

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING,
DISPOSITIONS AND CONCESSIONS

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November 19, 2015
Start: 1:16 p.m.
Recess: 6:42 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: Andrew Cohen
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Stephen Levin
Darlene Mealy
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Andrew Cohen
Mark Treyger

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

Letitia James
Public Advcoate

Linda Johnson
Brooklyn Public Library President

David Kramer
Hudson Companies

Johnathan Marvel
Marvel Architects

Jeff Nelson
Head of Real Estate Group at EDC

Miriam Katowitz
Brooklyn Heights Resident

Alexandra Bowie
Brooklyn Heights Association

Jonathan Bowles
Executive Director at Center for Urban Future

Carlo Scissura
Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Carole Raftrey
Build Up NYC

Keeshawn Labarie
Build Up NYC

Dave Ramsey
Build Up NYC

Orlando Castillo
Build Up NYC

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

Tucker Reed
President of Downtown Brooklyn Partnership

Jim Devor
Past President of Community Education Council for
District 15

Calliope Matthews
School Outreach Librarian for Brooklyn Public
Library

Elena Rivera
Children's Librarian at Washington Irving Library

Uldis Skrodelis
Brooklyn Heights Branch Manager

Michael White
Citizens Defending Libraries

John Skinner
President of Local 46 on behalf of Maritza Silva-
Farrell

Ansley Samson
Community Affairs Committee of PS8 PTA

Norman Savitt
Brooklyn Heights Resident

Maggie Cancar
Brooklyn Bridge Harbor Heights Association

Nina Collins
Brooklyn Heights Library Board Member

Roxanna Benavides
Sunset Park Library

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

Michael Pollack
Brooklyn Roasting Company

Albert Tablonti
On Behalf of Eric Chu

Paul Ness
Citizens Defending Libraries

Rachel Teimann
Brooklyn Heights Library

Prudence Katze
Common Cause New York

Daniel Winnicore
NYC resident

Greg Hamatus

Dennis Markell
Author

Ed Brown
Team Brown Consulting

Kalim Neetum

Jason Asbury
Assistant Head of School at Saint Ann's School

Martin Allen
People for Political and Economic Empowerment

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

Mary Fouts

Gwen Fishman

Patricia Rattigan

Kerwin Pilgrim

Director of Adult Learning at Brooklyn Public
Library on behalf of Theodore Oberman

Roselle Silverstein

Phillip Kellogg

Fulton Area Business Alliance

Christian Zabriskie

Urban Librarians Unite

Bosko Stankovic

Brooklyn Heights Resident

Mazeda Uddin

NYC Campaign Finance Board Member

Diana Faulk

Brooklyn Heights Resident

Marilyn Berkon

Brooklyn Heights Resident

Catherine Silberblad

Brooklyn Heights Resident

Maria Roca

Founder and Chair of Friends of Sunset Park

Isabel Draves

Brooklyn Public Library

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

Nick Higgins

Brooklyn Public Library on behalf of Peter
Goldwasser

Sheila Schofer

Brooklyn Public Library on behalf of Jessica
Warwaug

Lavonda Shaw

Arlington Branch Library on behalf of Michal
Greenspan

Deborah Howard

IMPACCT Brooklyn

Laurie Frey

Citizens Defending Libraries

Margaret Authro

Clinton Hill Resident

Mary Buchwald

Former Brooklyn Public Library

Mike Jankowitz

Citizens Defending Libraries

Doreen Gallo

DUMBO Neighborhood Alliance

Stephanie Blue

IMPACCT

Kimberly Grad

Coordinator of School-age Services at Brooklyn
Public Library

Ryan Aucha

On behalf of Jonathan Butler of Smorgasburg

Lucy Koteen

2 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I'm going to turn the
3 mic on. Good afternoon. I'm Council Member Andy
4 Cohen, Acting Chair of the Subcommittee on Planning,
5 Dispositions and Concessions, filling in for the
6 Chair, Inez Dickens. We are joined today by Council
7 Members Mark Treyger, Liz Crowley, Steve Levin, and
8 our own Public Advocate Tish James. We have one item
9 on the calendar today, the redevelopment of the
10 Brooklyn Heights Branch of the Brooklyn Public
11 Library along Cadman Plaza in Council Member Levin's
12 District. The project would result in the
13 construction of a mixed-use development, a new
14 library to be located in the base of the building and
15 affordable housing off-site, affordable housing off-
16 site. The Council's reviewing two actions that are
17 required for this project, Land Use Item 301, the
18 Disposition of City Property and Land Use Item 302,
19 the Acquisition of the Library Space in the New
20 Building. As proposed, this development would result
21 in an approximately 300,000 square foot mixed-used
22 development including 21,500 square feet for the new
23 library. The project would result in 114 units of
24 off-site affordable housing within Brooklyn Community
25 Board Two reserved for people making between 60 and

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2 165 percent of the Area Median Income. We will hold
3 the public hearing on these two related items today.

4 We will begin with speakers representing Hudson

5 Properties, the New York Economic Development

6 Corporation and the Brooklyn Public Library and

7 continue with panels of four speakers, each speaker

8 given two to three minutes. We will alternate

9 between panels in support of the project and panels

10 opposed to the project. If you wish to speak, please

11 fill out a speaker's slip and submit it to the

12 Sargent at Arms at the desk over there. We will make

13 sure that everyone is given an opportunity to

14 testify. Before we start, I would like to this

15 hearing over to Council Member Levin for a brief

16 opening statement.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very

18 much, Chair Cohen and to the members of the

19 Subcommittee on Planning, Dispositions and

20 Concessions and to all of the members of the public

21 who have joined us here today and are coming here

22 today to testify. I thank you very much for being

23 here, and I thank you in advance for your patience,

24 because I expect this to be a lengthy hearing. I

25 would also like to thank Brooklyn Public Library and

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2 Hudson Companies and Economic Development Corporation
3 coming to testify today. The project before us is at
4 its core a disposition of a public asset. In any
5 disposition it is the responsibility of decision-
6 makers chartered, under the Charter of the City of
7 New York. It's the, at this stage, the New York City
8 Council to examine the proposal carefully to ensure
9 that the public is receiving the full and fair value
10 of its property and that the public policy--that
11 public policy interests are being served. The
12 neighborhoods surrounding the library on Cadman
13 Plaza, Cadman West, Brooklyn Heights, Downtown
14 Brooklyn, Vinegar Hill, and DUMBO are growing
15 neighborhoods. Demand for a library and other
16 services, including education services,
17 transportation services are only increasing. At the
18 same time, these communities have struggled and
19 continue to struggle with the challenges presented by
20 dense and rapid development. Nothing happens in a
21 vacuum. I hope that today's hearing will provide a
22 chance to gather more information about this project
23 and hear what the public thinks about this deal. I
24 know that I have heard strong opinions on all sides
25 of this issue from my constituents, and I am sure

2 that we will continue to hear many of those dedicated
3 voices again here today and in the coming weeks.

4 Community Board Two and the Brooklyn Borough

5 President Eric Adams have already weighed in on the
6 project, and I thank them for their thoughtful input.

7 These issues are complicated ones. I feel strongly
8 that I cannot support a project unless it is a good

9 deal for both the local community as well as the

10 Brooklyn Public Library system and all of Brooklyn

11 and all of the city as a whole. I look forward to

12 hearing from all sides of the issues today and to a

13 thorough and respectful discussion. Now, throughout

14 the last two years plus, this has been a very

15 controversial topic, and I say I think that this is

16 the most controversial issue that I've seen in my

17 district since being elected in 2009. Passions run

18 high on this one, and what we are trying to do here

19 is look at this as clear-eyed as possible, as

20 objectively as possible and try to weight all of the

21 interest. The fact of the matter is that the library

22 system as a whole has a capital deficit. It has a big

23 one, and this would be an opportunity to address some

24 of that capital deficit, not all of it, not even

25 close, but some of it. Conversely, this is an issue

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2 that impacts the negative impacts of this, and there
3 would be negative impacts to this--would affect one
4 community in particular. The negative impacts would
5 be felt most strongly by the Downtown Brooklyn
6 Heights Community, impact of development, the impact
7 on the local schools, the impact on transportation,
8 on all the things that we try to weigh carefully when
9 we decide about where development goes in New York
10 City. Those impacts hit that local neighborhood, and
11 those things have to be weighed against each other,
12 and we want to take, as I said, as objective point of
13 view as possible here, as cleared-eyed of point of
14 view as possible. I want to strip away all the
15 rhetoric, and I want to look at the numbers. I want
16 to examine the numbers. I want to know is this a
17 good or is it not a good deal? And I welcome the
18 input of everybody here to help this body fully
19 ascertain that. So, with that, I turn it back to the
20 Chairman. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Council
22 Member Levin. We've been joined by Council Member
23 Lander. I'll now turn the hearing over to our first
24 panel. I'm not sure in what order you're going to
25

2 testify but you can decide among yourselves. Thank
3 you.

4 LINDA JOHNSON: Great, thanks. Good
5 afternoon, everyone. I'm Linda Johnson. I'm
6 President of Brooklyn Public Library, and I'm here
7 this afternoon with David Kramer from the Hudson
8 Companies, Johnathan Marvel from Marvel Architects
9 and Jeff Nelson from the Economic Development
10 Corporation. I'd like to thank Council Member Levin
11 for his remarks and for convening this session with
12 the Subcommittee on Land Use, in particular
13 Councilman Cohen, Mealy, Rodriguez, Treyger, Crowley,
14 and Lander. Thank you all for being here. We
15 appreciate your interest in the Cadman Plaza project
16 and are gratified to have reached this point in the
17 public review process. Thank you for the opportunity
18 to present our plans for the new Brooklyn Heights
19 Library. We've been working in the community on this
20 project since 2013 when we convened a community
21 action advisory committee and went out for an RFP to
22 sell the property at 280 Cadman Plaza, and we're
23 grateful for the participation of all the
24 stakeholders who attended those meetings, and in
25 particular, Council Member Levin's office as well as

2 other elected officials and neighborhood

3 stakeholders. In the spring of 2015 three library

4 design workshops were held as well as an online

5 survey, and in June of 2015 we certified into ULURP,

6 and acronym I thought I would never have to use in my

7 life, but this project proves otherwise. In July

8 2015 Community Board Two approved the project, and in

9 November 2015 we had a unanimous City Planning

10 Commission vote on the project, and so while we

11 recognize that no disposition is easy to decide this

12 is a rare opportunity to complete a major project

13 that will produce significant public benefits in

14 Brooklyn Heights and beyond. Brooklyn Public Library

15 is the fifth largest library system in the country.

16 We have 60 branches throughout the borough and a

17 physical plant that exceeds one million square feet,

18 but we have a deferred maintenance crisis. We have

19 over 300 million dollars of unfunded capital needs,

20 80 million of which would reach the level of

21 emergency repairs, 70 percent of the branches are

22 more than 50 years old, and nearly a third of our

23 buildings are over 100 years old. Nearly all of our

24 59 locations require at least a million dollars of

25 capital repairs and a quarter of them require an

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2 excess of five million dollars. We simply do not have
3 the funds we need to address the capital challenges.

4 Council Members have done yeoman's work to support us
5 with discretionary funds, but never the less, we

6 receive approximately 15 million dollars a year from

7 the city in capital money. So we've had decades of

8 underfunding, and we've only been able to deal with

9 the direst of emergencies and therefore, only take of

10 capital issues when they are at their most expensive.

11 Nowhere are our capital challenges more evident than

12 in the Brooklyn Heights Library. It's outdated and

13 outmoded. It was built in 1962 to house a library

14 and a fall-out shelter. It has too little public

15 space and more space than is needed for staff and

16 storage. It has in adequate tech infrastructure.

17 It's not hospitable to technology we're using today,

18 much less to that we might use in the future. The

19 workspaces are uninviting. The ceilings are low.

20 There's very little natural light and there's an

21 unpleasant streetscape. In fact, I learned recently

22 that Landmarks Preservation Commission opted not to

23 landmark this building when a request was made. Back

24 in 2012, the cost of repairs at Brooklyn Heights was

25 estimated at nine million dollars according to the

2 Department of Design and Construction. Every system
3 in the building needs to be replaced. The HVAC
4 system does not work, and as a result we've got
5 reduced summer hours. We open early, close early,
6 but still can't maintain a full day's schedule there
7 because of the heat in the afternoons. The elevators
8 are malfunctioning. The roof improperly drains and
9 we have problems with the boilers. You should also
10 keep in mind that that facility at 280 Cadman Plaza
11 houses not only a neighborhood library, but also the
12 Business and Career Library. At the Business and
13 Career Library, which serves job-seekers and aspiring
14 entrepreneurs from across the borough. We've long
15 had a plan to relocate the business and career
16 library to the central regardless of the outcome of
17 the Brooklyn Heights project. The advantages of
18 relocating that library are numerous. First of all,
19 it's--we would like it to be more centrally located.
20 We would like the Business and Career Library to be
21 open for longer hours, including work nights and
22 Sundays, and the services that we offer in the
23 Business and Career Library dovetail with the other
24 services that we're offering in the Central Library,
25 including the information commons and the Deck

2 Center. A survey of more than 700 Business and
3 Career Library users found that 67 percent of the
4 users were like--were as or more likely to use the
5 library if it were located at Central. So, as we
6 search for a solution to the problems in Brooklyn
7 Heights and throughout the system. We discovered
8 opportunity in Brooklyn Heights that we do not have
9 in any of our other branches. After one of the most
10 competitive RFP processes ever facilitated by the
11 Economic Development Corporation to that date we made
12 a decision to enter into an agreement with the Hudson
13 Companies and Marvel Architects to build a new state
14 of the art library in Brooklyn Heights as well as an
15 interim library located five blocks from that branch
16 to raise funds for the repairs at the branches
17 throughout Brooklyn as well as taking care of the
18 issues that are facing us in Brooklyn Heights. The
19 total project worth is worth approximately 65 million
20 dollars, 52 million dollars for the Brooklyn Heights
21 fit-out as well as the other branches that we receive
22 funds for capital improvements. A new library in
23 Brooklyn Heights, a core and shell which has been
24 valued at 10 million dollars and an interim location
25 at Our Lady of Lords--our Lady of Lebanon Church five

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2 blocks away which has been valued at 2.7 million
3 dollars. The transition--I'm sorry. The new
4 Brooklyn Heights Library will be a great improvement
5 over the current branch. The total square footage of
6 the existing building, both libraries, is 59,100
7 square feet; 23,700 of the square feet is a former
8 fall-out shelter, which now functions as a storage
9 and mechanical space. Nineteen thousand square feet
10 are occupied by the Brooklyn Heights Branch, and
11 16,400 square feet by the Business and Career
12 Library. The square footage numbers for the branch
13 and the Business and Career Library are gross square
14 feet, meaning it includes staff and utility spaces,
15 which are not accessible to the public. So, the
16 total public space in the Business and Career--in the
17 Business and neighborhood libraries combined is
18 approximately 27,200 square feet. The new library
19 that we are proposing to build in the same location
20 on the same block has a square footage of 21,500
21 square feet, and will be solely the neighborhood
22 library. There will be in that 21,500 square feet a
23 total of 18,000 square--18,500 square feet accessible
24 to the public, more than any other Brooklyn branch.
25 The Kings Highway Library, which is the next largest

2 library to Central, has 18,265 square feet of
3 publicly accessible space out of a total of 25,195
4 square feet, just to put it in context. The new
5 Brooklyn Heights Library will offer more, as I said,
6 public space than any other branch. It will--we have
7 a design in concept, which Johnathan Marvel will
8 discuss in a bit. The new branch will be owned by
9 the City of New York just as the current one is. It
10 will be modern and inviting with an open floor plan
11 and flexible spaces that will be convenient for
12 individuals to work much as they do today, but also
13 for people to work collaboratively much as they have
14 been in the recent past and will continue to be in
15 the future. More public space, as I said, than any
16 other branch library in Brooklyn and a design which
17 will incorporate suggestions and ideas from multiple
18 stakeholders through public meetings, which we've
19 already begun to hold and will continue to hold in
20 the future. We will also provide uninterrupted
21 library service in an interim library five blocks
22 from the current branch at Our Lady of Lebanon
23 Church. So, there will never be an interruption in
24 service throughout this process. In addition to
25 benefitting the Brooklyn Heights community, this

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2 project will also help struggling libraries
3 throughout the borough. It will help us reduce the
4 300 million square--300 million dollars of deferred
5 maintenance that I referenced earlier. It will
6 eliminate more than nine million dollars in
7 outstanding capital needs in Brooklyn Heights, and it
8 will pay for outfitting the new branch, the 21,500
9 square feet core and shell that the developer will
10 deliver to the library. It will generate 40 million
11 dollars for urgently needed repairs at other branches
12 throughout Brooklyn, and we already have the
13 beginning of our plan for that, which includes the
14 Pacific Library in Boerum Hill to make that building
15 ADA accessible and to construct a new entrance there;
16 3.5 million dollars will be spent on that branch.
17 It's a Carnegie Library. We will spend six million
18 dollars at the Walt Whitman Library in Fort Greene
19 and five million dollars at the Washington Irving
20 Library in Bushwick. Both of those libraries are
21 Carnegies as well, and then we will spend eight
22 million dollars in Sunset Park. We plan to build a
23 library that's nearly twice the size of the existing
24 one for a neighborhood which is in bad need of more
25 space in their library and also a library that has

2 significant capital need there, and then we will
3 identify in the near future the way the rest of the
4 money will be disposed. So, before I turn this
5 presentation over to my colleagues I want to thank
6 you for your thoughtful deliberation as you consider
7 our project. I want to stress again that this project
8 is an opportunity for the library to build a new
9 world class branch in Brooklyn Heights. It will give
10 us the ability to fund critical capital improvements
11 throughout the borough. It will give us what we
12 believe we need for the library and for the
13 community, and really what is best for the entire
14 borough and for the Community Board Two, and I wish
15 that as a result of today that you come away with the
16 understanding because we believe this deeply that
17 this is a path forward which will put the library on
18 much steadier footing for the future. So, thank you
19 for your continued partnership and for your
20 longstanding support of the library. I look forward
21 to working with you on this project in the future.

22 DAVID KRAMER: Thank you, Linda. Good
23 afternoon, Council Members, Madam Public Advocate.
24 Just around this time I realized boy, I should have
25 had lunch first. Rookie mistake by me. I'm with the

2 Hudson Companies. We've been around since 1986. We
3 are residential developers. I see on the little
4 chart here we have J Condo on the left, which is in
5 Council Member Levin's district, and in the middle on
6 top is Third and Ballins [sic] in Council Member
7 Lander's district. We have either completed or in
8 development 8,000 units, and we're very active across
9 many markets from affordable housing, middle income
10 housing, institutional housing, and market rate
11 housing. There you have with the rendering the
12 website 280Cadman.com. We set this website up.
13 We've tried to be transparent. We have put our
14 renderings. We put our full ULURP application.
15 We've put the full environmental assessment statement
16 all on online to try and have accurate information
17 available to the public. I don't know if anybody
18 else has put their EAS and ULURP application out as
19 we did. So, if anybody has any questions,
20 280Cadman.com is a good place to find out information
21 on the project. A big part of this project is the
22 affordable housing we're building in the Public
23 Advocate's former Council District of Clinton Hill.
24 We have two sites at 911 Atlantic Avenue and 1041
25 Fulton Street and it's a combination of inclusionary

2 housing we're building to generate floor area for the
3 development at Cadman as well as additional, middle
4 and moderate income housing that we are developing
5 that helped make our bid as compelling as possible.

6 We are doubling the number of affordable housing
7 units that we're required to build through this
8 project by providing the off-site housing, and no
9 city capital or subsidies are at play in developing
10 this affordable housing. The timing is that the

11 affordable housing has to be built before the Cadman
12 Plaza Housing can be built. We can't pull a building
13 permit for Cadman until we pull a building permit for
14 Atlantic and Fulton. We can't get a certificate of
15 occupancy for Cadman until we get a certificate of

16 occupancy for the affordable housing, and the
17 affordable housing is deed restricted, legally
18 binding, and the inclusionary housing units are
19 affordable in perpetuity and rent stabilized. We

20 have, as you'll see later, we have renderings for the
21 affordable housing, and we hired Marvel architects to

22 design both the Clinton Hill buildings as well as
23 Cadman Plaza, and the acquisition status is that we

24 have purchased Fulton Street and we're purchasing
25 Atlantic Avenue in the next couple of days. So there

2 we have some examples of the spread of units. Again,
3 this is also on our website, from 60 to 80 to 100 to
4 165 percent AMI, and the income limits, as you can
5 you see there's a wide range. As an example, if it
6 is a household of two at 60 percent AMI the income is
7 41,000; 80 percent, 55,000; 100 percent, 69,000; 165
8 percent, 113,000. So there's a wide range of
9 incomes, which most housing studies would say that
10 healthy mix of incomes is the best way to have a
11 successful housing development. And again, those are
12 examples of rents. As an example, if you look at the
13 one bedroom rents, 60 percent is 913 dollars, 1,236
14 is for 80 percent, 1,500 for 100 percent, and 2,600
15 at 165 percent. We think the market is right about
16 at 165 percent today, which means that all the other
17 AMI's are below market, and five, 10, 15, 20, 30, 40
18 years down the road all of those AMI's will probably
19 help create permanent covenanted affordable housing
20 for middle income salaries. As Linda mentioned, we
21 have an interim library. We looked high and low to
22 find 7,000 square feet at the ground level for a
23 space that would take a short term lease. That is
24 not easy to find a three-year lease, ground floor
25 space at retail rents that weren't crazy, and we

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2 found at the Social Hall at Our Lady of Lebanon
3 Church, which you can see is on Remsen Street. The
4 entrance will be on Remsen Street. The handicap
5 access will be at their driveway on Henry Street.
6 Breaking news, here is a rendering that we just put
7 together to show what the converted social hall will
8 look like as an interim library. We are at the point
9 now of getting permits to convert the space, and our
10 goal is to have this interim library up and running
11 this summer instead of having the library in Cadman
12 closed at one o'clock during summer hours, we can
13 have a full schedule in a well-conditioned temporary
14 space. And while 7,000 square feet is not anybody's
15 idea of palatial, it beats a book mobile. It beats
16 no service at all, and it was--you know, it's been a
17 lot of work. We consider this sort of a separate
18 project to get the interim library done. To tell you
19 a little bit about the building besides the interim
20 housing, interim library and the affordable housing,
21 our building is going to have 139 units, a mix of one
22 to four bedroom apartments, ground floor retail,
23 below grade parking, possibly below-grade community
24 facility. We're still working to see if we have a
25 community facility user for the building. In terms

2 of the retail, it's not big box retail. It's not
3 anything that is too retail [sic]. We have two micro
4 retail spaces, which reach 400 square feet, which is
5 basically take-out spaces. One is going to be
6 utilized by the Brooklyn Coffee roasters so that we
7 have an appropriate amount of caffeine for the
8 project, and the other space will be a curated pop-up
9 retail space curated by Smorgasburg so that every
10 month there will be a different vendor in the space
11 basically testing their operational capacity to see
12 are they just a weekend vendor under a kiosk or can
13 they be a bricks and mortar operation, operating
14 fulltime in a space. And we thought it was a fun
15 variety for our library patrons, for our residents,
16 for our students, for our neighbors to see that there
17 is going to be a different service on services
18 provided every month. I'd like to briefly address
19 the issue of construction labor for this project.
20 Hudson currently builds with both union and nonunion
21 subcontractors, though frankly we're more focused on
22 the issue of local hiring, the selection of MWBE
23 companies, and paying New York City residents who
24 will recycle their wages in the local economy. We do
25 however anticipate a substantial number of union

2 subcontractors since this is a big complicated
3 project, but to give you a sense of our experience in
4 some recent projects Hudson developed, we hired on
5 average 25 percent MWBE subcontractors.

6 Approximately 30 to 40 percent of our subs are local
7 Brooklyn subcontractors, and 45 percent of the
8 workers on the job are from Brooklyn, and these are
9 projects where there were--where all the local hiring
10 was voluntary. There were no actual requirements we
11 were following. Let me say a word briefly about the
12 purchase price. We were obviously aggressive bidders.

13 We knew that it was a very full field of our
14 colleagues in the real estate industry, and that with
15 14 teams bidding we had to really stretch to try and
16 provide a compelling bid, which was our 52 million
17 dollar number, and I should say that the evaluation
18 of this site can be very complicated. There are
19 issues of the cost of providing the library of 21,500
20 square feet, the cost of providing the interim
21 library, the cost to demolish the existing building,
22 and the cost to generate the affordable housing
23 without capital subsidies to generate more floor
24 area. So until you have a grasp of all of the
25 nuances of the evaluation, you need to understand all

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2 those elements before coming to a conclusion on the
3 elevation for the project. Lastly I should say, as a
4 ULURP, just to remind everybody, the three action
5 we're seeking is disposition of the site, which the
6 Council mentions, acquisition of the condo library,
7 modification of the special permit, and that this
8 project that we've deigned is as-of-right with
9 current zoning. And with that, let me hand it to my
10 colleague Johnathan Marvel. Hudson and Marvel have
11 done seven or eight projects together. We are both
12 local residents. We're both constituents of
13 Councilman Levin. We both live seven or eight blocks
14 from the site. For us, this is very personal. We
15 take this project very seriously. We want only the
16 best for a project we're going to be walking by for
17 many decades to come, and Hudson has had only a great
18 relationship with Marvel on our many projects
19 together.

20 JOHNATHAN MARVEL: Thank you, David.
21 Thank you, David. Thank you, Linda. It's an honor
22 to be on this team. This is a very much of a
23 dialogue between the library, the developer and the
24 architect and I appreciate the Council for listening
25 on some of the design issues. The ground floor is

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2 over half of the entire library dedicated space. We
3 worked very hard after the three listening sessions
4 and workshops, and in fact went to a local high
5 school to find out what the teenagers wanted, the
6 young adults, as they want to be called. So, we took
7 all that information and distributed it into the
8 envelope of the 21,500 square feet. So, over half of
9 that is on the ground floor. you can see that the
10 library space wraps around the core of the building,
11 which is the tower, elevators and lobby, and that
12 gives the library very much of a presence on Cadman
13 Plaza, but also on Clinton Street and on Tillery
14 Street. So, it really has a big presence in the
15 neighborhood. The mezzanine level is again on Cadman
16 Plaza. It's naturally lit. It overlooks the library
17 spaces. The young adults would really love to be up
18 here from what we've heard. It would be very much a
19 big part of the participatory with the space and
20 would provide that kind of ability for the library
21 supervisors to check on them, and the lower level
22 would also get some natural light because it has a
23 very large staircase going down to it. It has a
24 dedicated assembly room that will be operable after
25 the library hours or after the library's closed, and

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DISPOSITIONS & CONCESSIONS 30
2 that space is, again, tall ceilings and we can bring
3 the filtered light through the stairwell. The
4 building sits in this prime location on Cadman Plaza
5 and has a very civic presence. It's going to be clad
6 in limestone. It's nestled in height between one
7 pier-punt [sic], which is around 400 feet, and 16
8 Court which is at 460 feet. So, our library is 415
9 tall to the rough plus another 25 feet of
10 mechanicals. It brings it up to 440 feet in height.
11 The library occupies that portion that faces Cadman
12 Plaza. It has its own elevation. It's 24 feet tall.
13 It'll have a significant iconic presence on Cadman
14 Plaza. Its front door will be monumental,
15 recognizable and inviting. The library itself is
16 built on flexible use of column, largely column free
17 space so the library can adapt over time. We
18 consider this a 21st century library and that it's
19 going to be based on a module. It'll have tons of
20 moving capacity for the library to grow within it,
21 and again, naturally lit throughout all of its
22 spaces. The Tillery Street elevation shows the
23 library on the left, the tower base with its Clinton
24 Street four-story kind of town house façade facing
25 Clinton Street. So it scales down to the Brooklyn

2 Heights neighborhood on the Clinton Street elevation
3 where the residential lobby is the micro units, a
4 library façade as well and an entrance for the
5 community space. The building really is a neighborly
6 building in that it is part of the cluster of
7 buildings close to downtown Brooklyn. It's part of
8 the civic area as well as we think participatory in
9 the Brooklyn Heights feeling with a townhouse on
10 Clinton Street, but also given that scale of
11 limestone from a citywide civic gesture. The
12 Atlantic Street and Fulton Street affordable housing
13 component, this is the Atlantic Street, 80 feet tall.
14 It's nine stories, has 75 units, and we've designed
15 it to--out of brick on all facades. It's a very--
16 it's a beautiful brick. It'll be multicolored.
17 It's--but it picks up some of the scale, double-
18 height nature of the library design. So, we're
19 bringing that kind of civicness [sic] to the
20 affordable housing component. This is the Fulton
21 Street building. It's same height, nine floors, and
22 it houses 39 units, and we think that these building
23 are going to be very much a part of their
24 neighborhood as well as that reference to the library
25 and it's sort of Community Board Two sort of link-in

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2 presence. Going back to the interior space, this is
3 something that will be designed through an RFP, but
4 we feel that the planning process has laid the
5 groundwork for a very successful library. So, thank
6 you, and now I'd like to introduce the gentleman from
7 EDC on my left.

8 JEFF NELSON: Good afternoon, Council
9 Member Levin and all other Council Members. My name
10 is Jeff Nelson. I'm the Co-Head of the Real Estate
11 Group at EDC. EDC does not have prepared testimony,
12 but we're available to answer any questions that you
13 have, and we're pleased to be joining BPL and Hudson
14 at this hearing.

15 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you very much.
16 I'm going to, as the Chair, defer to Council Member
17 Levin for the first round of questions. I think we
18 have some more questions after that, and we'll come
19 back. Thank you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very
21 much, Chair Cohen. Thank you very much to everybody
22 for your testimony. Just one thing to point out at
23 the outset just for the record. In the introduction
24 to the presentation you mentioned the Community
25 Board's recommendation, City Planning Commission's

2 recommendation, did not mention the Borough
3 President's recommendation which was to disapprove
4 with conditions. So, just for the record, the
5 Borough President did in fact weigh in--was not in
6 the introduction. It's not a question. It's for the
7 record. So, I want to start off with a point of
8 consensus because there's not a lot of consensus on
9 this project or this proposal. One point of
10 consensus between the Borough President, the
11 Community Board, Brooklyn Heights Association is that
12 everybody is requesting a larger library than
13 proposed. So, the first question I have is, what is
14 your response to all three of those entities call for
15 a larger library?

16 LINDA JOHNSON: So, look, we'd love to
17 have a larger library as well. It's a matter of cost.
18 Every square foot that we add to the project costs us
19 additional money not only to fit out, but then also
20 to operate. We've heard loud and clearly that this
21 is a concern, and so we are looking at the
22 possibility and trying to figure out how that will
23 impact the project.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, when I walk
25 into this library I don't really--I see one library,

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2 right? I don't see two separate libraries. So, what
3 is the publicly accessible space in the Brooklyn
4 Heights branch with the Business Library today?

5 LINDA JOHNSON: So, it's the combined
6 16,400 square feet and 18,000 square feet. So, a
7 little bit over 30,000 square feet.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: A little bit over
9 30,000. And that's--

10 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] Gross, gross
11 square feet.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: That's--so, that's
13 where I'm at.

14 LINDA JOHNSON: twenty-seven thousand.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Twenty-seven
16 thousand--

17 LINDA JOHNSON: Two hundred publicly
18 accessible square feet.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Twenty-seven two
20 is the publicly accessible.

21 LINDA JOHNSON: Yep.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, in your
23 remarks you said that that was--you said there's too
24 little public space, and I know you said that vis-à-
25 vis the--

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DISPOSITIONS & CONCESSIONS 35

2 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] In other
3 words, relative to a 59,000 square foot building,
4 only 27,000 square feet.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But do you think
6 that 27,200 square feet is too little public space?

