Transit
22 Authority has not been a good neighbor to the people
23 of Van Nest. We suffer daily because of the neglect
24 of MTA's properties in Van Nest. These properties are
25

2 filthy with graffiti, urine, dog waste, and garbage
3 strewn about. I urge the City Council to please
4 consider the people that you represent first. Stop
5 implementing the agenda of wealthy donors and think
6 about the impact of your policies on the people.

7 Examine the areas of which I speak and perhaps you
8 will develop greater insight and compassion for the
9 many in my community who are filled with trepidation.

10 I am tired of losing wonderful neighbors and, as a
11 consequence, the city that I love because of gross
12 mismanagement on the part of our local government.

13 Thank you for your consideration.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Aniya A.?

15 ANIYA A.: Okay, good afternoon. Well, I
16 just wanted to say I'm extremely appalled about what
17 happened here today. I'm not sure exactly what the
18 main agenda was, but a lot of people came unprepared
19 and it seems like it's been really unfortunate that I
20 just sat through like three hours of this. Anyway, my
21 name is Anaya A. Let's go back. Finally, I'm going to
22 just speak a little bit of truth because I've been
23 hiding a lot of truth about myself for so long
24 because it's like who's going to listen to this
25 little Black girl, Haitian-American from Brooklyn? A

2 lot of times people like myself are discriminated
3 against. We're immigrants, we're this, we're that.
4 We're bullied. We got a lot of problems that they
5 think we're bringing to the city, but what happens
6 when a little Black girl has a dream, her parents are
7 already successful, her parents already have
8 millions. They're already hiding money each way
9 because the government is after them. Her grandmother
10 is a multi-millionaire Haitian woman that travels the
11 world. Her grandfather is the colonel of the Haitian
12 army. They dismantle the army. They dismantle our
13 land. They force us to move to this country for the
14 American dream. Ultimately for what? For this? Every
15 time you try to step ahead, you can't. So the bottom
16 line is this, right? I've been watching and listening
17 for a long time and trying to be real low key because
18 my situation is I can't afford a damn thing in New
19 York. Why is that? Why do I have to hide my money
20 from the government so that you guys can give me
21 affordable housing on a voucher? Why is it that I go
22 back to my parents' property and live pretty nice
23 with all the cars but because of this rare medical
24 condition that the government and the doctors talk
25 about, I can't have nothing? So let me hide my coins

2 real quick. Let me hide the bag because at the end of
3 the day, obviously the system is made to break us,
4 but there's one thing that people must understand and
5 I want everybody that's in here to look at me, first
6 of all, and see that I'm not really one of those
7 people that you think, right? I'm wearing a baseball
8 cap. I'm out here just chilling because I'm trying to
9 learn. But bottom line, when you look in this room,
10 how many of us do you see represented here?
11 Furthermore, I look at the press. My background is
12 psychology, public relations, media, communications.
13 But obviously you took away DEI. You took away
14 affirmative action. You took away our voice so that
15 we can't be in this room, but I applaud you all for
16 sitting here and speaking truth to power, especially
17 you, ma'am. I don't even know who you are. God bless
18 you. You ask the right questions and it opens the
19 eyes of people like me and, yes, I'm under the
20 representation of Reverend Al Sharpton, a leader, a
21 force to be reckoned with, but I'm just a Haitian
22 American just trying to make it in this city. Thank
23 you for having this meeting today.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Jack Connors.

JACK CONNORS: Good afternoon. I'm Jack Connors, Research and Communications Associate at the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to the MTA, PCAC. Thank you for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. The Penn Access Project will bring reliable regional rail service to many communities in the East Bronx for the first time in a century, allowing hundreds of thousands of working New Yorkers to get to and from work, cultural amenities and recreation without the expense and inconvenience that comes with car ownership or the excessive delays that plague our bus system, in part due to the Mayor's failure to implement the Streets Plan. As we broaden access to transit in an area that has traditionally been bypassed, we must ensure that those who stand to benefit the most from the project have the opportunity to live near the transit they depend on. This plan is a major step in the right direction towards that goal. By allowing gentle density around the Parkchester/Van Nest and Morris Park, this plan will produce nearly 7,500 units of housing, including some 1,900 permanently affordable units, generating more than 10,000 jobs in the process. Expanding Fair Fares is also critical so that low-income New Yorkers

2 can afford the fare. We commend Speaker Adams and
3 Mayor Adams for raising the eligibility threshold to
4 145 percent of the federal poverty level in the most
5 recent city budget, but continue to call for
6 expansion to 200 percent of the federal poverty level
7 and to the commuter railroads, which better reflects
8 the high cost of living in New York City, as well as
9 peer cities with similar programs. Expanding commuter
10 rail discounts like CityTicket will also ensure that
11 more people can afford to access faster travel on
12 Metro-North. Affordable housing and affordable
13 transit are a recipe for a more equitable New York.
14 On behalf of MTA Riders, we urge the Council to
15 implement this plan. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
17 Member, do you have any questions?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yes, I do. I'd
19 like to ask Dr. Jackson a question.

20 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Oh, my goodness,
21 that's embarrassing.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: So how long
23 have you been in the community?

