

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON ZONING & FRANCHISES

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October 24, 2008  
Start: 10:13am  
Recess: 12:55pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers  
City Hall

B E F O R E:  
TONY AVELLA  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Eric N. Gioia  
Helen Sears  
Simcha Felder  
Robert Jackson  
Melinda R. Katz  
Michael E. McMahon  
Larry B. Seabrook  
Albert Vann

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

Holly Leicht  
Deputy Commissioner for Development  
Department of Housing Preservation and Development

Tom McKnight  
Senior Vice President  
Economic Development Corporation

Helen Marshall  
President  
Borough of Queens

Joseph Benincasa  
Executive Director  
Actors Fund

Amina Rachman  
Special Assistant to President  
United Federation of Teachers

Roxana Grozo  
Catholic Charities

Monsignor Sean Ogle  
Queens Congregations United Coalition

Winifred Burke  
Queens Resident

Eduardo Rodriguez  
Co-Director  
Centro Hispano Cuzcatlan

Paul Fernandez  
Building and Construction Trades Council

Mike McGuire  
Mason Tenders' District Council Laborers' Union

Bernard Callegari  
Organizer  
Laborers' Local 79

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

Farzana Morshed  
Queens Community House

Quazi Raihan  
Queens Community House

Ericka Stallings  
New York Immigration Coalition

Carol Waaser  
Actors' Equity Assoc.

Nancy Fox  
Screen Actors Guild

Father Darrell DaCosta  
St. Paul the Apostle Church

Jesse Rodriguez  
Our Lady of Sorrows Church  
(On behalf of Jose Cariella)

Elena Conte  
Pratt Center

Jack Friedman  
Executive Vice President  
Queens Chamber of Commerce

Roland Lewis  
President  
Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

Joe Conley  
Community Board 2

Jaime Weisberg  
Director  
Queens Congregation United for Action

Yuri Ruiz  
Queens Community House

## A P P E A R A N C E S (Continued)

Hannah Weinstock  
Community Organizer  
Queens Community House

Dolly Velasquez  
Queens Community House

Alicia Vizueta  
Queens Community House

Maria Esther Romero  
Volunteer  
Queens Community House

Natividad Hernandez  
Centro Hispano Cuzcatlan

Peter Branson  
Queens for Affordable Housing  
Coalition of Veterans in Pain and Distress

1  
2                   CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Do I have to  
3 do that all over again? I would also ask you to  
4 bear with me. I have a bad cold and, as you can  
5 see, my voice is cracking as we speak. So, we're  
6 going to accommodate everybody. But, because of  
7 the situation, we ask for everybody's  
8 consideration. If you're in this room and you  
9 haven't signed up by now, you shouldn't be here.  
10 And, I will not allow people to sign up people who  
11 are not here. That's not going to happen, given  
12 the smallness of the room.

13                   So, what I will do is, first, we  
14 will ask for the City to give its presentation and  
15 then, we'll go to public testimony. I would also  
16 advise people that we are not, not, voting on this  
17 item today. So, this is the public hearing. But,  
18 we are not voting on the item today.

19                   I call the Administration up.

20                   HOLLY LEICHT: Good morning. Thank  
21 you, Councilman Avella, I think I share your cold,  
22 and Members of the Subcommittee. I'm Holly  
23 Leicht, Deputy Commissioner for Development at the  
24 Department of Housing, Preservation and  
25 Development. Joining me is Tom McKnight--

1  
2 TOM McKNIGHT: Just hold for a  
3 second.

4 HOLLY LEICHT: Okay.

5 TOM McKNIGHT: - - working on the  
6 presentation.

7 HOLLY LEICHT: All right.

8 TOM McKNIGHT: I think there's a  
9 cover over the projector.

10 [Off-mic]

11 TOM McKNIGHT: High time.

12 HOLLY LEICHT: Joining me is Tom  
13 McKnight, Senior Vice President of the Economic  
14 Development Corporation. We're here today to  
15 outline the City's visionary plan for Hunters  
16 Point South, a proposed mixed-use development on  
17 approximately 30 acres of prime waterfront  
18 property in Long Island City, Queens.

19 With 3,000 units of moderate and  
20 middle-income housing, Hunters Point South will be  
21 the largest affordable housing project in New York  
22 since Starrett City was built in the early 1970s.  
23 And, it will transform a largely vacant site into  
24 permanently affordable apartments for our City's  
25 middle-class. This is housing for our City's

1  
2 firefighters, police officers, teachers and other  
3 municipal workers, its nurses and healthcare  
4 workers. Middle-class New Yorkers who are leaving  
5 the City due to rising housing costs. Without  
6 them, it's hard to imagine a workable, livable New  
7 York City.

8                   This plan is a product of a  
9 comprehensive interagency effort and is the result  
10 of an extensive and successful outreach process  
11 that has engaged community members at each step in  
12 the planning process. We thank Councilman Gioia  
13 for his ongoing active involvement in helping  
14 shape this project to date. Hunters Point is an  
15 ideal waterfront location on the southwestern tip  
16 of Queens with frontages on both the East River  
17 and Newtown Creek. It has extraordinary views of  
18 midtown and Lower Manhattan, as well as downtown  
19 Brooklyn. Though this 30-acre site represents a  
20 once in a lifetime development opportunity, it has  
21 remained largely vacant and underutilized for  
22 decades. The plan also includes the rezoning of  
23 an adjacent privately owned 7.5 acre parcel known  
24 as Site B to allow for development that will be  
25 compatible with the Hunters Point South site.

1  
2 First, some history, in the late  
3 '80s, the Hunters Point South site was slated to  
4 become the third and fourth stages of the state's  
5 Queens West development. That project called for  
6 2,200 apartments and over two million square feet  
7 of office space. The site later was envisioned as  
8 the location of the Olympic Village in the City's  
9 2012 Olympic bid. Then, in 2006, on the heels of  
10 the sale of Sty Town and Peter Cooper Village,  
11 Mayor Bloomberg announced the City's intention to  
12 acquire the site from the Queens West Development  
13 Corporation and Port Authority to create the New  
14 York's first large-scale, moderate and middle-  
15 income housing development in decades. Since  
16 then, multiple city agencies have been working  
17 with the community to develop the plan before you  
18 today.

19 The centerpiece of the Hunters  
20 Point South project is housing, specifically  
21 housing for a critical segment of New York City,  
22 moderate and middle-income households. The  
23 project envisions up to 5,000 housing units total,  
24 60% of which will be affordable to moderate and  
25 middle-income families. The new units will be

1  
2 part of Mayor Bloomberg's \$7.5 billion New Housing  
3 Marketplace plan, the largest municipal affordable  
4 housing plan in the nation.

5 By moderate and middle income,  
6 we're referring to firefighters, police, teachers,  
7 nurses, city workers, healthcare workers and  
8 others, the hard-working residents who help form  
9 the backbone of our City. It's important these  
10 New Yorkers have a way to remain in the City in  
11 the face of exorbitant housing prices. Hunters  
12 Point South aims to deliver on the  
13 administration's commitment to generating moderate  
14 and middle income housing as part of the City's  
15 overall affordable housing strategy.

16 New York is experiencing an exodus  
17 of middle-income families as a result of the high  
18 cost of housing. Housing costs are cited as the  
19 number one reason that people leave New York.  
20 According to a 2006 Brookings Institute study, New  
21 York has the smallest proportion of middle-class  
22 families of any metropolitan area in the country.  
23 A report by the City's Comptroller found that  
24 middle-income households are the most likely to  
25 leave the City due to rising housing costs. Those

1  
2 who remain have been forced to move farther away  
3 from their places of employment to find housing  
4 they can afford.

5           According to data compiled by NYU's  
6 Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy,  
7 during the three-year period between 2002 and  
8 2005, home sales affordable to New Yorkers earning  
9 80% of the HUD income limit dropped from 19% to  
10 5%. The number of homes affordable to those  
11 earning 130% of the HUD income limit saw an even  
12 steeper decline, from 58% of all sales in 2003 to  
13 21% in 2005. And finally, those households making  
14 165% of the HUD income limit saw the number of  
15 sales affordable to them fall by 32 percentage  
16 points between 2002 and 2005, from 75% to 43%.

17           The reality is that moderate and  
18 middle-income households are difficult to serve  
19 due to the lack of state and federal financing  
20 programs targeting these populations.

21 Exacerbating the problem is the expiration of  
22 thousands of Mitchell Lama units. Though 21,000  
23 Mitchell Lama units have been preserved through  
24 extended affordability loans, another 11,000 have  
25 been lost since 2002, a trend that will continue

1  
2 as more of these developments reach the end of  
3 their terms.