7 LINDA JOHNSON: For the business--under
8 several circumstances I think it's too little. I
9 think it's a bad ratio for the building, and I think
10 it's a building which is not well-designed and
11 doesn't deserve additional money to be invested in
12 that building. There's no way to make that building
13 more efficient or more inspiring. And then I think
14 it's too little if you consider it as two branches, a
15 Business and Career Library as well as a neighborhood
16 library. I think it is more than ample for a
17 neighborhood library alone or for a business library
18 alone.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, my, actually--

20 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] And by the
21 way, I say that in the context of Brooklyn Heights.
22 That's not to say you couldn't have a fabulous
23 library at 10,000 square feet in some other
24 community. It has a lot to do with the number of
25 people--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] This
3 is the downtown branch.

4 LINDA JOHNSON: Right.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: This is the
6 downtown branch.

7 LINDA JOHNSON: Exactly.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: There are a number
9 of colleges and universities within a half mile
10 radius. There are obviously a lot of businesses.
11 It's near Metro Tech. It's near DUMBO. It's near
12 downtown. It's near the courts, and I'm concerned at
13 the outset about the idea of relocating all business
14 services over to the main branch. So, I had this
15 idea that I was going to check to see the commute
16 times by public transportation for all the council,
17 for all the district offices of Council Members in
18 Brooklyn by train. Like, what's--how--is it faster
19 to get to the main branch? Is it faster to get to
20 the Brooklyn Heights branch? And before I had an
21 opportunity to do that Mr. Kramer was kind enough to
22 do that for me, and what it shows is that, you know,
23 on a--so, an average time, you know, just a random
24 time, Tuesday at 10:00 a.m., from half of the
25 district offices in Brooklyn, it's actually quicker

2 to get to the current branch than it is to get to the
3 main branch. So, 50/50. Sometimes it's, you know,
4 it's sometimes it's a little bit less than 50/50.
5 Sometimes it's 50/50. By taking this action we are
6 taking away some--we're not just adding something to
7 the main branch. We're not just adding a business
8 branch to the main branch, because maybe that makes
9 sense. Maybe it makes sense to have. You got the
10 resources there. You got a bigger building. You
11 know, maybe that makes sense to add one there. I'm
12 not saying it doesn't, but in doing this you're also
13 taking away something from an area that has a lot of
14 traffic. A lot of people from all over Brooklyn are
15 coming to downtown Brooklyn, and so my initial fear
16 is that, you know, this is removing a resource from
17 Downtown Brooklyn.

18 LINDA JOHNSON: So, two points. One is
19 when that--when it was decided to put the Business
20 and Career in Downtown Brooklyn life was a lot
21 different, and the people who were using the Business
22 and Career Library were largely downtown businesses.
23 That's not the case any longer. In fact, the
24 universities and the businesses that you referenced
25

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2 in your remarks are largely online today and not
3 using the Business and Career Library.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But everybody can
5 use the library.

6 LINDA JOHNSON: No question. I'm telling
7 you anecdotally--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
9 Everybody can use the library.

10 LINDA JOHNSON: about who is actually
11 using it? so, the fact is that if you are a
12 burgeoning entrepreneur, somebody who's looking for a
13 job, you are in greater need of the services that
14 we're offering there because you don't necessarily
15 have access to the information that you can get
16 online, that you would if you're a business that's
17 already up and operating downtown Brooklyn. And so--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] I get
19 all that. My question is--

20 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] Most of what
21 I'm saying--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Why
23 not do--why not do a second, maybe a smaller business
24 branch, but why not do a separate business branch
25 here and say we're going to keep that type of service

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2 downtown because it belongs downtown? Why not? I
3 don't understand why. Why not do that? We have a
4 lot of space. This is a big--this a big deal. There
5 are hundreds of thousands of square feet that are
6 going into this building, hundreds of thousands of
7 square feet, right? Why not set aside seven--

8 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] My second
9 point--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] to 10
11 thousand square feet or 12,000 square feet for a
12 business branch as part of this deal in this
13 location? I don't understand. Why not--

14 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] My second
15 point--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Why
17 move it out?

18 LINDA JOHNSON: My second point is that
19 this will be one of our larger libraries, and we have
20 in process designing a hub system, and this library
21 will be one of the hubs in the overall Brooklyn
22 Public Library system, one of seven or eight, and the
23 libraries are all stronger than just what happens in
24 the four walls of each branch. We've been working
25 hard on making sure the public understands that, and

2 I believe that all the hubs actually will have a
3 business librarian or consultant available to them in
4 that branch. So, while the resources may not be--
5 resources meaning material--may not be targeted
6 specifically to the business community. There will be
7 somebody in that library who will be skilled at
8 helping people who are either looking for work or are
9 interested in working for themselves, part of the
10 large freelance community that works in Brooklyn.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but why not
12 take--like whatever you're going to do, and we don't
13 know what the plan is for the main branch business
14 library. We don't--we haven't seen that plan yet,
15 but why not take whatever some of the--physical, some
16 of the physical space, some of like whatever's
17 happening down there, not just a staff member that's
18 there to like counsel people on how to get a job, but
19 why not take some of that type of thing that's going
20 on there physically and also add it to this deal.
21 Like, how would that effect--if you were to add
22 10,000 square feet to the library so that it--so that
23 on balance we're not losing any square footage,
24 because as I said, I'm Joe Public, and I walk into
25 that building, I see one--I see one library. I don't

2 see two libraries. So, I can walk back and forth
3 between the two sides and it's like, for me it's one
4 library. So, that's how the public perceives it when
5 they walk in the door. So, what would it take, like,
6 how would it affect the deal to--

7 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] The question
8 isn't so much--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] No,
10 that is my question. My question is how would it
11 affect the deal? I'm sorry, I'm asking the
12 questions. How would it affect the deal to add
13 10,000 square feet of library space to this proposal?

14 LINDA JOHNSON: To add--well, regardless
15 of how we use it, to add 10,000 square feet would
16 change the deal with Hudson, and you'd have to
17 comment on that, but it would then cost the library
18 money to fit the space out, and then would actually
19 cost us on an ongoing basis additional money to
20 operate. So, that's the answer regardless of how the
21 space is used. How we run our business, how the
22 library delivers service is a different question,
23 which you're not asking, but which I will suggest,
24 we're trying to target where people live and work,
25 how people live and work, and how we can most

2 efficiently answer their needs that relate to
3 literacy as it's most broadly defined in the case, in
4 the context of your line of inquiry, how they get
5 support in their efforts to find work, to build their
6 own businesses, to do research, and to work as
7 freelancers.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: How many programs
9 today are being run out of the Brooklyn Heights
10 branch?

11 LINDA JOHNSON: I don't know the answer to
12 that. We'll have to see [sic].

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And how does that
14 compare with other branches?

15 LINDA JOHNSON: So, the answer about--I
16 mean, generally speaking, the number of programs that
17 are run are in part impacted by the number of hours
18 that a library is open. So, for example, in the
19 summer when we were closed significantly, obviously
20 we were able to offer fewer programs, but I will get
21 you specific numbers on the number of programs--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
23 Because my staff looked at it, and it's significantly
24 lower than say Borough Park, right? Borough Park has
25 a lot more programs that are offered out of that

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DISPOSITIONS & CONCESSIONS 43
2 library. Under this proposal is there--are you--is
3 BPL proposing to add more programs? Is there a
4 concrete proposal to say, okay, if we're--if there
5 are 40 programs being run out of it today, there's
6 going to be 70? That's what they have at Borough
7 Park.

8 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, we're not at that--
9 we're not at that stage of the planning, but--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
11 Because that's going to cost money, too, right?

12 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, of course, but the
13 programming--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] So,
15 that would have to be part of this deal. Right? It
16 would have to be--right? That--

17 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] This gets
18 into the way we operate and it gets into the
19 operating budget as opposed to the capital budget.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh. But
21 obviously--

22 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] But yes, I
23 mean--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] You
25 know--

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2 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] Here's the
3 thing, we'll have hub library. It'll be inspiring
4 and welcoming. We hope usage will go up as a result
5 of this project, and then necessarily, we'll be
6 offering more programs there.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right, but usage,
8 one thing that attracts usage is the number of
9 programs, right?

10 LINDA JOHNSON: Absolutely.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So--

12 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] It's a--you
13 know, and also so does the space and the environment
14 and the librarians. I mean, it's a whole mix of
15 things which we're working hard to improve, and we're
16 working hard to make sure that each library is doing
17 the work that is needed in that particular community.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: If you were add
19 space to this library, if you were to add additional
20 library space, where would that library space go?

21 LINDA JOHNSON: Again, that's an
22 architectural question. We're taking a look at that
23 now, because of the inquiries that you've made, and
24 we're looking at the ground floor.

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Can I ask the
3 architect where?

4 LINDA JOHNSON: Sure.

5 JOHNATHAN MARVEL: So, there are areas on
6 the ground floor that are now dedicated and planned
7 for, additional parking and for the community
8 facility. We can probably grow into there a couple
9 thousand square feet, but it is very limited space on
10 the ground floor. There is a potential to because of
11 the community facility being close to 20,000 square
12 feet largely below grade, that lower level becomes
13 the best opportunity. Again, we can bring natural
14 light down through architectural glass and make it
15 pleasant, but the ground floor is very tight as--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Okay,
17 but the below grade floor that's currently designated
18 for community facility, because if you go back--can
19 you go back to that slide? So, as it is now, there's
20 6.5 thousand square feet dedicated to the library on
21 the lower level, right? Does that get natural light
22 or is that not natural light?

23 JOHNATHAN MARVEL: So, the upper part of
24 the zone is where the natural light's going to be
25 coming from. It's the sidewalk on Cadman Plaza. You

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2 can see here's the ground floor. so we're going to
3 be bringing natural light through double-height
4 spaces where the big stair comes down, and so I think
5 that--and you can see here on this image to the right
6 of the blue is where we have some additional parking
7 in the community entrance for the lower level, and
8 that's where we can probably squeeze a couple
9 thousand square feet.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And currently the-
11 -if you go back down to the lower level, so then what
12 is--what's the usage for the remainder that's there?

13 JOHNATHAN MARVEL: So, the area just to
14 the, on the bottom of the image, you can see there's
15 a large empty box, that's a double-height space that
16 was meant to house an auditorium or a gym type of
17 use. So, there's a large double-height space there
18 that has a mezzanine associated with it. The area to
19 the--at the very prow of the building we were housing
20 that for mechanicals for the building itself and some
21 storage. So, we could probably grow into that prow.
22 We could probably grow a little bit down. There's an
23 egress corridor that buffers between the two sides.
24 We'd have to rework that, but that's not unfeasible.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And that's not--so
3 when you're counting the residential square footage
4 of this deal, that doesn't--an expansion of the
5 library--say you were going to do that, right? An
6 expansion of the library is not actually coming out
7 of residential square footage at Cadman, 280 [sic]
8 Cadman?

9 DAVID KRAMER: Yeah, that's right. I mean,
10 the--I mean, it's only money we're talking about, and
11 if it--if the money is--if the expansion would be
12 below grade you wouldn't be taking out any FAR, and
13 it would be the cost of construction, and if it's
14 above grade, it would be the cost of construction
15 plus less land value to BPL.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. And with
17 the community, can you talk just a minute about the
18 community facility space and how that is--what are
19 the terms of community facility here? So, what
20 happens if you don't rent it up as a community
21 facility space, you know, at a certain point and
22 time? I know there's some issue there within the
23 contract?

24 DAVID KRAMER: So, we had partnered with
25 Saint Ann School. It's, you know, a nonprofit school

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2 across the street to build them an auditorium or a
3 gym, and we were going to do it at cost to provide
4 them with something that was very important to them,
5 and they just finished a capital campaign, I think
6 their first ever, and for them to basically upgrade
7 their existing campus, they decided it was one
8 project too many. So we had worked out a contractual
9 plan b with EDC that should our community facility
10 partner at Saint Ann's drop out, that we would make a
11 best faith effort to find a substituted community
12 facility user. We're in the middle of that process
13 of seeing if there's anybody who's interested
14 basically buying at cost a below-grade condominium
15 for community facility use and that depending upon
16 how that shook out, we were going to re-jigger the
17 lower levels so that it was either going to be two or
18 three levels below grade, because below grade you
19 have the library. You may have community facility.
20 You have sort of back of house residential uses, and
21 you have parking.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, so when you
23 say at cost, what is cost? What is that per square
24 foot?

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2 DAVID KRAMER: It's around--it begins
3 with a three. It's basically a hard cost and soft
4 cost for the square footage below grade, and it also
5 depends upon what you're building out. Are you
6 building out literally a concrete shell? Are you
7 providing HVAC? But in terms--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] But
9 you have an HVAC system in this building. It's not
10 like you're building, you know, you just have duct to
11 do there, right? I mean--

12 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] You know, I
13 mean, we went through this exercise with Saint Ann's,
14 and so there's incremental cost for--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Well,
16 what was--okay. So what was it for Saint Ann's?
17 Like, what was at cost? If they're going to buy the
18 condo at cost, what were they going to buy it at?

19 DAVID KRAMER: So, then we get into all
20 sorts of nuance, because a gym or a theater is
21 column-free [sic] and it creates all sorts of
22 expensive steel spans [sic].

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Oh, so maybe it's
24 more expensive. If it were to be a for--

25

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2 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Right, if
3 it's--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] the
5 library.

6 DAVID KRAMER: If it's bargain basement
7 Steve Levin special, yes, we could do something
8 that's--I mean, we would have to get back to you on
9 that. In fact, we're working on that right now, but
10 just as an example, at Saint Ann's I think we were
11 talking about an 18,000 square foot space at a cost
12 of around 10 to 12 million dollars, and so you could
13 do the math right there about what that is per foot
14 on--18,000, 20--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] I'm
16 spending a lot of time on my calculator.

17 DAVID KRAMER: Yeah. It's probably six
18 or seven hundred dollars a foot I'm guessing, and it
19 was because there are huge structural premiums of
20 trying to provide column-free space.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Column-free.

22 DAVID KRAMER: Which is not the case
23 here.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right.

25

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2 DAVID KRAMER: So, I mean, the answer is,
3 you know, whether it's Saint Ann's or another
4 community facility space or BPL, you know, we will be
5 open book about what the costs are and try and figure
6 out, you know, what the best deal would be.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. So, I'm
8 going to like jump around a little bit, curve balls,
9 so just--it's not like--I'm not trying to, you know,
10 trip you guys up, I'm just, you know, it's kind of
11 the way that I'm working here. So, what happens if
12 something goes wrong with the deal in two and a half
13 years? Like, what happens if--what happens to the
14 library?

15 DAVID KRAMER: You're--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] What
17 are the safeguards for a library, right? So, one
18 thing that I've heard a lot over the last couple of
19 years is the what happened at the Donnell Library and
20 how that was a very bad negative thing to happen.
21 That was tied to broader economic trends and so on
22 and so forth, but what has EDC, Brooklyn Public
23 Library, developers, what has everybody learned from
24 that experience, and what are you doing to make sure--
25 --and what happens if something goes wrong here? What

2 happens if you can't build this building? What
3 happens? Are we stuck with a 7,000 square foot
4 library at already at Lebanon for the, you know, ad
5 infinitum or what's the story there?

6 LINDA JOHNSON: It's a great question.
7 Thank you. And I think we all can chime in on it.
8 From the library's perspective we learned a lot from
9 Donnell. The first thing is not to shut down library
10 service before you're ready to demolish the building.
11 So, we won't do that. The second thing is to make
12 sure that there's a location for interim service
13 while the construction project is underway. So,
14 that's part of this deal, and the third thing is that
15 if something should go wrong during construction, and
16 I'll let my colleagues speak more to this point, but
17 there are clauses in the agreement that give the
18 property back to the city, back to the library.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, the property
20 will go back to the city, back to the library and
21 then what, put it out for bid again?

22 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah.

23 DAVID KRAMER: I mean, I always joke that,
24 you know, the best thing--it's not the best thing
25 that could happen--if we default, we don't get the

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2 keys to the site until we've paid 52 million dollars
3 for the site. So, we pay the library 52 million
4 dollars. The library gets relocated to the interim
5 location and we start construction. If we were to
6 default and we get, you know, kicked off of the site,
7 the library can sell it again for 52 million dollars.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But you--but that
9 happens like next year. Closing's next year. You
10 hand over 52 million dollars--

11 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Yeah, we
12 close before anything happens.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Next year--

14 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] We write a
15 check.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: What happens if
17 something goes wrong after you close?

18 DAVID KRAMER: I was getting to that. I
19 was getting to that. So, then during construction,
20 you know, given there are no guarantees in the world,
21 the Hudson Companies provides guaranties of
22 completion to the library in New York City. In
23 addition, we provide completion guarantees to the
24 lender, and the lender is funding the project that's
25 not equity from the ownership team. So there are all

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2 sorts of safeguards that between our guarantees and
3 the debt from the property.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But what does the
5 guarantee get us?

6 DAVID KRAMER: The guarantee gets that
7 you can knock on my door and say you have to write a
8 check to complete construction of the project. You
9 can knock on my door. Linda can knock on my door,
10 and the lender can knock on my door, and so that the
11 project has to be capitalized.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but what if
13 you declare bankruptcy? Who's the--who's primary?
14 Who's mezzanine?

15 DAVID KRAMER: I mean, I--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] I'm
17 sorry, I don't mean to. I'm not wishing bankruptcy.
18 I'm saying that, you know, what happens in that
19 instance?

20 DAVID KRAMER: Listen, I started by saying
21 like there are no guarantees, but the structure is as
22 air tight as possible to, A, make sure that the
23 project gets completed for the sake of the city and
24 the lender, and B, if we don't perform we get kicked
25 out and the project gets completed without us.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But who, who does
3 it? How does that happen? Does it go to re-RFP?

4 DAVID KRAMER: I mean, that's a good
5 question for Jeff, but--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Goes
7 back to disposition, goes back before us.

8 JEFF NELSON: Need [sic] to answer that?

9 DAVID KRAMER: You get to tell it again.

10 JEFF NELSON: Ultimately, we'll come back
11 to the city, and we have actually had cases in the
12 past with projects where deals have come back to the
13 city and we've re-RFP'ed them and they've become
14 great projects again.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And the city keeps
16 your 52 million dollars?

17 JEFF NELSON: Yeah.

18 DAVID KRAMER: Yes.

19 LINDA JOHNSON: The library keeps the--

20 JEFF NELSON: We revert the property and
21 we keep--well, the library in this instance, receives
22 the money. But even before getting to construction,
23 I think one of the things that we think about a lot
24 at the EDC is how do we set this project up so that
25 we don't run into exactly the problem that we're

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2 hypothesizing about right now, and that goes to not
3 only getting the completion guarantee for the
4 project, but also before closing making sure that the
5 money is in place to actually build the project. So,
6 we're not interested in closing on a deal where the
7 Hudson Company and its partners do not have the
8 financing in place to actually build a project, and
9 once that project is underway and you have the money
10 in hand, you reduce the risk that there is a problem
11 during construction.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but what--
13 so, then you're not going to close the deal until
14 Hudson has all of its financing in place--

15 JEFF NELSON: [interposing] It is a
16 condition--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] to
18 construct all of this--

19 JEFF NELSON: [interposing] It is a
20 condition to closing that Hudson demonstrate it has
21 financing commitments for the project.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And what happens
23 if they don't?

24 JEFF NELSON: Then we take Hudson's down
25 payment and we may have to re-RFP the site.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: When this, when
3 Hudson was awarded the RFP I saw a rendering of the
4 property. It was a different rendering that what we
5 see today. Can you explain what changed? Why, and I
6 mean, I don't know if anyone--people here have seen
7 this rendering. It was a much smaller building, or at
8 least it looked smaller. It was shorter. I don't
9 know. It was shorter and squatter. Was it a
10 different FAR? Was it a different total square
11 footage? Was it the same square footage? What
12 happened? What happened there? Why is there is a
13 change?

14 DAVID KRAMER: It was two things. One is
15 that it's very complicated zoning. There's
16 inclusionary housing bonus. There's the FAR that was
17 sold off to Far City [sic], and so during the RFP,
18 the zoning assumptions evolved and there was the
19 insight that there was more square feet available for
20 the library to take advantage of in terms of the sale
21 price, and so everybody's sale price increased
22 because the understanding was that there was more
23 floor area available, primarily through the
24 inclusionary housing bonus.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So the original
3 rendering was how many square feet, building gross
4 square foot?

5 DAVID KRAMER: I don't remember. It was
6 based on the original RFP. It was less. It was less,
7 and then on the design front what happens when we got
8 designated, the feedback was, "We like the economics.
9 We like the purchase price. We like Hudson. We like
10 Marvel. We're not in love with the design. Let's go
11 back and start from scratch," which really is the
12 right thing to do, because RFP's are not the best way
13 to comprehensively design a project.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Maybe. Okay,
15 sorry. Going back one step there. So--

16 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] And all the
17 bidders got the information that don't assume the FAR
18 is "x", assume it's "y."

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but Hudson
20 was selected under the previous assumption, right?

21 DAVID KRAMER: No, with the new updated
22 floor area assumptions.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So when Hudson was
24 announced, the rendering that it was announced with
25 was the current one and not the previous one?

2 DAVID KRAMER: I think we had done--we
3 had done multiple renderings. We had done a
4 rendering for the smaller FAR. We had done a
5 rendering with the larger--with a larger FAR.

6 LINDA JOHNSON: I'd like to just add
7 something here, because as we went through the RFP
8 process, the point of the process was to pick the
9 right partner and the right deal, not to pic the
10 design, and we were very clear about that with
11 everybody and at every step of every hearing, but it
12 was just a rendering, that it was not the ultimate
13 design of the building.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But it was a
15 rendering that reflected a certain amount of FAR,
16 correct? Yes?

17 DAVID KRAMER: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. So, my
19 question is, was Hudson selected when there was an
20 announcement between EDC, the library and Hudson that
21 Hudson won the RFP, they'd been selected, the
22 rendering that I think was put out there was that
23 initial one which reflected a lower--a smaller
24 building, an FAR, a smaller FAR.

2 DAVID KRAMER: It was our second
3 rendering, and I think we were pretty clear in all of
4 our comments that--and we said this very consistently
5 that the team was selected. Now the hard work begins
6 of designing the project.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, but when
8 Hudson was announced, when that announcement
9 happened, the amount that Hudson is paying to the
10 library, to the city of 52 million dollars that was
11 at that time that had already been determined,
12 correct?

13 DAVID KRAMER: Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, 52 million
15 dollars for the development of this building.

16 DAVID KRAMER: And all the respondents
17 were working off the same set of assumptions--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Okay-

19 -

20 DAVID KRAMER: as to what they could do.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I hear you. I hear
22 you. But what I'm asking is when Hudson--when a deal
23 was struck between EDC, the library and Hudson for 52
24 million dollars, that was for a building that was how
25 many gross square feet?

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2 DAVID KRAMER: That was for the current
3 square footage.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Not the previous
5 one.

6 DAVID KRAMER: Correct.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, because the
8 rendering went out as a previous.

9 DAVID KRAMER: Okay, so there were, from
10 my recollection, it's going back a year and half now,
11 there were two renderings. There was the initial
12 rendering that we submitted with the RFP for the
13 reduced square footage, for the initial square
14 footage number.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And how much was
16 that valued at?

17 LINDA JOHNSON: We didn't get numbers at
18 that value. As we went through the process we got to
19 the right--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] You
21 need to use--you need to speak in the microphone.

22 [cross-talk]

23 DAVID KRAMER: Yeah, no--I'm guessing it
24 was a number in the 30's. I don't know if any of my
25 colleagues here remember the number. Oh, it's 36?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thirty-six, well
3 that was the--okay, so that goes back to the
4 appraisal, right? So, the appraisal--

5 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] No, no, no.
6 [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: No?

8 DAVID KRAMER: The apprai--the appraisal
9 we've been looking at is from June of 2014, long
10 after the FAR changed, and that appraisal has the
11 right square footages. Just to be specific, what
12 we're talking about is 110,000 square feet of as-of-
13 right FAR,--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Yep.

15 DAVID KRAMER: which gets us to the 10
16 FAR, an additional 145,000 square feet of
17 inclusionary FAR--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
19 Right.

20 DAVID KRAMER: which can only be utilized
21 with a either 3.5 or 1.25 ratio for inclusionary
22 housing. So, what happened is we had an initial
23 rendering for the lower square footage where we bid
24 36 million dollars, and BPL and EDC had six or seven
25 renderings that they put online for everybody to see.

2 That was everybody's initial take, and then when as
3 the RFP evolved, and it was 15 months from the
4 initial RFP announcement to designation in September
5 of 2014 when we went through two administrations and
6 FAR assumption updates. So, we had submitted a
7 second rendering of the larger square footage, the
8 one we're dealing with now, which I think was what
9 was distributed at the announcement with the caveat
10 that this was not the final design, but you may be
11 confusing in your memory the initial renderings for
12 the smaller buildings.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Well, I mean, the
14 reason why I'm asking this is I want to make sure
15 that 52 million dollars--

16 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: is reflective of
18 the current square footage and not the previous
19 square footage.

20 DAVID KRAMER: Definitely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Question for EDC
22 about the RFP process. Why did EDC go with Hudson
23 versus other proposals?

24 JEFF NELSON: Sure. So, just backing up
25 and maybe talking through how the process evolved, I

2 think that would be helpful. So, we issued with the
3 RFP in June of 2013. We received 14 responses, and
4 the way our RFP process works we interview those
5 respondents in conjunction with the library. We ask
6 a series of follow-up questions, and we ask bids to
7 be resubmitted. We narrow down the list. I believe
8 it was to seven and then to three finalists. Of
9 those three finalists, we took two of them to
10 literally final contract to get a best and final
11 offer from them. So, at the point at which we signed
12 Hudson we had two respondents still in the running,
13 and Hudson, through a combination of the purchase
14 price, the delivery of the interim library space at
15 Lady of Lebanon, which had been identified at the
16 time, and the commitments it had made around
17 completion of the project and the schedule for
18 completion of that project presented the strongest
19 proposal for the library and for EDC, and that's how
20 the selection was made.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Did the inclusion
22 of "modern income affordable units" impact that
23 decision in any way?

24 JEFF NELSON: In terms of--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
3 Influence the decision?

4 JEFF NELSON: In terms of how the final
5 submissions played out, Hudson was able to offer a
6 comparable purchase price, but a greater number of
7 affordable units overall.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Affordable units,
9 but I'm specifically asking about--just so
10 everybody's clear here, there's a requirement for 55
11 units of affordable housing under the inclusionary
12 housing program. That's 55 maybe 61 units, somewhere
13 in there, that's for 80 percent or lower. In
14 addition to that, there are "moderate income units"
15 or workforce units, 29 at 100 percent of AMI and 24
16 at 165 percent of AMI. So, I just--just so everybody
17 understands what AMI is, it's the area median income
18 for the New York City metropolitan area. So that's
19 indexed to family of four. It's around 80 something
20 thousand, 82,000 a year for a family of four. So,
21 that's AMI. So, at a 100 percent of AMI it's an
22 apartment of affordable to a family of four making
23 80-something thousand a year, and for a 165 percent
24 of AMI, it's affordable for a family of four making
25 165 percent of that number. So, that's--I just want-

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2 -because that's an important distinction, because for
3 me, 165 percent of AMI is not affordable to--by
4 definition, your average New Yorker. Your average
5 New Yorker is actually lower than 100 percent of AMI
6 because that includes Westchester County and parts of
7 New Jersey and Nassau and Suffolk where the AMI's a
8 little bit higher. So, just to be clear, 165 AMI is
9 not affordable. It is "moderate" or "workforce" but
10 by my definition it's not affordable. So, anyway,
11 did the 165's and the 100's for that matter, that's
12 you know, 63 units, did they in any way, their
13 inclusion in anyway, influence EDC to select Hudson
14 over another proposal?

15 JEFF NELSON: There were comparable
16 proposals and Hudson's provided a greater number of
17 overall affordable units.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And by when you
19 say affordable units, you're counting the 165's,
20 right?

21 JEFF NELSON: So, stepping back I think,
22 you know--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
24 That's a yes or no question.

25

2 JEFF NELSON: If you look at the Housing
3 New York Plan, Council Member, I know we can talk
4 about workforce housing, but you know, there are over
5 30 percent of the households in the city earning what
6 we could consider workforce housing or rent burdened
7 as well, and if you look at the Mayor's Housing Plan,
8 there is a goal of delivering 200,000 units either
9 through preservation or new construction of
10 affordable housing. So, we were fortunate in this
11 project through the utilization of the inclusionary
12 zoning bonus, and keep in mind this was not a stated
13 goal in the RFP with the library, but we were
14 fortunate that through the IZ bonus Hudson was able
15 to deliver a number of units, and with respect to the
16 workforce housing there were additional units that
17 were delivered. They still count as affordable and
18 we can discuss whether that's appropriate
19 affordability or not, but met the--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] So,
21 the answer is--

22 JEFF NELSON: [interposing] greater number
23 of affordable units.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: The answer is yes,
25 you do count the 165's as affordable. That's-- was

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2 there another proposal that bid a higher cash amount
3 than this proposal?

4 JEFF NELSON: Our final responses were
5 within two percent of one another.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Two percent?

7 Okay. I am--

8 JEFF NELSON: [interposing] But when you
9 look at the--again, going back to the--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Well,
11 your final--okay, so that's your final--

12 JEFF NELSON: To the overall goals and
13 what we look for in terms of security and delivery of
14 a project, in whole we thought Hudson was the
15 strongest proposal.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, there was no
17 proposal that was more than two percent higher than
18 52 million. So, another million?

19 JEFF NELSON: In the two finalists that we
20 had.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: That's not what I
22 was asking. I was asking were there any proposals
23 that were--any proposals that were higher than two
24 percent higher than 52?

25

2 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, there was one. I
3 believe that there was one. We can confirm it, but
4 the likelihood of getting that building built we felt
5 was minimal at best, and the idea was not the most
6 dollars but the project that would actually get built
7 that would actually result in a new library for BPL.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. No, that's
9 understandable. I understand that there's a premium
10 base for security in the proposal, but I just want to
11 make clear that there was, and I would appreciate if
12 it's able to be shared with us, if there's no legal
13 reason why there's not, that you can't share with us,
14 we would appreciate knowing what that bid was and why
15 it wasn't selected actually? That would be helpful.

16 JEFF NELSON: We can follow up.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I'm going to turn
18 it over to my colleagues. I'm going to come back for
19 a second round of questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Council
21 Member Levin. I'm going to ask my colleagues to in
22 the spirit of trying to get through this hearing
23 which is now, based on the number of speakers,
24 scheduled to go quite late, I'm going to ask my
25 colleagues to observe the five-minute clock, and if

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2 there's a need for a second round we'll go back for a
3 second round. So, Council Member Crowley?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Thank you, Mr.
5 Chairman. Good afternoon. This is a public/private
6 partnership, so I'm very concerned about some of the
7 issues that were raised by Council Member Levin and
8 some of the stuff that I read, particularly in the
9 Daily News today which said that Brooklyn was getting
10 short-changed. It said that the property was worth
11 52, while possibly over 50 percent of what it sold
12 for, and sold for 52 million but that it could have
13 gotten more than 26 million dollars more if you look
14 at what the square footage sells for today. So, my
15 first question has to do with that, and I certainly
16 don't want to be rude, but I'm going to be watching
17 the clock too with your answers, because I have a few
18 questions as it relates to the overall partnership
19 here.