24 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Well, actually,
25 I have been in the Parkchester/Van Nest community

2 since 1989, when I moved from the West Coast to New
3 York, and we became homeowners in Van Nest in 2010 so
4 that's 14 years, and that's a total of, oh, my God,
5 35 years now that I've been in the East Bronx.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, so as
7 long as you've been here, what are the changes that
8 you've seen?

9 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Oh, my goodness.
10 Well, at one point we worked very hard in Van Nest.
11 We are the little village that could, my beautiful
12 Van Nest, and we are located just north of
13 Parkchester. We were seeing significant improvement
14 for a long time, and it was a pleasure. We worked
15 really hard to secure our neighborhood and to make it
16 cleaner and more attractive. We really push for
17 homeownership. That's a big thing in our area. And we
18 also really work hard for our children so under the
19 leadership of Bernadette Ferrara and others that were
20 founders of the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance, we
21 were able to get our park upgraded, and that was a
22 really big deal but, in recent years, we have seen
23 the neighborhood is really falling apart. I know that
24 you very graciously participated in a cleanup along
25 the MTA wall, which extends on Morris Park Avenue

2 from Fillmore to about Van Buren Street, and you
3 actually, on a freezing January day in honor of
4 Martin Luther King, got out there with us and we
5 cleaned up, and this is why, unfortunately, I have to
6 say that the MTA hasn't been a good neighbor, and we
7 just have a lot of issues with trusting the MTA
8 because that area is really filthy, and one of the
9 things that we lost, we used to have the Doe Fund, so
10 they would come in and clean along that MTA wall on a
11 regular basis, but we don't have that anymore. And
12 then there has been, we have many, many people that,
13 transient people, that are kind of in our community
14 and don't have ties to the community, and so it's
15 very disturbing as a person that uses the subway on a
16 daily basis. It's just very upsetting to walk through
17 your community, which was once a quiet, lovely
18 neighborhood, and now you see all sorts of people
19 that make you feel unsafe, smoking marijuana on top
20 of you, loud music most nights so that you can't
21 sleep, and we can't get much police assistance
22 because of their limited number.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Yes. And what
24 kind of community benefits agreement would you like
25 to see come out of this, such as like a space for the

2 Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance to acquire where they
3 can meet every month or provide community events?
4 Would that something you would be?

5 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: What we would
6 like to see, number one, is responsible development.
7 As you were hearing the representative of the
8 developer for White Plains Road speaking, she said,
9 we will add a 12-foot building on White Plains Road
10 because that's a busier thoroughfare, but there are
11 no 12-foot-high buildings on White Plains Road, and
12 what has to be said is, like I said, we are a little
13 village. All of our streets are dead-end streets so
14 if you put thousands of people there, those people
15 press into our tiny little dead-end streets and,
16 without additional policing, additional sanitation,
17 additional infrastructure. My home was built in 1895,
18 and that's by no ways unique. You can't tell me that
19 we don't require upgrades in sanitation and on our
20 streets. There's just no way. The water drainage
21 alone so we would really like responsible
22 development. And then if you're going to do that,
23 please, please give us a K-8 school because we're
24 very short on that. And then also, the City must,
25 must find a way to provide us with more policing. It

2 is not fair. We just went through the 4th of July
3 weekend where we could get no help, and it's not fair
4 that you bring thousands of people. You know that
5 that will increase the need for police and
6 firefighters, and to just do that and expect the
7 people of my community that for the most part are
8 hardworking, taxpaying, law-abiding, you have
9 families that have been there like 80 years or so,
10 and to just leave us in that situation with no
11 additional support, that is to me a government
12 malpractice.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Thank you so
14 much.

15 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I have a follow up
17 question for that.

18 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So likewise, I
20 actually was born in 1987 so I was I lived in the
21 Northeast Bronx for 37 years, I'll be 37 this year,
22 so I've also seen the change within the Bronx. You
23 mentioned the change in sanitation, increased
24 policing, but you also need to recognize that there's
25 a change in population in the Bronx as well. My

2 mother bought her house in 1991. We currently still
3 own it. You bought your home a little later, but you
4 moved in the District in 1989. The population at that
5 time was not where it is today.

6 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: And currently right
8 now neighborhoods that historically haven't been able
9 to produce housing should figure out how can we
10 creatively produce housing without disrupting too
11 much of the makeup within the communities. I think
12 when we're having these conversations, a lot of the
13 times there's no way of negotiating. It's either no,
14 we're not even going to accept this because there was
15 another project, well not necessarily in your area,
16 but in the northeastern Bronx that wasn't as high up
17 and members in that community were still saying that
18 they didn't want the buildings to come over there so
19 I think we have to come together where we can
20 respectfully acknowledge. I have three kids. We still
21 live in the three-family household with my mother,
22 but we would love to move somewhere in the District
23 at that time, and there's other members, peers that
24 have as well, and I'm pretty sure you have residents
25 on your block, young people that you've seen grow up

2 and now they want to raise families so I guess my
3 question to you is, how can we as a northeast Bronx
4 moving forward produce housing without, I guess
5 historically denying housing for any reason. I know
6 this one is typically the main issue is height. It is
7 really high. I'm not going to lie. This is really
8 high. We're trying to negotiate this now, but how can
9 we increase housing in the northeast Bronx? We want
10 homeownership, but we still need housing. We need
11 senior housing. We need veteran housing. How can we
12 do this in northeast Bronx when we have communities
13 really pushing back on any form of development?

