

TESTIMONY OF THE REAL ESTATE BOARD OF NEW YORK INC BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL CONCERNING THE WILLETS POINT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

October 17, 2008

The Real Estate Board of New York, Inc. is a broadly based trade association of 12,000 owners, developers, brokers and real estate professionals active throughout New York City. REBNY supports the redevelopment of Willets Point. As part of a land use strategy for all of the Flushing area, this plan envisions high quality mixed use development, improved connections with adjacent regional destinations and enhancements to public open space, streetscapes and transportation. We commend the City for taking a comprehensive look at Downtown Flushing, the waterfront area and Willets Point. Willets Point is transit-accessible via the Long Island Railroad and the #7 subway line and therefore is a good place from a planning perspective to put new development.

The Willets Point Development Plan will address a number of environmental factors and will lead to an improvement in those factors. Through redevelopment, longstanding environmental problems such as contamination on the land, lack of sewer connections and poor stormwater management can be addressed. Furthermore the new development will have the opportunity to incorporate the most up-to-date sustainable design practices.

There are two areas that must be examined during this review. Attention should be paid to auto access from Roosevelt Avenue and Northern Boulevard to ensure that there will be efficient traffic flow at the site. We also recommend that the Council assess the areas of the city that are zoned for the light industrial and auto-related uses to ensure that adequate space exists for these uses as well.

The borough of Queens has been growing in population and is projected to continue that growth in the coming years. Between 2000 and 2030, the Queens population is expected to increase by 15%. Given the lack of available land, we need to look for new places to build the substantial number of new units that we need to offer housing options for everyone. Under the proposed rezoning, it is projected that 5500 new dwelling units could be constructed over 10 years in Willets Point and this is very important toward reaching the City's housing goals.

The new development would have tremendous economic impact by creating construction jobs, new permanent jobs and additional tax revenue for the City. We support the redevelopment of Willets Point because its overall impact will be positive for the City. Thank you.