20 DAVID KRAMER: I mean, just very quickly,
21 I sort of alluded to in my initial reports. You
22 know, that report wasn't where the paper was written
23 on in terms of understanding the square footage, in
24 terms of understanding the floor area. They included
25 square footage that had already been sold to Forrest

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2 City [sp?]. They didn't understand inclusionary
3 housing and how you have to generate inclusionary
4 housing to enjoy the floor area. It's 110,000 square
5 feet of as-of-right and a 145,000 where you have to
6 build a 50,000 square foot building with affordable
7 housing to enjoy that 145,000. That wasn't deducted.
8 If you look at what they thought the land price per
9 square foot, it's much lower than what we're paying.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right. Okay, so
11 this partnership wouldn't be allowed if not was for
12 the city saying you could purchase our land and then
13 we're going to work together on what you're going to
14 do with that land, but from what Council Member Levin
15 said, there's some--a lot of the folks in the
16 community feel like the library is not large enough.
17 The amount of residents in that particular part of
18 Brooklyn Heights will be inundated with a lot more
19 families needing to use overcrowded public schools,
20 and the affordable housing while it's needed all over
21 the city, one would think that you would give it to
22 the area where you're making the impact of the
23 density in housing, yet you sort of doing what the
24 mayor does not want to happen from his current
25 rezoning plans that he's putting forth to the

2 Council. You're sort of building a poor door as they
3 would say or affordable housing in another community,
4 and all the while, although this is a private
5 public/private partnership, there's no project labor
6 agreement, and there are a lot of people here today
7 that feel that there will be substandard construction
8 in the development, and just, you know, my concern is
9 this wouldn't happen if not for the City Council to
10 allow it to happen. So, what type of assurance that
11 we're--what type of assurance with the Council get
12 that nobody will be killed while this project is
13 being developed? Somebody was just killed yesterday
14 on a construction site in Staten Island. It's the
15 fourteenth death that we've seen on unsafe
16 construction sites in this city. So, there's an
17 alarming increase in safety hazards that I'm
18 concerned about, and so often that goes with jobs
19 that are not setting forth standards in regard to
20 training for the construction workers. So, is there
21 going to be a project labor agreement, first
22 question, and how could you reassure the Council that
23 you will be having people build this building, both
24 the building in Brooklyn Heights and also your other
25 building, with good, trained workforce?

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2 DAVID KRAMER: Alright. And you had a
3 third question about the site of the housing. Let me
4 just answer that very quickly, which is we're just
5 following the rules, and there is inclusionary
6 housing in the zoning resolution, and the zoning
7 resolution treats neighborhoods as within the
8 Community Board, and we looked throughout Community
9 Board Two to find affordable housing and it was very
10 difficult to find the 80,000 square feet of FAR that
11 we bought.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Right. Just--

13 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] I'll get on
14 to the --

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]
16 Before you finish, what is the going rate of the
17 square foot for a condo, brand new condo in Brooklyn
18 Heights? What is it selling for? What are you
19 imagining you'll get with your extra 144,000 square
20 feet of condo sales that you'll be able to--

21 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Sure.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: do with this
23 development?

24

25

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2 DAVID KRAMER: I mean, if you look at the
3 comps, you know, we think it's somewhere around
4 1,500-plus a square foot.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: You're getting
6 that for used units in Long Island City. You're
7 getting close to 2,000. So, I know that Brooklyn
8 Heights sells for more money than Long Island City.

9 DAVID KRAMER: There are at most a handful
10 of comps at 2,000 dollars a square foot in Brooklyn
11 Heights.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: So, it's very
13 rare. It's very rare to have this development
14 opportunity in Brooklyn Heights that the city is
15 giving you, for Library--

16 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] I just
17 answered a different question.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: There isn't much
19 development happening right there because land is
20 scarce.

21 DAVID KRAMER: Well, I think one of the
22 reasons there's been a swirl of conversation about
23 this project is that people feel there is
24 development, whether it's Pier [sic] House or Pier
25 Six or this project, so--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: This is a
3 substantial building.

4 DAVID KRAMER: Sure.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: You're going to
6 have over 240,000 square feet of residential condos
7 that will go for sale, and all likelihood they'll
8 sell for greater than 2,500 dollars a square foot.

9 DAVID KRAMER: No, I think what you're
10 getting at is that for the city to get--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing] I
12 just really--

13 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] the best
14 bang--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: [interposing]
16 don't want to be rude, just looking at the--

17 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] for the buck.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: forty seconds.
19 What will be the labor standards in this development?

20 DAVID KRAMER: Just to finish on the
21 condominium, you back into a land price. The land
22 price is based upon what you think you can get for
23 condominiums, and the best way for the city to get a
24 bang for the buck is to A, have a spirited
25 competitive bid, B, have an appraisal, and C, have a

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2 reappraisal before closing to make sure that you had
3 the checks and balances to make sure that we're not
4 getting away with a below-market bid. We stretched
5 and really went so aggressively to try and win this
6 bid by going with a very high number, which is much
7 higher than the appraisal that the city got, and they
8 gave a second bite at the apple with the second
9 reappraisal. As for construction labor, Hudson has
10 built numerous projects, 8,000 units you saw. We
11 have five projects under construction. We finish
12 projects all the time. You can check out our history.
13 You can check out our labor standards, our building
14 standards. We take safety incredibly seriously, and
15 we stand by our record.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Good. So, what
17 I would encourage Hudson to do to reassure certainly
18 myself as a Council Member who will be voting
19 potentially on this project is that there is a
20 project labor agreement with a level of safety
21 standards so we will ensure not only the people who
22 are working on that construction site will be safe,
23 but also the community around the construction site.

24 DAVID KRAMER: So, we have no problem with
25 safety standards. A project labor agreement goes far

2 beyond safety standards, but we're happy to talk
3 safety.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CROWLEY: Usually it's
5 just a level of training that is required, whether it
6 be through apprentice or pre-apprentice programs, and
7 the ability to make sure that their safety and OSHA
8 standards tied to that training.

9 DAVID KRAMER: Yes, it's apprenticeship
10 training programs that are approved by the State
11 Department, which severely limits who we can work
12 with, and as I said in my comments, we're very
13 focused on local hiring and MWBE hiring, which
14 sometimes is inconsistent with those restrictions.

15 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Council
16 Member Crowley. We've been joined by Council Members
17 Rodriguez, Mealy and the Land Use Chair, Council
18 Member David Greenfield and Council Member Lander has
19 questions.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you, Chair
21 Cohen.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I'm sorry, Council
23 Member Lander, could the panel, could you please
24 identify yourself again when you--as you answer a
25

2 question, just give your name for the purpose of a
3 transcript, thank you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you, Chair
5 Cohen, I'm Council Member Lander. So, in his opening
6 statement, Council Member Levin made what I think is
7 exactly the right framing for the way to think about
8 this. He said he can't support this deal, this
9 proposal unless it's a good deal for the local
10 community and the Brooklyn Public Library system, and
11 I'm going to defer to him entirely on what's a good
12 deal for the local community that he represents. I
13 think that second question, what's a good deal for
14 the Brooklyn Public Library is important to the
15 entire council and obviously especially to the
16 Brooklyn members, and as I've said before, the
17 reasons for me to think it makes sense to take the
18 value of the air rights above that branch and turn it
19 into resources for our library are because of how
20 dire the need for our library system is. You
21 mentioned the 300 dollar, million dollar figure. I
22 know you've talked before about 80-plus million in
23 essentially emergency repair needs. Those are air
24 conditioning in branches that are supposed to be the
25 cooling centers for seniors where the air

2 conditioning doesn't work, and then we know there's a
3 lot of need throughout the system now. If we had
4 been doing our job as a city over the last decades
5 and putting the money that we needed to put into the
6 library with city capital, then we wouldn't have 300
7 million dollars of unfunded capital repair needs, and
8 I have taken my--even though I've doggedly fought the
9 last six years to get more capital dollars into the
10 system, I'll take my share of the lumps that we have
11 not--and that's decades of neglect, and we just maybe
12 a little bit started to correct for it, but not
13 nearly enough. So, I want all my share of getting us
14 here and I hope others will as well. I wish we
15 weren't. I wish we had put the money in, and this
16 wasn't how we needed to fund our library system.
17 Having said that and owning my responsibility, given
18 how dire that need is and how strongly I feel about
19 supporting the library system, I think that is the
20 reason to--for us to entertain supporting this
21 proposal are those resources, but then I do think
22 it's important to really push on Steve's second
23 question, or Council Member Levin's second question,
24 which is about understanding the value that we're
25 getting. And what I'll say is this, obviously on the

one hand for us to get it this way, there has to be enough profit in it for a private developer to do it or else we wouldn't get any value at all. On the other hand, we have to ask the question how those values are being shared and distributed, and is the public getting enough of that value relative to what private value there is? And even though there was a robust bidding process, and this was up near the top of the bids, although it sounds to me like not quite at them. Those are questions that we have to scrutinize, and some of that is about is this a fair market value and is it the best bid possible, and some of it is how do we think about the share between public value and private value on a deal like this, and to me, there's meaningful public value here to be sure, but I think I share Steve's concern that it has got to be just absolutely as much as we can possibly get or we are not doing our jobs here. So, I mean, a couple of questions. First, I just wanted to understand, you say 65 million. That includes you're counting ten million for the core and shell build-out of the branch, and then there's also another 12 million of the 52 that's going to pay for the fit out

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2 of the interior. I'm just trying to really
3 understand where, you know, what we're counting.

4 LINDA JOHNSON: Yes. So, there's 10
5 million, which is essentially the condominium that
6 will revert back to the city, and then there's the
7 cost of fitting that building out, and Brooklyn
8 Public Library will use proceeds from the sale of the
9 property to then fit out the Brooklyn Heights branch.
10 It will become one of the projects that we will
11 undertake as a result of having raised these dollars.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, just to be
13 clear then, because it feels to me like we can say
14 three different things and they're all the same, but
15 I just want to make sure I understand it. You could
16 say it's 65 million dollars that's being paid of
17 which 22 is going for the Brooklyn Heights Library
18 Branch, two and a half for the interim, and 40 for
19 other branches.

20 LINDA JOHNSON: Right.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: You're calling
22 that 52 because the build-out of that 10 million and
23 the other 2.7 are being covered by the developer
24 separate from what's being pad.

25 LINDA JOHNSON: In cash, right.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay. But even at
3 that 65 million as you've seen, there was a story
4 today in the Daily News that there's questions being
5 raised about whether that's really a market value,
6 and I think this goes to Council Member Crowley's
7 questions, and you can't blame people for asking this
8 question, because the values in downtown Brooklyn are
9 obscene. That is what they are. No one who's
10 thinking could I afford a place to live is looking at
11 those prices and thinking, hey, I could afford them.
12 So, that's what we're talking about is values that
13 have hit the stratosphere of obscene, and that's just
14 what it is. I mean, that's how real estate works. On
15 the other hand, you know, I guess what I'm going to
16 ask is for you to respond to the Daily News article
17 that ran today. To me, it says you should pay more
18 money to the Brooklyn Public Library system before we
19 support this deal.

20 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, I'll start and I'll
21 let the developer, the expert on real estate chime
22 in, but the way you establish fair market value is
23 you put something on the market and see what it
24 brings, and the fact that we had such a robust
25 process that was, you know, undertaken by the

2 Economic Development Corporation essentially
3 established what fair market value was. As the
4 process went along, various developers came in with
5 bids at various different rates and the highest
6 bidders were--got to the end of the game, and at the
7 time, actually, it was well in excess of what people
8 anticipated we would get because it was an aggressive
9 and robust process. You want to talk about the--[off
10 mic]

11 DAVID KRAMER: I mean, I would just say
12 it's a silly report that was commissioned by folks
13 who oppose the project, and you know, they're allowed
14 to do that. They want to oppose the project. They
15 hired some guy who has a P.H.D. in his title to write
16 it. You know, we'd be happy to point by point rebut
17 all of the inaccuracies. I mean, I'm a little
18 disappointed the Daily News thought this was
19 newsworthy, but we're happy to point by point review
20 all of the square footage inaccuracies, and if you
21 look at what the report thinks the value of the land
22 in Brooklyn is worth, our number far exceeds that,
23 and they were wrong with all of their deductions and
24 math.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, I would like
3 to see it. I mean, I want to support this, but I want
4 to support it at the most value for the public
5 library system--

6 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Sure.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: that we can
8 possibly get and that is appropriate here, and
9 exactly because it went up some. Look, the numbers
10 have been going up in this remarkably escalating way.
11 I think there's every reason to believe that if and
12 when these units come online they'll sell for a lot
13 more than the price that units are selling today, and
14 our job is to capture as absolutely every last penny
15 we can for the public, and it is hard not to worry. I
16 guess what I would say is I don't think this is
17 unique to this deal. In almost every public deal I've
18 seen I feel like the public doesn't get top dollar.
19 I feel like the prices keep going up, and the
20 residual value winds up going to the developer who's
21 taking some risk and winds up benefitting from market
22 increases, and the public doesn't get the maximum
23 value, and I'm not persuaded that's where we are
24 today, and I think if you could give us the
25 additional information it'll help us.

2 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, I think you
3 mentioned the risk and it is exactly that, and so
4 there are many projects too which actually end up
5 with the developer like the Donnell Library where
6 things go wrong and, you know, the developer takes on
7 risk that's--so the library's not in the business of
8 taking on risks like this. We have a fiduciary
9 responsibility. We're trying to actually honor that
10 responsibility by taking care of our buildings, and
11 as you've said, in a perfect world this isn't what we
12 would be doing, but in the hand that we've been dealt
13 we feel like we have really gotten a lot for the
14 property, way more than we anticipated. We think
15 that even now this many months after the RFP process
16 that the property is still valued at a very high--
17 that the value of the deal is still very high
18 relative to what's selling, and there'll be another
19 stage in this process where there'll be another
20 appraisal.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And I assume that
22 Council Member Levin may ask a little more about that
23 phase of the process and what happens with that
24 appraisal and so forth. I'll defer it to the Council
25 Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair, thank you.

2 DAVID KRAMER: I mean, just to add, to
3 give comfort to the City Council, the leverage
4 environment of folks bidding on RFP's is completely
5 one-sided towards EDC in that they'll negotiate up to
6 the very end with more than one party. There's a lot
7 of like, "I don't know. I don't know, Hudson. You're
8 not the high bidder. Sharpen your pencil. I don't
9 know, Hudson, let's get your best and final. Oh,
10 let's get your best and final, and how we doing on
11 the affordable housing?" It was a very, very
12 strenuous bid, and so if anybody was taking advantage
13 of anybody during the RFP process, the City Council
14 should know that EDC has all the leverage in these
15 matters.

16 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Council
17 Member Lander. Public Advocate?

18 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Thank you, Mr.
19 Chair. So, let me begin by saying the following;
20 downtown Brooklyn is booming, but just across the
21 street in downtown Brooklyn we have the lowest
22 census, lowest income census in the entire city,
23 representing Ingersoll, Whitman and Farragut public
24 housing, and they have been promised and given empty
25 promises and strung along by developers for years,

2 and we see the consequences all around us,
3 unemployment, violence, health indicators, and we
4 also see a significant number of children who are
5 living with grandmothers because their parents can no
6 longer afford to keep them in their homes. And so, I
7 say all this to say that we've got to do a better job
8 with all of the stakeholders, and this is really not
9 against the Hudson Group, but all developers and all
10 stakeholders in downtown Brooklyn who represent
11 business interest and the developers, we've got to do
12 a better job in reaching across Flatbush Avenue and
13 providing benefits to the residents of Ingersoll,
14 Whitman and Farragut public housing to bring them out
15 of poverty. They are in an island unto themselves,
16 and there are skyscrapers surrounding all of them,
17 and it's a shame that we are not doing anything to
18 address their needs. That being said, I'm glad that
19 you are looking at Whitman public housing, Whitman
20 Public Library to get some resources as well as in
21 Bushwick, as well as the library that I care a lot
22 about, as you know, and the library that I saved as a
23 Council Member, the Pacific Street Library, but I
24 hope that we would look at East New York and
25 Brownsville as well to address their needs. The best

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2 way to address poverty is education, and it begins
3 with, again, providing resources to our libraries. I
4 want to again echo the sentiments of Council Member
5 Lander. As the Council Member, as you know, I
6 received minimal amount of public dollars as a City
7 Council Member for whatever reason and not in the
8 position to provide funds to the libraries that were
9 in the 35th Councilmatic [sic] District, and I do it
10 through negotiations. I hope that you would provide
11 funds to Whitman as well as Clinton Hill Library,
12 Pacific Library, the Bushwick Library, and include
13 East New York and Brownsville. EDC, though the
14 gentleman indicated that EDC negotiates a strong
15 bargain, I disagree. I think EDC can do a better job.
16 I think EDC needs to negotiate for greater
17 affordability in this city, and that means you need
18 to reject the AMI and look at community AMI's, and
19 you need to address unit sizes. The fact that this
20 development only has for the most part studios and
21 one bedrooms is unacceptable. Two, the design of
22 these buildings is inferior to that of Brooklyn
23 Heights. This is primarily bricks and mortar, and I
24 think that we can do better in Clinton Hill.

25 [applause]

2 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: No, no, no, no,
3 no. Don't do that. You're taking away from my time.
4 Don't do that. I don't need that. We can do better
5 in Clinton Hill. I would hope that you would consider
6 a better design in my beloved Clinton Hill. Even
7 though I'm citywide, I still live not too far from
8 here, and two, I hope that we would consider retail,
9 because we need more retail to create more activity
10 on Fulton Street and Atlantic Avenue. This is nice,
11 but it's--it leaves a lot to be desired. It's not
12 very attractive, and we need more two and three
13 bedrooms. New York City and particularly Brooklyn is
14 booming with children. You can't walk down Fulton
15 Street and Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn Heights without
16 baby carriages. We need more apartments for children
17 and families if we want to make sure and keep
18 families in New York City, in particularly in
19 Brooklyn because they're relocated. I know I'm
20 rushing through my comments because we have--we don't
21 have a lot of time. My question to Brooklyn Public
22 Libraries is, in the past when I was a City Council
23 Member you indicated to me, if I'm not mistaken, that
24 the Brooklyn Public Library was not large enough to
25 accommodate any additional--did not have enough space

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2 for its current operations, and so my question to you
3 is how can we accommodate the Business Library if in
4 fact there are space limitations?

5 LINDA JOHNSON: The Central Library?

6 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Yeah.

7 LINDA JOHNSON: How can we accommodate
8 that in the Central Library? We're actually
9 undergoing a master plan right now, developing a
10 master plan with architects. We've already allocated
11 space for the Business and Career Library. We've
12 gotten all of the back of the house operations that
13 used to occur at Brooklyn Public Library, are now
14 being accomplished actually in Long Island City in a
15 joint venture with New York Public Library. So we've
16 taken out a lot of the things that happened in
17 Central that were not public facing, but were back of
18 the house, and are now figuring how to use the space
19 in Central Library in a way that has a better ratio
20 of publicly accessible space.

21 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: Will there be a
22 permanent revenue stream to maintain the capital
23 needs of the new library?

24 LINDA JOHNSON: So, the--one of the
25 beauties of the new library is that the mechanical

2 systems are outside of the core and shell, and that's
3 why there is such a high ratio of space that's
4 available to the public as opposed to space that's
5 not, and the building itself, the mechanicals for
6 itself, will actually be taken care of by the
7 residential condo.

8 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: My last two
9 comments is we live in a city which increasingly is
10 becoming more segregated than ever, and I abhor
11 segregation, and I know that there are a number of
12 factors. Stop the clicking, please. There's a
13 number of factors, and one of the factors,
14 unfortunately, is when government promotes
15 segregation. I abhor off-site affordable housing. I
16 believe that we should all live together and we
17 should all live under one building, but I recognize
18 at the same time, I've heard from the residents in
19 Clinton Hill. They stop me in my neighborhood, and
20 they want more affordable housing because there's a
21 crisis in affordable housing. I can't question you on
22 your numbers. So, if this gets us more affordable
23 housing, then I guess there is public benefits to it,
24 but again, it has to be in perpetuity, and again let
25 me go back to it has to be affordable. The AMI's and

2 the unit size and the breakouts that I have before me
3 unfortunately will not work for Fort Greene and
4 Clinton Hill. I know the neighborhood is changing
5 dramatically, but we still have pockets of working
6 class people who are desperately looking for
7 affordable housing and they want to make sure that
8 those units are appropriate to their families. And
9 then lastly, let me just say that I too want to echo
10 the sentiments of Council Member Crowley, and I
11 believe that given all of the accidents that we've
12 seen in downtown Brooklyn as a result of nonunion
13 work that really this project should be built because
14 of its size it should be built union, but at the same
15 time we should make sure that the residents of
16 Ingersoll, Whitman and Farragut are included in that
17 project, and so if you can respond to that that would
18 be greatly appreciated. I tried to do that in five
19 minutes.

20 DAVID KRAMER: Thank you for all your
21 feedback, and you know, we are working to have a
22 local hiring process. There is sometimes all sorts
23 of conflicts with union jobs and local hiring as I
24 alluded to earlier, and we're prepared to talk about
25

2 safety and construction safety for as long as we want
3 to talk about it.

4 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JAMES: And then, again,
5 I support Council Member Levin and will defer to
6 Council Member Levin, but I too joining with him in
7 urging that annex and/or school for PS8 be included
8 in the project, but again, I would hope that you
9 would give due consideration to all of my comments,
10 primarily the offsite housing, the unit size, AMI's,
11 local hiring, and the fact that we definitely need a
12 school as PS8 continues to grow. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Madam
14 Public Advocate. Just I just want to go back to a
15 point that Council Member Levin brought up regarding
16 guarantees incase God forbid this goes south. Whose
17 52 million dollars are you going to give the library?

18 DAVID KRAMER: I don't know if I have it
19 in my wallet right now. You know, it's a mix of
20 equity and debt, and the debt will be--

21 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: [interposing] Are
22 those creditors going to want to lean on the real
23 estate? I mean, are you guaranteeing the loans with--
24 in other words, who has prior--if you go--if you
25 don't pay library--if you don't pay your lenders and

2 you don't build a library, who has priority on the
3 land?

4 DAVID KRAMER: The lender will want the
5 right to bring in a substitute borrower to get the
6 approval of EDC. You know, these are always
7 complicated matters because everybody wants their
8 rights. So, if Hudson goes south the lender doesn't
9 want to say, well, I guess I lose my collateral
10 because Hud's going south, so EDC, how about you give
11 me a certain period of time to bring in a substitute
12 developer that approved by EDC that can complete the
13 job so, you know, so that the lender has collateral.

14 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: So, the lender has
15 the right to step into your shoes?

16 DAVID KRAMER: Oh, absolutely, and bring
17 in a substitute developer that's acceptable to the
18 city.

19 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Has there been a
20 discussion about a bond of some kind that could
21 guarantee that if the project goes fault [sic] that
22 there's money put aside to make sure that the people
23 in Brooklyn Heights get a library?

24 DAVID KRAMER: So, there are all sorts of
25 ways to go on this matter. So, sometimes you'll hire

2 a construction company with a fixed price, general
3 construction contract which has some more security
4 than a construction manager who is hiring the
5 subcontractors but doesn't have the same risk. There
6 are payment and performance bonds or there are new
7 programs such as a subcontractor default insurance
8 program that sort of play the same role, and in each
9 job it's a little different whether we have a bond,
10 whether it's required by a lender, whether there are
11 certain subcontractors that are more important to
12 guarantee their performance, and others, usually that
13 has to do with things like the façade.

14 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Despite the tool
15 basket, are we going to know definitely what tools
16 are going to be in place, what mix you're going to
17 use to guarantee, to ensure the people of Brooklyn
18 that they're going to have a library at the end of
19 this day regardless of whether the economy goes up,
20 the economy goes down. I don't think it can be
21 subject to those kind of--

22 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Yeah, so I
23 mean, those safeguards are in the contract in terms
24 of our providing completion guarantees to both the
25 lender and to the city, and there are certain

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2 financial requirements about what kind of lender can
3 lend on the project so it's defined as an
4 institutional lender. I mean, in this case, you know,
5 our interests are aligned. I want to see the
6 projected completed. I'm the guarantor.

7 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I understand. Thank
8 you. Council Member Levin? We've been joined by
9 Council Member Cumbo.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you, Council
11 Member.

12 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Oh, I'm sorry, you--
13 I'm sorry, I'm going to go to Council Member Treyger
14 first before we go back to Council Member Levin.
15 Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Thank you.
17 Thank you, Chair Cohen. I want to just begin by
18 saying that it's obvious that the input and the
19 feelings of the local Council Member certainly weighs
20 very heavily with us as is tradition in the Council,
21 but I just would like to say a few things and also
22 ask some questions as well. The first question I
23 have is just a technical question to EDC. What is
24 your role in this, and why is EDC involved in this
25 process?

2 JEFF NELSON: Sure. So, EDC essentially
3 acts as an intermediary between the city and the
4 ultimate purchaser. The--

5 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] [off mic] He
6 doesn't understand that the city owns the building.

7 JEFF NELSON: The city--so, stepping
8 back, the City of New York is the fee owner of the
9 property. It owns the land right now in which the
10 library is situated. In a way in which the city can
11 dispose of property is through essentially a
12 negotiated sale that EDC handles, and so when you
13 look at how the property actually is transferred, it
14 goes from the city through EDC or affiliated entities
15 and then ultimately to Hudson.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: The reason why I
17 ask is because the district I represent was really
18 promised a whole lot of different things back in 2009
19 by EDC in a Coney Island rezoning, and there were
20 glitzy pictures and photographs and presentations of
21 what Coney Island was going to look like if the
22 rezoning went through and all these great things.
23 Just to bring you up to speed, the main bank, Chase
24 on Mermaid Avenue, is closing down at the end of the
25 year. We don't have a clothing store in my

2 neighborhood. We don't even have a bakery now in my
3 neighborhood. So, for me, we have to focus on the
4 basics of people, basic needs of people, and so
5 forgive me that there is a trust deficit with
6 residents on the ground and with government
7 officials. So, that's why I do have to question, you
8 know, EDC's role and EDC's commitment and historical
9 inaccuracies in some parts of the city, because I see
10 there's a lot of energy and attention being paid
11 here, which I'm not, you know, that's for the
12 community to decide and the members to decide, but
13 you have to also finish what you've started in other
14 parts of this city. You have to make sure that
15 communities get everything that was promised them as
16 well, retail shops, housing that meets the needs of
17 today's workforce, not 20, 30 years from now but
18 today. So, I just want to begin by saying that. The
19 next thing I'd like to ask to President Johnson and I
20 appreciate your responsiveness you had, how much did
21 the City of New York commit capital wise to the
22 Brooklyn Public Library system this past budget?

23 LINDA JOHNSON: Fifteen million dollars.

24

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Fifteen million
3 dollars, and you mention that you have a 300 million
4 dollar capital unmet need overall, is that correct?

5 LINDA JOHNSON: That's correct. Those
6 numbers are at least a year old, so--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So, when we hear
8 government leaders talk about how much they love
9 their libraries and how much they appreciate their
10 libraries and take photo ops by their libraries, 300
11 million dollar need and only a 15 dollar commitment,
12 is that correct?

13 LINDA JOHNSON: That's correct.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So, we need to
15 question our government leaders some more, because
16 there's a difference between words and actions, and I
17 have a question about how much would this--I was
18 speaking to my--looks like an Apple store. How much
19 would this proposal cost without this deal? How much
20 would building something like this cost without this
21 deal moving forward? Is there any figure to the
22 library?

23 LINDA JOHNSON: The idea of knocking the
24 library down and building something there without a
25 residential tower above it, 22 million dollars I'm

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2 being told. I don't--again, it's not my area of
3 expertise, but 22 million dollars.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Around 22
5 million dollars. So, obviously if the City of New
6 York--

7 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] That's
8 without land cost.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Right, but if
10 the City of New York committed to its commitment to
11 support our libraries, you wouldn't even have to do
12 this.

13 LINDA JOHNSON: That's right.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: So--

15 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] Well, let
16 me just--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Yes.

18 LINDA JOHNSON: It's the caveat. In
19 addition to building a great library in Brooklyn
20 Heights, this project affords us the ability to take
21 care of 40 million dollars of capital need elsewhere
22 in the borough. So, it would--the 22 million dollars
23 would take care of the problems in Brooklyn Heights.
24 It would be fabulous, but it would still leave me
25

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2 with this 300 million dollar or actually 290 million
3 dollar deficit all over the borough.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TREYGER: Yeah, I'm just
5 highlighting the fact that you're dealing with, you
6 know, what we've heard from colleagues, decades of
7 neglect. So, this is not really an attack so much on
8 the library system. This is really evidence of the
9 neglect of government for many years, and the Borough
10 President made a point in his recommendation
11 questioning even the structure of the library system
12 and how whether it should be a mayoral agency or city
13 agency. Even agencies that we have today are crying
14 poverty. So, this is something that we need to take
15 very serious of the precedent that it sets moving
16 forward, but also fulfilling our needs to the
17 libraries of today, not just 20, 30 years from now,
18 but the needs of people in the libraries of today. I
19 thank the Chair for his time.

20 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Council
21 Member Treyger. Now, Council Member Levin.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, thank you, Mr.
23 Chair. So, I just actually want to go back to his
24 line of questions, just about exactly how it stacks
25 up in terms of who ultimately has--if this deal were

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2 to go belly up, whose rights are protected first? So,
3 like--so, is there a deed rest--is there a deed--

4 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: In the conveyance
6 of the deed is there a deed restriction that goes to
7 you and your lenders and partners that their
8 interests are secondary to the public's interest, or
9 how does that work? Can you lay that out for--

10 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] The--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] us in
12 very--as clear plain English as you can?

13 DAVID KRAMER: The deed requirement
14 includes the--the deed requirement requires Hudson to
15 complete the project and complete the library.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. If that
17 doesn't happen, right, then do--say there's a
18 bankruptcy, say there's something where something
19 goes wrong where everybody has to recoup their
20 investment. Whose ultimately--do your lenders and
21 your partners have first go at their debt vis-a-vi
22 the city? Who has the first right as an interested
23 party in that instance in the property?

24 DAVID KRAMER: You know, so if there's a
25 problem, there's a notice of default that a lender

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2 will issue and you have a cure period to cure the
3 default. And so, you know, Hudson would scramble
4 around to cure the default, and let's say we don't
5 cure the default.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Say you don't cure
7 the default.

8 DAVID KRAMER: So, then the lender has the
9 right to kick us out, bring in another developer, get
10 approval from the city, and the city is the one
11 that's sitting there with 52 million dollars and with
12 the right to have the property revert back to the
13 city if the performance isn't completed.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And so if that
15 remedy doesn't work, say you can't cure it, a new
16 developer brought in--would not--cannot perform or
17 can't meet the standards of EDC, what then--what
18 recourse does the lender then have in that instance?

19 JEFF NELSON: They would have to find
20 someone else.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And they can find--
22 --and that goes on forever?

23 JEFF NELSON: Ultimately the interests
24 are aligned here, though, because--

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Well,
3 no, no, let's game it out--

4 JEFF NELSON: [interposing] the city has a
5 desire to finish the project.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: What if they just,
7 you know, their--

8 JEFF NELSON: The lender has the desire--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
10 remedy is to find--

11 JEFF NELSON: [interposing] and--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
13 Excuse me. I'm sorry, wait, wait. Hold on. Their
14 remedy is to continue to find somebody else or they
15 have the right to recoup their money from the city?

16 DAVID KRAMER: I mean, we'll share the
17 deed. I mean, it's a limited period time because it
18 can't go on forever, and at some point the city can
19 kick the lender out.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And the lender's
21 out?

22 DAVID KRAMER: Yeah.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay, and that
24 ultimately would--that would be that--

25

2 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] And the deed
3 reverts back to the city, and this is consistent
4 with, you know, most types of EDC deals where there's
5 a requirement to build something that involves the
6 public.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I want to ask
8 about this issue of the union versus nonunion. The--
9 from EDC's--first question's for EDC. Does EDC have
10 a position on when there is a public asset like this,
11 public--this is a, you know, the development rights
12 belong to the City of New York, and just to be clear,
13 they belong to the--they belong--I know this is a
14 library. The library's on it. This is a library
15 deal, but ultimately this is a public asset. It
16 belongs to the city. It belongs to the tax payers,
17 not just an entity that is, you know, a quasi-
18 government, just to be clear. Does EDC have a
19 position across the board for when it is appropriate
20 to require prevailing wage or union for the
21 construction of a project and when it's not? Because
22 like for example, eight blocks away or whatever at
23 pier six, that is as of now, is a--that's a Brooklyn
24 Bridge Park which is a quasi-governmental agency,
25 right? But that deal is slated to be a union trade's

2 construction deal. Now, five blocks up from there
3 pier one is not. Now, the difference between those
4 two is that pier one was under the Bloomberg
5 Administration and pier six was under the de Blasio
6 Administration, but this is under the de Blasio
7 Administration, under EDC. Does EDC have a position
8 on whether this is--whether-- because this isn't just
9 a private--keep in mind, like, you know, the Council
10 when we have--we do ULURPs right, and when oftentimes
11 there's some private deal that happens and we'll here
12 from the trades, and they'll say that private deal,
13 that should be union, right? So, whatever it is,
14 Domino or what, you know. That's something that
15 Building Trades, Build Up NYC, what have you will say
16 that that should be a union deal. This is different
17 than a private deal because it's not a private deal.
18 This is-- the seller is the City of New York. So, is
19 there a policy from EDC on this?