14 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Well, I think
15 our community is very aware, I think, of the lack of
16 housing and, of course, we want to do our part, but
17 it just has to be done. I would never say no increase
18 in housing and, yes, there is a change in the
19 population from when I first moved into the northeast
20 Bronx and from even when I moved into Van Nest but,
21 for me, as an effective government, you need to have
22 short-term and long-term solutions. I heard a lot
23 about a whole wellness area, which was proposed by
24 Ruben Diaz, Sr., and I am totally in support of
25 something like that, but there must, must be a

2 commitment to quality education. A part of why our
3 population is changing is because our population is
4 increasingly illiterate. When is somebody going to
5 say what's going on in our schools? Why can't our
6 children read? If we want to stabilize our
7 communities, we have to make sure we are creating
8 citizens that are capable of living independently and
9 living well. You know that very few people in our
10 communities even vote so you have to have a short-
11 term solution and increase housing but in reasonable
12 ways. It is not our job as taxpayers to make sure
13 that developers profit.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So I don't believe
15 housing is a short-term goal. I think housing is a
16 long-term goal...

17 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: It's both.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: And I do believe today
19 we have been advocating for investments in our
20 schools, parks, libraries, police stations,
21 firehouses. I think the Council has been stating that
22 alongside with this project and this is a
23 conversation we should have moving forward, but I
24 think this is for the Northeast Bronx. We really need
25 to come together and figure out how we can produce

2 more housing together comprehensively without
3 disrupting too much of the makeup, but we also have
4 to understand there is a change. This is not earlier
5 where a lot of members in the community did purchase
6 their households, but we don't want to push anyone
7 out of the community, and when you say that you're
8 losing neighbors, we don't want you to lose
9 neighbors. We want to keep everyone within the
10 community so we do need people to be more civically
11 engaged, and I even appreciate you coming out and
12 testifying here today because it looks like you're
13 probably the only resident from the Northeast Bronx
14 that lives there that physically came here today, and
15 we really appreciate your testimony.

16 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Chair Riley, I'm
17 sorry, and then I'm going to be quiet. Thank you so
18 much for your professionalism, and I think you make
19 our community very proud in the way that you conduct
20 yourself, and the goal is to lift everyone up so the
21 strengths that our community has, take those
22 strengths and build on that and give those
23 opportunities to more people. I think that's a
24 beautiful thing about the East Bronx, and we want
25 that wellness center to extend from Eastchester Road

2 all the way through to East 180th and into the Bronx
3 Zoo.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: So thank you so much.

5 SHARLENE JACKSON-MENDEZ: Thank you, sir.

6 ANIYA A.: May I just add one more thing,
7 please?

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: No, we can't. I'm
9 sorry.

10 ANIYA A.: Oh, I'm sorry. Okay, I was
11 going to talk about the YMCA. It's so beautiful, too.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: But thank you.

13 If there's no more questions, this panel
14 is excused. Thank you so much.

15 Next, oh, we do have other residents from
16 here. Michael's here. Sorry, Mike, we have Michael
17 Kaess here, Bashek Grimes, and another resident,
18 Robert Press.

19 I'm sorry. Maybe I missed Bashek. Yeah,
20 Bashek Grimes. Come up. I will start with you,
21 Bashek.

22 BASHEK GRIMES: Hi, everyone. Thank you
23 for having this meeting here. Thank you to all the
24 Council Members and all the Staff. I'm currently a

2 Department of Education special education teacher. I
3 taught in the Bronx. So I have a...

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: One second. Mike, I'm
5 going to need you to remove your camera from... Thank
6 you so much.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Sorry. Go ahead,
8 Bashek. You can start the clock over.

9 BASHEK GRIMES: I have a vested interest
10 in my testimony today because I have plenty of
11 students who live inside the areas that's going to be
12 redeveloped, and I just ask that, I know that several
13 Council Members inquired about the schools. I request
14 that we have at least three to four new schools
15 inside of the rezoned areas, and I also ask that we
16 have a District 75 school for students with severe or
17 moderate severe disabilities and also mental health
18 centers to help some of the new residents in case
19 they may need mental health services. I know that it
20 was mentioned that out of the four stations, all of
21 them will be accessible to people with disabilities.
22 I ask that the housing also, out of the 7,500 units,
23 some of them be allocated and made for people with
24 disabilities and mobility issues. I also ask that
25 some of the housing also be allocated towards

2 teachers so that they have easier time educating the
3 population. I know teacher housing is a prevalent
4 issue in a lot of State Legislators, but I suggest
5 that we start allocating housing towards our teachers
6 so that they can have an easier time to teach the
7 students in the community. Also, I'll ask that
8 there'll be at least four STEM centers or STEAM
9 centers developed as well so that the youth can have
10 access to science, technology, engineering and
11 mathematics training so that they can be better
12 equipped to proceed in the future. Being that these
13 areas are going to be rezoned and it's going to have
14 a higher density if approved, I ask that those who
15 profit also help the community long-term education
16 options as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Bashek.