4           Hunters Point South is a  
5 significant part of the answer to this growing  
6 problem. This is our opportunity to create 3,000  
7 new permanently affordable homes for moderate and  
8 middle-income New Yorkers. The plan for Hunters  
9 Point South envisions up to 5,000 housing units,  
10 60% of which will be affordable to moderate and  
11 middle-income families. Moderate income refers to  
12 households earning between 80 and 120% of the HUD  
13 income limit, which is about 76,000 for a family  
14 of four. Middle-income households are those  
15 earning between 120 and 165% of the HUD income  
16 limit. This income range roughly equates to  
17 55,000 to 158,000 for a family of four and scales  
18 down according to household size. For a single  
19 person, for instance, the range would be 43,000 to  
20 64,500.

21           These target income bands  
22 accommodate the population we're aiming to serve,  
23 the police officers, firefighters, teachers,  
24 nurses and construction workers. It's currently  
25 expected that of the 3,000 total affordable units

1  
2 at Hunters Point South, 1,000 will be for  
3 households earning 80% of the HUD income limit; a  
4 thousand will be for households earning up to 130%  
5 and a thousand will be for households earning up  
6 to 165%.

7 It is important to note that unlike  
8 units produced under Mitchell Lama or rent  
9 stabilized units, the affordable units at Hunters  
10 Point will be permanently affordable, not phased  
11 out over time or deregulated. The affordable  
12 units will range in size from studios to three-  
13 bedroom apartments enabling a range of family  
14 sizes from singles to larger families with  
15 children.

16 Hunters Point South is being  
17 developed to accommodate a critical segment of our  
18 population so they can continue to work and live  
19 in New York. The project focuses on incomes that  
20 match the salaries of the City's essential  
21 workers, from a rookie police officer at the lower  
22 end of the targeted income spectrum, to a nurse  
23 and construction worker couple with children at  
24 the upper end.

25 Make no mistake about it, while

Hunters Point South is intended to serve moderate and middle-income households, the City is as committed as ever to providing low-income housing in Queens and citywide. Sixty-eight percent of the 165,000 units that will be produced under the Mayor's New Housing Marketplace Plan, that's over 112,000 units, will serve low-income New Yorkers. That includes at least 3,000 units of low-income housing that will be built in Queens over the next ten years, 330 of which are expected to be built on Site B, which is immediately adjacent to the Hunters Point South.

After consultation with Councilman Gioia and the community, the City is proposing inclusionary zoning for this private site, which we anticipate will result in 330 units of housing onsite that will serve households earning up to 80% of the HUD income limit. Our partnership with the Councilman and the community throughout this process has ensured that the City addresses the broad range of housing needs in the Borough of Queens, even while dedicating Hunters Point South to the development of homes for moderate and middle-income New Yorkers.

I'll now hand off to Tom to discuss other elements of the plan.

TOM McKNIGHT: Thanks, Holly.

Affordable housing is the centerpiece of the plan. But, the project is more comprehensive. The vision is to create a vibrant, sustainable and well-designed community and waterfront park. Hunters Point South would accommodate ground floor neighborhood retail, community space and parking within aboveground, concealed garages. The project would also accommodate a new 6 through 12 school, a major benefit since new higher grade schools are often difficult to site.

The signature public amenity is an 11-acre waterfront park. Situated in a prominent location, with great views of the Manhattan skyline, it's easy to see this park becoming another New York City icon. It will become a new and much needed open space for Long Island City and all of Queens.

Good design is an important part of the plan. The design principles include a focus on establishing and protecting views, making streetscapes pedestrian and bike friendly,

1  
2 establishing greenway connections, creating a  
3 varied skyline, promoting high quality,  
4 sustainable design, and encouraging alternative  
5 transportation, like a Class 1 bikeway. These  
6 principles form the basis for the plan and have  
7 been incorporated into the zoning.

8 Today, the project site itself is  
9 largely vacant and underutilized with the  
10 exception of a tennis facility operating on a  
11 short-term agreement and a water taxi dock, which  
12 would remain within the future park. The site  
13 also includes a ventilation plant being  
14 constructed by Amtrak along 2nd street.

15 The City plans to acquire the 30-  
16 acre Hunters Point South site to make way for new  
17 development. Approximately 24 acres of the site  
18 are now owned by the Port Authority, with the  
19 remaining six acres owned by the Queens West  
20 Development Corporation. All parties are on a  
21 path to complete both acquisitions around the end  
22 of this year.

23 The proposed plan would transform  
24 this current vacant and underutilized site into a  
25 vibrant community, with a new street network and

1  
2 continuous waterfront park. The development would  
3 consist of seven residential parcels which would  
4 accommodate low, mid and high-rise buildings, as  
5 well as the school. The residential towers have  
6 been planned and situated to preserve water views  
7 from the site, as well as from the existing  
8 community.

9                   The new street network seeks to  
10 create pedestrian-scaled streets that tie into the  
11 existing street grid and neighborhood. The  
12 project taps into nearby transit connections, as  
13 well. The 7 train is two blocks away and, as  
14 noted, there's water taxi service onsite. The  
15 City's also been working with the MTA to extend  
16 bus service to the site. And, in addition, the  
17 two-way, Class 1 bikeway would be separated from  
18 traffic by a landscaped buffer and connect into  
19 the City's greenway plan.

20                   Come 2010, the water taxi stop at  
21 Hunters Point South would also allow transit  
22 riders to connect into the City's East River ferry  
23 service, which includes more water taxi stops and  
24 service 16 hours a day, 365 days a year. The  
25 water taxi ride from Hunters Point South to

1  
2 midtown is about three minutes. The ride downtown  
3 is about 27 minutes.

4 The proposed 11-acre park would  
5 take advantage of the site's varied topography and  
6 this very unique waterfront location. Open spaces  
7 would include a mix of active and passive uses,  
8 including sports facilities, play equipment, bike  
9 and walking paths, sitting areas and plenty of  
10 natural landscaping. We expect to begin park  
11 design after the approvals process.

12 The current zoning for the site is  
13 industrial, so changes are required in order for  
14 the plan to move forward. Under the proposed  
15 zoning, a carefully tailored special Southern  
16 Hunters Point District would be established to  
17 ensure that the development that ultimately occurs  
18 is consistent with the plan. The rezoning would  
19 establish residential zones on the Hunters Point  
20 South, as well as on Site B and commercial  
21 overlays in select locations to provide active  
22 ground-floor spaces.

23 While the pedestrian-level  
24 experience is a critical part of the plan, the  
25 zoning also provides for a range of building types

1  
2 and heights, which will help create a varied and  
3 compelling skyline along the East River  
4 waterfront. The plan for Hunters Point South is  
5 new development from the ground up.

6 The site currently lacks  
7 infrastructure and roads, and the City would  
8 design and construct the necessary infrastructure,  
9 new street network and waterfront park. A  
10 consultant team has been selected to spearhead the  
11 design and engineering work. EDC would manage  
12 both the design and construction contracts on  
13 behalf of the City. Implementation is planned to  
14 proceed from north to south, in a manner that  
15 builds on the existing Hunters Point community.

16 Due to the lack of federal  
17 financing sources for middle-income housing, the  
18 City is considering two approaches to the Hunters  
19 Point South development to maximize affordable  
20 housing, limit the high cost of development and  
21 minimize city subsidies. One is the more  
22 traditional RFP approach. In this case, the  
23 development parcels would be RFP'd by the City to  
24 both not-for-profit and for-profit developers.  
25 The other approach is the creation of a nonprofit

1  
2 that could access tax-exempt bonds outside the  
3 City's volume cap, potentially resulting in over a  
4 \$100 million in savings. The not-for-profit would  
5 own the development parcels and oversee project  
6 development, contracting through a competitive  
7 process with architects, engineers, construction  
8 managers, contractors and property managers to  
9 develop and manage the project. The entity would  
10 be controlled by a publicly-appointed Board of  
11 Directors that would include agency, elected and  
12 local representation. A decision will be made in  
13 the coming months on whether to proceed with the  
14 RFP, not-for-profit, or a combination of the two.

15           Regardless of the approach, it's  
16 important to note here that the development would  
17 be the same, the RFP respondents or not-for-profit  
18 would be required to implement the approved plan.  
19 We will continue to consult with the Council and  
20 community during this decision-making process.

21           The Council's vote in November will  
22 mark the completion of the approvals process for  
23 Hunters Point South. If the project is approved,  
24 the City would move into implementation. This  
25 would include kicking-off infrastructure and park

1  
2 design around the end of the year. Property  
3 acquisition is also slated to be complete around  
4 year-end. By early '09, the preferred development  
5 path will be selected. And, by late '09, we would  
6 expect to commence demolition, site preparation,  
7 as well as remediation.