20 JEFF NELSON: There's no policy. The
21 projects that we have run the gamut based on how a
22 developer chooses to approach construction. What I
23 can say is with respect obviously to things such as
24 living wage, prevailing wage all of our projects
25 follow the laws, the law and the mayor's executive

2 order and to the extent that that comes into play.

3 Certainly Hudson would be obligated to do that just

4 as any other developer will.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I should hope so. I

6 should hope that they're not going to be building

7 illegally. So, that's pretty low bar honestly.

8 You're saying they're not allowed to do like illegal

9 labor practices. That's good to know. But I mean, I

10 would expect that there's more consistency, because

11 as I said, what makes this different from pier six?

12 Like, why is this a different standard than pier six

13 is? Pier six is a labor deal, right? Its cost of

14 construction can't be that much different on pier

15 six. Maybe it's more expensive on pier six, but it

16 can't be--certainly I don't see why it would be, you

17 know, lower. So why--what's--explain.

18 JEFF NELSON: I mean, I can't speak to

19 the details of pier six. I can simply say that EDC

20 doesn't have a policy on union labor.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay. I would, you

22 know, I would hope that there would be a little bit

23 more consistency on this particularly from this

24 Administration. I wanted to ask just--I want to get

25 a little bit more, and we don't need to go ad nauseam

2 on this, but I would like to know how the number was
3 arrived at in maybe a little bit more detail than has
4 been put out there in terms of the purchase price,
5 the 52 million dollars. So, and--so, just to be
6 clear, folks, there is--this deal can be divided into
7 two separate chunks, right? You have your as-of-
8 right is 110,000 square feet, and there has to be
9 library core and shell in there and that has to be
10 covered under the purchase price, and then in
11 addition to that--so, that's 110,000 square feet of
12 developable square footage, and then on top of that
13 you have an inclusionary bonus and that is 145,000
14 square feet. It's bigger than the as-of-right. It's
15 a lot. A hundred and 45,000 residential square feet
16 is a lot. It's big and it's valuable. And so that
17 has an inherent value in it. Now, that carries with
18 it a requirement to build the affordable housing.
19 That's what we call the inclusionary bonus. Right
20 now we're considering mandating inclusionary as part
21 of every deal in select areas of New York City. So
22 there's--you know, that's right--right now there's an
23 option to do inclusionary. Developers can take it or
24 leave it, but this Administration has put forward is
25 mandatory inclusionary moving forward. Now, this

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2 wouldn't be covered under that because we're still in
3 the optional area here, but that 145,000 square feet
4 is valuable. It has an inherent value, and so I
5 wanted, what I would like for you all to explain to
6 the public how you arrived at 52 million dollars both
7 with the value of the as-of-right FAR and the value
8 of the bonus and how the requirement of affordable
9 housing fits into that, because I think it's
10 instructive for everybody to hear how you all arrived
11 at that.

12 JEFF NELSON: I'll take a shot it at
13 first from the EDC side. I think it goes back to
14 running a competitive process, 14 bids, a number of
15 qualified firms all working off of the same set of
16 assumptions about what they could do at the site, and
17 through that process people revised their bids and
18 Hudson ultimately delivered the best value for the
19 city. I want to amend one answer to an earlier
20 question that you had regarding the bids. So, once
21 we got to the conversation about the amendment to the
22 RFP process and clarifying the amount of inclusionary
23 that was available, so once that information was
24 shared, Hudson's bid was--the two finalists were

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2 within two percent of one another. There was not a
3 higher bid above that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: There was no
5 higher bid--

6 JEFF NELSON: [interposing] No higher bid
7 above that was among the finalists.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Of any of the
9 bidders, not just the finalists?

10 JEFF NELSON: Yeah, once we had reset the
11 assumptions on the amount of inclusionary that was
12 available.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh, okay. So,
14 alright, I think we can follow up with that further.

15 JEFF NELSON: We can follow up with that.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

17 JEFF NELSON: But I did want to clarify.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: But the question
19 that I asked I wanted a little more detail than it
20 was a competitive bid--

21 JEFF NELSON: [interposing] So, I'm going
22 to turn it over--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] and
24 that's how we arrived at--

25

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2 JEFF NELSON: [interposing] Well, but I'll
3 say from our perspective, look, there are a variety
4 of inputs that go in. There are assumptions about
5 sale value. There are assumptions about construction
6 costs and so on, and ultimately what we're looking at
7 is what is someone willing to pay for the property,
8 and that's where Hudson had the strongest bid, and
9 I'll turn it over to David to talk about.

10 DAVID KRAMER: Steve, I think you want to
11 know how we make the sausage, and so this is
12 proprietary information. I hope you and I will keep
13 this confidential between the two of us as we discuss
14 this. You know, Hudson, we basically look at this as
15 a 400 dollar land value, which is more than any other
16 report or appraisal I've seen, and as I've said, we
17 stretch to make that number. And so at 110,000
18 square feet of as-of-right FAR at a 400 dollar land
19 value less the cost of the library, less the cost of
20 the interim library, less the cost of demolishing the
21 existing building, we gave a value of 27 million
22 dollars to that as-of-right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

24 DAVID KRAMER: We took the same
25 evaluation for the 145,000 square feet of

2 inclusionary floor area, but from that we had to
3 subtract the cost of buying and paying for 50,000
4 square feet of inclusionary housing. So we had to
5 look in every nook and cranny of Community Board Two
6 to find a site that was available. In fact, the site
7 where we bought on Fulton was a shovel-ready
8 condominium project that we purchased to have as
9 affordable housing. We had a very tight deadline for
10 immediacy to find the affordable--to find the sites.
11 And so we have to subtract from that evaluation the
12 cost, 100 percent of the land hard cost and soft cost
13 to build the affordable housing units. So when you
14 subtract that, the inclusionary housing is valued at
15 24 million dollars approximately, and so the two
16 together are 52 million dollars, and I should say
17 that the difference between this transaction and most
18 other transactions has to do with the value of the
19 inclusionary housing. In most other transactions the
20 seller gets the value of the as-of-right FAR. So, in
21 this case the seller of the city would get 27 million
22 dollars which is based on a 10 as-of-right FAR, and
23 then the buyer goes out and separately tries to
24 generate additional floor area through the bonus,
25 through the inclusionary housing, and if in doing so

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2 the acquisition price is less than whatever the value
3 is that the seller received, the buyer enjoys that
4 benefit of a discounted lower blended process.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Just a question
6 about that. So, if you're telling me, right, that if
7 a--

8 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] And that
9 happens all the time.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Sure, okay. So
11 you're saying, right, that if a seller on the open
12 market has 110,000 square feet to sell, right, and it
13 is bonusable [sic] to 250 like it is like this is,
14 right? So, that's an extra 145,000 square feet and
15 bonus, right? So, you're saying under--if one seller
16 has that and another seller, you know, for whatever
17 reason nearby or whatever in a comparable area has
18 110,000 square feet to sell but you can't bonus it,
19 there's no inclusionary there for whatever reason,
20 you're saying that those two properties are valued at
21 the exact same amount because that bonusable [sic]
22 square footage no matter how much it is? This is
23 145,000 square feet of bonus--

24 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Right, I--
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: that carries with
3 the requirement. I'm not saying it doesn't. It
4 does, but you're saying that those two properties
5 have the same value, that they're going to sell for
6 the same price?

7 DAVID KRAMER: No, first of all it's a
8 great point, and second of all, it's atypical that
9 the ration of as-of-right to bonus is as it is for
10 this project.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Right, that's what
12 I'm trying--

13 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] It's usually--

14 -
15 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: to say. This is a
16 big bonus.

17 DAVID KRAMER: It's a big bonus

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Mucho bonus here.
19 This is more than 50 percent of the property is
20 bonus.

21 DAVID KRAMER: Which is why we treated it
22 as a mucho bonus, and that's why we gave the extra
23 value back to the library with our bid. In a typical
24 deal you're absolutely right. Maybe it's another 20
25 percent that's a bonus, and you know, you make your

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2 deal, and if it helps your acquisition price, great.
3 I've talked to appraisers on this very subject, which
4 is how do they treat the bonus FAR, and the
5 appraisers have told me that their response is that
6 they never look at the extra bonus FAR, but if there
7 is some value that is integral to let's say the
8 flurry of bonus, they will incorporate that into the
9 value of the as-of-right FAR. So you might say okay,
10 it's 110 as-of-right, but we're going to give it a
11 premium because of this added potential. So we
12 thought we were being clever in saying we're going to
13 be really aggressive by giving the extra value back
14 to the city, but obviously everybody else had that in
15 mind because, you know, the numbers were comparable,
16 and one of the reasons you should feel assuage in
17 your concerns about bang for the buck is that you had
18 a lot of developers who were bidding aggressively who
19 were bunched in the same amount and had the same
20 idea, was to give the extra value of the inclusionary
21 back to the city.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: So, I've just been
23 informed that there are 85 people here to testify, so
24 I thank everybody for their patience, and I will--I
25 mean, I really do appreciate your patience. I would

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2 ask more questions at this time, but I think we can
3 follow up on, and I covered most of the areas that I
4 wanted to cover, maybe if not all the questions I
5 wanted to ask. So, I assure those members of the
6 public that we will continue to be asking the tough
7 questions in the coming days, but with that I'll seed
8 my time to my colleagues.

9 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Council
10 Member Levin. Council Member Greenfield?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Thank you,
12 Chair. Thank you, Council Member Levin, for those
13 questions. I think this is actually an outstanding
14 display of how effectively the New York City Council
15 works, which is what our job is, is to do oversight
16 and to make sure in fact that all the issues are
17 being addressed and most importantly that the
18 communities needs are being recognized. I want to
19 thank Council Member Levin for his robust questioning
20 in that effect. I really just want to get some
21 clarity on a few issues, and as the Chair of the Land
22 Use committee I tend not to take positions on these
23 matters, but I certainly do care about clarity, and
24 so I just want to clarify on a few different issues.
25 The first issue I want to clarify is community

2 consultation and the process that was engaged in. you
3 know, we're sort of hearing different things.

4 Community members are saying they didn't feel very
5 engaged. I mean initially. I don't mean after the
6 deal. I mean before the deal was struck. Obviously,
7 you folks are saying that they were engaged. So, can
8 someone sort of clarify both from the library and
9 EDC's perspective what exactly the engagement process
10 was with the community and how much input the
11 community actually had while this deal was being
12 fashioned?

13 LINDA JOHNSON: So, before this deal even
14 went to EDC for the RFP process, the library set up a
15 CAC and there were representatives of elected
16 officials including Councilman Levin and others who
17 participated in those meetings. Those meetings were
18 held periodically throughout from the time that it
19 was established throughout the RFP process until a
20 final selectin was made. Throughout the RFP process,
21 as David mentioned, there was a website that people
22 could consult to see. I'm sorry, there was a--before
23 David was selected, before Hudson was selected there
24 was actually data that was put on the library
25 website. You could see renderings from the bidders

2 who were in the end of the short list. And then,
3 after the bidder--after the process came to an end,
4 after Hudson was selected, Marvel Architects engaged
5 in a process which is ongoing but which pulled
6 members of the Brooklyn Heights community together to
7 sort of determine what they wanted to see in their
8 library as the library was being designed.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: So, one of
10 the big debates, of course, or one of the
11 conversations or what I'm hearing as frustration has
12 to do with the size of the library and the location
13 of the, the relocation rather of the business
14 library. Was that something that was also discussed
15 during that time and was the community allowed to
16 engage and sort of have an opinion on how large the
17 library should be or whether or not the business
18 library would stay at this location or in fact move
19 to the central library?

20 LINDA JOHNSON: So, the decision about the
21 business library was actually made separately from
22 the decision about what's going to happen at Brooklyn
23 Heights, and that is a function of just where our
24 patrons are located and who's using the business
25 library today. We did surveys and determined that,

2 you know, over two-thirds of the people who are using
3 the business library today were likely or more likely
4 to use the library if it were located in central.

5 It's just the demographics have changed in terms of
6 who's using that library and where those people are
7 living in the borough. The size of the library in
8 the proposed project is one that's been discussed
9 widely. It's driven in part by economics and in part
10 by need. So, we took a look at what the neighborhood
11 library currently was comprised of and tried to
12 replicate the services that--the space that we would
13 need to deliver the service that we anticipate by
14 building what will actually be, other than the
15 Central Library, the largest branch in the system,
16 the branch with the most number of square feet
17 accessible to the public.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Sure. So,
19 but the community didn't necessarily have an
20 opportunity to weigh in on either one of those
21 issues?

22 LINDA JOHNSON: Oh, no, everyone's been
23 weighing in. Oh--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
25 On the size, meaning during the beginning of the

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2 process were they able to say we'd like the following
3 size library or we'd like to keep the library, the
4 business library here? Those were independent
5 decisions that were made.

6 LINDA JOHNSON: I mean, these are things
7 which were all opinions that were expressed
8 throughout the process as we were making these
9 decisions.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Okay. My
11 final question relates to the affordability, and I
12 guess I'll throw this over to the good folks at EDC.
13 Obviously when you build affordable housing
14 essentially the decision that is being made is that
15 these funds that could go elsewhere, right, there is
16 a specific cost that Hudson has mentioned depending
17 on how you calculate it. There's somewhere between
18 20 and 30 some odd million dollars, the cost of
19 actually building affordable housing. So, I'm
20 curious, why did EDC make that decision? Why did you
21 put on this affordable housing tax, for lack of a
22 better term, as opposed to for example giving the
23 Brooklyn Public Library more money or as opposed to
24 creating a public space, or as opposed to for example
25 reinvesting some of the money in the community in the

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2 form of a park? I'm curious as to what was that
3 policy decision that you made? It seems like a pretty
4 clear decision, which is obviously costing tens of
5 millions of dollars, which is worthy, but I do want
6 to point out at the same time that we have a separate
7 housing plan that involves building and preserving
8 200,000 units of affordable housing. The mayor today
9 announced a nearly three billion dollar plan for
10 supportive housing, and to be clear, I want housing
11 and I want the housing to go especially, just for the
12 record, in Council Member Cumbo's district. I'm just
13 curious as to that decision-making process. Laurie
14 Cumbo deserves affordable housing in her district on
15 her own not subject to a deal with the library, and
16 I'm really curious about how that policy decision was
17 made and whether or not there was input from
18 community members as to that policy decision.

19 JEFF NELSON: I think the simplest way to
20 answer that is that eh affordable housing being
21 delivered is a function of the inclusionary zoning.
22 There are some additional units--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
24 A portion was required. I mean, unless I'm
25 understanding the deal incorrectly.

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2 JEFF NELSON: Right.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: And a portion
4 was not required.

5 JEFF NELSON: And those--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
7 All of it was required?

8 DAVID KRAMER: No, none of it was
9 required. So, the as-of-right would have been to
10 just--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
12 No, for the bonus, you need 10 FAR.

13 [cross-talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: No, for the
15 bonus--

16 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Right, for
17 the bonus you need affordable housing.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: We speak the
19 same language.

20 DAVID KRAMER: So, the bonus--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: [interposing]
22 SO you want to build your bonus, you have to build
23 some affordable.

24 DAVID KRAMER: Right, so I'm confused why
25 you're asking if the requirement for the bonuses you

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2 have to build the affordable housing without public
3 subsidy.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: No, we're
5 talking about--my understanding is that you're
6 building beyond what the bonus requires you to build.

7 DAVID KRAMER: That was Hudson trying to
8 make its bid as compelling as possible.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: Sure, but
10 realistically--

11 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] That wasn't--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: in their--

13 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] That wasn't
14 an EDC requirement.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: In the real
16 world, in the real world, the way these things are
17 calculated there's a cost involved, right, and you
18 could have easily added more cash to the deal instead
19 of building the more non-required affordable housing.
20 So, my question, if you don't mind, sir, was related
21 to EDC,--

22 DAVID KRAMER: [interposing] Sorry.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I'm happy to
24 hear your answer afterwards, is whether there was a
25 judgement on EDC's level that the spare dollars,

2 shall we say, shall be allocated for additional
3 affordable housing as opposed to some other project
4 and what that process was that looked like, or for
5 example to allow the Brooklyn Public Library to get
6 more money to renovate more libraries?

7 JEFF NELSON: I think ultimately that gets
8 back to where we were at the time Hudson was
9 selected, which is that we had comparable proposals
10 in terms of the purchase price offered and Hudson
11 took an extra step of delivering additional
12 affordable units, and that's what put them forward.
13 So, in the alternative we would have been in the same
14 place with an ultimate bidder, but with fewer
15 affordable units.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I will point
17 out, though, and I'll wrap up with this out of
18 respect to the many folks who are waiting here today,
19 which is that our dear friend at Hudson testified
20 that you gave very specific direction on how it is
21 that you wanted these contracts to look and that you
22 pushed Hudson even further and you asked them to be
23 more aggressive. I find it hard to believe that EDC
24 played no role in pushing, and once again, I'm not
25 saying it's not a legitimate role; it is. It's just

2 I find it very hard to believe that EDC didn't play
3 an active role in pushing more affordable housing and
4 that EDC couldn't have turned around and said, "Hey,
5 give them 20 million dollars more so that they can
6 renovate more libraries, or give them 10 million
7 dollars for a park or 10 million dollars for a public
8 space." And that couldn't have been a legitimate
9 conversation as well. So, I'm a little bit skeptical
10 of that, but I having said that on the record, I will
11 gladly move on, and I just wanted to--just sad that I
12 think that's a legitimate public policy question as
13 to how do we spend these resources, and you know,
14 what sort of "tax" the city is placing on the sale of
15 the city property.

16 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Council Member Cumbo?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you, and I
18 want to first start off by thanking my colleague
19 Steve Levin. He has had many conversations and has
20 been looking at this issue very seriously, and I
21 appreciate the line of questioning that he's put
22 forward because it shows how meaningful this is to
23 him, to his constituents, and it's a difficult
24 position to be in at this particular time. I wanted
25 to ask questions about the total capital deficit, if

2 you will, of the library system, including all of the
3 branches, not just in Brooklyn but beyond. I believe
4 Brooklyn's is about 300 million. What is it for the
5 entire city?

6 LINDA JOHNSON: The number for the entire
7 city is in excess of a billion dollars.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. Now, I
9 wanted to ask, what are the other--are there examples
10 of what the other branches are doing? So here's what
11 we're talking about. We're talking about this
12 project here today. Are other branches talking about
13 similar ideas, other ideas in terms of how they are
14 going to address this deficit in their perspective
15 branches?

16 LINDA JOHNSON: Yeah, we're all--I mean,
17 yes, other systems are looking at projects like this.
18 This is the first, and this is, you know, we're well
19 in advance of where the others are in these terms,
20 but this is a model that they are now examining as
21 well, Queens and New York Public Library.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So, they are also
23 looking at potential of other libraries in terms of
24 how they are going to address their deficit issues as
25 far as capital improvements that need to be made.

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2 LINDA JOHNSON: Correct.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Let me ask you
4 this question. So, in Brooklyn if it's about a 300
5 million dollars deficit as far as capital
6 improvements, this would put excess of how many
7 millions dollars exactly into the other branches?

8 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, if you take out the
9 money that we'll spend in Brooklyn Heights--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]
11 Right.

12 LINDA JOHNSON: it'll leave us 40 million
13 dollars to spend elsewhere, and as I mentioned we're
14 spending that at the Walt Whitman Library at the
15 Washington--smile--at the Washington Irving Library
16 at Pacific. Those three are Carnegie libraries, all
17 near and dear to you, and then in Sunset Park where
18 there's a library that's not a Carnegie, it's
19 probably built in the 60's, which is much too small
20 for that community and so we'll build a new library
21 there. It has a lot of capital need. We'll build
22 one that's almost twice the existing size.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Is the thought for
24 the remaining 260 million dollar capital improvements
25 that will need to be made, are we looking at similar

2 models, like what we're doing here in order to
3 address that capital deficit?

4 LINDA JOHNSON: This particular
5 opportunities I won't say is unique because--but it's
6 very, very unusual that you would have a library
7 sitting on a piece of property that had this kind of
8 intrinsic value, and part of the reason we're
9 spending money in some of the other libraries that I
10 just mentioned is because they have the need, but
11 they don't have that kind of value, and so the idea
12 of finding something exactly like this elsewhere in
13 the system is not great.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: What are some of
15 the other thoughts to address that deficit at this
16 time?

17 LINDA JOHNSON: Well, you know, we've
18 been lobbying hard to get a better capital budget
19 from the city, and you know, I mentioned that our
20 budget is around 15 million dollars a year to take
21 care of this 300 million dollar deferred maintenance,
22 which needless to say doesn't go far enough. It is
23 city-owned property that we are entrusted to take
24 care of and we need better for over a million square
25 feet of real estate. We need more than 15 million

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2 dollars a year, and then we're looking at ways to
3 partner. We're looking at a lot of different models
4 with a lot of different organizations that might be
5 willing to work together with us to address some of
6 the need.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Now, I know, and
8 this has come up a lot during the hearing, a lot of
9 the perceived benefit of this particular project
10 would benefit the 35th Council District, and so I
11 would say despite the fact that a lot of the benefit
12 comes to this district, which is certainly in need,
13 I'm still in deferring to my colleague Council Member
14 Steve Levin because the intricacies of this project
15 impact his district in a major way.

16 LINDA JOHNSON: Of course.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And with that,
18 wanted to ask are there--in other instances with
19 this, I want to understand, and I'm sure this is very
20 rudimentary for you, but for me wanting to know when
21 this happens, when it's all decided, what twill
22 change in terms of the ownership of this library, in
23 terms of it has a certain entity and designation and
24 an understanding of ownership, when this project,
25 should this project happen, what will be its new

2 ownership designation? How will it be different from
3 what it was in terms of ownership and designation?

4 LINDA JOHNSON: So, it will still be
5 owned by the City of New York just as the Brooklyn
6 Heights Library is today. It just won't be a free-
7 standing, a fee-simple. It will be a condominium in
8 the mixed-use project that Hudson is proposing.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Now, obviously
10 there are a lot of people here that are saying and
11 have signs and are expressing that that say, "Don't
12 sell our library." So, in clarity in that, what's
13 the difference between what is understood in terms of
14 how it's owned, who controls it, what its future will
15 be compared to then and now?

16 LINDA JOHNSON: Exactly, no change. In
17 other words, the city will still own it just as they
18 do today. I think it's a sentimental kind of notion
19 that a free-standing building is somehow different
20 than a condominium is, but the facts are that this
21 ownership structure is still--the ownership will
22 still be in the City of New York.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Is there any
24 potential that in the structure of this deal that I
25 don't understand the intricacies of that somehow

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2 later on down the line 30, 40 years from now, 100
3 years from now that, I mean--

4 LINDA JOHNSON: [interposing] No, the city
5 would have to sell it in order just the way the city
6 would have to sell a free-standing building.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. Let me just
8 ask this other question, and I apologize for the--I
9 know I've gone over my time. Again, rudimentary to
10 me, maybe very common to you, are there examples
11 where labor and non-labor and projects like this have
12 worked collaboratively together so that there is
13 somewhat of a win/win here if that's at all possible?

14 DAVID KRAMER: No, absolutely. I mean,
15 Hudson builds union. We have a union project going
16 on right now. We build open-shop where we
17 competitively bid out every trade, and you know,
18 increasingly you see that in worksites that you have
19 union subcontractors and non-union subcontractors
20 working projects and we're doing that right now as
21 well.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Is that a
23 possibility or is that on the table because this is a
24 large project happening in two different districts;

25

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2 has that been brought to the table that potentially
3 there could be a collaboration on both ends?

4 DAVID KRAMER: We do that in every
5 project, which is that we openly competitively bid
6 every subcontract, and we have no prejudice when we
7 select subcontractors.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Excellent. And
9 then one final question, wanted to ask, Hudson, can
10 you talk a bit about your past history and track
11 record? As you know, the Mayor has been announcing
12 quite a bit in regards to MWBE's. Can you talk a
13 little bit about your track record with MWBE's and
14 the projects that you've done?

15 DAVID KRAMER: Alright. I don't want to
16 embarrass you Councilwoman for coming late, because I
17 discussed this in my opening remarks.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: You did. Well, you
19 know what, let's table that because as was said,
20 there were 85 different people that want to testify,
21 so I'll look back on the video for that and reconnect
22 with my colleagues on that and I want to be
23 respectful in the interest of time. So, thank you
24 very much.

25 DAVID KRAMER: It's riveting video.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you, Council
4 Member Cumbo. Thank you for the panel for your
5 testimony. As it's been announced, there is a very
6 large number of people who have signed up. We're
7 going to limit each speaker's testimony to two
8 minutes to give every, hopefully, everybody an
9 opportunity to testify today or we will give everyone
10 an opportunity to testify today, and Council will
11 call the panels. If you can come up quickly we'll
12 try out best to try to get everybody through this
13 hearing in an expeditious manner. Miriam Katowitz,
14 Alexandra Borne, sorry, Bowie, Jonathan Bowles, and
15 Gladys or Uldis Skrodellis. So, please identify
16 yourself before you speak and also when answering
17 questions after you're done, and we'll go ahead and
18 take testimony from all four of you and then we'll go
19 ahead and the questions after that.

20 MIRIAM KATOWITZ: That's on, okay. Good
21 afternoon, Councilmen. My name is Miriam Katowitz,
22 and I've been a resident of Brooklyn Heights in Steve
23 Levin's district for almost 40 years now. I won't
24 put you in that age range. It's okay. In addition
25 to being a patron of the Brooklyn Heights Branch, I

2 take out books, I have had three children who grew up
3 going to the library taking out books, going to
4 reading hours and story time, and various programs at
5 the branch. My grandchildren are residents of Carol
6 Gardens. They continue to be patrons of both Carol
7 Gardens and the Brooklyn Heights Branch, and I'm also
8 privileged to be a member of the Board of the
9 Brooklyn Public Library, and I'm speaking in support
10 of the application to allow the project to create a
11 new Brooklyn Heights Branch and have 40 million
12 dollars available to assist with the deferred
13 maintenance challenges in the other Brooklyn
14 branches. You know, finding enough funds to both
15 keep the branches open and staffed, especially the
16 hours that we'd all like to have, to support all of
17 our patrons as well as keeping the physical buildings
18 in good shape has been a challenge for many years,
19 well before I became involved with the library.

20 There are now no easy solutions, and the fact that
21 the Brooklyn Heights Branch has value provides for a
22 large sum of funds to be available for other
23 communities as well. It is a challenge. There is a
24 need to continue to make all the Brooklyn Public
25 Library branches relevant into the new century, and

2 while that involves having gathering spaces,
3 computers, computer connections, it also includes
4 books, other media, DVD's, CD's, all of the pieces
5 especially children's books. People still need to
6 learn to read. And also to have programs for
7 children, teens, adults, and senior citizens. The
8 Brooklyn Heights branch plans are created to meet all
9 these needs and allow the branch to continue to
10 service, to provide the services that have been
11 provided over the years, including a respectful and
12 welcoming space. I've spoken to a number of my
13 friends and neighbors, and they've asked me questions
14 about the branch project, and many are concerned
15 about being able to have a place to go, a place to
16 take out books, a place to be able to have community
17 gatherings and the things that the libraries have
18 become in this day and age, and in my view that's
19 what this new plan provides for, and it allows us to
20 march forward. I think it's also a benefit to have
21 an additional 114 units of affordable housing in
22 Community Board Two, and I look forward to having a
23 21st Century branch for all to use and ask your
24 support. Thank you.

2 ALEXANDRA BOWIE: My name is Alexandra
3 Bowie, and I'm reading the statement of the Brooklyn
4 Heights Association. The Brooklyn Heights Branch
5 Library is central to our community. The library
6 serves its community best when it is comfortable and
7 up to date. Features like reliable online access,
8 good lighting, size, and air conditioning matter.
9 What's true of the Brooklyn Heights Branch is true of
10 the rest of the Brooklyn Public Library system. This
11 proposal will provide funds for the renovation of
12 other BPL branches, and that is why the BHA and its
13 members support it. After the Brooklyn Heights
14 branch has been outfitted, the remaining money will
15 pay for repairs at the Walt Whitman, Pacific Street,
16 Washington, Irving, and Sunset Park Branches. The
17 experience of the New York Public Library with the
18 reconstruction of the Donnell Branch has been
19 instructive. As a result, the Brooklyn Heights
20 Branch project is subject to strict terms outlined in
21 both the original RFP and an MOU between the library
22 and the city. Those requirements include an interim
23 library, time limits on construction, completion of
24 the affordable housing before issuance of a CFO [sic]
25 for the condominium and that all proceeds for the

2 sale go to the BPL. Of course we have concerns.

3 Community Board Two has requested that the usable

4 area of the new library equal the usable area of the

5 existing branch, and we completely agree. The

6 preliminary plans show a branch having 21,500 square

7 feet of usable space, but we would like to see this

8 figure enlarged considerably in order to attract and

9 house the significantly larger number of visitors the

10 new branch will attract. Our local school is at 140

11 percent of capacity, and the addition of 139

12 apartments to the school zone will increase the

13 overcrowding. City Council must insist that the

14 Department of Education address the burden that

15 surging development in Brooklyn causes. We concur

16 with what many in our neighborhood have said, that

17 the developer and BPL give further consideration to

18 the configuration of the affordable housing. Sixty

19 to 165 percent of AMI may be too high and we need

20 larger apartments. The Brooklyn Public Library has

21 gone far to meet and address the concerns of our

22 community. We look forward to a spacious state of

23 the art branch library in our neighborhood, well-

24 designed affordable housing in our district,

25 substantial repairs and infrastructure upgrades in at

2 least four Brooklyn branch libraries. We urge you to
3 support this proposal. Thank you.

4 JONATHAN BOWLES: hello. I'm Johnathan
5 Bowles. I'm the Executive Director of the Center for
6 an Urban Future, which is a think-tank here in the
7 city that writes about economic opportunity in New
8 York. We've published a number of reports about how
9 to improve New York City's Workforce Development
10 System, how to expand ESOL services, how to improve
11 graduation rates of the city's community colleges,
12 but we've also written extensively about the city's
13 public libraries, which we believe are really one of
14 the biggest opportunity institutions in New York.
15 We've shown that the city's libraries are helping
16 adults upgrade their skills and find jobs, assisting
17 immigrants learn English, fostering reading skills in
18 young people, serving as an important community space
19 for older adults, and providing technology access for
20 those who don't have a computer or internet access at
21 home. They're also serving a record number of New
22 Yorkers today. As important as the public libraries
23 have become, however, they are facing a maintenance
24 crisis today. A report we published in September
25 2014 found that the average branch library in the

2 city is 61 years old with a quarter of the city's 207
3 branches built over a century ago. It also showed
4 that the city's three library systems have at least
5 1.1 billion dollars in capital needs with 59
6 different branches requiring five million dollars or
7 more in maintenance work. I won't go into all the
8 details in my written testimony, but clearly Brooklyn
9 is facing substantial needs as well. I've testified
10 at--I've testified before this City Council on
11 multiple occasions over the last couple of years,
12 urging the city to increase public funding for the
13 city's public libraries. We advocated for a
14 substantial increase in public operating support for
15 the libraries so they could stay open for at least
16 six days a week. We also push for big increase in
17 city capital funds so the libraries could also
18 address this maintenance crisis. I'm really thrilled
19 that the Council led the way in increasing operating
20 and capital support for libraries in this year's
21 budget. It was a major boost for the city's
22 libraries. Thank you, but it's not enough. The
23 city's three library systems still require hundreds
24 of millions of dollars in capital funds, and that's
25 just to bring the branches into a state of good

2 repair. A much larger investment is needed to create
3 the modern 21st century libraries that New Yorkers
4 deserve. That's why I support the current proposal
5 to redevelop the Brooklyn Heights Library. Thank
6 you.