18 Michael.

19 MICHAEL KAESS: Hi, my name is Michael
20 Kaess, and I'm a resident in Morris Park. Thank you
21 for the opportunity to testify today. Three weeks
22 ago, I learned that a good friend of mine moved away
23 from Morris Park and out of the Bronx because they
24 couldn't find their own place. They weren't eager to
25 leave the neighborhood they grew up in, but this is a

1 choice they were forced to make because of a lack of
2 options, and it is the consequence of ill-conceived
3 planning choices made 20 years ago when we were still
4 kids, which cut down on new housing options in the
5 East Bronx but, today, with the Bronx Metro-North
6 Neighborhood Plan and with the City of Yes, we have a
7 chance to make the right choice so that in the next
8 20 years, when my kids look for their own place, they
9 can stay in the neighborhood they grew up in. After
10 six years of public engagement, the Bronx Metro-North
11 Neighborhood Plan already represents a thoughtful
12 compromise, and the estimated 7,500 homes must be our
13 floor. The Bronx Metro-North project is a multi-
14 billion-dollar transportation investment in our
15 community, and any modification which reduces the
16 overall density of the plan could squander a once-in-
17 a-lifetime opportunity. Morris Park is a major and
18 growing job center, but the neighborhood is already
19 out of reach for people who work there today. During
20 Speaker Adams' 2024 State of the City program, we saw
21 the story of Dr. Luisa Aguilar, a third-year Jacobi
22 resident who has to commute home to Queens after 12-
23 hour shifts because he couldn't find housing in our
24 community. Council Member Marmorato frequently

2 reminds us that she bought her home in Morris Park
3 because of the Metro-North, so I urge Marmorato not
4 to shut the door behind her but rather to open the
5 door for the thousands of families who deserve the
6 same opportunity to live in our community and use the
7 station. I urge the City Council to pass this plan
8 without any height or density reductions and with all
9 of its provisions, including the elimination of the
10 residential parking mandate. We can make the
11 investments to make it work. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Robert.

13 ROBERT PRESS: Yes, I moved here.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Robert, you have to
15 push the button.

16 ROBERT PRESS: Okay, I moved here to
17 Morris Park five years ago from Riverdale and, in
18 2018, when public scoping meetings were called by
19 Metro-North, the public was asked what we'd like to
20 see at the new stations. It was all four at first, at
21 the meetings, then it went into individual stations.
22 We were told a plaza would be built at each station
23 and asked what we wanted. We wanted a quality
24 restaurant like a Denny's, not a fast-food
25 restaurant. We wanted other quality stores, and even

1 a Haagen-Dazs ice cream store. We said we would like
2 to see some parking and a bus stop to drop off
3 passengers at the stations. There was no mention of
4 any housing. Housing came into the picture when Eric
5 Adams became Mayor in 2022. First, there was 6,000
6 units, which people thought would be divided between
7 the four stations. Then it was only at the Morris
8 Park and Van Nest/Parkchester stations. Then with the
9 City of Yes housing component, it became 7,500 units,
10 of which 7,100 units will be in Bronx Community Board
11 11 or the 49th Precinct. At last week's crime stats,
12 while Mayor Adams said overall crime was down for six
13 months in a row, as a reporter, I was able to bring
14 out the crime stats for the 49th Precinct, which I
15 said were up 35 percent the past two years and did
16 not go down in any one of the seven major categories,
17 which was echoed by Chief Lipetri when asked by the
18 Mayor. I told the Mayor that with other new
19 construction, over 9,000 units of new housing,
20 bringing over 20,000 new people is too much for
21 Community Board 11 and the 49th Precinct to absorb,
22 as I'm telling you today. As I said, I lived in
23 Riverdale on the west side by the Hudson line of the
24 Metro-North, and I live about the same distance from
25

1 where I now live to this proposed new Morris Park
2 station but, in Riverdale, I could park my car by the
3 station for free or take a Jitney bus to it, which
4 none of which are proposed for any east side station.
5 That means that the Metro-North, while it is nice, it
6 is no use to me or many of my other residents in my
7 area because we can't get to it. If I lived in
8 Woodlawn, the Morris Park station would be of use
9 because the BX34 bus that starts in Woodlawn travels
10 right to the station. I hope you reduce this
11 rezoning, which is too large and Community Board 11
12 was not told exactly what was happening. City
13 Planning needs to return to Community Board 11 to
14 inform the community of exactly what this rezoning
15 is.
16

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
18 Member Marmorato has questions.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: I would like to
20 thank you for putting the D75 school on my radar. I
21 will definitely actually advocate and fight for that
22 because there will be a need with the increase of
23 people coming to the community. You know, we're
24 talking about regular schools, K-8, but we also have
25

2 a demographic of students that are going to need
3 special education so thank you for that.

4 And, Mr. Press, I just wanted to ask you
5 when you took the Jitney from Riverdale to the Metro-
6 North station, who paid for that?

7 ROBERT PRESS: I didn't take the Jitney. I
8 was able to park my...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: But there is a
10 Jitney... (CROSS-TALK)

11 ROBERT PRESS: There was, yes.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: But who
13 operates and pays for it? Is it privately run or is
14 it through the City?