8           The plan before the City Council  
9 today is the City's first permanently affordable  
10 housing development, and one that will serve New  
11 Yorkers for generations to come. It's a one-of-a-  
12 kind opportunity to meaningfully address the  
13 housing needs of moderate and middle-income  
14 families. These are the police, the teachers, the  
15 nurses, healthcare workers and others that you've  
16 heard about, the hardworking residents that help  
17 form the backbone of our City. It's a workforce  
18 that has been hard hit by rising housing costs  
19 and, as a result, is most likely to move out of  
20 the City. It's a workforce whose housing needs  
21 have historically been challenging to address  
22 given the lack of federal programs. Hunters Point  
23 South is an opportunity to provide this housing  
24 and to do it within a carefully planned waterfront  
25 community.

1  
2 Thanks for this opportunity to  
3 present. We'd be happy to answer any questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.  
5 Before I take questions from Committee members,  
6 I'd like to call on Council Member Eric Gioia.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Thank you,  
8 Mr. Chairman. I'll just make a brief statement,  
9 then we'll open up for questions and I'll come  
10 back and ask some more questions. First of all,  
11 thank you very much for your presentation and for  
12 all the work that you've been doing on Hunters  
13 Point South.

14 As you know, I grew up about two  
15 miles that way, a little past the tower up there,  
16 Citigroup tower. And, the good news is the Queens  
17 waterfront is experiencing a renaissance. We're  
18 able to go down to the waterfront. Growing up in  
19 Queens, you didn't see that waterfront unless you  
20 worked at the Budweiser factory or the Paragon  
21 Paint store. And now, I was down there over the  
22 weekend and it's beautiful. It's a great place to  
23 push a stroller, to read the newspaper, to go for  
24 a jog or just enjoy the most spectacular views  
25 anywhere in the entire world.

1  
2 But, the truth is the two million  
3 people who live east of the waterfront are  
4 suffering, suffering greatly. The housing crisis,  
5 as you accurately point out is the number one  
6 reason that middle-income families move out of New  
7 York; schools and the inability to afford housing.

8 And, in some ways, those who  
9 actually move out are the lucky ones because, if  
10 you can't afford to move out, then you're forced  
11 to live in squalor. And, when you travel around  
12 Queens and look at how many bells are on people's  
13 homes, one-family homes that have three bells on  
14 them or two-family homes that have six bells on  
15 them; people living on basement floors, sleeping  
16 on mattresses in the kitchen. The housing crisis  
17 in New York is real and there's fear out there.

18 And, oftentimes, being from Queens,  
19 Queens is a place that has a middle-class  
20 hardworking attitude, but doesn't actually, in  
21 many case, have the middle-class income. And, the  
22 poor in Queens are often invisible. And, I know  
23 it because I've lived it. You know, I remember  
24 going down to Washington, going to law school, and  
25 my dad came down to visit me one weekend. And, he

1  
2 was driving, at the time, it was like a 1978 or  
3 '79 Oldsmobile. And, one of my friends saw him  
4 and he said oh, does your dad collect old cars.  
5 And, I said yeah. I said we've got five more of  
6 them at home, you know. And, it's the point that  
7 people just don't believe that you could actually  
8 be poor or working class if you're from Queens.

9           And so, what I see a lot, and I've  
10 met with a lot of people, and I want to thank all  
11 the people who took off from work, who came down  
12 here today from Queens, are people who think that  
13 there's nobody who-- it's not even that there's  
14 nobody on their side, it's that there's nobody who  
15 sees them. And so, they came down to City Hall  
16 today to make sure that their voice is heard.  
17 But, more importantly, that the people in their  
18 neighborhood, the crossing guard, who's living  
19 with a friend and another friend month-to-month  
20 because they cannot, she cannot, afford to pay the  
21 rent; people who never thought that they'd be in a  
22 position of one paycheck away from actually being  
23 homeless.

24           That is the reality in Queens. And  
25 so, I think a lot of the questions will be dealing

1  
2 with that because, let me just say, I commend you  
3 and I commend the Mayor for taking such dramatic  
4 steps to increase the housing stock, the middle-  
5 income housing stock and the affordable housing  
6 stock in New York. And, I think that many of the  
7 people in the room, their criticism will not be of  
8 the effort. It's just that there's a fear and  
9 that people want even more, even better.

10 And so, I will just conclude by  
11 saying that Queens is a place, and New York City  
12 is a place, where the cop married to a  
13 schoolteacher ought to be able to live in a place  
14 that they're proud of and so should the janitor  
15 and the crossing guard, the hotel worker and the  
16 people who show up every single day and crowd on  
17 that Number 7 train and make New York work. With  
18 that, I'm happy to go to the Chair and open up for  
19 questions. And, I'll ask some questions later.  
20 But, thank you again.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Council Member  
22 Sears has a question.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Thank you.  
24 This certainly is an extraordinary plan. And, I  
25 can see that so much work has gone doing it. I

1  
2 may have missed it. Is all the property City-  
3 owned, 'cause I was just wondering if eminent  
4 domain had a spot, a place in this program?

5 TOM McKNIGHT: No, the property  
6 today is owned by the Port Authority--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Uh, huh.

8 TOM McKNIGHT: --and the Queens  
9 West Development Corporation. We're on a path now  
10 to acquire those properties by the City.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Okay. The  
12 second thing, and I'm not sure really how to  
13 phrase that, but, we talk about the affordable  
14 housing. And, yet we fail to put it in to the  
15 category of those who are on very bare minimum  
16 income. And, when we look at the dollars that are  
17 here, they're more realistic as to what people  
18 really have to pay today living in the City of New  
19 York. So, I don't really know how you address  
20 that entire global housing issue when we look at  
21 development, such as this. And, how do we address  
22 the needs of those that are below the projected  
23 the incomes for this form of housing, which is  
24 terrific? So, I think we have a whole issue here  
25 and it gets mixed in with development, such as

1  
2 this, also at Willets Point, affordable housing at  
3 Willets Point.

4           And, I can't be constructive in it,  
5 but I think that's the issue when we talk about  
6 affordable housing is how do we separate what we  
7 are looking at, which is very beautiful design.  
8 There's more to it and it's very commendable,  
9 'cause it is the first of the City. But then,  
10 when we have 20 or 30 people that were waiting to  
11 speak and I don't know where they are, but I saw  
12 them when we were coming in, they're not in that  
13 income range. So, that's a whole other issue.  
14 And, how do we address that form of housing? I  
15 know that's not a question. But, for me, the big  
16 issue here in affordable housing, 'cause your  
17 design is wonderful. Thirty years ago that  
18 waterfront was just not existing at all. We'd  
19 come over the Queensboro Bridge and my husband  
20 used to say one day you're going to see housing  
21 there. And, I'd say at the rate the City is  
22 going, never. And, one day, here we are listening  
23 to your presentation, which is great.

24           But, I do think that we need to  
25 look at how do we really put affordable housing

1  
2 into its proper context and look at those that are  
3 not in this income level. And, what do we do  
4 about housing for them, 'cause this is an entirely  
5 different project. And, it is affordable housing,  
6 'cause New York City is very expensive to live in  
7 and the housing is very, very expensive. And, how  
8 do we look at addressing those needs, which not  
9 necessarily fit into such a large development and  
10 complex. But, I want to thank you because-- and I  
11 thank the Councilman for really spending a lot of  
12 time with this, because it's an extraordinary  
13 plan. But, I think that we also need to look at  
14 and housing the income that I'm talking about.  
15 Thank you. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I'm going to  
17 hold off on my questions, since I know how to get  
18 a hold of you, in the interest of moving ahead  
19 with the public hearing. Council Member Gioia,  
20 you had a question?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Thank you.  
22 I have a few. I want to break it down to, and I  
23 think you guys started to do it in your  
24 presentation, terms that everyone gets. I think  
25 when we start talking about AMI and other things,

1  
2 it's, you know, AMI, FAR, the alphabet soup of..  
3 The median income in Queens is-- we have to do  
4 kind of Q and As. I could just kind of talk.  
5 But, it'd be--

6 HOLLY LEICHT: We think it's 45,  
7 46,000 in Queens, as a whole.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Can you run  
9 through, not in terms of AMI, and you started to  
10 do it, I saw one graph, the actual income levels  
11 for the bands?

12 HOLLY LEICHT: Um, hm.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: I think you  
14 had a slide on it, right? Did you have a slide?

15 HOLLY LEICHT: We did.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Well, if  
17 it's too hard for the slide, just walk through it.

18 TOM McKNIGHT: It might be easier  
19 to walk through it. There isn't a chart on it  
20 'cause there is a lot of information in it.

21 HOLLY LEICHT: Right.

22 TOM McKNIGHT: But, we could walk  
23 it through.

24 HOLLY LEICHT: So, it starts, the  
25 lowest is 80%. And, 80% translates to about

1  
2 61,000. What was up there is 55,000 because the  
3 way that our lottery system works with the  
4 marketing is, you know, dips below the actual and  
5 goes a little above. So, the range of incomes for  
6 a family of four is \$55,000 to 158,000 and that's  
7 from 80 up to 165.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: And, with a  
9 family making 40, you wouldn't prohibit a family  
10 making 46 from living there. But, they would have  
11 to pay the rent that the higher family would have  
12 to pay?