7 CARLO SCISSURA: Thank you. Good
8 afternoon. My name is Carlo Scissura, I'm the
9 President and CEO of the Brooklyn Chamber of
10 Commerce. Councilman Cohen, thank you for hosting
11 us, and of course, my good friend Steve Levin, always
12 a pleasure. I'm going to let my testimony speak for
13 itself, because there are a lot of people that have
14 to testify, but just two I think critical points that
15 the Chamber looked at when we really decided to
16 support this whole heartedly, and we are a membership
17 organization of over 2,000 members, one of the
18 largest in New York City and New York State. One,
19 this is a truly innovative project, something
20 revolutionary, and something that I think all of us
21 across the city and the country are going to have to
22 look at, because when you hear 300 million dollars
23 and you hear billion dollars citywide, something has
24 to be done. Clearly, the city is not--the city is
25 not going to just write a check for 300 million

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2 dollars, so libraries and other institutions, not
3 just libraries, have to really look at what do we do
4 to solve this critical issue. The Brooklyn Public
5 Library is doing that with this project, and by the
6 way, they couldn't have found a better partner in the
7 Hudson Companies. We all know their reputation is
8 stellar. The second point, and I know it came up
9 earlier, was the Business Library. In answer to, I
10 think, Councilman Greenfield's question about the
11 process in public, we were in on the ground as the
12 leading business group in the borough from day one.
13 We met with the President Linda Johnson. We spoke to
14 stakeholders. We let our Board know about it, and
15 everyone agreed that moving the Business Library to
16 the Central Library made the most sense. Brooklyn is
17 a big borough. If you really want to attract people
18 from Eastern Brooklyn and Southern Brooklyn, Central
19 made the most sense. So, we are fully supportive of
20 that, and one last piece, this new library although
21 it won't be the Business Library, it will continue to
22 allow people from all across the borough on a
23 business capacity to continue to access a great new
24 state of the art library. So, we really hope you
25 support this. It's critical. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I thank the panel for
3 their testimony. Thank you. Dave Ramsey, Keeshawn
4 Labarie [sp?], Orlando Castillo, and Carole Raftrey.
5 Just a reminder, we're doing panels of four
6 alternating between panels in favor and panels
7 against and two minutes per speaker, and please
8 identify yourselves before speaking.

9 CAROLE RAFTREY: Hello, good afternoon
10 and thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak
11 on this issue. My name is Carole Raftrey. I'm a
12 long time Brooklyn resident as well as a member of
13 Build Up New York City. We are an alliance of more
14 than 200,000 hardworking men and women from the
15 construction industry, building services and
16 hospitality industry. Together we advocate for
17 responsible development that strengthens our
18 community. I'm here to urge you to vote against the
19 Hudson's Company's proposal to downsize the Brooklyn
20 Heights Library in order to build luxury housing on
21 the site. The developer, Hudson Companies, is
22 proposing to buy the land for 52 million, renovate
23 and shrink the library within a luxury building on a
24 prime piece of downtown Brooklyn real estate.
25 However, based on a report released by respected real

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2 estate expert Doctor Hugh Kelley [sp?], Hudson is
3 only paying about two-thirds of what the land is
4 worth. This means that instead of paying the 52
5 million, Hudson should be paying up to 78 million for
6 the land based on the true market value. This is an
7 additional 26 million that can be used going towards
8 our libraries and contribute to other valuable
9 initiatives like increasing affordable housing,
10 building new schools and pre-k sites, improving
11 transportation and other badly needed infrastructure
12 improvements. As a tax payer, I ask you is this
13 proposal really in the public interest? In addition
14 to the low ball price, Hudson Companies have also
15 decided that in the interest of high profit, they
16 will place the affordable housing off site with none
17 in the luxury development housing for the library.
18 Large number of the affordable housing units are
19 studio and one bedroom apartments. They are actually
20 unaffordable and inaccessible to working families and
21 elderly Brooklyn residents who are feeling pushed out
22 at the rapidly gentrifying communities. We must be
23 mindful of the deal that is--thank you.

24 KEESHAWN LABARIE: Hello, my name
25 Keeshawn Labarie [sp?]. I live here in Brooklyn for

2 many years. I'm also a carpenter. I'm also here
3 representing Build Up New York City. While the
4 Hudson Companies propose to reduce the size of our
5 library and built off-site affordable housing, the
6 developer also refused to commit to creating a good
7 safe job with priority hiring for the city residents.

8 Not only that, the Hudson wants to pay almost 26
9 million under the market rate value of the land.

10 Construction of these projects can at least last for
11 years, and without adequate safety measures in place
12 its dangerous work environment that can put workers
13 and the public at risk. According to 2014 OSHA
14 statistics, 48 [sic] percent of the workplace
15 fatalities in NYC were construction relates.

16 Seventy-five percent of the constructing fatalities
17 in NYC in 2014 occurred on job sites where workers
18 did not participate in state approved training and
19 apprenticeship program. To create the good safe jobs
20 that a community deserves, we need developers who
21 commit to using contractor who participate in state
22 approved training and apprenticeship programs.

23 Apprenticeship programs provide necessary safety
24 training that can literally be the difference between
25 life and death. I work on sites where developer

2 believe in the safety of workers and the public,
3 from learning how to use equipment to feeling
4 empowered to speak up when I see unsafe conditions.

5 I have constant instruction on how to stay safe at
6 work, proper training and the safety measures by
7 construction employers help safeguard the public as
8 well. While the propose project will create

9 permanent jobs after construction is completed, but--
10 alright. I can continue? Alright. while the

11 proposed project will create permanent jobs after
12 construction is completed, Hudson refused to make a
13 commitment to good jobs with responsible wages,

14 medical and retirement benefits, creating permanent
15 that provide family sustain [sic] wages and benefits

16 can create opportunities for members of the community
17 that help support our local businesses. At Build Up

18 NYC we believe in responsible development that

19 provides good jobs and really impactful community

20 benefits while the Hudson Companies is offering far

21 less than what our public land is worth. They are

22 also refusing to create the jobs and opportunities

23 that will allow many of us to continue to call

24 Brooklyn our home. I urge you to send the Hudson

25 plan back and vote no. Thank you.

2 DAVE RAMSEY: Good afternoon. Good
3 afternoon, Council Members. Good afternoon, Council
4 Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak
5 today. My name is Dave Ramsey. I am a painter as
6 well as a member of Build Up New York City. I am also
7 a longtime Brooklyn resident who is working hard to
8 continue to call Brooklyn home for me and my family.
9 I am concerned about what Hudson Companies is
10 proposing for Brooklyn and what it means for families
11 like mine that are struggling to afford to stay in
12 our communities. As part of their plan for the
13 Brooklyn Heights Library, the Hudson Company proposes
14 to include affordable housing as part of their deal.
15 However, Hudson will segregate the affordable housing
16 placing it two miles offsite from the luxury
17 development that will house our much smaller library.
18 Last year there were fights against wealthy
19 developers using poor doors and luxury development.
20 Hudson Company has taken it a step further. Secondly,
21 over 75 percent of the proposed affordable housing
22 apartments are studios and one-bedroom apartments.
23 Brooklyn is in need of affordable housing of all
24 sizes. Excuse me, but the sale of our public land
25 should provide us with the housing that is much

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2 needed in our borough, real affordable housing for
3 families. Additionally, the affordable units are
4 simply not affordable. Most of the units are for
5 families making 86,300 dollars to 142,395 dollars.

6 These apartments are unaffordable and inaccessible to
7 working families or elderly Brooklyn residents being
8 pushed out of our rapidly gentrifying communities.

9 Increased luxury housing often combines with our
10 pressure to drive up rents in nearby communities.

11 Hudson projects adds 139 more luxury condos to an
12 area with large increase in luxury residential

13 development. As luxury development booms near

14 transit hubs, working families get pushed out, pushed
15 further away from access to public transportation and

16 retail hubs. To make matters worse, Hudson Companies
17 had not committed to creating the high quality jobs

18 that Brooklyn family's needs to afford continue

19 calling New York City. Creating good jobs is

20 necessary to combat the affordable housing crisis.

21 Again, Hudson Companies' projects fall short. I urge
22 the council to stand on the side of hardworking tax

23 payers and vote no on the project. It does nothing

24 to help families that need affordable housing the

25 most, and instead it may speed up gentrification and

2 continue to economically segregate my borough. We
3 deserve a better deal. Thank you very much.

4 ORLANDO CASTILLO: Good afternoon. My
5 name is Orlando Castillo and I'm an elevator
6 constructor. I am also a lifelong Brooklyn resident
7 and I live in Vinegar Hill. I came today as a
8 representative of Build Up New York, a coalition of
9 working men and women advocating for good jobs and
10 responsible development. We feel very strongly that
11 the Hudson Companies' Brooklyn Heights Public Library
12 project is a bad deal for Brooklyn. In addition to a
13 growing list of concerns I want to raise some red
14 flags about how this project impacts the
15 infrastructure of this community. Today, we asked
16 the committee to vote no on the plan and send this
17 project back to the drawing board. The schools are
18 already overcrowded in our area. In fact, the local
19 elementary school is operating at 142 percent of
20 capacity. We can't continue to bring more residents
21 into our communities and not provide the necessary
22 environment for our children to learn and grow. In
23 fact, this was a concern of Borough President Adams
24 when we voted against this project. We need to look
25 at the overall impact that these new developments

2 will have on our school children. In addition to
3 schools and other infrastructure concerns, I am
4 particularly concerned about the current electrical
5 grid. The New York Building Congress reported that
6 permits have been issued for 23,326 units of
7 residential housing in Fiscal Year 2015. Will our
8 electrical supply in this neighborhood adequately
9 support all of this development? Do we need upgrades
10 to service and equipment to ensure that our needs are
11 met? As an elevator constructor I know that
12 inadequate power can lead to elevator shut downs and
13 passenger entrapments. Building the infrastructure
14 to support this development is a matter of public
15 safety. I strongly urge this committee to vote no and
16 send this project back. We need a good plan that
17 considers the long-term impact a project of this size
18 will have on our infrastructure. Thank you.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very
20 much for your testimony. Just one comment as I was
21 looking to follow up on something I said earlier. In
22 terms of what AMI is in New York City, 86,300 is AMI,
23 100 percent of AMI for a family of four. So, that's
24 what a family of four has to make to be 100 percent
25 AMI. A hundred and 65 percent of AMI, which you

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2 referenced, is 142,395 dollars per year for a family
3 of four. So just to put some real numbers on those
4 percentages, and thank you very much for your
5 testimony.

6 ORLANDO CASTILLO: Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: We thank the panel
8 for their testimony.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Jim Devor, Elana Romero,
10 Uldis Skrodellis, and Tucker Reed [sp?]. And again,
11 just please identify yourselves before speaking.

12 [off mic comments]

13 TUCKER REED: Good afternoon, Council
14 Members. My name's Tucker Reid. I'm the President of
15 the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership. On behalf of the
16 Downtown Brooklyn Partnership I'd like to voice our
17 strong support for the planned Brooklyn Heights
18 Library Project. As you know, the partnership is a
19 not for profit economic development corporation that
20 serves to foster the growth of downtown Brooklyn as a
21 thriving business, retail, cultural, educational, and
22 residential neighborhood. We believe that the plans
23 to the site are well thought out and will benefit the
24 surrounding communities tremendously through their
25 investment in new and expanded library branches in

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2 Brooklyn Heights as well as the renovations that will
3 be made possible throughout Downtown Brooklyn at the
4 Pacific Branch and the Walt Whitman Branch among
5 others within the borough. We are equally delighted
6 to see the addition of 114 affordable housing units
7 coming online to Community Board Two as part of this
8 project that offer a full spread of sizes from
9 studios to three bedrooms, ranging a wide--a wide
10 spectrum of AMI's, and we are pleased Hudson
11 Companies will be partnering with Pratt Area
12 Community Council to ensure that local residents are
13 informed of these units as they become available. We
14 feel this project is complementary to the Brooklyn
15 strand, an initiative that we've been helping
16 shepherd along to reimagine and better link nearly 50
17 acres of disconnected park and plazas that run from
18 Brooklyn Borough Hall to Fulton Landing and parts of
19 the BQE. Not only will this improve public space
20 outside of the library, enhance the experience for
21 library goers, the café and open façade library will
22 further activate this corridor. At a time when budget
23 constraints are tight, we applaud the city and the
24 Brooklyn Public Library for coming together to pursue
25 such an innovative public/private partnership to

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2 finance library construction and renovations that
3 will equip residents with new technologies, ensure
4 that our system is a great success for generations to
5 come. For all those reasons, we're delighted to be
6 here today to support this project. Thank you for
7 your time.

8 JIM DEVOR: Good afternoon. I'm Jim
9 Devore. I'm the past President of Community
10 Education Council for District 15, a Carroll Gardens
11 resident. I come here to speak on behalf in favor of
12 the proposal. I noticed that this year Democratic
13 Socialism is on the public radar, and on that note, I
14 want to come out too as a Democratic Socialist like
15 Bernie Sanders. In fact, I have to confess that once
16 upon a time I was a member of the Young People's
17 Socialist League as was Bernie, although his
18 organization and mine were very different, different
19 period of time, but to bring this to this proceeding
20 here I want to quote from our spiritual forefather K.
21 Marx who said, "From each according to his ability to
22 each according to his need." And that's really what
23 we're talking about here and that's what this is
24 about. As the Councilman is fully aware I've long
25 been an advocate for Sunset Park, making sure that

2 they get their needed facilities even when they long

3 been forgotten in terms of, especially in terms of

4 capital needs for schools in that area. To the

5 extent that this is a mechanism to redistribute

6 wealth from the Downtown Brooklyn to places like

7 Sunset Park, it's important and it's necessary.

8 Look, I acknowledge that nothing is perfect, and for

9 example, I'm not terribly happy about the idea of

10 moving the central business--Business Library to

11 Central, but on that note in terms of possibly fixing

12 that I would ask that the Councilman reiterate his

13 support for the restoration of the B71 bus, the Union

14 Street Bus, which otherwise we didn't have any access

15 to the Central Library. I also finally want to thank

16 the Council. It's remarkable watching serious

17 questioning and serious thought being given to this

18 that were true most of the time on education, but I

19 do want to thank the Council's forbearance and their

20 help in adequately funding ongoing operations of the

21 libraries. Thank you.

22 CALLIOPE MATTHEWS: Good afternoon. My

23 name is Calliope Matthews. I'm a School Outreach

24 Librarian for the Brooklyn Public Library and former

25 Children's Librarian at the Brooklyn Heights Branch.

2 I'm reading on behalf of Elana Romero who could not
3 be here today. "I'd like to thank the Committee
4 Members, City Councilman Stephen Levin and members of
5 the City Council Committee for the opportunity to
6 testify. My name is Elana Romero. I'm a lifelong
7 Sunset Park resident and parent of three small
8 children. I am also an author and professor,
9 therefore, libraries are a critical part of my
10 professional life. As an academic and parent I'm a
11 frequent patron of the Brooklyn Public Libraries.
12 The Sunset Park Library is near and close to my heart
13 as it has become a vital resource for my community,
14 my children and is in desperate need of renovation
15 and resources. While our libraries' amenities
16 feature Wi-Fi, handicap accessibility, a community
17 meeting room, and Workforce One Career Center, we are
18 in need of a facility that can keep up with the
19 times. More computers are needed as well as space.
20 The Brooklyn Heights Project will benefit several
21 communities including mine. Of the 52 million BPL
22 will receive, funds will go towards renovating other
23 libraries including my home branch. Therefore, I
24 believe it is a win/win for us all. Please approve
25 the Brooklyn Heights Library project."

2 ELENNA RIVERA: Good afternoon. Thank
3 you, Committee Members for the opportunity to testify
4 today. My name is Elena Rivera, and I am the
5 Children's Librarian at Washington Irving Library,
6 part of the Brooklyn Public Library system. I have a
7 bachelor's in Languages and Cultures and a Master's
8 in Library and Information Science with a specialty
9 in youth services. Five months ago I moved 2,000
10 miles across the United States from Los Angeles,
11 California to Brooklyn, New York leaving behind
12 family, friends and all that was familiar in order to
13 work with the library system whose mission and values
14 closely align with my own professional philosophy,
15 and that is to provide free and open access to
16 information for education, recreation and reference
17 along with innovative library services that reflect a
18 diverse and dynamic community and the spirit of its
19 communities. I have learned a lot about the people
20 who live in Bushwick that comprise the Washington
21 Irving Library Community, my new home and community
22 where I live. They come from different walks in live
23 and backgrounds and use the library as a treasured
24 resource where they can introduce their child to
25 their very first favorite book, where they can work

2 on their resume and search for the perfect job, where
3 teens can have a quiet space to do homework if they
4 can't find it at home, and most importantly, they
5 come to the library to find hope, to find hope for
6 themselves, for their families, and even for the
7 world. Now, let me tell you about the Washington
8 Irving Library as a physical building. It is one of
9 the Carnegie libraries built in 1923 with the money
10 donated by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie based on
11 the belief that people deserved access to
12 information. Surely, a gorgeous library that greatly
13 served the needs of its community back in its day.
14 Now, however, not so much. The building is in a
15 state of disrepair, reasons such as limited space,
16 deteriorating walls and shelves that are falling
17 apart make it challenging for staff and myself to
18 provide enjoyable browsing experience and run daily
19 programing. It makes it difficult to accommodate 30
20 toddlers that have come for story time in a crowded
21 space that only makes them feel frustrated. It makes
22 it difficult to keep shelves neat when the only thing
23 that is momentarily keeping a book in place is a book
24 end that is very loudly showing its years. The
25 Washington Irving Library deserves a building that

1 reflects the information needs of its community. They
2 deserve the ability to have an enjoyable visit when
3 visiting their local library where they won't feel
4 discouraged to browse a shelf because they fear that
5 the child might accidentally bump into the nail
6 that's sticking out of a shelf, or when they won't
7 have to worry about whether the elevator has decided
8 to stop working for the day and aren't able to access
9 the main floor with their wheel chair. People deserve
10 appropriate and safe places where they can work and
11 explore information and recreational interests.

12 Libraries are undoubtedly important and the Brooklyn
13 Public Library is an amazing institution that offers
14 its communities great programs and access to
15 knowledge. With your help, my library will secure
16 the funds we desperately need to renovate and update
17 this crucial community resource. Please approve the
18 Brooklyn Heights Library Project. You will not only
19 help create a world class library for Brooklyn
20 Heights. The residents all over Brooklyn like my
21 community in Bushwick will benefit greatly from the
22 proceeds of this project. Thank you again for this
23 opportunity.
24

2 ULDIS SKRODELIS: Good afternoon. Thank
3 you Councilman Levin, Councilman Cohen and members of
4 the Land Use Subcommittee on Dispositions for this
5 opportunity to speak today on this very important
6 matter. My name is Uldis Skrodelis. I am the
7 Manager of the Brooklyn Heights Branch Library. I
8 have worked for the library my entire career. My
9 very first day as a librarian here in Brooklyn began
10 at this very same branch a great number of years ago.
11 I have been in a managerial role at this branch since
12 2008 and I am a resident of Brooklyn and reside
13 nearby. Over the years I have served in different
14 capacities at the Red Hook, Pacific, Carroll Gardens,
15 and Park Slope Branches. I know the neighborhoods in
16 my reading public from years of local experience.
17 This branch is a basically nondescript municipal
18 building designed in the late 1950's, constructed in
19 the early 1960's with two non-public use basements
20 fitted as civil defense shelters for use during the
21 time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The plan for this
22 current library as it stands is dated in design and
23 is not suited to the needs of modern progressive
24 librarianship and for a vibrant community such as
25 Brooklyn Heights. Our public deserves a new light-

2 filled, well-designed library with expansive reading
3 rooms for both adults and younger children. The
4 public also requires flexible performance and meeting
5 rooms so that our new building will be utilized to
6 its fullest capacity. The exhaustive AIA guide to
7 New York City makes no mention of this building in
8 the comprehensive Brooklyn Heights Downtown Civic
9 Center Chapters. Another guide, an Architectural
10 Guidebook to Brooklyn by Francis Meroni [sp?], which
11 also has an extensive chapter on the Brooklyn
12 Heights, make no mention of the current branch
13 library on Cadman Plaza. This building has also not
14 been landmarked by the Landmarks Commission. The
15 construction of a new state of the art facility will
16 serve the needs of all the people of Brooklyn, and
17 especially those of Brooklyn Heights. The new
18 library will be populated plentifully with books for
19 all ages, as well as the best modern technology. The
20 monies utilized by this construction will also
21 benefit other local libraries in Brooklyn and provide
22 for years of reading pleasure and education for all
23 the people of Brooklyn. Along with all of this is
24 not to be forgotten are the many units of affordable
25 housing to be built as result of this plan for the

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2 residents of Community Board Two. President Obama,
3 in his most recent State of the Union speech said,
4 21st Century businesses need 21st Century
5 infrastructure. Members of the City Council, 21st
6 Century libraries need 21st Century library
7 buildings. Help us build such a library for the
8 people of Brooklyn. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: We thank the panel
10 for their testimony. Do you have questions?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: No, no, I just want
12 to thank the panel for your testimony, especially Mr.
13 Devor, I want to thank you for providing a socialist
14 in favor of this plan, but no, thank you especially
15 to the libraries because I know how much work you
16 dedicate and how much energy, and you've dedicated
17 your entire careers to educating children and people
18 in our great boroughs. So, thank you very much for
19 your testimony and for your time.

20 JIM DEVOR: You're welcome. As Bernie
21 might say, it couldn't hurt.

22 UNIDENTIFIED: Ramon Asivedo [sp?],
23 Michael White, Maggie Cancar, Maritza Silva-Farrell,
24 Ansley Samson. We're going to move to panels of five
25 now.

2 [off mic]

3 JOHN SKINNER: I'll be sitting in for
4 Maritza Silva-Farrell. My name is John Skinner. I'll
5 be sitting in for Maritza.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Norman Savitt? And again,
7 just please identify yourself before speaking.

8 [off mic comments]

9 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: You can please begin.

10 JOHN SKINNER: Good afternoon. I'll be
11 sitting in for Maritza Silva-Farrell for Real
12 Affordable Housing for All. My name is John Skinner.
13 I'm the President of Local 46 who is part of that
14 organization as well. Thank you for giving me the
15 opportunity to comment on this proposed development
16 at the Brooklyn Heights Library. I am testifying
17 today on behalf of the Real Affordability for All
18 Coalition. We are a coalition of over 50 tenant,
19 faith and labor organizations working to end the
20 housing crisis in New York City. The Coalition
21 leverages its power to address homelessness, NYCHA,
22 the preservation of existing affordable housing,
23 development of new affordable housing, and good jobs.
24 The Hudson Company proposal is to be built on top of
25 the Brooklyn Heights Library Branch is yet another

2 example of giving away public land with no real
3 community benefits. Hudson Companies has proposed to
4 purchase from New York City the air rights to build
5 139 units of luxury condos and build 114 units off-
6 site affordable housing. Our libraries and public
7 buildings should not be for sale at bargain prices to
8 private developers while our hardworking communities
9 are getting pushed out. We urge the City Council to
10 disapprove this current application. Their
11 affordable housing plan is accelerating the economy's
12 segregation of rich and poor rather than creating
13 mixed income communities and real affordable housing.
14 Hudson Companies is getting a great deal on the land
15 and air rights in exchange for off-site affordable
16 housing units two miles away from the library and
17 luxury condos creating economically and
18 geographically segregated housing. This cannot be
19 acceptable. Nearly half of Hudson's affordable units
20 will be too expensive for many Brooklyn residents to
21 afford. The Kelly Report released today points out
22 that nearly half of the affordable units were aimed
23 at households earning between 86,300 and 142,395
24 annually. This may be affordable to some people, but
25 not for the most hard working middle class or lower

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2 income families. According to the US Census Bureau,
3 most families in Brooklyn do not have an annual
4 earnings as high as 63,700 or 105,105. This does not
5 meet the affordable housing needs of our families.
6 Seventy-five percent of the affordable units are
7 studios and one bedrooms. I would just like to add in
8 closing that this developer says they do fair labor
9 standards and they use a company called the Oringer
10 [sp?] Affiliated Companies. We have documentation of
11 their abuses of workers and labor problems, so please
12 do not accept this. Send them back to the drawing
13 board. Thank you.

14 ANSLEY SAMSON: Hi, my name is Ansley
15 Samson, and I'm here on behalf of the Community
16 Affairs Committee of the PS8 PTA. Our PTA will be
17 meeting tomorrow morning to approve official
18 testimony to submit to the Subcommittee and the
19 larger City Council. I want to be clear and short
20 today. I'm here simply to oppose the approval of
21 significant additional housing in the PS8 school zone
22 as part of this project when there is not a plan in
23 place to address the fast-growing and longstanding
24 overcrowding problem at our public school PS8, the
25 public school for which all this Brooklyn Library

2 project residences would be zoned. This is a big
3 project with a lot of apartments. It is not the only
4 big project with a lot of apartments in this school
5 zone. We are already suffering the consequences of
6 residential development without school planning.

7 Sort of one small point as part of that, as many of
8 you know, the Department of Education has proposed to
9 rezone PS8 because of this overcrowding, and the
10 neighbor school. As a PTA we have supported this
11 rezoning plan because it is the only plan on the
12 table that even begins to slow the growth of our
13 overcrowding process, overcrowding crisis, but even
14 according to the Department of Education, even if the
15 rezoning proposal is approved, which is not at all
16 assured at this point. PS8 will remain between 132
17 percent and 143 percent of its capacity, you know,
18 when the proposal is at scale. This is from a DOE
19 presentation in September, "We respectfully request
20 this Subcommittee and this Council recognize this
21 significant longstanding overcrowding problem at PS8
22 and not approve additional housing in our school zone
23 without a plan in place to address the public school
24 needs of the families who will live in this housing
25 as well as those who already live in this zone and

2 are already suffering the consequences of a rapid
3 increase in residential development in the absence of
4 planning to address the school needs of new
5 residences." Thank you.

6 NORMAN SAVITT: Hello. My name is Norman
7 Savitt. I'm a retired mechanical engineer who has
8 lived in Brooklyn Heights for more than 35 years.
9 I've given my testimony at other hearings on the
10 subject before, most notably between Community Board
11 Two and before our Brooklyn Borough President Eric
12 Adams, who as you know has come out against this
13 proposition and with good reasons. As I said now--as
14 I said before and now, in the very darkest days of
15 the city during World War I, the Depression, World
16 War II, the dot com crash, the financial crisis's
17 [sic], etcetera, when the city had dire and perilous
18 problems in our very darkest days, we still managed
19 to hold onto and funded our Brooklyn Heights and
20 other libraries. At present, our library is an
21 extremely popular working library that has the
22 biggest frequency of users that it's ever had in its
23 entire history. So why are we selling it this time?
24 Despite extensive Brooklyn Heights Library
25 renovations in 1993 that cost the city millions of

2 dollars we were told that somehow we cannot now
3 afford to fix a lowly air conditioner and do some
4 other basic maintenance to our library, maintenance
5 that other libraries all over the city and all over
6 the world are able to do, and we were using this only
7 recent lack of funding as an excuse to first curtail
8 hours and then to sell and tear down a very popular
9 heavily used library and build in its place a vastly
10 smaller downgraded library without its acclaimed
11 business and career room inside a monstrously large
12 building which will give our local community
13 infrastructure headaches for years to come, greatly
14 increasing our local congestion in the streets,
15 overcrowding in our schools, etcetera, to benefit the
16 very few. I don't fault developers here. They're
17 doing their job. If we let them, they'd put condos
18 on the Brooklyn Bridge, Central Park and all the
19 other properties all over the city, and I don't doubt
20 that they believe that what is good for--what they
21 believe what is good for them and their one percent
22 is somehow a public good, but that trickle down
23 mentality has not worked in our country and we all
24 know it. I would fault, however, any public officials
25 who have taken an oath to upheld--uphold the public

2 good to be our gatekeeper sent to protect us and our
3 public assets and delineate just where the buck
4 stops, who votes yes for this deeply flawed project,
5 a project which will hurt many of us who actually use
6 the library to benefit a very few who will likely be
7 wealthy newcomers, and mind you, this is a project
8 that goes beyond poor doors. All the lower income
9 affordable housing in this proposed new building is
10 to be shunted to the back of the neighborhood, just
11 like the back of the bus. Make no mistake, this is
12 project which people who actually live in our
13 neighborhood who do not have ties to the developer or
14 the library. It's a project which our residents are
15 solidly against, and if this goes down, they're not
16 going to forget it either. Tearing down our local
17 public library for all these flimsy reasons is
18 historically, politically, and morally unjust. I
19 urge our City Council and our other officials to vote
20 a resounding no to this unnecessarily and ill-advised
21 project. Thank you.

22 MICHAEL WHITE: Hello, Michael White,
23 Citizens Defending Libraries. We're going to be
24 giving you a lot of testimony. A lot of it is going
25 to be coming afterwards. We have lots of

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2 information. We have the answers to all the
3 questions that you should be asking given the lack of
4 transparency and a lot of misrepresentations that
5 were made here today. This is 2,000 testimonies that
6 we'll be giving you that we collected in just over
7 two weeks' time, 22 reasons people don't want to see
8 the libraries sold. We have over 24,000 signatures
9 to our petitions, 25,000. We have a sign-on letter
10 that is signed by--widely signed. We sort of make a
11 donut around the Brooklyn Heights Association, it
12 being the hole. These are two projects that were
13 conceived of at the same time, Donnell and the
14 Brooklyn Heights Library. The Donnell Library a week
15 ago Saturday reached its eighth anniversary of the
16 announcement of its sudden and secretive sale. Last
17 March, the luxury hotel, the luxury condominium where
18 the 50-60,000 dollar apartment was opened, the
19 restaurants where you can sit on coyote pelts to eat
20 your dinner, but the library that's been promised,
21 the one-third largely underground library, not in
22 sight; won't be there till summer of '16. They keep
23 postponing the date. What do we know about these two
24 deals? That one's David Offensend's [sp?] deal and
25 that one's Janet Offensend's deal. Now, there's lots

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2 of reasons that the public has stated and that have
3 come out in the hearings, but we--it's been clear in
4 the hearings. We are not even getting the tear-down
5 value of this library, not even the tear-down value
6 of. That is what was testified by EDC and the
7 Brooklyn Public Libraries. This library, it's an
8 owner's nightmare to have to sell a library for only
9 its tear-down value. This library, if you told
10 someone to go out and get a new library just like it,
11 you'd be spending over 120 million dollars, and
12 that's going by the library's own figures. We are
13 not even getting the tear-down value because they
14 didn't take the high bidder, and because they went
15 with extra weight for the off-site library, etcetera.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Sorry, can you
17 explain what you mean by the tear-down value?

18 MICHAEL WHITE: If you own a home, it has
19 a value to you because it's exactly what you want.
20 You may have renovated it the way you wanted to do.
21 So, in this case of the Brooklyn Heights Library, we
22 realized back in the 80's that we needed a much
23 bigger library. We therefore went through
24 considerable public expense and sacrifice to expand
25 this library. We expanded it by one-third in 1993,

2 building out over two wings. It is what we need.

3 It's not what the developer needs. It's not worth

4 anything to the developer. All that it's worth to

5 the developer is what he can do with it after he

6 tears down the value. If you told this same

7 developer that he couldn't do anything except build a

8 new library and sell it back to us, what would that

9 cost be? They would be spending 120 million dollars

10 to go out and buy the land and build the equivalent

11 of this library.

12 MAGGIE CANCAR: Hi, kind of awkward. I'll

13 show these later. I'd like to point out on top of

14 you is a saying that I've been staring at for most of

15 this hearing, "A government of the people, by the

16 people, for the people. Lincoln." And actually

17 think about that when you're actually voting. Saying

18 yes to this project--

19 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: [interposing] I'm

20 sorry, could you say your name for the record,

21 please?