15 ROBERT PRESS: I couldn't tell you because
16 I didn't use it. It was, I believe, part of the fare
17 to the Metro-North. I couldn't tell you. Like I said,
18 I found parking right by the station any time I
19 needed it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: Okay, all
21 right. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you for that
23 question, Council Member Marmorato.

24 There being no questions, this panel is
25 excused. Thank you for coming and testifying today.

2 The first online panel that we're going
3 to call is Bernadette Ferrera, Brandon Mohammed and
4 Cathy Cebek.

5 Once again, the first online panel we are
6 calling is Bernadette Ferrera, Brandon Mohammed and
7 Cathy Cebek.

8 We will start first with Bernadette
9 Ferrera.

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Ms. Ferrera, if you
12 could hear me, please unmute.

13 BERNADETTE FERRERA: Hello.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes.

15 BERNADETTE FERRERA: Sorry about that.
16 I've been unmuted for so long.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You may begin.

18 BERNADETTE FERRERA: Thank you. Good
19 afternoon, Committee Chair Riley and Council Members
20 for this public hearing. My name is Bernadette
21 Ferrera. I'm the President of the Van Nest
22 Neighborhood Alliance, a member of CEBCA and a
23 lifelong East Bronx resident living in the
24 neighborhood of Van Nest for over six decades. One of
25 the oldest neighborhoods in the East Bronx, dating

1 back to 1893 when the Morris Park Racetrack began in
2 1889. I want to thank also my colleague Sharlene
3 Jackson, who is the Vice President of Van Nest
4 Neighborhood Alliance, for actually being very, very
5 specific about many of the issues that were and
6 currently we are dealing with. Thank you. Everyone is
7 in agreement that the connectivity of the four train
8 stations will bring economic growth and jobs, and I
9 state for the record, we are not against housing. We
10 are in need of affordable housing. Both communities
11 of Van Nest and Morris Park desire growth by need,
12 but upgrades in the infrastructure must be provided
13 and sustainable before any housing development
14 occurs. In a few short years, I am here today to
15 speak on behalf of protecting my communities of Van
16 Nest and Morris Park. I've attached to this testimony
17 the Van Nest Neighborhood Alliance document that was
18 submitted to City Planning, the Bronx Borough
19 President, and Council Member Marmorato. I am begging
20 the City Council Members to please read it and take
21 special note of the DEIS visuals that show the
22 existing streets and then the proposed developments.
23 If this was your neighborhood and this...

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.

3 Thank you.

4 BERNADETTE FERRERA: Okay.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You can wrap it up,
6 Ms. Ferrera.

7 BERNADETTE FERRERA: Okay. I do have this
8 in written testimony. The one thing I would just like
9 to note is that one of the things that was taken from
10 Van Nest that we would like to add back is a post
11 office. We do not have a post office. It was taken in
12 2011. I will put all this in my written testimony.
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. You can
15 submit your testimony.

16 The next person that we're going to call
17 is Brandon Mohammed. Brandon, if you can hear me,
18 please unmute and you may begin.

19 BRANDON MOHAMMED: Hello. Thank you for
20 the time. First off, I want to thank everyone that's
21 involved over here, especially local Councilmen and
22 women, Councilwoman Marmorato, Councilman Salamanca,
23 of course, Councilman Riley, and of course, my local
24 Councilwoman and Majority Leader Farías. Due to lack
25 of time, I'll just do a brief intro. My name's

2 Brandon Mohammed. I'm a managing director of a
3 locally based non-profit, Alia Ltd, and I'm also a
4 principal of MBAS Inc. I'm a local resident in
5 Northeast Bronx, specifically on Gleason Avenue for
6 30-plus years. I still live close by on the corner of
7 the mosque and the church. That's for all you locals.
8 Let's speak about a few points. Council Member
9 Marmorato made a number of valid points about
10 quality-of-life standard issues with the design. I'm
11 a dissenter for the design, for the plan, but only
12 minimal dissent. I assume it's probably going to go
13 through so I don't want to say too much bad about it,
14 and I would consider myself a YIMBY and our non-
15 profit is also specifically not NIMBYs. I also
16 support Council Member Marmorato's point about
17 segmentation of her representative neighborhoods. But
18 I'm here to talk about that libraries and parks are
19 wonderful, but the Bronx also has well-intentioned
20 ideas for these institutions, but a lack of quality
21 and follow through. I wanted to mention the value of
22 third spaces and define creativity and concessions
23 for business owners, operators of set spaces, less
24 franchise restaurants for the development sites, more
25 stable locally owned businesses that hire locally.

2 Retail leases should be subsidized to allow for
3 maintaining commercial unit frontage and potentially
4 facilitating for the additional creation of BIDs,
5 and...

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.
7 Thank you.

8 BRANDON MOHAMMED: Okay.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You can...

10 BRANDON MOHAMMED: (INAUDIBLE) another 10
11 seconds to wrap up?

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, you can wrap up.