13 HOLLY LEICHT: Well, the way that  
14 our process works is that families pay about 30%  
15 of their income. And so, they have to, you know,  
16 in order to ensure that they can stay there and  
17 pay it month-to-month, they have to qualify on  
18 their income that they can pay that.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Will you--

20 HOLLY LEICHT: So, it is income  
21 qualified.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Will you  
23 walk me through what that means the rent would be?

24 HOLLY LEICHT: Sure. So, I have,  
25 and I can leave you with a chart that goes through

1  
2 it, if that would be helpful, as well. So, at  
3 80%, depending on, if we're going to use a family  
4 of four, let's assume that they're in a three-  
5 bedroom. Their rent would be 1,530, about, a  
6 month for a three-bedroom.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: No matter  
8 what their income level was?

9 HOLLY LEICHT: Well, again, their  
10 income level-- that's at 80% of AMI. So, if 80%,  
11 that's assuming that their adjusted income would  
12 be about \$63,000, their rent would be 1,500. If  
13 they're making 130%, so the next tier up, then,  
14 for that same three-bedroom, they're paying about  
15 2,500. And then, if they're at the very upper  
16 end, the family of four for a three-bedroom is at  
17 about 3,200. So, the range overall's about 1,500  
18 to about 3,200 a month for a three-bedroom. And  
19 so, that'd be, you know, the largest. If you're  
20 looking at a single--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Just, I'm  
22 sorry, just walk through the mechanics of it. But  
23 so, mom, dad, brother, sister, they can live in a  
24 two-bedroom, as well?

25 HOLLY LEICHT: They could live in a

1  
2 two-bedroom. It's somewhat geared on how large  
3 the family size is. If you had three, you could  
4 live in a two-bedroom. If you had a second kid,  
5 you'd probably go to the three-bedroom. Oh, if  
6 they're the same sex, we could have all of them in  
7 the two-bedroom.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Wait a  
9 second. Wait a second. You mean to tell me, so,  
10 the baby comes out and it's a boy and they get to  
11 stay. If it's a girl, they have to go?

12 HOLLY LEICHT: Well, no, no, no.  
13 You'd never be asked to leave once you're there.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Okay.

15 HOLLY LEICHT: This is when you  
16 would qualify, when you're first getting the  
17 apartment.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: You were  
19 sounding a little Soviet there for a second.

20 HOLLY LEICHT: Your family--yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: I just  
22 wanted to make sure that that was not--

23 HOLLY LEICHT: Your family can  
24 grow--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: --the actual

1  
2 policy.

3 HOLLY LEICHT: --there once you are  
4 there, yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Okay.  
6 That's very--

7 HOLLY LEICHT: No, we don't kick  
8 anyone out.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: So now, rent  
10 is calculated based on the actual income, is it?

11 HOLLY LEICHT: That's right.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: So, the  
13 family of four is making \$80,000 and disability,  
14 lose a job, what happens to the rent?

15 HOLLY LEICHT: It's basically the  
16 way you qualify is upon when you're getting your  
17 apartment. And so, that's really when you--  
18 whatever happens at that point is how your rent is  
19 going to be calculated. There's not further  
20 adjustments going forward.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: For how  
22 long?

23 HOLLY LEICHT: For the period of  
24 whatever the term-- well, in this case, it's going  
25 to be permanently affordable. So, it would be for

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the foreseeable future.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: So, if your income then goes up, alternatively, you don't get kicked out of your apartment?

HOLLY LEICHT: That's right.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: And so, in terms of the foreseeable future, does the rent go up every year? Or, how does it work?

HOLLY LEICHT: Well, there would be allotments based on, you know, sort of a lock step arrangement. And, it would go up based on that. But, it couldn't, you know, suddenly skyrocket. We would be having a permanent monitoring to enforce the affordability.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: In terms of, it's pre-tax income that you're looking at for the rent peg?

HOLLY LEICHT: Yeah, I think it's total, total income.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: So, does that include, like EITC or government benefits or anything like that?

HOLLY LEICHT: I imagine-- I'm not sure about EITC. But, it looks at your full

1  
2 income. So, I'd have to get back to you on that  
3 detail.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: My concern  
5 is is that for the \$61,000 family, you have them  
6 paying \$18,000 a year, approximately, in rent?

7 HOLLY LEICHT: I'm sorry, say that  
8 again. For the?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: For the  
10 family of four making 61,000--

11 HOLLY LEICHT: Um, hm.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: --you have  
13 them paying 18,000?

14 HOLLY LEICHT: More or less, yeah,  
15 1,500 a month for a three-bedroom.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Yeah, okay.  
17 I got it. Let me shift a second from the rent  
18 bands to building it. What is the City prepared  
19 to do to ensure the people who build these  
20 buildings are actually middle-class; that the  
21 prevailing wage is paid, you know, it would really  
22 be a shame to have a middle-income project where  
23 the folks who actually build the buildings can't  
24 afford to put food on their family's table.

25 HOLLY LEICHT: We have been in

1  
2 ongoing conversations with the building trades, in  
3 general, about involvement on our projects. And,  
4 we've talked to them and, you know, came to an  
5 agreement on Willets Point. We intend to do the  
6 same here. For a project of this scale, we  
7 certainly would like to work with them, if  
8 possible. But, we, obviously, have to have a  
9 conversation about that to ensure that the project  
10 can afford it.

11 TOM McKNIGHT: And, but there are  
12 actually-- they'll be speaking later today. So,  
13 while we're still having conversations about the  
14 wage and participation issue, they recognize that  
15 this is the housing for their members.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Um, hm.

17 TOM McKNIGHT: And so, they're here  
18 in that regard.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Will you,  
20 for my benefit and the Committee's, the Willets  
21 Point agreement is what?

22 HOLLY LEICHT: The Willets Point  
23 agreement is that any buildings that are 40, I  
24 want to make sure I get it right, 49% or less  
25 affordable will be built union.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: And so, when  
3 you said you want to do that, you want to have the  
4 Willets Point agreement for Hunters Point South--

5 HOLLY LEICHT: Not necessarily. I  
6 think it's a different, this is a different site.  
7 It's a different housing type. It's different  
8 affordability level. So, I don't know that we  
9 necessarily think that same agreement is the right  
10 agreement we want. But, we want to sit and talk,  
11 as we have been for a while, about whether we can  
12 find a way to involve them on this site.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: What would  
14 the height limits be of all the buildings?

15 TOM MCKNIGHT: It's a mixed height.  
16 But, the maximum height would be 400 feet, and  
17 that's consistent with Queens West to the north  
18 and Greenpoint Williamsburg to the south.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: What's the  
20 lowest height?

21 TOM MCKNIGHT: In the towers, I  
22 think it's about 280, approximately.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: But, there's  
24 some townhouses?

25 TOM MCKNIGHT: Yes, it would be a

1  
2 mix. So, there'd be low-rise parts of the  
3 structure. The buildings are integrated. So, you  
4 have kind of a donut-type building with parking in  
5 the middle. And, in the ring, you could have low-  
6 rise buildings. You could have mid-rise  
7 buildings. And, you'd have towers, also.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: It seems to  
9 me, and, you know, I'm not a construction expert,  
10 but it's often in the low-rise buildings when you  
11 see contractors starting to break the rules and  
12 hiring people who are either unqualified or not  
13 had training and they don't put proper safety  
14 precautions in. So, for the low-rise buildings,  
15 what is the City prepared to do to ensure that  
16 worker safety, from OSHA to the wage laws are  
17 followed?

18 TOM MCKNIGHT: I think that given  
19 that these are fairly unique buildings and, unlike  
20 Willets Point, where you had like a tower district  
21 and a lower-rise district, the buildings are  
22 integrated. So, I don't think we're at the point  
23 of figuring out, you know, what would work as low-  
24 rise type construction and what would work for  
25 high-rise type construction in terms of union

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participation.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: You know, it's interesting because it just seems that, obviously, the City can't mandate that it be a union that does it. But, it seems that it's the unions that provide, not only the best craftsmanship, but also the best worker safety and then, also, the wages that allow the workers to actually be members of the middle-class. And so, I think that's why it often becomes a union/nonunion issue. It's the nonunion workers that are often the least safe; the ones who are not getting health insurance; the ones who are often risking their lives on the job.

In terms of after the buildings are built, as you know, I paid my way through school as a janitor, as a doorman and elevator operator, member of 32 BJ. So, I talked about who builds the buildings and their ability to reach the middle-class. Once the buildings are up, the people who work there, what are we prepared to do, the City, to ensure that they can, as well, provide food for their family?