22 MAGGIE CANCAR: I'm sorry, Maggie Cancar,

23 Latinos for Library also representing Brooklyn

24 Bridge, Harbor Heights Association, a long life

25 resident of Brooklyn. Saying yes to this particular

2 project is saying yes to inclusionary housing

3 discrimination. Having low income people and in this

4 case not low income people, because 165 of AMI is not

5 a low income, in one section and having wealthy

6 people on the other section is the definition of

7 discrimination. If you were to ask that to Lincoln.

8 Now, I want to point out in one of the things, I had

9 a whole speech, but they keep on talking about this

10 library that is not--that it is dilapidated. This is

11 not a dilapidated library, if you actually look at it

12 and you've been in there, and of course both of you

13 probably have, but those that have not, please judge

14 for yourself. A picture is worth a thousand words.

15 The last thing is the shelter, it's a book

16 depository. Please call it what it is. It's a book

17 depository. It is accessible to the public. A

18 person just has to ask and it will be brought up to

19 them. I will finish this with my 11 seconds as

20 saying that I met a person who actually told me that

21 he was at the particular library in order to retrieve

22 old 1970 yellow telephone books to prove that he

23 resides in Brooklyn in the past 30-something years in

24 order not to be evicted from his housing. So, this

25 is why we need it.

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2 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you for your
3 testimony.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very
5 much to this panel.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Nina Collins, Roxanna
7 Benavides, Rachel Teimann, Michael Pallock, and Eric
8 Chu [sp?].

9 [off mic comments]

10 UNIDENTIFIED: It looks like we're
11 missing someone. Please identify yourself before you
12 speak.

13 NINA COLLINS: Hi, my name is Nina
14 Collins. I'm a Brooklyn Heights resident of 15
15 years. I've raised my four kids there. I'm also
16 very proud to be a Board Member of the Library
17 Trustee for the past six years.

18 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Could you move the
19 microphone a little closer to you?

20 NINA COLLINS: Yeah, sure. Did you--do I
21 need to repeat anything? Okay. So, I'm a local
22 resident and a Board Member, and I'm very--I was
23 thinking as I was sitting here listening to everyone,
24 I think the one thing that we all agree on here is
25 that the Brooklyn Public Library is really a truly

2 amazing institution that provides countless urgently
3 needed services for the people of our borough. I'm
4 very proud to be hear, and hearing some of the
5 librarians testify is very moving to me. So, I
6 appreciate the arguments on both sides and share some
7 of the concerns that have been raised today by our
8 public officials, but I can attest as a very involved
9 Board Member to the integrity and transparency and
10 high level of work and thought from every angle
11 that's gone into this process. The bottom line
12 remains the same, the library's capital needs are
13 tremendous and we don't have any other answer. The
14 current branch is ugly, outdated, uncomfortable. I
15 disagree with people who say it's a lovely place to
16 be. I find it really not pleasant at all. We have an
17 opportunity here to have a state of the art beautiful
18 new facility and raise much needed money, not nearly
19 enough of course, but 40 million dollars to put into
20 some of other branches. This won't solve all of our
21 challenges, but it will be a positive impact--but the
22 positive impact will be significant. The only other
23 thing I want to mention is everyone keeps mentioning
24 the Business Library, and I can say that this plan to
25 move the Business Library to Central has been around

2 since long before this project started. This has
3 always been something the six years that I've been on
4 the Board that we've been planning to do really
5 because of the way our patrons use the Business
6 Library. It just makes sense. It's nothing else.

7 ROXANNA BENAVIDES: Good afternoon. I
8 want to thank Chair Cohen, Council Member Levin and
9 members of the Committee for the opportunity to
10 testify and advocate for the support of the Brooklyn
11 Public--of the Brooklyn Heights Library project. My
12 name is Roxanna Benavides. I began my career at the
13 Brooklyn Public Library 22 years ago as a library
14 trainee at the Williamsburg Branch. For the past 10
15 years I have been working at the Sunset Park Library
16 Branch where I'm currently the Neighborhood Library
17 Supervisor. I have seen firsthand the need to expand
18 spaces and services to our growing and diverse
19 communities in Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Heights
20 Library project will have a positive impact in all
21 Brooklyn. In addition to a new 21,500 square feet
22 state of the art library in creating 114 units of
23 affordable housing in Clinton Hill, the Brooklyn
24 Heights Library project will fund substantial long
25 time overdue improvements at other Brooklyn branches.

2 The 52 millions in that proceeds will be used as
3 significant portion of the Brooklyn Public Library's
4 300 million capital improvement needs, which will
5 continue to grow [sic] if funds are not available.
6 Aside from building a new branch in Brooklyn Heights,
7 the proceeds will also fund repairs at other
8 branches. For example, eight million dollars will go
9 to the Sunset Park Library branch where I work. That
10 will allow for a branch expansion from 12,000 square
11 feet to 21 square feet. The Sunset Park Library is
12 one of the busiest branches in Brooklyn Public
13 Library. It has long been in need of the expansion
14 and renovation. The branch needs a new boiler, a
15 roof and the installation of much needed self-check
16 machines and the removal of this. Please, help us.
17 Help us get the much needed repairs across the
18 borough in all our dear libraries. This project will
19 generate the funds that are much needed at all across
20 the Brooklyn Public Library. Thank you for the
21 opportunity.

22 UNIDENTIFIED: Hi, Michael Pallock
23 couldn't be here today, but asked that I would read
24 this on his behalf. "As the owner and founder of the
25 Brooklyn Roasting Company, we are proud to be

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2 supporters of the Brooklyn Public Library project. I
3 have been active in Brooklyn Heights for decades and
4 began our business in DUMBO five years ago, and we
5 now have four locations where we offer New Yorkers
6 best quality, fair trade, Rainforest Alliance, and
7 organic certified and sustainable coffees. We agreed
8 to participate in the Cadman Plaza Project by opening
9 a micro retail space on Clinton Street where we will
10 be serving our delicious coffees, sandwiches and
11 baked goods to library patrons, local residents,
12 students and office workers. This project offers a
13 beautiful new library that Brooklyn Heights deserves,
14 funding for other branches throughout the borough,
15 and most importantly, the most wonderful coffee in
16 Brooklyn. To the City Council we say please support
17 this terrific project."

18 ALBERT TABLONTI: Hi, my name's Albert
19 Tablonti [sp?], and I'm speaking on behalf of Eric
20 Chu. "Good afternoon, my name is Eric Chu. I'm a
21 51-year-old father who lives two blocks away from the
22 Brooklyn Heights Library. My two young sons and I
23 frequent the current library almost every weekend and
24 check out 20 to 30 books each visit. I have thought
25 long and hard about this issue. I have followed the

2 newspapers, checked out the websites, listened to all
3 sides, and I'm decisively in favor of the new library
4 building. If it were up to me, my dream library would
5 be a cathedral filled with wonderful books where I
6 could spend days browsing stacks, but I've also come
7 to realize that the new library is not really for me
8 as so much for my kids and their generation. My kids
9 also like to check out the stacks, but they really
10 enjoy ordering their books online from the library.
11 A day or so later, the books arrive at our library
12 where we go pick them up in a strange ad-hock space
13 next to the entry, which is next to the enormous
14 check-out counter which is underused because everyone
15 now uses the little electronic self-check-out kiosks,
16 that are placed in an odd location off the corridor.
17 The existing library is now inefficient and poorly
18 laid out and could be improved in so many thousands
19 of ways. I believe the new library building will
20 achieve this and more. My neighbors and my family
21 will have a beautiful new library designed for the
22 21st century. The proposal will also provide much
23 needed money to renovate many neighborhood Brooklyn
24 Library branches and will also provide much needed
25 affordable housing on Fulton Street and Atlantic

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2 Avenue. In particular, I am very pleased the
3 proposal includes a newly constructed interim library
4 at Henry and Remsen [sp?] so my family and neighbors
5 will experience no interruption and inconvenience at
6 all. On balance, this is a great deal in front of
7 the City Council today, and I urge every City Council
8 member here to vote in favor of the proposed new
9 library building."

10 RACHEL TEIMANN: Thank you for the
11 opportunity to be here, Council Member Levin, Council
12 Member Cohen and members of the Land Use Subcommittee
13 on Dispositions. Thank you for allowing me the
14 opportunity to speak today. My name is Rachel
15 Teimann and I am a Children's Librarian at the
16 Brooklyn Heights Library. I've lived in Brooklyn for
17 10 years and I'm currently living in Park Slope. A
18 library can be and should be the foundation of a
19 community. A good library is part of the
20 infrastructure of a neighborhood, but only if it can
21 keep up with its neighborhood and offer the community
22 what it needs. We need our library to take its place
23 in the future of Brooklyn Heights, and this project
24 will not only provide for our branch's future, but
25 the future of other aging branches in ever-evolving

2 Brooklyn neighborhoods. Brooklyn libraries are more
3 in demand than ever before, and library patrons and
4 staff deserve more than aging buildings and
5 infrastructure as library staff go above and beyond
6 every day to serve the needs of residents in
7 neighborhoods that are dramatically changing in both
8 size and scope. I'm excited by the possibility of a
9 state of the art facility for the kids of this
10 community. I'm excited by the possibility of a
11 program space that can be a fluid maker space for all
12 of the 21st century programming that we want to do in
13 our library, art programs, book clubs, science
14 programs, building programs, technology programs,
15 book author skype programs, and class visits where we
16 can showcase our free electronic resources for
17 research. We literally serve hundreds of children
18 and adults each week and a better laid out space
19 would give us the ability to do what we do best,
20 which is serve the community we're in. Brooklyn
21 Height's residents deserve a space they can walk into
22 and be proud of. The library staff deserves a space
23 they can walk into and be proud of. New York City is
24 and has always been a hot bed of artists, writers,
25 innovators and futurists. Brooklyn's libraries don't

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2 want to just keep up, they want to help lead the way,
3 and we ask your support in doing that. Please vote
4 yes for the project and thank you for your time.

5 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank the panel for
6 their testimony.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Paul Ness, David Parker,
8 Marsha Renter [sic] or Remler [sp?], Prudence Katze,
9 and Helen Covington [sp?]. Gregory Hamatus [sp?]?
10 Daniel Winnicore [sp?]?

11 UNIDENTIFIED: When the light is on, the
12 mic is one.

13 PAUL NESS: Hi, my name is Paul Ness.
14 I'm here to testify. I'm also a member of Citizens
15 Defending Libraries. I want to thank Council Member
16 Levin for his very probing questions. I think he did
17 a really good job representing his constituents, but
18 there's a couple of things that haven't been
19 addressed, maybe answers that need to be answers
20 found for some of these questions. First of all,
21 there is a credibility deficit with city government
22 with the way new projects are organized, because
23 obviously we've seen it with Donnell Library, which
24 we've mentioned many times already today, but also
25 Pierhouse. There's something that needs to really be

2 overcome in order to, you know, get back the trust of
3 constituents of residents of Brooklyn, but
4 everybody's talking about how there's going to be a
5 yield of so many million dollars from the sale of the
6 library or the land that the library sits on, but the
7 things is, money in a city budget is fungible. I
8 think everybody knows that. The money that you're
9 going to give, you're going to take out of the
10 library, the land and put it into the system, that's
11 going to now offset any more contributions that would
12 come from the city in the future. So, that's not a
13 net benefit. That's just throwing the land away,
14 right? And now you'll no longer have that land to see
15 in the future. That land will now belong to the
16 developer, will not belong to somebody else. And
17 Linda Johnson mentioned or admitted that this is,
18 that this plan that is developed for the Brooklyn
19 Heights Library is a model for future sales and
20 shrinkage of other libraries. I mean, what's going
21 to happen in 10 years? In 10 years are we going to
22 look back and think, God, we had a whole bunch of
23 really good libraries and now they're all gone
24 because we sold them off? I mean, this is really a
25 terrible situation, and libraries should not use to

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2 trade away for affordable housing. That's not a good
3 trade. They shouldn't be in the same. We need both,
4 obviously. So, also my suggestion is that we have
5 now on the Board of Trustees for the Libraries, we
6 have real estate people, but I don't think we have
7 any librarians. I think it'd be a good idea to bring
8 some librarians in to the trustees, right? I mean,
9 we need librarians. We should also really have
10 representatives of the public, but I'd settle for
11 librarians. Thank you.

12 MARSHA REMLER: My name is Marsha Remler.
13 I've lived within three blocks of the site on Cadman
14 Plaza for the last 40 years. I think it's important
15 that we get our eye back on the ball. The library is
16 not the ball. The real estate is the ball. Follow
17 the money. Mr. Kramer was given a sweetheart deal for
18 whatever reasons. A building on the next block is on
19 the market, we just recently read in the paper, for
20 close to 200 million dollars. That's the T.G. [sic]
21 Bank building. So we really have to wonder what the
22 real estate deal is, and that's really Josh Nokowitz
23 [sp?] started it. He worked at EDC for 10 years.
24 Then he went over to the library. That's where the
25 puzzle is, and that's where the emphasis needs to be,

2 in terms of really understanding what's going on
3 here. All the pretty pictures of the library are not
4 the issue. That's the icing on the cake. We have to
5 get into the cake and see how it was baked. Now, in
6 terms of the affordable housing, I've been a social
7 worker since 1972, and I can tell you that putting
8 housing in an area with a school poverty lunch rate
9 of 85 percent is not a good idea, and that's what
10 this plan does. If the housing, the so-called
11 affordable housing, were on site, they would be in an
12 area where the school free lunch rate of eight
13 percent. That's a big difference. So, we are
14 resegregting [sic] people. We are putting them in
15 areas where they're not going to have opportunities
16 that they need. So, this is a bad deal socially.
17 It's a bad deal economically. It really needs to go
18 down the tubes, and the library needs to come up with
19 another plan. One more thing, only 17 percent of the
20 capital needs of the library are met by this plan.
21 What are they going to do for the rest of their
22 needs? How many other libraries do they plan to sell
23 off? Thank you.

24 PRUDENCE KATZE: Good afternoon. My name
25 is Prudence Katze, and I am the Research and Policy

2 Manager at Common Cause New York. We are interested
3 in the outcome of the Brooklyn Heights Library
4 project, not only as it relates to our mission of
5 government accountability, but also because we are
6 concerned that selling a public asset is only a short
7 term solution for the continuing looming problem of
8 how to maintain and strengthen our willfully
9 underfunded library system, and thus, as people have
10 said before me, sets a dangerous precedent for
11 plugging budget holes. Common Cause opposes the sale
12 of the library and we urge the Subcommittee to vote
13 to reject the two Land Use Applications before the
14 Committee today. We are especially concerned with
15 three items, the relative hasty and uncreative
16 decision made and disposing of the library and its
17 land, which subtracts from our continually shrinking
18 stock of commonly owned civic assets, that this
19 decision was made by the Brooklyn Public Library and
20 the New York City Economic Development Corporation
21 out of public view, and the lack of proper monetary
22 compensation for the sale of the property. Most
23 anything can be monetized, but selling a publicly
24 owned asset is forever. We are concerned at the
25 process around how the decision to sell the library

2 is made from the inception and whether the
3 ramification of the public steward no longer having
4 control of the land was explored in full. Selling a
5 public asset doesn't have to be the default way to
6 generate money to plug a leaky hole. Our city has
7 the potential to come up with creative and
8 sustainable programs that leverage our public
9 resources of the long term for the maximum community
10 benefit. We agree with Brooklyn Borough President
11 Eric Adams in a September 8th letter disapproving of
12 the ULURP action when he wrote that he believes that
13 the funding of libraries should be responsibly
14 addressed by the tax levy and by the authority of the
15 city, not a one-time sale of the amenable [sic]
16 property. I also want to highlight that 44 out of
17 the 72 people who signed up to speak during the
18 Brooklyn Borough President's August 18th ULURP public
19 hearing testified in opposition to the project and
20 many people voiced their concern over the lack of
21 transparency. I have--will briefly say also that we
22 believe that the air rights that are being
23 transferred from the Saint Ann's property to the new
24 Cadman Plaza site are also not being properly taken
25 to account of how much money and value they'll be

2 adding two full stories to the property and that we
3 think that the deal should be reassessed with that in
4 mind. And I want to close, even if development of
5 the property as a high rise condominium with a
6 library house at its base were determined to be the
7 best ultimate use of the real estate and public
8 interest, there are ways of structuring the library's
9 interest that would not only protect the public use
10 of a library facility, but guarantee the library as
11 an income stream in the future. The BPL and NYC
12 EDC's approach shows a startling lack of creativity
13 and in addressing the real challenges faced in
14 maintaining and preserving our public assets. Thank
15 you.

16 DANIEL WINNICORE: Good afternoon. My
17 name is Daniel Winnicore [sp?]. I am a retired
18 librarian. I may not be a resident of Brooklyn, but
19 as a resident of New York City and a former librarian
20 I'm greatly concerned about the future of public
21 libraries in New York City, all five boroughs. That
22 is why I'm here to speak against the proposed plan to
23 tear down the Brooklyn Heights Branch of Brooklyn
24 Public Library and replace it with a smaller branch
25 as part of a high rise on the same site. The New York

2 City Planning Commission has approved this plan by 11
3 to zero vote, but is this plan good for the Brooklyn
4 Heights communities, the Brooklyn Public Library
5 system and New York City as a whole? Is this plan
6 the solution to capital funding for public libraries
7 in New York City and to creating affordable housing
8 in New York City? The answer is no. What is
9 Brooklyn Heights getting by this sale? It will bet
10 getting a new high rise to add to the problems of its
11 currently overburdened educational institutions. It
12 will not be getting any new affordable housing. It
13 will be getting a new library one-third the size of
14 the present building, and the library will no longer
15 have its business division which will be moved out of
16 the neighborhood never to return. The new library
17 will have a below street level children's room. Look
18 at the architect's rendering, shows it will have far
19 fewer books than it currently has. What is Brooklyn
20 Public Library getting for this sale? It will be
21 getting a new way of capital funding, it's system, by
22 selling off its public assets, its buildings.
23 Brooklyn Public Library expects to use the proceeds
24 from this sale to make improvements on other existing
25 library branches. It is also planning to sell the

2 Sunset Park Branch as another source of revenue.

3 These sales will give the system a short term

4 infusion of cash, but should this sale of public

5 assets be the solution to capital funding? And what

6 is New York City getting from this sale? Is it

7 hoping by sales such as this to exchange its public

8 assets for very small additions to its available

9 affordable housing? Can the citizens of New York

10 trust the claim of the Administration of Brooklyn

11 Public Library that the replacement building will be

12 an improvement on the current library, even though

13 it'll be one-third its size? I strongly urge the

14 members of the New York City Council and Mayor de

15 Blasio to visit the Brooklyn Heights Library now and

16 see how well it serves Brooklyn Heights and the

17 downtown Brooklyn business community before they

18 approve demolishing it in exchange for a short term

19 infusion of cash and a very small number of

20 affordable housing units. Don't sell the citizens of

21 New York City short by selling off their libraries.

22 Thank you.

23 GREG HAMATUS: Good afternoon, Council

24 Member Lander, Council Member Levin, Council Member

25 Cohen, and others in the audience. My name is Greg

2 Hamatus [sp?], lifelong resident of Brooklyn, avid
3 library user of all three systems, especially the
4 Brooklyn Public Library. I would like to address the
5 280 Cadman Plaza West application which includes the
6 Brooklyn Heights project. Right now we're at a
7 historic moment in our city's history that this
8 decision must be made whether or not this Brooklyn
9 Heights Library will be sold to a private developer
10 or shrunk, or whether we protect and grow it to meet
11 the needs of a growing city. I urge you to stand
12 with a majority of library users and vote against the
13 sale. Vote no. Who is against this sale, proposed
14 sale? Let me tell you, there's been a petition of
15 over 16,000 citizen signatures delivered to former
16 Mayor Bloomberg opposing this sale of this and all
17 libraries. This petition was delivered on October
18 22nd, 2013 on the steps of City Hall. The group,
19 Citizens Defending Libraries, has collected an
20 additional approximately 8,000 signatures. We're
21 told approximately 24,000. This Mayor de Blasio
22 himself came out against the sale during his position
23 of NYC's Public Advocate. I'd like to address
24 something. In response of Council Member
25 Greenfield's talk, question on public involvement,

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2 BPL convened a Citizen's Advisory Committee, and I

3 sat in on a couple of those meetings and I was

4 appalled by the lack of transparency there and public

5 involvement. The people they had on that board were

6 not reflective of the diverse views of the area, and

7 their agenda seemed to be the sell-off this library,

8 public opinion be damned. That's my opinion. Now,

9 also let--next, it appears also that the Brooklyn

10 Public Library is in the process of selling off the

11 Brooklyn Heights Branch through an AC system that

12 doesn't work. Would you sell your house or car

13 through a broken AC system rather than fix it or

14 replace it? Think about it. if there's any doubt in

15 your mind, I urge the New York City Council's

16 Subcommittee on Planning, Dispositions and

17 Concessions and the full City Council and Mayor to

18 take a good hard look into this project to see if it

19 makes sense to go forward given what I've presented

20 you today and submit a recommendation to disapprove

21 this application of the sale of this site with a

22 condition of modification with the courtesy the

23 Borough President Eric Adams who said no also. Like

24 the commercial use to say in the old days, "Just say

25

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2 no" to this ill-founded idea. Thank you very much
3 for listening to me.

4 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: We thank the panel for
5 your testimony.

6 UNIDENTIFIED: Dennis Markell, Barry
7 Callahan [sp?], Ed Brown, Si Allah [sp?], Kalim
8 Neetum [sp?]? What are your names so that we can
9 call up two more?

10 KALIM NEETUM: Kalim Neetum [sp?].

11 ED BROWN: Ed Brown.

12 DENNIS MARKELL: Dennis Markell.

13 UNIDENTIFIED: Is Barry Callahan here?
14 And Si Allah? Jason Asbury? Martin Allen?

15 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Please.

16 DENNIS MARKELL: Good afternoon. My name
17 is--no, it's not on? Ah, there I am. Good
18 afternoon. My name is Dennis Markel. I am a lifetime
19 resident of Brooklyn Heights and an author of
20 children's books and a father who also has a child
21 who goes to the Brooklyn Public Library. First of
22 all, I want to thank you for your patience and
23 forbearance in listening to all the testimony.
24 Councilman Cohen, thank you for staying in the room
25 and listening to what we have today say on both

2 sides. I'm old enough that when I was five years old
3 the building was constructed. So, I've been going
4 there since it was built. I know I don't look like
5 it, but so I learned to read there. I did my school
6 work there. I even use it for microfilm when that
7 was state of the art in the 70's, and I'm blessed to
8 say that I could bring my son who is now 11 to the
9 same library, and this was a wonderful thing to be
10 able to do, however, during those 11 years one of the
11 things that I learned was the library simply wasn't
12 up to the task. As an author, I've traveled. I've
13 been able to go to other libraries around the
14 country, including for example Princeton, New Jersey
15 which has a state of the art library, and I could see
16 what we could have as a library, and Brooklyn Heights
17 deserves a library like that, and obviously all of us
18 wish that we could get this money from the city and
19 get this money in some other way, but this seems a
20 very good way of getting the money for this library
21 and for the other libraries in the Brooklyn system,
22 and it seems to me an excellent way to move forward,
23 and so I totally support this and I hope we can go
24 forward with it. Thank you so much.

2 ED BROWN: Good evening, Council Members.
3 What happened to Council Member Levin? He had to
4 step out. Alright, okay. My name is Ed Brown and
5 I'm the President of Team Brown Consulting, and I'm
6 the former Tenant's Association President for the
7 Ingersoll Public Houses in Downtown Brooklyn, and you
8 know, I'm hearing a lot tonight, you know, a lot of
9 misinformation is going out. And I just want to say
10 a young lady earlier said a government of the people,
11 by the people, for the people. We are here earlier
12 with a bus load, two busloads of people from
13 Ingersoll, Whitman and Farragut Houses and other
14 parts of Brooklyn, and for some reason strangely we
15 were stopped at the door and many of them weren't
16 allowed to come in for whatever reason. But when I
17 hear people talk about poor doors, you know, I come
18 from a poor community so to speak. The Public
19 Advocate said earlier about the people in public
20 housing in downtown Brooklyn being surrounded and
21 being left out. So when I hear these things about
22 the concerns about poor doors, how could you be
23 concerned about a door, one or two units of
24 affordable housing when there's an entire poor
25 community in downtown Brooklyn? And every time

2 there's a developer who decides that he wants to
3 provide job opportunities to people in those
4 communities, there's always opposition, and mainly
5 opposition from the union, and it's amazing that I
6 have hundreds of union members that come to me and
7 beg me for a job. I'm not a union delegate, but
8 there's something wrong with the union that everyone
9 keep lumping the construction union in with the rest
10 of the building trades. It's a different animal, so
11 to speak. The construction union doesn't have a good
12 history of providing long term job opportunities for
13 people of color. Yeah, they'll have a sprinkle here
14 and there and it looks good when they come and do
15 speeches like this, but we can show you hundreds,
16 thousands of union members who go to the bench and
17 don't never get called for jobs, and we can also walk
18 around downtown Brooklyn and see many of these union
19 construction sites where you don't see people who
20 look like me. And you look at the license plates and
21 you see Philadelphia and you see Virginia, and you
22 see all these other places outside of Brooklyn. So,
23 when I hear good job, you can't' tell a young man
24 who's living in a low income community where there's
25 high crime, no opportunity to wait for a union job

2 when any job will due to stop the bleeding. So, we
3 could be progressive and liberal when it comes to
4 certain issues, but we can't do that when it comes to
5 certain people, and I hear all this misinformation
6 about overcrowded schools in downtown Brooklyn. I'm
7 very familiar with the schools in downtown Brooklyn.
8 The schools in downtown Brooklyn are not overcrowded.
9 PS8 is overcrowded, but downtown Brooklyn is just not
10 PSA. There are other schools in downtown Brooklyn
11 that have adequate space, but if we're talking about
12 people living together when it comes to affordable
13 housing, we can't also now say we're not going to
14 send our kids to schools in the minority community,
15 we're going to stay over here at PS8 and just stay
16 and build and build and build and keep going to one
17 school. There's space in the other schools in
18 District 13. So we have to be very, very, very
19 truthful with ourselves about what we're building in
20 downtown Brooklyn. You know, to say one thing in
21 front of a microphone and say one thing when the
22 cameras are rolling, but live another thing when we
23 go back in these communities, it's going to come back
24 to bite all of us in the long run. I think David
25 Kramer's doing a great thing, because he reached out

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2 to the low income community and wants to provide
3 jobs. So, there's two trees. I understand there may
4 be other issues, but you cannot continue to every
5 time the low income community's gets an opportunity
6 to feed their families come up with reasons why it
7 shouldn't happen. So, pass this project because
8 there's people down there that need these jobs.
9 Thank you.

10 KALIM NEETUM: Good afternoon. My name
11 is Kalim Neetum. I'm a foreman on a construction
12 site down in downtown Brooklyn, non-union. We ask
13 the working people of New York, union and non-union,
14 we support the Brooklyn Heights Library project,
15 because it sets the bar showing us construction
16 workers have a chance to feed our families and
17 ourself [sic]. I urge the City Council to allow the
18 workforce who formerly convicted felons who are
19 trying to re-enter into the workforce with the
20 opportunity to build. I am not interested in going
21 back to a life of crime. I want to--sorry. I am
22 interested in providing for my family and myself.
23 The people of the city are at hard times, financially
24 ruined, and the lack of diversity in many
25 neighborhoods and industries. If the city is serious

2 about joining together and keeping our streets safe,
3 keep us in the workforce and not in the streets.

4 Vote Brooklyn Public Libraries, an amazing [sic]

5 change for the next generation in our community. And

6 I want to say one thing, another thing, in a

7 construction industry is very dangerous, non-union

8 and union, but you cannot forget about the non-

9 unions. We have families and everything as well.

10 You understand? And the last couple incidents that

11 have been happening in the construction workforce, it

12 has been with union companies. So, you know, you

13 can't just say, oh, because it's a union company, you

14 know, everything's going to be safe. Accidents happen

15 non-union and union. So--

16 JASON ASBURY: Good afternoon. I am

17 Jason Asbury and I'm the Assistant Head of School at

18 Saint Ann's School in Brooklyn Heights. On behalf of

19 our Head of School, Vincent Tompkins, I am here to

20 indicate his support for the construction of a new

21 library for Brooklyn Heights. As a near neighbor of

22 this project, Saint Ann's School will benefit from

23 the refurbished branch library that has been

24 proposed. The new library space would be a boon to

25 the hundreds of Saint Ann's students, families and

2 alumni who reside in Brooklyn Heights and in nearby
3 neighborhoods. Our families who live in other parts
4 of Brooklyn will benefit from the refurbishment of
5 other existing branches that the sale of this parcel
6 will help to fund. We are neighbors in another sense
7 as well. Our building at 153 Pierpont, which houses
8 our lower school, sits on the same zoning lot as this
9 project, and we have offered to sell existing unused
10 air rights from that building, a portion of which
11 will be used to increase the amount of inclusionary
12 housing that Hudson Companies is committed to
13 building. Thank you.

14 MARTIN ALLEN: My name is Martin Allen. I
15 represent People for Political and Economic
16 Empowerment. I'm also a Local 79 union worker, which
17 has never been called for a job. Union does not--
18 when they build houses in our community, the union
19 wants to come into our community and say, oh, these
20 jobs can be union because they can get better wages
21 and they can get medical, health, and all these other
22 things, but how many people are in the union in our
23 community? They're not. They don't have 750 dollars
24 to pay for a union book, and if they do, all the guys
25 that I know that got a union book and was laid off

2 after only working three months or four months, lost
3 their union book because you put a fine on them.

4 What kind of brotherly love is that? We got a more
5 serious problem coming. They's [sic] trying to reach

6 out into the community that needs help. All these

7 other established don't need no help. They already

8 get money. We got 6,000 federal prisoners getting

9 ready to be released from prison. Where are they

10 going to go? Who's going to give them a job? I've

11 been in the federal prison half of my life, you

12 understand? I came home. I made a change. So, it's

13 possible for everybody to change, and believe me,

14 when I say I've changed, I've changed. So, everybody

15 else needs that same opportunity to change, but

16 companies got to give you a chance to change. Hudson

17 has opened up the door for people like me to get a

18 chance to change to do something with their life

19 other than negativity. So, right now, what we do, we

20 work with the hard to employ. These people need

21 opportunity. They need housing, you understand?

22 Okay, sure some of the housing are very high, but

23 anywhere you go in Brooklyn is very high. I went to

24 look at an apartment for a young lady the other day.

25 It cost 2,500 dollars for a basement apartment with

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2 cracks and roaches running all around. So, when

3 people point fingers at somebody, remember that the

4 four other fingers is pointing right back at you.

5 So, I'm just saying, man, in all fairness, man, give

6 people the same opportunity you gave other companies

7 in downtown Brooklyn, and look at all the other

8 developments that downtown Brooklyn has putting up

9 the same kind of buildings that Hudson is putting up,

10 even though they're not giving back as much as Hudson

11 gave back to the community, they reaching out to

12 people. The other companies haven't reached out to

13 none of us. So I'm saying, do the right thing and

14 vote for this project and say yes, and remember, the

15 same people y'all had go out into the street and vote

16 for you, y'all didn't pay them prevailing wages

17 neither. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: We thank the panel

19 for their testimony.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: Mary Fouts [sp?], Gwen

21 Fishman, Michael Raymond, Maryanne Fastook [sic],

22 Patricia Rattigan.

23 [off mic comments]

24 UNIDENTIFIED: What are your names, just

25 so I can call another one?

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2 PATRICIA RATTIGAN: I'm Patricia
3 Rattigan.

4 MARY FOUTS: Mary Fouts.

5 UNIDENTIFIED: Who speaks? I don't know.

6 PATRICIA RATTIGAN: They want to check
7 our names so they can get one more.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Okay, they want somebody
9 else. She was--

10 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] Yeah, we want
11 to call someone else up--okay.

12 PATRICIA RATTIGAN: Patricia Rattigan,
13 Mary Fouts.

14 MARYANNE FASTOOK: Maryanne Fastook.

15 GWEN FISHMAN: Gwen Fishman.

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Rattigan was the last one
17 called. They gotta [sic] go--

18 UNIDENTIFIED: Can we-- Mary Crosby?

19 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Is Mary Crosby here?
20 Okay.