13 BRANDON MOHAMMED: Okay. Thank you. So
14 nuance in business tenant policy. Infrastructure
15 improvements are a must. Local job consideration for
16 industrial business (INAUDIBLE). Councilman
17 Salamanca, building height issues, and Farías
18 mentioned building height issues, diminished quality-
19 of-life standards, building amenities being created
20 without privately owned public spaces, lack of
21 qualitative outreach for the DCP events, further
22 substantiated by minimal diversity of thought and
23 design and more thoughtful local and M/WBE standards
24 for hiring with transparency, similar to the success
25 in the JFK redevelopment project. And, finally, one

2 of the local constituents had mentioned that literacy
3 and educational standards and vocational educational
4 standards. That's also a must for our communities. We
5 need people to be trained for these jobs. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we
7 have Cathy Cebek.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

9 CATHY CEBEK: Hello. Good afternoon. Good
10 afternoon, Chair and Council Members. I was going to
11 talk about infrastructure, flooding and all that, but
12 you all addressed that quite nicely and represented
13 your constituents well. I urge you not to say yes
14 until you get concrete commitments on that, but what
15 I really wanted to know, I live on City Island.
16 There's people in Pelham Bay. We would like to use
17 the Metro-North station, and there's an area that I
18 wanted to point out that I did numerous times at MTA
19 meetings and most meetings they said that will come
20 later, parking, and all the Council people seemed
21 interested in having parking. There's an area that
22 it's a ramp that went into Co-op City that went to
23 the (INAUDIBLE) that they closed. Alongside that was
24 a road that went to a old horse stable that was there
25 decades ago, and I guess it was run by the Parks

2 Department and they must have leased it to the horse
3 stable. That might be an area that you can make some
4 sort of deal with New York City Park to make that
5 area parking because people from City Island would
6 love to use Metro-North. People from Pelham Bay and
7 some of the people in that area, I don't know what
8 it's called, Pelham Gardens over there and a place to
9 park because we do drive here in the Northeast so I
10 just wanted to let you know about that area and maybe
11 you can investigate it with Parks and maybe you could
12 have a private city enterprise with parking there.
13 Thank you for the opportunity but please include us.
14 Don't forget about us in your MTA plan. We'd like to
15 use it. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
17 Member, do you have any questions for this panel?

18 All right. This panel is excused.

19 The next panel I'm going to call up
20 consists of Austin Celestin, Diana Finch, Jim Wright
21 and Kevin Daloia.

22 First, I'm going to call up Austin
23 Celestin to begin.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

2 AUSTIN CELESTIN: Hi, good afternoon. My
3 name is Austin Celestin. I am a graduate urban
4 planning student at NYU Wagner. I'm also a member of
5 Open New York. This plan embodies transit-oriented
6 development which is probably the three favorite
7 words of everyone in the urban planning sphere. It
8 embodies what green development looks like and
9 climate conscious development looks like. The arrival
10 of new Metro-North stations in an area of the Bronx
11 that's a huge transit desert is a gigantic
12 opportunity for economic and residential development,
13 and the 7,500 units of housing is something that
14 should be encouraged and, as Michael said before me,
15 should be the floor. I would caution against concerns
16 for parking. Obviously, it must be acknowledged that
17 this part of the Bronx, the Southeast Bronx and the
18 East Bronx in general has higher car ownership rates
19 than the rest of the city at large, but research does
20 indicate that splurging on parking and adding more
21 lanes time and time again does not help to
22 accommodate for increased congestion. In fact, it
23 causes the exact opposite. It can worsen congestion
24 and worsen parking issues and encourages people to
25 drive through induced demands, and the parking

2 mandates that we're trying to get rid of in City of
3 Yes is also found to make housing more expensive
4 which would undermine the very valid concerns about
5 affordability rates. What is a valid concern is that
6 there's not robust connections to the Metro-North
7 stations so calls for a commitment to a Hudson
8 railway type solution like in Riverdale or shuttles
9 to the Metro-North stations from various areas in the
10 Bronx is very necessary along with calls for
11 increased bus service or new bus routes. I know the
12 redesign is just over two years old, but it doesn't
13 help to just revisit that and introduce a new bus
14 service but this serves not just a model of what we
15 can do at more Metro-North stations in the region but
16 also things that we can expand to the state level as
17 well. I mean, Governor Hochul last year advocated for
18 transit-oriented development and this is a good
19 practice of that, building around new Metro-North
20 stations, building around transit is something that
21 we should be doing..

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time is expired.

23 Thank you.

24 AUSTIN CELESTIN: Just vote yes. Thank
25 you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll
3 hear from Kevin Deloia. Kevin, you may begin.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

5 KEVIN DALOIA: Yeah, I just want to make
6 sure you can hear me.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

8 KEVIN DALOIA: Hey, thanks. Hey, my name
9 is Kevin Daloia. I live in the East Bronx Community
10 Board 10. I'm in Community Board 11 all the time. I
11 consider it the East Bronx. There's not much more
12 that I can say today that hasn't been said by either,
13 however anybody feels about the project itself. Some
14 of the negative stuff we've heard and some of the
15 positive stuff we've heard, they fall into the same
16 category as each other. It just depends on how you
17 read it. At the end of the day, I am for the project
18 and want to state that I am for the Metro-North
19 stations being built. I am for the additional housing
20 that it would bring and the businesses that it would
21 bring and the infrastructure, meaning what would
22 happen in front of the local areas. Although I would
23 like to see things like anybody else that saw here,
24 the loading areas to have a drop-off so cars can keep
25 moving, maybe some street furniture to make it look

2 aesthetic and some open space in the areas so there's
3 not much more that I can add than the Borough
4 President did and that the former Borough President
5 did as well as the nice notes on both sides. I don't
6 think that we should focus the housing issue and or
7 the MTA's drop-off areas to lack of parking. Parking
8 would be a private issue, not something that the City
9 and/or the MTA would deal with. And one last note,
10 when the MTA first started having their public
11 hearings, which I've been a part of for the last six
12 or seven years, drawing bike lanes on their maps, it
13 was really about the MTA and the 100 feet within the
14 train track zone, and it wasn't for a year or so when
15 the City Planning had their hearings, that word of
16 what else these stations may need and/or include,
17 which would be the housing, the building around it..