HOLLY LEICHT: Once again, we're in

1  
2 conversations with BJ as well. The Commissioner  
3 Donovan had just had a discussion this week and we  
4 also made a deal with them on Willets, which may  
5 be applicable here. But, again, we're in the  
6 process of talking to them. So, we're definitely  
7 actively engaged with both building trades as well  
8 as BJ to have those conversations.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: And now, I  
10 think for the kind of larger question, Council  
11 Member Sears I think brought it up, very  
12 eloquently and accurately. She's not here to hear  
13 me say it that she was eloquent.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: She had to go  
15 Chair another meeting.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Someone tell  
17 her that I said she was eloquent. But, it's the  
18 problem of it looks like a great project. I don't  
19 think anybody who would look at this presentation  
20 could say it doesn't look like a great project on  
21 its face. But, it's a larger issue of what's  
22 happening to Queens and what's happening to New  
23 York City and how this fits into the larger  
24 conversation about the lack of affordable housing.  
25 So, can you speak to the Queens issue, in

1  
2 particular, with regard to the Mayor's plan for  
3 affordable housing?

4 HOLLY LEICHT: Sure. You know,  
5 it's a point well taken. We absolutely agree.  
6 This isn't the solution for everything right here.  
7 We are committed, as I mentioned in my testimony,  
8 we've got in the pipeline currently 3,000 units of  
9 low-income housing, including 330 at Site B, that  
10 are coming online in the next ten years. And, we  
11 expect there to be even more than that. That's  
12 sort of the minimum that we know is coming right  
13 now.

14 Queens has been a challenge because  
15 we don't own as much City land here as we do in  
16 some of the other boroughs. And, that's always  
17 made it more challenging for us to do affordable  
18 housing because, obviously, if you have free land,  
19 that makes it a lot easier to make it work. That  
20 said, we have been very much engaged in the  
21 Bloomberg administration in figuring out how we  
22 can do more low-income here. And, I think we have  
23 unprecedented support from the Council Members of  
24 Queens and from the Community Boards of Queens to  
25 make us look at that closely.

1  
2 We have really engaged in a pretty  
3 aggressive inclusionary zoning program in Queens.  
4 We've done I think all of the major up-zonings  
5 that have happened, have had inclusionary in them.  
6 And, that's one of our best tools that we had to  
7 do affordable low-income housing on private sites.  
8 And so, what we're really doing is looking for how  
9 we're going to be able to, since we don't have as  
10 much public land in Queens, figure out financing  
11 mechanisms to ensure that we have it on private  
12 sites. And, inclusionary is one of those ways.

13 So, again, as I said in my remarks,  
14 doing moderate and middle-income housing is as big  
15 of a need and, in many ways, harder to achieve  
16 than low-income housing because the financing  
17 that's available is so sparse for that targeted  
18 population. And so, we feel like this is meeting  
19 an incredibly huge need in the City. But, we're  
20 also very focused on finding more opportunities  
21 and continuing to build a pipeline for low-income,  
22 as well.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: One of the  
24 unfortunate, I think, consequences of the housing  
25 crisis in New York is you have a lot of folks who

1  
2 are making 25,000, 30, 35,000, up to \$40,000 a  
3 year, who are watching the cost of everything go  
4 up; the price of food, the price of their  
5 medications. They can't fill their car up with  
6 gas, it's so expensive. Although, I guess, in the  
7 past few weeks it's dropped \$0.50. I mean, who  
8 knew that I'd be excited to pay 3.50 a gallon for  
9 gas, but, you know, I was. I looked at it and I  
10 was starting to do the math in my head how much I  
11 would save all year.

12 But, that's the people in this  
13 room, people who are more than pinching pennies  
14 and clipping coupons. But, who know that if their  
15 rent goes up, they will have to make choices that  
16 nobody in New York should have to make. And so, I  
17 mentioned earlier, and I don't want to see anybody  
18 have to flee to the suburbs, but in some ways  
19 they're the lucky ones. And so, I think a lot of  
20 the people in this room look at the people who go  
21 to the suburbs and say, well, I'm glad the City's  
22 concerned about them, but I don't have the option  
23 to move to the suburbs. When my rent goes up, my  
24 family eats less. And, that's a tragedy. It's a  
25 tragedy that's happening daily in New York.

1  
2 And, I'm happy to hear that the  
3 Administration recognizes it. And, obviously,  
4 we've been meeting and talking and I hope that  
5 we'll be meeting over the next week or so to  
6 continue to improve this plan, not just for  
7 however many, I don't know how many blocks, I just  
8 point out this, not only for these 15 blocks, 15?  
9 Ten? How many? Eight. You can't tell by the  
10 picture. You know, for these eight blocks, but  
11 for the surrounding waterfront, for Long Island  
12 City and for Western Queens, because for the  
13 people in Queens to hear I can't afford to live in  
14 the neighborhood I grew up in particularly for the  
15 seniors, by the way, I can't afford to stay in the  
16 house that I raised my family in. I have no place  
17 to turn. The City, in my view, it is an  
18 inadequate response to say well, but, don't worry,  
19 we've got this wonderful place in Brooklyn or in  
20 Manhattan or in the Bronx. And, you know, sure,  
21 you won't know where the bakery is or the church  
22 is, but you'll make new friends. Don't worry.  
23 That's an inadequate response.

24 And so, my goal is to find ways for  
25 people who built neighborhoods, who are struggling

1  
2 to stay in neighborhoods to be able to stay in  
3 Queens in a way, in homes that they can afford, in  
4 homes that they are proud of and in neighborhoods  
5 they are comfortable in. And so, I think that's,  
6 I'll ask you-- I'm sorry, hold on one second. Let  
7 me check. And so, I will wrap up. I'll ask you  
8 all to stay around in case there's questions later  
9 on. And, I'm sure the Chair will ask you to do  
10 that, as well. Thank you very much for your time.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

12 And, I certainly, you know, concur with Council  
13 Member Sears and Council Member Gioia's general  
14 comments, you know, about the union labor and,  
15 most importantly, real affordable housing, because  
16 I disagree with the Administration with the  
17 numbers that we're talking about. We have to make  
18 sure it's really affordable, not, you know,  
19 unfortunately, most of the affordable housing  
20 we're doing is not affordable to the people who  
21 really need it. So, I'm going to be working,  
22 obviously, with Councilman Gioia to make sure that  
23 this project does what it's intended to do. Thank  
24 you.

25 The first, as a matter of courtesy,

1  
2 I'd like to call on Borough President Helen  
3 Marshall to give her testimony. And then,  
4 immediately after, we'll be going to the public  
5 testimony. And, everybody will be entitled to two  
6 minutes. And, we'll call alternating panels of  
7 those in favor and those in opposition. And, once  
8 again, I wish we weren't in this room, but it is  
9 what it is. And, as people speak, I will ask them  
10 to leave so that we can bring in people from the  
11 other rooms.

12 HELEN MARSHALL: Good morning.

13 And, I appreciate the opportunity to speak because  
14 I've got to testify at the Education hearing.  
15 Chairman Avella and my colleagues in government, I  
16 appreciate the opportunity to come before you and  
17 talk on such an important topic.

18 Middle-income households,  
19 firefighters, police officers, teachers,  
20 construction workers, nurses, civil servants,  
21 represent a very significant and important portion  
22 of our population. Without them, our City would  
23 not function well and our tax base would be  
24 severely strained. Most federal and state housing  
25 programs do not address middle-income housing

1  
2 needs. Although in Queens, we have 17 public  
3 housing developments. There has been a loss of  
4 thousands of Mitchell Lama units, more and more  
5 rent stabilized units are being lost in vacancy  
6 decontrol, which I voted strongly against when I  
7 was sitting in your seat. This is a trend that is  
8 becoming more prevalent and is gaining momentum.  
9 The result is that, right now, there is a major  
10 shortage of moderate to middle-income housing  
11 causing families to leave the City and eroding  
12 that significant portion of our tax base; those  
13 who can afford to leave the City, as was referred  
14 to earlier.

15 This project is part of an  
16 initiative by the Mayor to provide housing that  
17 will allow individuals who are earning NYPD and  
18 NYFD-base pay of \$36,000 per family and, moderate  
19 to middle-income households to stay in the City.  
20 And, building that housing union wages and  
21 worksite safety should be our goal. In  
22 recognition of the need for affordable housing,  
23 site bill will be zoned with inclusionary housing  
24 provision that would generate up to 330 units of  
25 affordable housing. It provides the owner who is

1  
2 going to provide low-income housing or moderate  
3 income housing, 20% more on the FAR. That means  
4 they can build a bigger building.

5 The Hunters Point South project is  
6 an initiative that will be financed by New York  
7 City and, ultimately, managed by a LCD not-for-  
8 profit entity that will oversee the project and  
9 ensure that the new housing will remain forever as  
10 a moderate to middle-income development. The cost  
11 of this project will be very high because it will  
12 require acquisition of the land, environmental  
13 remediation, construction of all necessary  
14 infrastructure, including streets, sewers and  
15 parks and, of course, ultimately, construction of  
16 the housing.