21 [off mic comments]

22 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Please begin.

23 MARY FOUTS: Mr. Chairman and Council

24 Members, my name is Mary Fouts. Thank you for this

25 opportunity to testify today before you. My topic is

2 what exactly the City Council should consider the
3 weight to be given to the decisions of the Planning
4 Committee of Community Board Two. Community Board
5 Two is still--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing]
7 Sorry, if you could hold on one second, please.
8 Please, quiet.

9 MARY FOUTS: and the City Planning
10 Commission, all of which approved this plan. I
11 attended the hearings before the Planning Committee
12 of CB2 and before the whole body of Community Board
13 Two. Do you know what member after member of the
14 Planning Committee stated as his or her rationale for
15 recommending this plan? It was that regardless of
16 the members' personal opinion, the plan should be
17 kicked up the ladder because more skilled and
18 knowledgeable bodies would be looking at the later
19 stages of the ULURP process, and what did member
20 after member of the Community Board state as his or
21 her rationale for recommending this plan to the
22 Borough President? It was that regardless of the
23 members' own opinion, the plan should continue to be
24 kicked up the latter because the skilled and
25 knowledgeable Planning Committee had seen fit to

2 recommend it, and of course because there were still
3 two levels of skilled and knowledgeable reviewers
4 above the Community Board. Each level of review of
5 this plan reveals a fundamental weakness, when a job
6 is everybody's business it's nobody's business. The
7 lower level reviewers can wash their hands of the
8 duty to look deeply into the floors of a plan by
9 expecting more diligent review in the later levels,
10 and the upper level reviewers can wash their hands of
11 their duty to take a fresh look at the flaws of the
12 plan by relying on the supposed diligence of the
13 lower levels. ULURP does not create any reliable
14 degree of genuine study of a land use plan. What it
15 creates is a house of cards, each level based on
16 flimsy and meaningless level below it, and each level
17 is incapable of supporting any weight from above.
18 That's why I call on the City Council to look at this
19 plan from the beginning and do as much as you can to
20 determine its real value and its real flaws. Thank
21 you.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very
23 much for your testimony. I do want to say that
24 that's exactly what we're doing, and if you look at
25 the previous stages in ULURP, the Community Board

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2 voted for it in a split vote. The Borough President
3 voted against it with recommendations. The City
4 Planning Commission voted for it. So, you know,
5 there's been some split there on the kind of previous
6 stages in ULURP, but we are really doing our due
7 diligence here, taking under advisement all of those
8 recommendations, but doing our own thorough review.
9 So, we do appreciate your testimony on that matter.

10 GWEN FISHMAN: Hello, my name is Gwen
11 Fishman, and I live in Brooklyn Heights and have for
12 50 years, and I also lived in Crown Heights for a
13 couple of decades before that. So, I want to
14 challenge Linda Johnson's assertion about the
15 location of the Brooklyn Heights Business Library and
16 Career Development and Education Library. I'm going
17 to ask you to do two things. Take a walk outside the
18 library someday at noon, and you will see all the
19 people who work in the federal, state and local
20 courthouses in the business offices. Take a walk
21 down Fulton Street, the resurgent retail district.
22 It's not just Macy's anymore. It's H&M. It's ANX
23 [sic], whatever that is, and Old Navy and
24 Nordstrom's, and T.J. Maxx. Well, where do all these
25 people who work till six, seven o'clock at night go

2 to the library? They go to the Brooklyn Heights
3 Library and the Business Library if they need to
4 write up a new resume or check on a job search, or
5 just get their tax forms Xeroxed. This is a vital
6 location for downtown Brooklyn and all the hundreds
7 and thousands of people who work there. Their
8 library--when they get home, their libraries are
9 closed. So, this is it. One day I was sitting in
10 one of the six bus lines that stop right outside the
11 library, and I was all by myself, no driver. All of
12 a sudden, this guy comes running out of the library
13 onto the bus. It was the bus driver, and he said,
14 "Sorry, I had to get this book," and it was a civil
15 service exam prep book. So, that's how vital the
16 location of the library is. One more thing I'd like
17 to tell Linda Johnson, look at a subway map. Let me
18 just finish this. I grew up in Crowne Heights. I
19 went to Brooklyn College. I went to Erasmus. I know
20 how you get to Grand Army Plaza. You take the two or
21 the three and you get off at Easton Parkway or you
22 can take the four and get off at Grand Army Plaza,
23 but there--and also the 41 bus, but there is no
24 platform to surface transportation. So, if you're
25 like me now, you're out of luck. Whereas, look at

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DISPOSITIONS & CONCESSIONS 206
2 the map again. Look at the Brooklyn Heights downtown
3 area. The two, the three, the four, the A, the C,
4 the F, the R, and some of those have platform to
5 surface transportation. Every--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] F2.

7 GWEN FISHMAN: Oh, right, I'm sorry. I
8 grew up on the two or three. I eliminate four and
9 five sometimes, but the bus lines go all over
10 Brooklyn, the 25, the 26, the 38, the 41, the 52, and
11 the 103 that comes from Bay Ridge. So, not only can
12 you get to this library, but you also when you need
13 to go home you have a way to get home to the library,
14 and that's why I think she is wrong, wrong, wrong
15 about putting this Business and Career Development
16 Library at Grand Army Plaza. To me, I know she
17 always talks about this being as a 21st century
18 library. It's a 21st century swindle as far as I'm
19 concerned.

20 MARYANNE FASTOOK: My name is Maryanne
21 Fastook and I am a resident of downtown Brooklyn, and
22 I have spent my entire life in what became Cobble
23 Hill and then in Brooklyn Heights, and for the last
24 45 years a block outside of Brooklyn Heights in
25 Concord Village, but that Brooklyn Heights Library

2 has been my branch library for my entire life. I
3 went there when I was seven when it was a building on
4 the corner of Montegut Street that Robert Moses
5 destroyed calling it urban renewal. It took us two
6 years and a lot of pressure to try and get the
7 building that now stands at Cadman. It is a bad deal
8 to sell this library. Public land and public
9 buildings belong to the public and by extension to
10 the people of the city, and they should never be
11 privatized, because once you lose it you can never
12 replace it. the other thing, I want to thank you,
13 Steve, for all the questions you asked, because
14 you're right, there is not guarantee that this will
15 ever come about, because you don't know if the
16 economy may turn down or what may happen, and the
17 city will be left holding the bag. Lehman Brothers,
18 Bear Sterns [sic] were very big institutions, but
19 they went down, and when they did there was a lot of
20 pain. There are ways they could shore up the
21 finances, but they don't want to spend the money.
22 There's ways to, you know, build in insurance. They
23 don't want to do that. It is a very bad deal. We
24 cannot afford any more housing because there are
25 5,000 and more apartments that already have building

2 permits and that will be coming on line with more
3 people, more kids, more this, and nothing will move
4 there. The trains will be jammed, and where is the
5 infrastructure for these, all these people they want
6 to bring in? They don't care. They get the money
7 and they run. The hell with you. And the people who
8 live there and by extension the city are left to try
9 to pick up the pieces. Thank you.

10 PATRICIA RATTIGAN: Hi, I'm Patricia
11 Rattigan, and I'm really sick of looking at these
12 buildings, quite honestly, these high-rises of Fulton
13 Street, downtown. It's a horror. It's a nightmare.
14 There's not a tree to be had. I mean, I grew up in
15 Brooklyn, and I never saw it like this. I have
16 nightmares about the city now. I actually--I know,
17 I'm a--I was born in this city, and what they're
18 doing to this city is horrible. It's really, it's a
19 shame. It's a damn shame, and it's all, you know,
20 they all--the same developer also built that atrocity
21 under the Brooklyn Bridge in the Brooklyn Park. It's
22 supposed to be a park. You know, someone said to me,
23 if you stand too long they'll put a building on top
24 of you. So, I said, yeah, you're right. And you
25 know, I think its 21st century swindle also. Thanks.

2 MARY CROSBY: Hi, my name is Mary Crosby
3 and I'm coming as a librarian, not that I'm--I'm
4 going to try to present some ideas that are maybe a
5 little different than other people have brought up,
6 but and I may not even be the best person to do this,
7 but I'm retired, so I'm not beholding to anybody, and
8 I think it's important. I'm raising the question--
9 first of all, I want to thank the robust--thank you
10 all for the robust question. You're doing very good.
11 I also have the question about the deal, and I would--
12 -and just to be short about it, I'm wondering why the
13 deal wasn't structured as a land lease so that the
14 money from the leasing of the land itself would help
15 to provide ongoing support for the library.
16 Apparently, this was not considered or just brushed
17 off much in the beginning of the process. So, I
18 raise that question. But going beyond that, I have
19 the question of just what exactly a 21st century
20 library is. There's not a lot of description, and
21 generally speaking when you plan a facility you plan
22 what goes on in it, and then you figure out what kind
23 of building you need to go on, to go around it. I
24 would point out that people are always talking about
25 technology and what they mean by that is computer

2 technology. We need more computers. I want to point
3 out that this is a piece of technology. If you look
4 here, you have marks on the paper, right, which your
5 brain decodes. Just spend a minute thinking about
6 that. That's like amazing, and it is a vehicle for
7 you to travel and visit people that you will never
8 meet in your lifetime, in the past or even people
9 around the world who are, you know, very prominent
10 people, and you're not going to get in to see them,
11 but through a book you can. I'm disturbed by the
12 trend that seems to be like, we'll we start out,
13 we're going to have only 2,000 square feet. That was
14 the beginning, and it looks like--and there are no
15 shelf list numbers. There's no like how much linear
16 shelving are we going to have in here. So, it looks
17 to me like we're going to be doing away with books
18 thinking that everything's going to be on the
19 internet. And I just want to finish with one
20 statement here very brief. I'm concerned that the
21 plans for the so-called 21st century library are
22 aimed at commercializing the act of reading.

23 Statements in the Center for the Urban Future report
24 point in this alarming direction with regard to
25 tapping new revenue possibilities. The authors state,

2 "Library websites attract millions of visitors a
3 month. If they could perfect an online browsing
4 environment with recommendations in interactive
5 capacities, libraries could sell advertisements and
6 user data like any other digital media company.
7 Knowing how a user landed on a particular book, for
8 example, could be extremely valuable for publishers.
9 We know that every clip of the internet is tracked
10 and recorded and supported by advertising revenue
11 which then drives the design of its offerings. E-
12 books carry the same potential. Can it be called a
13 library if you're selling the act of reading?" I'm
14 very concerned about this, and you're not going to
15 read War and Peace on the internet. So, anyway,
16 thank you very much. Thank you for the opportunity
17 to testify.

18 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: We thank the panel for
19 your testimony.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you, and
21 just on that last piece, that's something we
22 unfortunately didn't have really the time to get
23 into, but I would like to follow up on that issue,
24 because I am concerned as well about in terms of
25 shelf space, in terms of the number of books, whether

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2 this plan has been well thought out in terms of
3 having that comparable number to what is currently
4 there today.

5 PATRICIA RATTIGAN: Right. I would
6 appreciate that. I will be giving. I will be sending
7 you some further information.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Great, thank you.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Roselle Silverstein [sp?],
10 Robert Hebron [sp?], Nathaniel Maize [sp?], Nina--
11 Nina Collins, I think already went. Christian
12 Zabriskie, Phillip Kellogg?

13 ROSELLE SILVERSTEIN: Should I start?
14 Hello? Hi, I'm Ms. Silverstein, I come from--

15 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] One moment,
16 one moment. Michael Crane? No? Theodore Oberman
17 [sp?]?

18 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Please begin. Sure.

19 KERWIN PILGRIM: Good afternoon. My name
20 is Kerwin Pilgrim. I'm the Director of Adult
21 Learning at the Brooklyn Public Library, and this
22 evening I'm here to provide testimony on behalf of
23 Theodore Oberman who couldn't remain here with us.
24 "I'm a lifelong resident of Brooklyn and a father of
25 five daughters. I'm here to ask that the project for

2 the new library to be approved. The current library
3 is an unattractive building which has a poor and
4 inefficient layout. It is basically unusable during
5 the summer months because of the faulty AC system.
6 I'm here to ask for approval for particularly my
7 daughters and for other children of Brooklyn. At
8 some point in their lives my daughters stopped
9 wanting to go to Brooklyn Heights Library, calling it
10 ugly depressing and boring. I believe strongly that
11 libraries play a critical role in the lives of
12 children. Libraries give them resources to create,
13 learn and understand the world around them. This can
14 only happen if a library is a place that children
15 want to visit. So, I ask that this project be
16 approved for my children and all children in Brooklyn
17 so that they can have a library that inspires them.
18 Thank you."

19 ROSELLE SILVERSTEIN: Hello. I'm Ms.
20 Silverstein. I come from the neighborhood where the
21 library is located. I'm a frequenter of the library
22 and I've been going there since I was a child, and I
23 would like to say that I think the library is in very
24 good shape and serves its patrons very well. People
25 can differ. You know, some people say it's ugly.

2 People can have differences of opinion about things
3 like that, but I would like to point out that it was
4 actually designed by a well-respected architect, the
5 same architect who designed the main branch, and it
6 has artwork. In addition to having artwork that is
7 very visible in the front, there's actually some--
8 there's a very charming area in the back which is not
9 really used at present, but could be. I would like to
10 point out to respond to what people have said
11 regarding a library for the 21st century. As I said,
12 first of all, I think it is doing, you know, serving
13 patrons very well the way it is, but if people, you
14 know, would like a library, you know, that serves
15 people better in terms of technology, that's
16 something that can be added. I mean, they added
17 computers already to the library, and they can add
18 other things. That's not--you do not need a
19 different building to do that. It can be
20 retrofitted. It can be renovated. I would--I'd also
21 would like to mention--I think some people have
22 mentioned a café. The current library I understand
23 has two kitchens, which are probably not being used
24 right now and it could be. So, and I would also like
25 to point out that I do think there are other ways to

2 fund the libraries. I would like to, you know, point
3 to the museums in New York City. There are museums
4 that are free to the public, but people donate,
5 maybe, you know, some of them they have a suggested
6 donation, and I would like--I've even spoken to
7 people outside the library, "Would you be willing to
8 donate to the library to fix the air conditioning or
9 for other things?" and you know, there are people who
10 would be willing to spend a few dollars on that. So,
11 I think the library and the library could have after-
12 hours events. There could be all kinds of creative
13 ways that the library could use to raise money.
14 Including, by the way, I mentioned the kitchens. I
15 think that, you know, there's a lot of potential with
16 food to raise money. There could be food trucks
17 outside the libraries, various libraries, and
18 including the Brooklyn Heights Branch Library.

19 PHILLIP KELLOGG: I think we've slipped
20 into evening. Good evening everybody. Council
21 Members, my name is Phillip Kellogg. I'm Executive
22 Director of the Fulton Area Business Alliance. It's
23 a business improvement district along 1.2 miles of
24 Fulton Street in Fort Greene and Clinton Hill, and we
25 represent over 400 small businesses and property

2 owners in the neighborhoods. With respect to the
3 affordable housing component of this proposal to be
4 located at 1041 Fulton Street in Clinton Hill, we
5 feel this project would deliver significant benefits
6 to the Fulton Street Commercial Corridor and the
7 wider Clinton Hill community. In previous public
8 hearings on this matter, FAB testified on how
9 important it was that 1041 Fulton include ground-
10 floor commercial uses. We were very pleased that the
11 project's developer listened to FAB's testimony and
12 now includes ground-floor commercial, and FAB is
13 equally pleased at the City Planning Commission
14 recommendation for this project also include the
15 requirement that 1041 Fulton Street include ground-
16 floor commercial. This mixed-use development with
17 ground-floor commercial will provide a number of
18 benefits. A vacant lot on Fulton Street will be
19 developed, activating a dark and dreary stretch of
20 the commercial corridor. The street will be
21 energized with more people. Existing businesses will
22 benefit from increased population density, which
23 translates into more potential customers. Existing
24 small businesses will also benefit from maintaining
25 the continuity of the retail corridor because of the

2 ground-floor commercial use. This will avoid the
3 creation of a dead zone that you see in other
4 neighborhoods that have so many blocks and buildings
5 without ground-floor commercial spaces. Residents
6 will benefit from having more choices for shopping
7 and dining right in their neighborhood, and more
8 people means more eyes on the street which will
9 improve public safety for the existing businesses and
10 their employees, residents in the surrounding
11 communities and the people who live in the new
12 building, and to that very important point, this
13 corner of Clinton Hill needs affordable housing to
14 help maintain the vibrant diversity of the
15 neighborhood. FAB welcomes this mixed-use building
16 at 1041 Fulton that includes affordable housing plus
17 ground-floor commercial usage. It will be a dynamic
18 addition to this section of the Fulton Street
19 commercial corridor. So, I want to thank you for
20 your consideration. Also, I delivered written
21 testimony from another property owner and business
22 person on the district, and they're just hungry for
23 more foot traffic, making sure that there isn't a gap
24 in the commercial corridor and how important it is

2 not only to his business but to the other businesses
3 along that strip. Thank you very much.

4 CHRISTIAN ZABRISKIE: Good evening.

5 Thank you for allowing me to speak here today. My
6 name is Christian Zabriskie. I'm the Executive
7 Director of Urban Librarians Unite. We are an
8 independent 501C3 not-for-profit that focuses on
9 libraries and librarianship in urban centers. We've
10 been speaking out in favor of funding for libraries
11 here in New York City for over seven years now and
12 follow operating and capital budgets for the three
13 library systems very, very carefully. I, myself,
14 have a Master's in Science in Library and Information
15 Studies and have been a working librarian in the city
16 for nearly a decade. In an ideal world, all our
17 public libraries would be well-funded and in a state
18 of good repair. Unfortunately, that is not the state
19 of libraries in New York City, nor is the funding in
20 place to put them into good repair without difficulty
21 and controversial resolutions. We at Urban
22 Librarians Unite feel that this plan as set forth by
23 Brooklyn Public Library is the best solution to a
24 difficult problem. Now, our working rule of thumb is,
25 offer the best library services to the greatest

2 number of people with the resources currently
3 available. Years of advocacy for New York City
4 libraries have made us very pragmatic. We address
5 the issue that is in front of us, not the issue as we
6 would like it to be. Here are the benefits of the
7 plan as we see them. Modern library service, now
8 it's been talked about 21st century library. We are
9 currently working in 21st century libraries. It's the
10 one that I work in today is a 21st century library.
11 The modern library offers far more than books. Now,
12 we are going to have books, guys, trust me. We are
13 not getting rid of the books. There will be books in
14 the library, I promise you. However, now we are
15 spaces of active education, digital exploration,
16 patron [sic] creation, the kinds of programs that,
17 Councilman Levin, you said you were interested in
18 happening. These are the things that happen in our
19 libraries. And the new library design, which will go
20 into the space in question, would be at the cutting
21 edge of librarianship for the people of that
22 neighborhood and for the borough of Brooklyn in a
23 wider sense. This sale will generate revenue for
24 other branches. Now, this is the part of the plan
25 that is most compelling to us. This sale will allow

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2 for numerous other branches in lower income
3 neighborhoods to get much needed capital
4 improvements. Now, these improvements are mission
5 critical for these libraries and for the people
6 working in the libraries and the people that they
7 serve. We're talking about roofing and HVAC systems.
8 These needs are not exciting. They're not sexy.
9 They're not cool full renovations or new buildings,
10 but they nevertheless are essential for library staff
11 and for patrons alike. Now, I'm here to ask this
12 City Council to give their support to a plan that
13 will ultimately offer a great benefit to a large
14 number of Brooklyn residents. For us, this is simple
15 math. This plan offers the greatest gain for the
16 largest number of people with the resources that are
17 currently available to the library. We ask that you
18 please look at this issue in a broader context and
19 see the positive impacts it will offer in more than
20 just one neighborhood. Thank you very much.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you. Folks,
22 just want to let everyone know that we've been
23 informed that there's been some disagreements within
24 the audience between people that are in favor and
25 opposed and there's been some arguments. We cannot

2 allow that in these chambers, and if anybody raises
3 their voice or picks a fight with somebody else or
4 responds to somebody picking a fight with them,
5 everybody, you know--those people will be ejected
6 from the Chambers. So we don't want to do that. So
7 people please behave. Thank you.

8 BOSKO STANKOVIC: Good evening. My name
9 is Bosko Stankovic. I live in the community in
10 Brooklyn Heights just a block away from the library,
11 and I've never done this before, so I'm super nervous
12 and sweating. So, I live literally behind the block
13 from the library. I work two blocks away from the
14 library for a small family-owned business, and I went
15 to school three blocks away from the library at Saint
16 Francis College, and I used the library a lot. I
17 borrowed books, and it's great that it's there, and I
18 love the fact that it's there that you can use it as
19 a student. It helped me a lot to get to where I am
20 now, but I never felt welcome in the library to stay
21 there and do my homework and do my studying there.
22 The library was always a dark place. It was always a
23 dirty place. It was hot in the summer. It was cold
24 in the winter. It was not a place where a student
25 can go and study, and I am, as someone who is going

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2 back to school soon, I'm super excited that this is
3 happening. I'm hoping that, you know, before I
4 graduate the library's going to be there and that I
5 can use it and go there and spend time there, because
6 in Brooklyn Heights you don't have--you don't have a
7 lot of places where you can study. There's Starbucks
8 always packed, and I can't study where people are
9 just talking and drinking coffee. For those reasons
10 I'm voicing my support for this library.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Thank you very
12 much for your testimony. Thank you to this entire
13 panel.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: Martha Ramos, Diana Faulk,
15 Pearl Hotchstead [sic], Marilyn Berkon, Darius
16 Gordon, Carolyn McIntire [sp?]-is Carolyn here?

17 MARILYN BERKON: Carolyn had to leave.

18 UNIDENTIFIED: Darius Gordon? Marilyn
19 Berkon?

20 MARILYN BERKON: I'm here.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: Pearl Hotchstead? Diana
22 Faulk?

23 DIANA FAULK: I'm here.

24 UNIDENTIFIED: Judy Gorman [sp?]?
25 Cristabel Gogh [sp?]? Kashan Labarie [sp?]?

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2 Catherine Silverblad [sic]? Maria Rocca [sp?]?

3 Mazaia [sp?], Mazeda? How do you pronounce your last
4 name, sorry? Is it Uddin? Uddin. Just identify
5 yourself before speaking. You can go ahead.

6 MAZEDA UDDIN: Thank you. I am the only
7 South-Asian here today testify, and we are the
8 largest growing population in five borough, and
9 especially three borough is highest ranking. First is
10 Queens District 24. Second is honorable Brad Lander
11 District 39 [sic] and District, City Council District
12 18 in Bronx. My name is Mazeda Uddin. I am New York
13 City Campaign Finance Board Member, and South Asian
14 Funding [sic] Scholarship. I'm founding member
15 District 24 Taskforce Chair. I'm all-known community
16 leader over 30 year's South Asian community, which is
17 a minority in New York City. Due to my hard work at
18 district, Bengali translate ballot and DMV has a
19 written Bengali test. South Asian population more
20 than 75 percent senior citizen, 65 percent English
21 proficiency problem in five borough. And I'm writing
22 today proposed library card [sic] and how it will
23 affect my children. More than 500,000 immigrants
24 without legal listed [sic] as New York City, and
25 there are many poor minority children whose parents

2 work at least the minimum job and under [sic] the
3 trade [sic] off [sic], and when they're working two
4 shifts just to survive. There has not been a minimum
5 or increase recent making to financial institution.
6 Family always have difficult or life's [sic] are bad.
7 For most the children of the family, a library system
8 in their [inaudible 4:28:54] are books, computers and
9 all information. Any cost [sic] library but it will
10 be separately affect our children in a very negative
11 way. There are chances to success [sic] and their
12 school system will be greatly demised [sic]. There
13 are proposed [sic] library cards or we had [inaudible
14 04:29:14] poor children across the city greatly
15 [sic]. We must protest that we [inaudible 04:29:21]
16 library fully funded and in the great city of our
17 education system and housing and technology advanced
18 society. Every time you close library it is
19 [inaudible 04:29:33]. All the bookstores have been
20 closed. Our economy viable [sic] instead how good
21 city [inaudible 04:29:46] in this tradition of
22 library system. And in institution that education
23 our city [sic] and offers product for free. It makes
24 no logical sense. When Andrew Carnegie opened the
25 first library in New York City, he understand the

2 value of knowledge, of necessarily [sic] sharing
3 knowledge free of charge. Have our library official
4 become dense of their vision is not that clear. Mr.
5 Carnegie was over time 100 years ago, and would
6 [inaudible 04:30:21] our city this has been promised
7 jobs, living and shared apartment [sic] that
8 libraries many times only place we can study and
9 read. [inaudible 04:30:32] I'm asking City Council,
10 City Hall to leave our library alone. Please,
11 contact me if any further information to collect
12 petition. Thank you.

13 DIANA FAULK: I'm Diana Faulk. I thank
14 you for letting me speak today. I'm a resident of
15 Brooklyn Heights. I have a family history going back
16 in Brooklyn Heights over 50 years. In fact, PS8 was
17 the first place I ever taught. I'm a retired teacher
18 and a clinical social worker. I also agree that we
19 need a lot of improvement in our library system, but
20 I don't feel that the way to do that is by selling
21 off the land and the building to a private developer.
22 Selling our city land and public library to private
23 real estate developer in my opinion is a very myopic
24 short term solution to meeting future long term needs
25 of the Brooklyn Public Library system. Just

2 listening to the figures today, I'm sorry, maybe I'm
3 not a math whiz, but the numbers didn't hold up. It
4 sounds like with the money received maybe we'd be
5 able to put, repair one percent of the needs of the
6 crumbling system that has been described in the
7 Brooklyn Public Library system, 300 million dollars
8 and maybe 30 million put into repairs. I don't know,
9 it just doesn't sound adequate. I think that we can
10 find a more visionary and out of the Bronx approach
11 to meeting library funding. For example, someone
12 raised the issue of fund raising, of donations. In
13 fact, when the library system was described in
14 literature, it talks about being a nonprofit
15 organization funded by government and by private
16 donations. I know in New York City the libraries, the
17 museums receive major funding, millions of dollars
18 for improvement. There's a conservancy that funds
19 the park system. Why can't we develop such a
20 donation system for our library system in a growing
21 and wealthy Brooklyn that where we certainly can find
22 the resources? Not to mention, online resources. My
23 last statement is just to let's really catch up to
24 the 21st century concept of what library should be,
25 a community gathering place and a place for all to

2 come together. That's what many libraries in the
3 metropolitan area have become, and that's what would
4 really meet our needs. We should not be selling out
5 and selling off our library. Thank you.

6 MARILYN BERKON: Hello. I'm Marilyn
7 Berkon. I've lived in Brooklyn Heights for decades,
8 and I love that library. I've been out two and a
9 half year's canvassing, and I see the community
10 outrage against the plan to sell this library. They
11 sign our petitions rapidly, gladly because the anger
12 stirs them on, and we have thousands signing these
13 petitions. I think we have to respect the wish of
14 the communities, and I put that in the plural because
15 we're not only a Brooklyn Heights library, we serve
16 all the communities surrounding and even in
17 Manhattan. We're a destination library and that
18 should be understood. Now, they can see why we have
19 to have that tower above the library a third the
20 size, because they're very happy with the library as
21 it is. And the library, someone was saying before,
22 is done by a famous architect. That was Francis
23 Keely [sp?] who also did the Grand Army Plaza by the
24 way. And this library, it should be noted, was
25 enlarged somewhat, Michael White said that, in 1993.

2 It was also completely renovated at the time. It got
3 new HVAC, new everything, completely redone, and it
4 was at that time 1993 rewired for modern technology.

5 It has everything it requires now to be a 21st
6 century state of the art library. If it needs any
7 kind of renovation, any renewal of any sort, the city
8 has a huge surplus according to Mayor de Blasio. Why
9 aren't city funds being used to repair our libraries?

10 We have an abundance. We want a full size library
11 where there are not only computers, but loads of
12 books, and Mayor de Blasio allowed 46 million dollars
13 recently, he resorted 10 million and funding and
14 added more to keep the libraries open six days a
15 week. He gave not one penny for repair. Why?

16 Because he likes this idea apparently of selling them
17 off. That does not have to be and it should not be.

18 There's no 40 million dollars we are going to get for
19 this at all, because when everything is subtracted,

20 and Linda Johnson only subtracts the cost of the new
21 library, there will be nothing left or maybe a

22 deficit, nothing left. As for affordable housing, at
23 the 60 percent level there are only 23 units

24 available and only five of those 23 are big enough

25 for families. We've got to have a full size library,

2 the one that is there, abundant with books,
3 computers, whatever is needed. It's available and
4 people love it and they want to keep it. Thank you.

5 CATHERINE SILBERBLAD: My name is
6 Catherine Silberblad and I've lived in Brooklyn
7 Heights for 35 years. The many changes that have
8 occurred here and in the environs in that
9 neighborhood in the past few years have made me very
10 concerned. The uncontrolled overdevelopment, which
11 has occurred and is accelerating with the
12 encouragement of the public sector and our public
13 officials, is quickly creating a place that is less
14 and less desirable as a neighborhood to call home. In
15 the past, we were very underserved with active use
16 park land. Now we have a big park down below us, but
17 we've lost the view that we used to have of the
18 iconic Brooklyn Bridge, and that's because private
19 housing and a hotel were encouraged and allowed to be
20 built on public park land there. We had a local
21 hospital, but that was sold to build high-rise condos
22 totally out of context with the adjoining brownstone
23 neighborhoods, and now we are to sell our library. I
24 ask you not to support the creation of a high-rise
25 condo land under any guise. In this case, the

2 justification is to get some units built of what is
3 being called affordable housing and funds for other
4 libraries in the borough, but to accomplish that goal
5 we will be sacrificing a well-used and loved existing
6 library and selling the publicly owned property it
7 sits on, and in its place allow the creation of one
8 more truly monstrous building totally out of scale
9 with the adjoining historic neighborhood, and which
10 will put further stress on the available neighborhood
11 services. In the meantime, during the construction
12 period, the Clinton Street corridor that is now used
13 as a short cut by traffic moving through the
14 neighborhood will grind to a halt, and the traffic
15 will further clog the rest of the local streets.

16 There is so much development already in progress
17 nearby that adjacent streets are already backed up
18 with stalled traffic, further polluting the
19 neighborhood. And in the meantime, library users are
20 supposed to be thrilled to use a space in a nearby
21 church, but what about those who can't get up the
22 steps to that space on Remsen Street and will have to
23 go around the corner and down a long blind alley
24 through the cars parked there and across another
25 large community room to get into and out of the

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2 interim library. That plan is just as ill-conceived
3 as the rest of this. This is no solution for the
4 libraries of Brooklyn. The money raised will not be
5 enough to go around for all the repairs and
6 renovations needed borough-wide, and when this one
7 library is sold, what will we do next time the money
8 isn't forthcoming from the city, sell another library
9 and then another? Why not just use our tax revenues
10 to pay to maintain such invaluable public assets?
11 Thank you.