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired,
19 thank you.

20 KEVIN DALOIA: No problem, thanks. You
21 really want to give people a little bit of a warning,
22 maybe 10 seconds. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Kevin.
24 Next, Diana Finch.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

2 DIANA FINCH: Hi, my name's Diana Finch.
3 I'm a resident of Community Board 11 for over 30
4 years and a Board Member of my local neighborhood
5 association in the Northwest quadrant of the
6 District. I'm in favor of the Metro-North rezoning
7 because it can bring much needed affordable housing
8 to the area and will revitalize underused areas. The
9 largest and most significant being East Tremont from
10 White Plains Road to Castle Hill Avenue. I was
11 introduced to this stretch of a major East Bronx
12 thoroughfare in spring 2019 when my newly elected
13 Congressperson, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, organized
14 an Earth Day cleanup along East Tremont. For hours,
15 we walked this deserted and extremely pedestrian
16 unfriendly roadway filling bags and bags of trash,
17 everything from disintegrated bits of plastic to
18 heavy abandoned car parts. To see it re-imagined as a
19 thriving commercial and residential transportation
20 nexus is wonderful. I'm glad my Community Board voted
21 in favor. However, they only did so with conditions,
22 ones I hope the Council pays close attention to. I
23 wish the Board had appreciated that instead of
24 demanding to cap everything at R6 out of dislike of
25 tall buildings, it's best to designate some large

2 lots as R7 or R8 because the greater height requires
3 setbacks, amenities, public space, green space, even
4 parks, particularly at East Tremont and Bronxdale
5 where currently there are none. I do agree with the
6 Board's and residents' concerns about two spots where
7 new taller buildings might too closely impinge on
8 single and two-family homes and narrow streets, at
9 the East End at Tenbrook and Seminole and Morris Park
10 at the West, the C8 and R6 development by Baker
11 Street, both mentioned by Council Member Marmorato.
12 Overall, I'm very much in favor and thank the
13 Subcommittee for the opportunity to speak on this
14 much needed revitalizing plan. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we
16 hear from Jim Wright.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

18 JIM WRIGHT: Good afternoon. My name is
19 Jim Wright, a transportation architect and urban
20 designer speaking on behalf of the American Institute
21 of Architects, New York. AI in New York strongly
22 supports the goals and provisions of the zoning
23 proposal which links local city and regional land use
24 and mobility goals through transit-oriented
25 development. The fine-grain zoning changes will

2 create opportunities for higher density mixed-use
3 residential, commercial, and retail development at
4 Parkchester/Van Nest and strengthen the regional
5 medical and research hub at Morris Park with direct
6 access to regional public transit by providing access
7 to jobs and housing along the underutilized Amtrak
8 right-of-way with its mostly manufacturing industrial
9 uses will direct development in a way that protects
10 the character of the existing neighborhoods while
11 allowing for growth around the transit stations.

12 While separate from the City of Yes for Housing
13 Opportunities Zoning Proposal, this neighborhood plan
14 shares several of its goals. Increased residential
15 density closest to transit access, Mandatory
16 Inclusionary Housing requirements, and elimination of
17 parking mandates for new housing developments. These
18 measures will create more affordable, healthier, and
19 sustainable communities. We recognize the robust
20 outreach and engagement that the City and MTA have
21 undertaken with local communities over many years,
22 which was validated by a favorable vote by two of the
23 three local Community Boards with jurisdiction as
24 well as from the Bronx Borough Board and Bronx
25 Borough President. We urge local Council Members,

2 DCP, and other City agencies to continue this
3 community outreach. AIA New York further urges that
4 DCP and other City agencies work together to leverage
5 the full potential of this rezoning by making public
6 investments in critical infrastructure, including
7 open space, streetscape improvements, schools,
8 libraries, basic services like power, sewer, water
9 and public safety by accommodating sustainable growth
10 and connecting our residents to job opportunities,
11 services and recreations locally and beyond...

12 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Your time has expired.
13 Thank you.

14 JIM WRIGHT: Can I just finish this?

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, you can wrap it
16 up.

17 JIM WRIGHT: The coordinated land use
18 transportation planning approach of the Bronx Metro-
19 North Plan serves as a model for thoughtful urban
20 planning throughout the city. Thanks for letting me
21 speak.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council
23 Member, do you have any questions for this panel?

24 There being no questions for this panel,
25 this panel is excused.

2 The last panel that we'll be calling up
3 is Logan Phares and Mary Pearson. We'll begin with
4 Mary Pearson.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Ms. Pearson, are you
7 there? Ms. Pearson, can you unmute?

