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### **Testimony of Manhattan Community Board 11 New York City Council – Subcommittee on Planning, Dispositions and Concessions Re: ULURP # C070513HAM – “Colon Plaza”**

**October 23, 2007**

**Testimony Prepared by Chair Robert Rodriguez**

On behalf of Manhattan Community Board 11, I would like convey our full support of the proposed affordable housing development referred to as “Colon Plaza” to be located at 55 and 57 East 115<sup>th</sup> Street and 1753 Madison Avenue. Our Community Board voted unanimously to approve the ULURP without condition in June 2007, with 37 members voting in Favor, and no votes Against or Abstaining.

Colon Plaza proposes to develop 55 residential units of low-income housing, built to accommodate household below 60% of Area Median Income. As you are aware, the City’s housing subsidy programs target households based on an Area Median Income measurement that includes more affluent suburban communities. These skewed numbers make it difficult to develop housing which is truly affordable to the local community, especially in East Harlem where the average household income is \$22,000 per year. The development of Colon Plaza provides our community residents a much needed opportunity to rent truly affordable housing and will help prevent families from being priced-out of our rapidly developing community.

Community Board 11’s offices are currently located in an HPD-owned building which will be demolished on the proposed development site. We have been working closely with the developers of Colon Plaza, HPD and DCAS to temporarily relocate our Board Office during construction, with plans to come back to a new modern permanent space for Community Board 11 in Colon Plaza. During their June 2007 ULURP presentation to our Board, the development team committed to providing us with more than 2000 square feet of already fit-out space to be occupied by our Board Office. We look forward to working closely with all parties throughout the next two years in preparation for our return to the site.

Also included in the site to be developed as Colon Plaza, is a community garden located at 1753 Madison Avenue which has been designated for development by the 2002 New York State Attorney General’s Agreement. To accommodate those residents that regularly use the garden, an alternate garden location has been offered only 150 feet away. Called the La Cueva Garden, this alternate garden is rarely used, its gates almost never open, and is actually larger than the current garden at 1753 Madison Avenue. We believe this proposition will make more active use of an unused garden and free up a garden slated for development to accommodate desperately needed affordable housing.

We hope to continue working with HPD and the City to build more housing which is truly affordable to our residents based on our community's income distribution. With Colon Plaza, we are fortunate to have partners in that effort.