12 MARIA ROCA: Good afternoon. I am Maria
13 Roca. Happy to be here. Thank you for this
14 opportunity. I'm a Sunset Park resident for decades,
15 Founder and Chair of the Friends of Sunset Park, and
16 I'm here in unequivocal opposition to both the
17 Brooklyn Heights and the Sunset Park Library deals.
18 And why? Because the Sunset Park deal is being
19 marketed as how selling our public land to build
20 super expensive condos is the only way to provide
21 Sunset Park with a viable library branch. That could
22 not be further from the truth. As you have and will
23 hear from the testimony of others. Unlike the
24 appointed members of the City Planning Commission,
25 New York City Council Members are elected officials

2 whose first and foremost duty, mandated duty, is to
3 represent the views of their constituents to advocate
4 for the best services and conditions, best quality of
5 life for all and for the present, the near and the
6 future beyond. If you approve the sale of Brooklyn
7 Heights Branch, the subsequent sale of the Sunset
8 Park Branch and the public land these properties sit
9 one, you approve the sale of two library bran--two
10 public library branches that are active and fully
11 functional and two parcels of land owned by your
12 constituents. You approved the violation of the
13 BPL's, Brooklyn Public Library's, own mission and
14 vision statements to provide education and
15 information to Brooklynites. This statement say
16 nothing whatsoever about providing real estate
17 development opportunities for anyone. You approve
18 the construction of so-called affordable housing one
19 mile away from Brooklyn Heights, which means you're
20 approving de facto poor door segregated housing. You
21 approve the construction of hyper expensive condos
22 while turning your backs on solving school
23 overcrowding, on providing world class healthcare
24 facilities as are needed right now in downtown
25 Brooklyn and the opportunity to build extended hours

2 public community schools of excellence for all
3 children and teens, which is what should be built on
4 both of these publicly owned parcels instead of
5 condos for super-rich buyers, who buy in large come
6 from countries other than the United States and with
7 money often from very questionable sources. You
8 approve the inability of these two library branches
9 to evolve and fulfil your constituent's future needs
10 for continuing education and information, and I ask
11 these present who are employed by any members of the
12 development team of this project, Brooklyn Public
13 Library, the Hudson Companies, Marvel, their
14 subcontractors and consultants, how many of you would
15 be able to afford the so-called affordable housing
16 one mile away from Brooklyn Heights? You're here
17 because we know you have to keep your jobs. That is
18 what we are--

19 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: [interposing] Thank
20 you. Thank you for your testimony.

21 MARIA ROCA: We understand that, but
22 think about this project--

23 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: [interposing] Thank
24 you for your testimony.

25 MARIA ROCA: affects you. Thank you.

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2 UNIDENTIFIED: Deborah Howard? Randal
3 Torray [sp?]? Tanya Evans? Jessica Warword [sp?]?
4 Peter Goldwasser? Isabel Draves?

5 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Folks, we would just
6 appreciate it if you could stay as close to the two
7 minutes as you possibly can. Thank you.

8 ISABEL DRAVES: I'd like to thank Mr.
9 Stephen Levin and the Committee Members for the
10 opportunity to testify, and I'd like to thank others
11 who have testified on both sides. My name is Isabel
12 Draves. I'm an entrepreneur who has started for
13 profit and nonprofit companies, and I'm grateful to
14 have organized technology and media events in public
15 library spaces. I'm a member of the Brooklyn Public
16 Library and Sunset Park is my branch, which would
17 benefit from you voting yes to allow this deal to go
18 through. They do a great job with what they have,
19 but it's obvious that more funding is needed. Where
20 does money come from? You have to give something up
21 to get it. It's not free. So, I urge you to vote
22 yes to allow the Brooklyn Public Library to receive
23 this 52 million. I sympathize with families that are
24 being pushed out of their neighborhoods due to rising
25 rent prices, and I recognize this as a real and

2 pressing problem. Infrastructure issues need to be
3 addressed as well. However, I do not think these
4 problems should be conflated with the libraries' need
5 for funding and the deal they have reached with
6 Hudson to upgrade their existing home in the Brooklyn
7 Heights Library, provide for affordable housing and
8 get 52 million dollars. Which of you would refuse
9 this deal if it were offered to you? Change can be
10 very tough, but cities grow. Cities must change over
11 time. This is unavoidable. So, compromises need to
12 be made to make cities work for everyone. I know how
13 difficult it is for nonprofits to raise funds. I'm
14 also familiar with what it takes to run a profitable
15 business, and it is a fantasy to think that any
16 business has unlimited funds. So necessarily there
17 is a limit to how much companies can spend making
18 real estate offers, and tax payers are unwilling to
19 make up the difference. I think the library and the
20 community are getting a good deal on this offer, and
21 they'll of course--although, of course, we all wish
22 it could be more money. I don't believe that it's
23 possible, which is why I urge you to vote yes and get
24 the library funded and the new housing built as soon
25 as possible. Thank you.

2 NICK HIGGINS: Hi, my name is Nick
3 Higgins. I'm a librarian the Brooklyn Public
4 Library. I run our jail and prison libraries, our
5 services for immigrants and programs for older adults
6 across the system. I'm here to read prepared
7 testimony by Peter Goldwasser who can't be here this
8 evening. "Good afternoon. Thank you, Chair Cohen,
9 Council Member Levin and the entire Subcommittee for
10 allowing me to the opportunity to testify in support
11 of the new Brooklyn Heights Library. I am Peter
12 Goldwasser, Chair and Founder of the Brooklyn Eagles,
13 a community of engaged young professionals who
14 support Brooklyn Public Library by fundraising,
15 advocating and raising awareness for library programs
16 and resources. We're doing our part to make
17 Brooklyn's libraries better for the people who rely
18 on them, and that is what the redevelopment of
19 Brooklyn Heights Library is all about. The Eagles
20 have many members in Brooklyn Heights and they are
21 excited for a project that would provide the library
22 with both a beautiful new local branch and badly
23 needed funds to support branches throughout the
24 system. I founded the Brooklyn Eagles shortly after
25 my daughter was born. We were beginning to visit our

2 local branch, taking advantage of all of its amazing
3 services and feeling very lucky that we have this
4 local resource, but not everyone does, and I felt
5 that I wanted to in some small way do something that
6 would make her proud eventually and would help the
7 borough I love. The library, of course, seemed a
8 natural choice. Along with great schools, great
9 libraries are essential to the health and happiness
10 of our children and to the strength of local
11 communities. Children are smart, far smarter than we
12 give them credit for, and they observe everything
13 even if we don't want them to. They may not always
14 understand how the world around them works, but when
15 they visit a library that is stifling hot in the
16 summer and visibly deteriorating year round, they
17 know what that says about our priorities. Kids in
18 every Brooklyn neighborhood deserve great libraries.
19 We have the chance to do something extraordinary for
20 the children and families of Brooklyn Heights and
21 other communities throughout the borough. I urge you
22 on behalf of my family and countless others to
23 support the new Brooklyn Heights Library. Thank
24 you."

2 SHEILA SCHOFER: Hello, my name is Sheila
3 Schofer. I'm a librarian and the Director of
4 Neighborhood Services at the Brooklyn Public Library,
5 but I'm reading today testimony from Jessica Wurwaug,
6 a resident of Brooklyn Heights. "My name is Jessica
7 Wurwaug and I'm a resident of Brooklyn Heights. I'm
8 very sorry I could not be here today in person. I
9 had been planning on joining you, but I have a seven-
10 month-old baby is home sick. I support the new
11 Brooklyn Heights Library. I grew up using the local
12 public library for studying, research and even to
13 socialize with friends. I'm really looking forward
14 to bringing my own daughter to the new Brooklyn
15 Heights Public Library in the future for story time
16 and to take out books, and I hope she also finds it a
17 place to do work and to enjoy. A new facility with
18 modern heating and cooling systems, community rooms
19 and perhaps even a café would be an asset to the new
20 neighborhood. The new library seems like it could be
21 a nice improvement in Cadman Plaza. Thank you."

22 LAVONDA SHAW: Good evening. Thank you
23 City Council Members. My name is Lavonda Shaw. I am
24 with the Brooklyn Public Library. I'm the Library
25 Manager at the Arlington Branch. I will be reading

2 testimony for Michal Greenspan on behalf of Muss
3 Development who are the owners of New York Marriott
4 at the Brooklyn Bridge, the Brooklyn Renaissance
5 Plaza and 345 Adams Street. Our hotel, office
6 building and retail space is just few minutes' walk
7 from the Brooklyn Heights Library. As owners of the
8 New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge since 1998
9 we have contributed to and watched the growth of
10 downtown Brooklyn throughout the years. With
11 residential sales up 17 percent since last year in
12 Brooklyn Heights and retail prices increasing each
13 year, the neighborhood has seen tremendous growth.
14 The Brooklyn Heights Library, however, which was
15 built in 1962 does not reflect the rapid-changes
16 taking place in downtown Brooklyn. The building is
17 poorly designed with nearly 50 percent of its space
18 unavailable for public use. Supporting the
19 redevelopment of the Brooklyn Heights Library will
20 not only help improve the library itself, but it will
21 also generate 40 million dollars in capital funding
22 to repair other Brooklyn library branches as well as
23 create 114 units of affordable housing. We at Muss
24 Development believe the new library and affordable
25 housing units will boost the surrounding economy and

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2 help create a safer and more attractive neighborhood.
3 According to a study by the Urban Libraries Council,
4 newly developed libraries attract a steady stream of
5 visitors. This increase in foot traffic in the
6 neighborhood benefits the surrounding retail and
7 could help attract more tourists to downtown Brooklyn
8 and to our hotel. Additionally, libraries contribute
9 to safety and quality of life, which will no doubt
10 benefit the existing residents and tenants as well as
11 potentially attract more visitors, families and
12 businesses to Brooklyn Heights. Despite the fact
13 that the project might block some of our views, we
14 believe that the redevelopment of the Brooklyn
15 Heights Library will play a crucial role in downtown
16 Brooklyn's continued growth and success, and we hope
17 that you will join us in supporting this important
18 project. Thank you."

19 DEBORAH HOWARD: Good evening. My name's
20 Deb Howard. I'm Executive Director of IMPACCT
21 Brooklyn, formerly Pratt Ara Community Council, a 51-
22 year-old community based housing development
23 organization serving the communities of central
24 Brooklyn. We welcome the opportunity to offer our
25 opinion. Thank you so much for this Subcommittee's

2 hearing to offer our opinion on the proposal of

3 Hudson Companies to develop the Brooklyn Public

4 Library Business Library site at 280 Cadman Plaza.

5 This proposal has many public benefits which make it

6 an ideal solution to the development of this site.

7 These include the 52 million dollar acquisition

8 price, 40 million of which will go toward the

9 renovation of several libraries in the BPL system

10 needing major capital improvements, thus spreading

11 the benefits of this project to many other

12 underserved communities of Brooklyn. The brand new

13 library on the site at 280 Cadman featuring modern

14 technology, which when completed will be owned by

15 BPL, plus the provision of temporary quarters for the

16 branch library close by, a wonderfully designed condo

17 tower which the developer has opted to not use 421A

18 tax abatements. Therefore, these new residents will

19 be paying real estate taxes. This is something that

20 few other developers in the downtown Brooklyn plan

21 have done, which resulted in having luxury rental and

22 condo towers where owners do not pay real estate

23 taxes, yet, with the added population there is that--

24 there is no additional tax revenue to increase city

25 services, build schools or improve the

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2 infrastructure. Therefore, we applaud Hudson
3 Companies for making this choice. They also opted to
4 utilize inclusionary zoning, which is not mandatory.
5 The project will provide 114 affordable apartments in
6 Clinton Hill, an area that has experienced severe
7 displacement pressures, affecting the existing low
8 income and moderate income residents where there are
9 limited new sources of affordable rental units. We
10 believe these benefits to both neighborhoods of
11 Brooklyn Heights, Clinton Hill, as well as revenue to
12 Brooklyn Public Library system make this project a
13 positive contribution to Brooklyn.

14 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: We thank the panel for
15 their testimony. Okay.

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Sonja [sp?] Collins?
17 Laurie Frey? Parna Gersun [sp?]? Mary Buchwald?
18 Babs Dromm [sp?]? Michael Jankowitz? Derrick Pearl
19 [sp?]? Doreen Gallo? Margaret Ethren [sp?]? Just
20 remember to identify yourself before you speak.
21 Thanks.

22 LAURIE FREY: Go ahead.

23 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Please.

24 LAURIE FREY: Okay. Laurie Frey. I'm a
25 Citizen Defending Libraries, and I speak in

2 opposition to this proposal, and I hope that you will
3 vote no to the alienation of this public property,
4 and instead I want you to uphold the public trust for
5 municipal land, because I think that's the core issue
6 here. First, just a matter, a comment on the due
7 process of what's--of this proposal, which is that
8 there does not seem to be a record of the Brooklyn
9 Borough Board having approved the alienation of this
10 library parcel, and since the proposal says that the
11 land would be transferred to the LDC, the Local
12 Development Corporation, that falls under state law
13 for the nonprofit law, and that seems to--reading
14 that law as a lay person it seems that the Brooklyn,
15 the Borough Board should have reviewed and approved
16 this proposal, and that hasn't happened. I also
17 wanted to comment on the idea that the--the
18 cannibalistic idea that somehow this would provide
19 capital funds for the city, and I wonder why there
20 isn't somebody here from the DDC, the Department of
21 Design and Construction, or even the Comptroller's
22 Office if that is seriously what is being proposed,
23 that somehow we're going to ignore state and local
24 finance law and begin selling our land to provide
25 capital funds, because that makes no sense to me. I

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2 looked up the Capital Budget Report for the libraries
3 for the last two fiscal years, and I was shocked to
4 see that only eight to 10 percent of the money had
5 been committed. So, in Fiscal Year 15 about 100
6 million committed to broken public libraries, only
7 about 10 percent of that money was committed in the
8 last Fiscal Year. So, it doesn't seem to me that the
9 issue is enough money so much as using the money
10 that's already there, because if we have 90 percent
11 of the funds allocated sitting there uncommitted,
12 then what good does it do to throw another 40 million
13 at the problem. So, then, also I guess since there
14 goes the bell, my other point was about the
15 inclusionary housing, which I just want to make the
16 point that the 114 units are a provision under the
17 zoning resolution, and they do not depend on selling
18 the library for those units. The compensatory bonus
19 air rights could be applied to another R10 property,
20 the 55 units. The other units are compensating the
21 Fulton Street and the Atlantic Avenue properties.
22 So, you don't have to sell the library for those
23 provision to be used. That provision is there
24 regardless, and so it makes no sense to sell the
25 library in order to affect the zoning resolution

2 because as Mr. Kramer said, he's simply following the
3 rules and that obligation remains. Thank you.

4 MARGARET AUTHRO: Hello. Thank you for
5 your attention and your patience in the long
6 afternoon. My name is Margaret Authro [sp?] and I
7 live in Clinton Hill. I've been there for 50 years,
8 and in the 1970's I helped put a new public library
9 into Clinton Hill. It was our only available library
10 since Pratt had closed their library to the community
11 when the banks and the real estate industry red lined
12 the neighborhood and started moving in black
13 families. So, now we have our own library. I wanted
14 to talk about this history of why the city gives land
15 when a public facility is put up for the citizens,
16 and I believe that they go together, that they can't
17 be separated, that they belong together forever, and
18 just because a previous Administration thought it was
19 a bright idea to indulge the real estate lobby and
20 look for a loophole and say, "Well, this is city
21 land, we could sell this." I don't believe that that
22 should be done. I don't believe it's legal. I don't
23 believe that's what the people ever intended, to sell
24 the land under our libraries. I wanted to bring up
25 the Business Library. The Business Library belongs

2 in the Business District, and I know you've already
3 heard of all the subway lines and the bus lines that
4 go to downtown Brooklyn, and it is very hard to get
5 to Grand Army Plaza. It doesn't belong out there in
6 the corner of the park. The Business Library belongs
7 in the Business District. And I wanted to say one
8 thing about putting the affordable, so-called
9 affordable housing which is not affordable to low
10 income people out in a corner of our neighborhood,
11 which is a diverse neighborhood, mixed economically
12 and racially, and I think it's discrimination. It is
13 people who live in luxury housing saying, "We don't
14 want those people coming in our front door." I hope
15 you reject this proposal. Thank you.

16 MARY BUCHWALD: My name is Mary Buchwald.
17 I'm a retired New York City School Librarian,
18 formerly a librarian with BPL. The proposal to sell
19 the Brooklyn Heights Library is a classic transfer of
20 wealth from the 99 percent to the one percent. The
21 proposed new library will be one-third the size and
22 one-third underground. It will be at the bottom of a
23 luxury residential tower, preventing the library from
24 expanding in the future. The deal is sugarcoated
25 with affordable housing and funds to repair a few

2 branches. Be assured, the selling price for the
3 penthouse will be greater than the 52 million to buy
4 the Brooklyn Heights Library. That's what it means
5 when you transfer the wealth of the 99 percent to the
6 one percent. Check out the video from the City
7 Council hearing September 30th, 2013 on the capital
8 construction needs and potential disposal of
9 libraries in New York City. In the hearings,
10 Brooklyn Public Library and New York Public Library
11 mapped out the importance of selling libraries.

12 Brooklyn Public Library cited insufficient capital
13 funds for repairs. Queens Library described in great
14 detail, however, how they reached out to their
15 elected representatives in the City Council and the
16 State Government for additional capital funding and
17 proceeded to make repairs plus new expansion of
18 library construction. Comparing these testimonies at
19 the 2013 hearings it becomes absolutely clear that
20 Brooklyn Public Library's decision to sell libraries
21 was a choice and not a necessity. This ill-conceived
22 decision to sell libraries by BPL has been a 10-year
23 project. From a FOIA request, Citizens Defending
24 Libraries learned that BPL in 2007 paid Karen Backus
25 from the Developer, Forest City Ratner, to create a

2 "real estate strategy plan" showing what libraries
3 BPL wants to sell. The City Council must see this
4 "real estate strategy plan." I ask Council Member
5 Levin to support the choice of the 95 percent of his
6 constituency and vote no on the proposal to sell the
7 Brooklyn Heights Library. Thank you.

8 MIKE JANKOWITZ: Hi, I'm Mike Jankowitz.
9 I was a resident of Brooklyn Heights for 28 years,
10 and I was born and raised in New York City. my
11 parents were born, raised and died in New York City,
12 and my grandparents were either born or came here
13 when they were very young and raised and died in New
14 York City, and I can safely say that all of them
15 almost every single one of them would have been
16 disgusted by this plan. An idea, the idea to take a
17 perfectly good or at least salvageable library and
18 tear it down, not to build a hospital or another
19 self-standing library or a school or even affordable
20 housing, but to build a luxury high-rise essentially
21 for the wealthy with a miniature, non-expandable
22 library inside. No, that's not where their values
23 would have led them and it's not where my values lead
24 me. As far as the money that the library needs, I'm
25 sorry to say if this is the only thing they can come

2 up with, then somebody wasn't doing their job
3 properly or with enough imagination, and I think
4 jobs, we do need more jobs. We do need more
5 construction jobs building affordable housing, more
6 affordable housing. I just--if you look at the big
7 picture, this really just comes out to be a matter of
8 whether or not you're supporting the wealthy people
9 of New York or the people of New York, and I think
10 that's a no-brainer. Thank you.

11 DOREEN GALLO: Good afternoon. My name
12 is Doreen Gallo. I've lived in DUMBO since 1980.
13 I'm here to testify on behalf of the DUMBO
14 Neighborhood Alliance founded in 1997 to express our
15 extreme concern over the current plan to sell off our
16 Brooklyn Heights Branch Library to pay for this
17 library and a couple of others. I'm their DNA
18 representative on the Brooklyn Public Library
19 Community Advisory Council, which was formed after
20 the decision was made to sell off our library to a
21 connected developer, and this decision was made by a
22 select few. There was a lack of representation of
23 our community on the CAC especially the underserved
24 or anyone from the diverse community that uses this
25 library and defines our Brooklyn Community.

2 Regardless, the Community Advisory Committee sees
3 [sic] to meet [sic] once the responses to the RFP's
4 for this project were presented at a public meeting.
5 Three people in a room chose the developer. There
6 has been a lack of transparency throughout the entire
7 process. One thing is certain, is that both the
8 Brooklyn Public Library and the developer chosen by
9 the Brooklyn Public Library has spent all of his time
10 and a lot of money lobbying this deal. The disparity
11 between the profit the developer will receive
12 compared to with what the libraries will receive is
13 too great not to audit and re-evaluate other
14 possibilities for this site. The way too tall out of
15 human scale building at this already overpopulated
16 area at a strategic intersection effecting many
17 neighborhoods does not support the loss for what
18 we're supposed to gain. The Brooklyn Heights Library
19 building is an extremely solid, well-built building
20 with enormous adaptive re-use potential. The current
21 leadership for the Brooklyn Public Library has not
22 been able to effectively maintain books in the
23 library, and this particular branch is poorly run.
24 The under-utilized space at the Brooklyn Heights
25 Branch is full of storage and neglect. The

2 underground spaces would economically cost a lot less
3 to transform to podcast rooms and/or any number of
4 cutting-edge library uses. The present conditions
5 seem to have been created on purpose to present a
6 narrative for renewed development project at this
7 site instead of an improved, beloved, desperately
8 needed not replaced library. It is fiscally more
9 responsible to adaptively reuse the current building
10 and find concrete solutions to the current ongoing
11 problems forcing the selloff of our public land. The
12 majority of our constituents are against this sale
13 and corresponding physical shrinkage of all our
14 library systems as a way to pay for maintenance for
15 the remainder of the Brooklyn libraries. The
16 community feels left out of the process because they
17 were from the very beginning. Our public libraries
18 used to be the envy of the world. Now we're
19 struggling to keep branches open, shelves stocked
20 with basic books. The Brooklyn Public Library
21 administration should be advocating for funding,
22 education, working with the community and not against
23 it. There's a school crisis in our district because
24 of all of the over development not planned for. Is
25 upscale housing with a little affordable offsite

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2 housing supposed to solve every financial process--
3 financial issue in this city. This projects resolves
4 very little for the Brooklyn Public Library. Vote
5 public. Vote no.

6 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Stephanie Blue? Rachel
9 Teimann? Michael Greenspan? Kimberly Grad [sp?]?
10 Elizabeth White? Vonnia Marino [sp?]? Is there anyone
11 else here who wishes to testify in favor?

12 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Did you fill out a
13 slip, sir? Alright.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: And Michael Greenspan isn't
15 here. Rachel Teimann?

16 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Great, thank you.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: And Vonnia Marino? You can
18 go ahead, just please identify yourself before
19 speaking.

20 STEPHANIE BLUE: Okay. My name is
21 Stephanie Blue. I'm the Director of Marketing at
22 IMPACCT, formerly known as Pratt Area Community
23 Council. I've worked in property management for over
24 15 years. Having the ability to conduct several
25 housing lotteries, I've had the opportunity to

2 process several applications for housing throughout
3 Brooklyn, New York primarily Clinton Hill and
4 Bedford-Stuyvesant Brooklyn. I just wanted to give
5 testimony to the affordable housing component of this
6 issue. If and when given the opportunity to market
7 the 114 units, affordable units, we will be giving an
8 opportunity to 114 families that are often overlooked
9 from many of the housing opportunities that arise.
10 Often when we process applications we have to reject
11 these individuals because they are over income by a
12 mere dollar, 500 or a 1,000 because they've been
13 priced out of the low income limits. So, these
14 moderate income families will be given an opportunity
15 for the new housing opportunities that will be going
16 up. Living in Clinton Hill and also working, we see
17 that the rents on market rate are at least 3,000 to
18 5,000 per unit, one bedroom studio sizes. So, we are
19 eager to get the word out to just market the units as
20 Pratt Area Community Council and just put the word
21 out and keep the community-based residents also, and
22 there's a large outreach for it now, and we're just
23 willing to help any way that we can. We hope you
24 vote in favor of yes. Thank you.

2 KIMBERLY GRAD: My name is Kimberly Grad,
3 and I am currently the Coordinator of School-age
4 Services at Brooklyn Public Library. I thank you for
5 the opportunity to speak today, Council Member Levin
6 and the Planning Commission, Planning and
7 Dispositions of Concessions. So, formerly I was a
8 manager at Brooklyn Heights and Bay Ridge libraries,
9 and I was a Children's Library at Windsor Terrace and
10 other libraries in the system I've worked in for
11 about eight years. I've lived in Brooklyn for 20
12 years almost, and I've raised two young children
13 here. One of the many reasons I love my work with BPL
14 is like many of my librarian colleagues, I was born
15 with the librarian gene. So, I love working with
16 children. I love assisting families and patrons of
17 all ages. Most recently I've been working with
18 training our many wonderful new children's
19 librarians, and in fact today I led a workshop on the
20 art of getting books into the hands of young readers.
21 Everyone in that room today was there because they
22 were passionate about the work they do, as we do as
23 librarians, and much of my work involves supporting
24 my fellow librarians. Working and inspiring new
25 spaces is a much more positive position than having

2 to boost the morale of folks who are trying to do
3 that work that they do with kid's story time, after
4 school programs to just name a few despite
5 challenging conditions. As the housing development
6 continues in downtown Brooklyn, we owe it to the
7 public and all of the neighborhoods that comprise
8 downtown Brooklyn to build a new library, a branch
9 hub that we can all appreciate. I think that we're
10 looking at a very creative opportunity to support the
11 work that we do in the spaces that we work in. I urge
12 you to support the Brooklyn Heights project. Thank
13 you.

14 RYAN AUCHA: Good evening, Council,
15 ladies, gentleman, empty seats. My name is Ryan
16 Aucha [sp?], Jonathan Butler couldn't be here today
17 so I'm reading this on his behalf. "I'm here as one
18 of the co-founders of Smorgasburg to speak in favor
19 of the Brooklyn Heights Library project which we're
20 proud to be part of. When Hudson first approached us
21 two years ago we spoke about a recent study EDC had
22 commissioned that discussed the challenges food
23 entrepreneurs faced in transitioning from weekend
24 food markets to more permanent bricks and mortar
25 stores. We hatched a plan to create a micro retail

2 space that would serve as an incubation space for
3 food vendors to be curated by Smorgasburg. The
4 concept we got excited about is the idea of a
5 rotating pop-up retail experience. Every month, a
6 different Smorgasburg vendor will lease the space.
7 For consumers, this rotation will provide some
8 interesting retail variety. For vendors, it will
9 afford them a chance to test their operational
10 capacity in a bricks and mortar location. I'm very
11 familiar with the Brooklyn Heights location and as a
12 parent of young children, I welcome the addition of a
13 brand new library that looks absolutely stunning. I
14 urge the City Council to support this very exciting
15 project. Thank you."

16 UNIDENTIFIED: I have the honor to be the
17 last one, and I'm sure you're all glad at this.
18 Members of the City Council, all two of you, thank
19 you for the opportunity to bring my views to you.
20 Truth in advertising. I work for Brooklyn Public
21 Library for 36-plus years and till I retired at the
22 end of 2002. More truth, I have been a library user
23 since I was a very small child, and for the last 13
24 years since I retired I've been using the Brooklyn
25 Heights Library as my local library even though I

2 live in Fort Greene. I've checked out and read 1,260
3 books since the library began keeping these
4 statistics, and that doesn't count the ones that I
5 bought for myself or borrowed from my friends. I've
6 been unhappy with the loss of accessibility because
7 of the summer heat. So, I'm definitely a stakeholder
8 in this. I like that work, stakeholder. I've
9 attended almost every public meeting on the subject
10 of the replacement of the Brooklyn Heights Library
11 and I've listened carefully to the presentations of
12 both sides and I have very seldom spoken about it
13 because I just like to hear what they say and make up
14 my mind later. I've also talked to both library
15 users and the library staff, because I still do talk
16 to them. I will undoubtedly be inconvenienced by the
17 construction involved in replacing the library. I
18 know there's going to be a greater demand on local
19 infrastructure and some from--and neighborhood
20 services as well as an impact on the already
21 overcrowded local school if this construction goes
22 through. It's obviously a very controversial and
23 highly emotional subject. Can I finish?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: You can finish.

2 UNIDENTIFIED: I'll have to talk faster.

3 And frankly not all the information out there has met
4 my standards of voracity on both sides, because
5 sometimes I know a little bit maybe other people
6 don't know. I'm not comfortable with the move of the
7 Business Library to the Central Library for a couple
8 of reasons. One is the less accessible public
9 transportation, which the other lady already brought
10 up, and which I totally concur with. There are no
11 elevators in any of the subway stations anywhere near
12 that Central Library. I'm also finding it a little
13 odd that even after all these years of planning to
14 move the business branch to the Central Library,
15 which is overcrowded, and I know that because I
16 worked there, the relocation plan has not yet been
17 flushed out, but I also realize that with the ongoing
18 and very welcomed support of the City Council, the
19 city apparently doesn't have enough funds to do this.
20 This plan won't solve all the problems, and there are
21 many aspects of it that I do not like, but I've
22 decided, however, reluctantly that I will support the
23 library's plan and therefore I ask you to approve it.

24

25

2 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you all for your
3 testimony. Okay. And we have--we actually have a
4 final panel in the no camp.

5 UNIDENTIFIED: Rita Pearl? Ann McKay
6 [sp?]? Lucy Koteen [sp?]? And is there anyone else
7 who would wish to testify?

8 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: I hate to do this, but
9 I'm obligated to ask, is there--please, anybody else
10 who did not have an opportunity to testify who would
11 like to testify. Going once, okay. Thank you.

12 LUCY KOTEEN: Well, thank you all for
13 sticking it out and listening to so many people
14 speak. I hope you can retain all of it. My name's
15 Lucy Koteen. I wanted to talk about a sense of
16 place. Before I do that, I just wanted to thank
17 everybody for their heartfelt and interesting and
18 varied testimonies. So, anyway, a sense of place is
19 important. Free-standing libraries like free-
20 standing schools show that these institutions matter,
21 that they are worthy. Libraries are the center of
22 democracy and their importance must not be
23 diminished. What is the significance when we can
24 only have these institution as an addendum to a high-
25 end condo? What is the feeling that a person gets

2 when she walks into a basement library that lies
3 beneath the tower of the wealthy compared with
4 walking into a library that stands on its own with
5 space around it and above it? There's a sense of
6 owning that space and of belonging to it, of being a
7 citizen member who has rights in that building. It
8 was built for you and for me, not as part of a get
9 rich profit center for a developer. Libraries have
10 become the center of learning and community for many
11 neighborhood and they need to be free and independent
12 and have the ability to expand if called upon. It is
13 government's duty to maintain and fund libraries. In
14 the past and much less prosperous times government
15 managed to fund libraries. It is only in the last
16 few years that libraries have been allowed to
17 deteriorate with the apparent purpose to free them up
18 to make real estate deals that are lucrative for the
19 developers. The precedent and model to sell
20 libraries was set when the magnificent Donnell
21 Library across from MOMA was sold for a fraction of
22 its worth, 59 million dollars. Eight years later
23 while the rest of the luxury hotel and condo building
24 is built at this location there is still no library
25 open there, and the new library planned is an

2 underground cave, a fraction of its previous size.

3 Even former library president Tony Marks later admits

4 mistakes were made. We ask you not to approve the

5 disposition of the Brooklyn Heights Library. It is a

6 slippery slope when government allows the sell-off of

7 public assets that were built for public benefit.

8 The Brooklyn Public Library Board has identified many

9 other libraries throughout Brooklyn that they want to

10 sell. They should not be allowed to make the

11 decision of selling buildings that were designated to

12 serve the public. What does it say about the Board's

13 ability to be a steward of these incredible

14 institution when they allow them to deteriorate to

15 the point that the only solution that they can

16 imagine is to sell that which they are responsible

17 for? This sell-off of the Brooklyn Heights Library

18 is not about affordable housing. It is not about

19 providing a modern library to the public. There are

20 other ways to do that. It is about a real estate

21 deal designed by a board that has made real estate

22 their priority over their obligation of maintaining

23 the public libraries to benefit the public and no one

24 else. Thank you very much, and I think we can all go

25 home now.

2 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: Thank you for your
3 testimony. Before we conclude I just A, would like
4 to say I really appreciate the civil manner that this
5 hearing, the discourse of everybody who came. I
6 really think that that was a model hearing on a very
7 controversial issue, and everybody's passion came
8 through in a very orderly way. I really want to
9 thank Council Member Levin for his commitment and
10 fortitude in taking on this matter. This will
11 conclude the public hearing on Land Use Item 301 and
12 302. They'll be laid over until the next scheduled
13 meeting which is presently scheduled for December
14 1st, and I'm going to--I'm going to let Council
15 Member Levin say one more word.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Chair, I just want
17 to say that the civility with which this hearing was
18 conducted is a reflection upon the Chair. So, thank
19 you very much for--

20 [applause]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And thank you to
22 the members of the public and to the Borough
23 President Library, EDC, Hudson Companies, and
24 everybody that was here to testify. Thank you so
25 much for your testimony.

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2 CHAIRPERSON COHEN: This concludes the
3 public hearing. Meeting adjourned.

4 [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 December 11, 2015