8 Okay, we'll come back to Ms. Pearson.

9 We could begin with Logan Phares. Logan.

10 MARY PEARSON: You hear me?

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Oh, yes. We hear you,
12 Ms. Pearson. Go ahead.

13 MARY PEARSON: You heard that?

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes. Yes, go ahead.

15 MARY PEARSON: Hi.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

17 MARY PEARSON: Oh, boy.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: We can hear you, Ms.
19 Pearson.

20 MARY PEARSON: Hello.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

22 Okay, she's having technical difficulties so we could
23 move to Logan Phares.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

2 LOGAN PHARES: Thank you, Chair Riley and
3 Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to
4 testify in favor of the proposed Bronx Metro-North
5 rezoning. My name is Logan Phares, and I serve as the
6 Political Director of Open New York. Open New York is
7 an independent, grassroots, pro-housing non-profit.
8 We have 12 chapters across the state and more than
9 600 volunteer members. New York faces a severe
10 housing shortage. In February, the New York City
11 Housing and Vacancy Survey revealed that the rental
12 vacancy rate had fallen to 1.4 percent, the lowest
13 point since 1968. This means that we're experiencing
14 the tightest housing market in decades. New Yorkers
15 are feeling these pressures. Evictions have
16 increased, asking rents for unregulated housing have
17 skyrocketed, and newly issued building permits have
18 plummeted. In Bronx Community Districts 9, 10, and
19 11, nearly 55 percent of current residents are rent-
20 burdened, while nearly 30 percent are severely rent-
21 burdened. Without a significant increase in the
22 housing supply in this and other areas, the housing
23 crisis for these residents will not end. We cannot
24 fix the city's housing crisis without building more
25 homes, and every neighborhood must do its part,

2 especially neighborhoods that are benefiting from
3 billions of dollars in new transit investments. The
4 City has repeatedly called on suburban communities to
5 allow transit-oriented development adjacent to Metro-
6 North and Long Island Railroad stations. We must also
7 do so within our own boundaries. These proposals will
8 bring exciting new residential and commercial
9 developments to these neighborhoods as we have seen
10 happen in cities and states across the country that
11 have implemented transit-oriented development. We are
12 pleased to see that community feedback from the
13 scoping process is taken into consideration, and the
14 current plan will now include more affordable housing
15 than originally proposed. As is, the plan will create
16 7,500 much-needed new homes and 10,000 new jobs near
17 transit. We encourage the Council to pass the current
18 proposal without cuts to the density, and to maintain
19 the elimination of residential parking mandates for
20 the new special district. Thank you for the
21 opportunity to speak today.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Lastly,
23 we'll hear from Mary Pearson.

24 MARY PEARSON: Thank you for your time
25 again, everybody. I'm addressing the Co-op City

1 station access problem. A north side of the tracks,
2 Metro-North station entrance on Erskine Place,
3 reachable only by traveling through Co-op City
4 section five, is planned. Access from the south side
5 of the tracks, though possible and vital, is not
6 planned. Fuller station access would greatly benefit
7 section five, all of Co-op City, and our Manhattan-
8 bound neighbors. All it requires is funding. Much has
9 changed since I put together a video called All
10 Aboard that shows how the destroyed westbound Pelham
11 Parkway entrance ramp to I-95 North, ramp C, could
12 have been incorporated into the plan to facilitate
13 full access to the south side of the station. Full
14 south side of the station access is no longer
15 possible. However, partial access by vehicle and foot
16 remains possible. A new pathway along the destroyed
17 ramp C route leads close to the recently blocked off
18 path to the railroad tracks. It appears to be, but
19 not wide enough for buses, wide enough to facilitate
20 entry exit for vehicles via a cul-de-sac type
21 turnaround. It opens a short distance from the path
22 to the tracks and therefore continuing on to the
23 railroad tracks. However, a newly planted field of
24 trees separates that opening from the road to the
25

2 tracks. I urge Council Members Riley and Marmorato to
3 fight for the needed additional access point and the
4 additional staircase elevator array to get to the
5 station from the south side of the tracks. Thank you
6 very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, Ms.

8 Pearson.

9 There being no questions for this panel,
10 this panel is excused.

11 If there are any more members of the
12 public who wish to testify regarding the Bronx-Metro-
13 North rezoning and text amendment proposal remotely
14 or here in person, please see one of the Sergeant-at-
15 Arms or press the raise hand button now, and we will
16 identify you. We will stand at ease for a couple of
17 seconds.

18 There being no other members of the
19 public who wish to testify on the Pre-Considered LUs
20 for ULURP number C 240015 ZMX and N 240016 ZRX
21 relating to the Bronx-Metro-North rezoning and text
22 amendment proposal, the public hearing is now closed
23 and the items are laid over.

24 As I mentioned at the start of this
25 hearing, a separate public hearing will be held later

2 this month regarding the street mapping action
3 related to this proposal at which the public will
4 have the opportunity to testify.

5 That concludes today's business. I would
6 like to thank the members of the public, my
7 Colleagues, especially Council Member Marmorato who
8 stayed to the end with me, Subcommittee Counsel, Land
9 Use and other Council Staff and the Sergeant-at-Arms
10 for participating in today's meeting. This meeting is
11 hereby adjourned. Thank you. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date August 6, 2024