17 Based on the above consideration, I  
18 hereby recommend approval of this application with  
19 the following conditions. First that the office  
20 of the Borough President should be a member, with  
21 full voting rights, on the proposed local  
22 development corporation that will be responsible  
23 for construction and implementation of Hunters  
24 Point South project and also, to help keep those  
25 rents down.

1  
2 The office of the Small Business  
3 Services should develop a program to match Queens-  
4 based businesses to the procurement needs of the  
5 not-for-profit local development corporation and  
6 its consultants. For the duration of the  
7 development process, beginning with the selection  
8 of a developer, must be an ongoing outreach effort  
9 that will inform and promote opportunities  
10 available to the community and MWBE firms and  
11 local businesses for the provision of goods and  
12 services for the project.

13 Every effort should be made to  
14 provide homeownership opportunities to broaden the  
15 availability. All inclusionary affordable units  
16 should be built onsite and not transferred  
17 someplace else.

18 The mass transit improvement should  
19 include shuttles to the subways, new bus services  
20 to Hunters Point South, express bus service and  
21 expanded ferry service.

22 Engine Company Number 261 should be  
23 reopened in recognition that Hunters Point South  
24 and Queens West will bring tens of thousands of  
25 new people in high-rise buildings into the area.

1  
2 We must be certain that fire safety and protection  
3 is adequate to service the increased population.

4 New York City is now in a situation  
5 when private developers will be reluctant to go  
6 forward with any new projects. Hunters Point  
7 South is a City-driven project that will provide  
8 construction and permanent jobs, as well as  
9 middle-income housing, along with an affordable  
10 component.

11 For these reasons, Hunters Point  
12 South should be approved. I thank you for your  
13 consideration this morning.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you,  
15 Madam Borough President. If we can have a copy of  
16 your testimony?

17 HELEN MARSHALL: Okay.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Great.

19 HELEN MARSHALL: I have them---

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay.

21 HELEN MARSHALL: Okay. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

23 HELEN MARSHALL: You're welcome.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: We will now  
25 proceed with the regular testimony. Yeah, let's

1  
2 take care of the clock. Well, the first people  
3 are [pause]. All right. Could I have a little  
4 quiet, please? The first, let's see, we have  
5 three chairs up there, the first panel will be a  
6 panel in favor, Amina Rachman, from the UFT;  
7 Roxana Grozo, from Catholic Charity and Joseph  
8 Benincasa, from the Actors Fund.

9 JOSEPH BENINCASA: There you go,  
10 thanks. My name is Joe Benincasa. And, I'm the  
11 Executive Director of the Actor's Fund, the  
12 national human not-profit, human service  
13 organization that provides essential and  
14 critically needed services for all performing arts  
15 and entertainment professionals.

16 We were founded in 1882 by an act  
17 of the New York State Legislature. And, we serve  
18 everyone, not just actors, who work in theater,  
19 film, television, radio, music, opera, circus and  
20 dance. Our programs address the unique needs of  
21 the community with comprehensive social services,  
22 health services, housing, employment and training  
23 services and skilled nursing and assisted living  
24 care. The Fund also makes emergency grants for  
25 essential needs and we directly help more than

1  
2 9,000 people every year, including 4,000 New  
3 Yorkers.

4           While, the Fund has offered senior  
5 housing since 1902, when we opened a retirement  
6 home in Staten Island, our first opportunity to  
7 provide affordable, supportive housing in New York  
8 City was 12 years ago when we opened the Aurora  
9 Residence, 178-unit building on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street in  
10 Manhattan. The Aurora's a low-income tax credit  
11 project. And, it provides housing to working  
12 industry professionals, those living with HIV and  
13 AIDs and seniors can live in a safe, affordable  
14 and conveniently located building.

15           Next month, the Actor's Fund, in  
16 partnership with Common Ground Community, will  
17 begin renting up the Schermerhorn Residence, a  
18 217-unit affordable housing building in downtown  
19 Brooklyn. Half of these units will be targeted to  
20 low-income performing arts professionals. The  
21 building will have a 2,000 square foot community  
22 room designed as a black box theater that will be  
23 available to residents as well as community art  
24 organizations for shows, rehearsals and  
25 performances, films and exhibitions and other

1 cultural activities.

2  
3 People working in the entertainment  
4 and the performing arts endure great uncertainty  
5 because of the episodic nature of their work and  
6 the lack of affordable and middle-income housing.  
7 Over the past few years, the Actor's Fund has  
8 offered monthly seminars on finding affordable  
9 housing, which include applying for 80/20s,  
10 information on HPD programs, the Housing Authority  
11 Section 8, apartment search tips and housing  
12 leads. We also provide information on short term  
13 stays, roommates leading and housing court. But,  
14 we need to do more.

15 Middle-income workers, those  
16 earning between 30 and 80,000, have been priced  
17 out of the market. They earn too much to qualify  
18 and we are in great support of this particular  
19 program. Do I have 10 or 20 seconds? Those  
20 working in the performing arts often go to work at  
21 five in the morning for a shoot and they come  
22 home.

23 Listen, we support this program and  
24 this project at Hunters Point South. We recognize  
25 that many of the people working in industry earn

1  
2 less than the income margins that have been  
3 described here today. But, we certainly support  
4 this effort, support the City and look forward to  
5 supporting this in the future. Thank you very  
6 much for your time.

7 AMINA RACHMAN: Thank you. Good  
8 morning to the Chair and other members of the  
9 Council and members of the Zoning and Franchises  
10 Committee. My name is Amina Rachman. And, I am a  
11 Special Assistant to the President of the United  
12 Federation of Teachers. On behalf of the UFT, I  
13 want to thank you for this opportunity to testify  
14 here on the Hunters Point South redevelopment  
15 project, which we support.

16 We're here today to make four  
17 points about this project and how we think it  
18 should proceed. One that it should be union  
19 built. Two, that several schools must be part of  
20 the plan. Three, the housing units being created  
21 must be kept at a level that is affordable to  
22 teachers and other middle and moderate-income New  
23 Yorkers. And, four, retailers setting up business  
24 in these spaces should pay living wages to the  
25 workers.

1  
2 Let me go through these one at a  
3 time. We think this is crucial to families and  
4 workers in and around the community to benefit  
5 from the new jobs and economic development  
6 opportunities that this redevelopment project  
7 would offer. We strongly support the creation of  
8 union construction jobs. Projects like these  
9 benefit greatly when union contractors are used,  
10 as does the community. The building trades in  
11 this City are ready and able to provide a highly  
12 trained and highly skilled local workforce to get  
13 the job done.

14 We also support the creation of new  
15 school space as part of this project. Many of our  
16 schools, throughout the City, are bursting at the  
17 seams. And, there's a tremendous need for new  
18 capacity and the ability to lower class size in  
19 most neighborhoods. Overcrowded schools and  
20 congested classrooms diminish teacher efficacy and  
21 negatively affect student performance. So, we  
22 know that the plan calls for the development of  
23 schools at the upper grade levels. But, we think  
24 an elementary school should be included as well.  
25 Queens has tremendously overcrowded schools.

1  
2           It's also abundantly clear that,  
3 you know, there's a shortage of affordable  
4 moderate-income housing. And, we like the idea  
5 that the plan is for this development, the units  
6 to be kept always at moderate and middle-incomes.

7           Lastly, let me close by saying at a  
8 time when we are all riveted to the daily  
9 headlines about market fluctuation, layoffs and  
10 difficult economic times ahead, it's easy to get  
11 excited about the possibilities this project  
12 presents. New schools, affordable housing, union  
13 construction, business opportunities and permanent  
14 jobs that pay living wages are very important to  
15 this City. That's a model for success and we hope  
16 moving forward that this model is one that is  
17 followed in other economic development projects so  
18 that all New Yorkers benefit.

19           CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

20           ROXANA GROZO: Thank you. Yes,  
21 good morning. Thank you for having me. My name  
22 is Roxana Grozo. I'm a longtime resident, Long  
23 Island City resident and I represent Catholic  
24 Charities. I'm here because I saw the plan. No  
25 one can, you know, it's a very interesting plan.

1  
2 It's a big project for Queens. The first one of  
3 its kind.

4           There are some things that I like  
5 about the proposal. Some other things I'm  
6 opposed, beginning with the income guidelines.  
7 The median income for most Queens' residents is  
8 about between, I would say between 42 and 46,000.  
9 I recently was lay off. I started working again.  
10 But, basically, prices, everything that's going  
11 up. I want something that's reliable. I support  
12 this plan. And, I welcome the affordable housing  
13 plan. But, we need to adjust the income  
14 guidelines for a lot of people in Queens.

15           Queens' residents, mostly Long  
16 Island City residents, are very hardworking  
17 residents. I've been there since 1991. My  
18 landlord will want me out of the apartment because  
19 that apartment, he says that he will rent it at  
20 1,700. And, he tells me this constantly. Now, I  
21 can report him, but I'm not going to do that. I'm  
22 not that type of person. And, I know this plan  
23 will be built with taxpayers' dollars, which is  
24 very interesting. That is why I truly agree that  
25 there should be some adjustments income guidelines

1  
2 for anyone who makes 25 and 35, 35 to 45 and then  
3 60 and up, as you guys haven't stated in this  
4 plan.

5 What else? Also, I read your  
6 statement. A lot of artists in Long Island City  
7 have been pushed out to other neighborhoods  
8 because they cannot continue with their artwork  
9 space. I support this-- I want residents have  
10 been living there to stay and have some type of  
11 sustainable. And, that's it. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.  
13 The next panel will be a panel in opposition,  
14 Monsignor Sean Ogle, did I pronounce it right?

15 SEAN OGLE: Yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Winifred Burke  
17 and Eduardo Rodriguez. Before this panel speaks,  
18 by the way, I have received testimony from the  
19 Municipal Arts Society on the project and also  
20 from the City University of New York that will be  
21 entered into the record.

22 SEAN OGLE: Good morning. It's an  
23 honor to be able to address the panel and  
24 especially my fellow Union East Councilman Gioia.  
25 I think I ran that elevator a couple of summers

1  
2 about 30 years before you did. But, one of the  
3 things I learned when I came home every night to  
4 my own family house in Long Island City from my  
5 elevator job or my grass cutting jobs was that I  
6 would heat up dinner that my mother made and  
7 usually it was a mulligan stew of some kind. And,  
8 one thing I found out was that the gravy would  
9 heat up a lot faster than the meat and the  
10 vegetables.

11 That is similar to the situation  
12 we're facing, particularly in Long Island City for  
13 housing because as the temperature rises in the  
14 overall mix of housing in the area, it eventually  
15 will heat up all the rents in the area. And,  
16 therefore, we're opposed to the current plan, as  
17 beautiful as it is, because the threshold of rent  
18 is not low enough for enough people. The higher  
19 the number of rents there are at that level, the  
20 greater pressure it will put on people like Roxana  
21 to get out of their other apartments in the area.  
22 We need to lower the temperature on the stew of  
23 housing, particularly in Long Island City in order  
24 to maintain affordability. That \$60,000 threshold  
25 doesn't make it. Okay, 45,000 is the Queens

1  
2 median. If you make it 60,000, you're almost  
3 guaranteeing that people who really live in Queens  
4 are not going to be able to go there.

5 I'm with the Queens Congregations  
6 United Coalition, which is a broad-based group of  
7 many religious congregations. We've been working  
8 for more than a year on rallies, hearings and  
9 trying to inform people about the necessity to  
10 make this plan more inclusive for the people who  
11 really live in Queens now. Otherwise, you're  
12 going to change it.

13 My parents were Irish immigrants.  
14 They came here without a high school education in  
15 the late '40s. In seven years, they bought a two-  
16 family house, sent all their kids to graduate  
17 school several times. Current people can't do  
18 that. My own nieces and nephews can't afford to  
19 live in most of Queens. We need to do something  
20 to improve this. My own people that I see every  
21 day, teachers, all the people you've mentioned in  
22 that plan, they're leaving Queens. They're not  
23 staying in Queens. And, they will not be able to  
24 stay in this development unless it is improved to  
25 the level where real people can actually live

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there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

WINIFRED BURKE: Okay. Good morning. My name is Winifred Burke. I've lived in Queens my entire life, but I could not qualify for this development. This is a large development being built on public land, yet the City's proposal excludes the average working family living in Queens. They're planning to build the 5,000 units with 60% of them solely for families meeting their definition of affordable, which is 60 to 158,000.

The plans look great when they're presented. But, when you examine them, you realize that the average family could not-- would be excluded. They could not afford it. None of the units would be affordable for a family earning the Queens median income, which is 45,000, or in that area. There's absolutely no consideration given to the lower income families, in fact, they're totally ignored.

I can think of no explainable reason why the City has excluded from this development any affordable housing for the low and

1  
2 moderate-income families in Queens, other than for  
3 pure monetary reasons. And, I don't think that's  
4 a very acceptable reason. All of us present here,  
5 who are pleading our case, urge the Council to  
6 vote in favor of modifying the proposal to include  
7 all levels of income, including those families  
8 earning from 25 to 60,000, or even less. There's  
9 a great need for affordable housing in Queens,  
10 which we're all aware of it. And, I believe the  
11 Council should recognize that need. And, I thank  
12 you for letting me speak.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

14 EDUARDO RODRIGUEZ: Hello. My name  
15 is Eduardo Barahona. I am Co-Director of Centro  
16 Hispano Cuzcatlan. But, we are also member of the  
17 Queen for Affordable Housing. And, Centro has  
18 been working about for eight years trying to look  
19 for affordable housing and tenants' right. As  
20 working on the Queen for Affordable Housing, we  
21 have the experience of the Jamaica rezoning, the  
22 Willets Point, seeing also now that at Hunter  
23 Point South.

24 And, what we fear is that according  
25 to us, you know, the conception of what is

1  
2 affordable housing, we believe in those rezoning  
3 project really no-- it's not including the  
4 affordable housing for low-income people. And,  
5 all the time, we have to be fighting, the looking  
6 for affordable housing. And, considering that  
7 they also-- we think Queens is at 45,000 average  
8 median income, that sometime is not true for all  
9 the different places of the Queens. Some of them,  
10 the median income is 30,000 or 35,000. And, some  
11 of the solution that they give and say  
12 inclusionary zoning, inclusionary zoning is not  
13 mandatory. In many of the developments, sometime  
14 they don't want to take that option. And, that's  
15 make it more difficult to get affordable housing.

16 One thing that I, personally, don't  
17 understand is why everybody knows, the Mayor  
18 knows, everybody who is in this room who isn't--  
19 that we are against this time. We believe that we  
20 have a crisis. And but, it seems in all the  
21 areas, we're trying to find to modify or to  
22 improve some legislation. But, on the rezoning in  
23 the new project, it's not a solution all the time  
24 for - - Hunter Point South is one of the  
25 opportunity that we should have to get affordable

1  
2 housing for low income, also. And, it's not  
3 happening. We haven't there, also, only housing  
4 for people who make more than 60,000. And, I  
5 think it should be modified.

6 Our petition today is also--

7 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Sir, can you  
8 sum up?

9 EDUARDO RODRIGUEZ: Oh, okay.

10 There's a petition is in the name of Centro  
11 Hispano Cuzcatlan, Queen for affordable housing,  
12 the tenant we represent and myself if the Council  
13 Members should oppose to this project, unless they  
14 give some affordable housing for low-income  
15 people.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you. I  
17 want to thank all three of you, I think there was  
18 excellent testimony. And, I think, you know, we  
19 understand the issue here.

20 WINIFRED BURKE: I hope so.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: The next panel  
22 will be a panel in favor. Is it Oner Adams? Am I  
23 pronouncing the first name right? She here? She  
24 left. Bernard Calgari-- Callegari.

25 BERNARD CALLEGARI: Callegari.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Callegari,  
Mike McGuire, okay.

MALE VOICE: - - that time?

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: What? No, you  
can't. Good try, but no, you can't.

MALE VOICE: [Off-mic]

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Yeah, Mike,  
Paul Fernandez. Okay.

MALE VOICE: [Off-mic]

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Why don't you  
guys start?

PAUL FERNANDEZ: Okay. Good  
morning, Councilman Avella and Councilman Gioia.  
First, I want to start with giving my condolences.  
Yesterday, New York City lost Police Officer  
Taylor in Afghanistan yesterday and our prayers  
are with him. The Building Trades is an  
organization consisting of local affiliates of 15  
national and international unions representing  
100,000 working men and women in the five boroughs  
of New York City.

We are pleased to testify in  
support of the development of Hunters Point South

1  
2 to create up to 5,000 housing units, of which 60%  
3 will be affordable to middle-class families. In  
4 addition to meeting the housing needs of working  
5 New Yorkers, the development of Hunter Point South  
6 will add retail space, waterfront parkland, a new  
7 public school and other amenities to what we  
8 believe will become another model community in  
9 Queens. Our support for the development of Hunter  
10 Point South is contingent on its remaining what it  
11 was, and always intended to be, which is a  
12 community for middle-class backbone of our  
13 workforce and tax base so often forgotten in the  
14 housing and economic development policy of New  
15 York City. We will not support the bastardization  
16 of this development in something different at the  
17 expense of working families and union households.

18 Our support for the development of  
19 Hunters Point South is also contingent on it  
20 generating thousands of good jobs in building and  
21 construction industry, which pay prevailing wages  
22 with health insurance and pension benefits. It is  
23 therefore imperative that strong labor standards,  
24 comparable to, or exceeding, those adopted in the  
25 procurement process for Willets Point, also be

1  
2 adopted in the procurement process for Hunter  
3 Point South.

4           We look forward to having this  
5 project built on the record of all projects  
6 utilizing union labor in the five boroughs to  
7 promote diversity and local opportunity through  
8 programs to recruit, train, place New York City  
9 residents into unions of building construction  
10 trades, such as the high school students, adult  
11 facing economic challenges, residents of public  
12 Section 8, veterans, U.S. armed services and  
13 women, I'll wrap up now, with strong protection to  
14 assure that this development remains what it  
15 always intended to be, which is a community for  
16 middle-income households, strong labor standards  
17 to assure that we are creating truly good jobs.  
18 We look forward to working with the Administration  
19 and the Council to support the measures necessary  
20 to have a grand vision for Hunter Point South  
21 realized. Thank you.

22           MIKE McGUIRE: Turn it off, I know,  
23 yeah. All the times I testified here, I should  
24 know that by now. Mike McGuire, Mason Tenders'  
25 District Council Laborer's Union. The New York

1  
2 City Economic Development Corporation recently  
3 agreed to history-making labor agreements on the  
4 Willets Point redevelopment project. The concept  
5 during those negotiations was a simple one, with  
6 the change of just a few letters in the zoning  
7 text, the value of a piece of property could  
8 instantly increase ten or twenty-fold. In the  
9 minds of organized labor, that amounts to a  
10 subsidy which allows the developer to obtain  
11 financing, build larger and create more units.

12           It is our belief that along with  
13 that subsidy goes the responsibility for the City  
14 to ensure that the workers on these development  
15 sites, and the workers who will be employed on the  
16 sites post-construction, be treated with dignity  
17 and be paid a fair day's wages for a fair day's  
18 work. The agreement on Willets Point will  
19 virtually guarantee that the development will be  
20 done to union-quality standards. Included in the  
21 agreement are provisions to pay prevailing wages  
22 on much of the project and for all contractors to  
23 participate in New York State certified  
24 apprenticeship programs. This coupled with the  
25 fact that 45% percent of the contracts will be set

1  
2 aside for minority-owned business enterprises,  
3 woman-owned business enterprises and locally-owned  
4 business enterprises, presents perhaps the best  
5 opportunity for opening the trades to communities  
6 that have traditionally not been able to gain  
7 entry into these professions.

8 Further, there are agreements on  
9 post-construction building service and security  
10 jobs, as well as hotel and convention employees  
11 and retail workers. The Willets Point labor  
12 agreement was designed to be a template for all  
13 major re-zonings.

14 We are also enthused by the amount  
15 of affordable housing that is included in this  
16 project for the middle-class. Vast amounts of  
17 housing are built in New York City that are made  
18 available as market rate. This market rate  
19 housing is far outside of the reach of the middle-  
20 class workforce, the construction worker, the  
21 firefighter, the teacher. There are also a fair  
22 amount of low-income affordable units built each  
23 year, again, unavailable to the middle-class  
24 workforce.

25 Being a union laborer is one of the

1  
2 best blue collar jobs in the City. But, if one of  
3 my members were lucky enough to work five days per  
4 week, fifty-two weeks per year, which in our  
5 industry is rare, that member would earn \$58,000.  
6 Good money to be sure, but \$30,000 to high to live  
7 in low-income affordable housing and \$100,000 to  
8 little to live in market rate housing. I have  
9 more members that live in Pennsylvania than live  
10 in Manhattan.

11 Middle-class working families are  
12 the backbone, the very foundation, on which New  
13 York City is built. Being the City's foundation  
14 is a burden we must take on, because the poor  
15 can't, and the rich won't. Yet it is a burden  
16 that the middle-income, working families take on  
17 gladly, for the love of this great City. But that  
18 foundation is eroding, piece by piece, block by  
19 block as working families are forced to move to  
20 the suburbs, or even further, to find quality,  
21 affordable housing to raise their families.  
22 Ultimately, of course, once enough of any  
23 foundation is removed, a structure will collapse  
24 in on itself. To prevent this collapse this type  
25 of workforce housing must be promoted at every

1  
2 turn.

3 We applaud the call for more low-  
4 income housing on this project. However--

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Mike, can you  
6 sum up?

7 MIKE McGUIRE: Yes, I will.  
8 However, I urge you not to increase that housing  
9 to the detriment of the proposed workforce housing  
10 or to the labor standards that I have asked for  
11 here today. If you can find a way to include more  
12 low-income affordable units while adhering to  
13 those two caveats, we will embrace that fully.

14 We ask that this Committee impress  
15 upon the Bloomberg administration the need to  
16 include the same labor standards on the Hunters  
17 Point South redevelopment project that they  
18 included at Willets Point, and to include such  
19 labor standards on all future re-zonings. Thank  
20 you.

21 BERNARD CALLEGARI: Good morning.  
22 My name is-- Now, it's on. My name is Bernard  
23 Callegari. I'm an organizer with the Laborer's  
24 Local 79. I work in Queens. I live in Queens. I  
25 live in Astoria now. I spent everything but five

1  
2 years of my life in that neighborhood. I had the  
3 benefit of growing up in New York City Housing  
4 Authority, so I do see the need for low-income  
5 housing on projects, this one in particular.

6           However, I talk to construction  
7 workers all the time and I'm almost positive that  
8 the numbers that they gave on the screen, when  
9 they showed the construction worker and the nurse,  
10 that that was not any of the construction workers  
11 that work in the nonunion industry. I want to  
12 encourage the City to use all resources at hand  
13 to, not only include the middle-income housing  
14 with the affordable housing, but to not allow that  
15 to affect the wages on the job.

16           We are asking for a clear, concise  
17 promise, if you will, that this project is going  
18 to be built using union labor. I appreciate the  
19 fact that the word union was mentioned here today.  
20 For some reason it feels taboo, although this  
21 country was founded on unions. This City was  
22 built by unions. And, it's a shame that it's  
23 difficult to say the word union without someone  
24 giving you a sneer. Unions are the reason that  
25 this City pays the taxes that it pays. Nonunion

1  
2 workers make what they make because of what union  
3 workers make. And I just want to say that on the  
4 jobs that I deal with construction workers make  
5 around ten to \$12 an hour.

6 Building properties to provide  
7 housing at the rate of ten to \$12 an hour is  
8 adding to our problem in this City. People that  
9 make that money qualify for welfare. They're  
10 allowed to get food stamps. They qualify for  
11 health insurance, subsidized health insurance, all  
12 that comes at the expense of the taxpayers. So, I  
13 think, in the grand scheme of things, if we are to  
14 grow, especially through this economic crisis that  
15 we're in, we need to maintain the level of wages  
16 for the jobs that in our City, and at the same  
17 time, not neglect the need for housing. Thank  
18 you.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Council Member  
20 Gioia has a question.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Thank you.  
22 And, maybe you guys said it in your testimony and  
23 I missed it. Do you have an idea of how many  
24 construction jobs this project will create?

25 BERNARD CALLEGARI: I don't.

1  
2 MIKE McGUIRE: I don't have it off  
3 the top of my-- again, with the off light. I  
4 don't know off the top of my head, actually, the  
5 numbers. It's a vast amount. I mean you're  
6 familiar with the scope of the project. I don't  
7 know that number off the top of my head. This is  
8 one of the biggest projects we've looked at in a  
9 long time. But, I couldn't tell you numbers.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GIOIA: Okay. I'd  
11 like the City to supply it. I think, and I'm  
12 happy to have your testimony, I think it was Harry  
13 Truman who said "The best social program is a good  
14 job." And so, as we face uncertain economic times  
15 in the City, I think public investment in  
16 construction, particularly to build housing, is  
17 important on a number of levels. One, for the  
18 housing it's creating; but, two, for the people  
19 who are working it in those middle-class, middle-  
20 income wages. And, that's why I mentioned in my  
21 questioning it would be a tragedy and a farce to  
22 build housing affordable and for middle-income  
23 folks and have the people who are building it not  
24 be able to afford to even live in New York City.  
25 So, thank you very much for your testimony.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

Next panel is a panel in opposition. And, it looks like Farzana Morshed. And, I only have, I'm not sure if it's a first name or a last name, Raihan, R-A-I-H-A-N. Okay. Ericks Stallings. And, I would just remind everybody that please keep to the two minutes so we can get everybody's testimony in today. There are still 30 speakers to go.

FARZANA MORSHED: Hi, good morning, everybody. I'm Farzana Morshed from Queens Community House.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Move the microphone closer, because the meeting is being recorded. So, you have to speak into the microphone.

FARZANA MORSHED: I'm Farzana Morshed from Queens Community House. Today, I'm very happy that you're giving me this opportunity to speak for Queens people. It's really, really great news that City has a big plan for the Hunters Point South. And, that will be allotted for 5,000 families. No doubt it would alleviate the housing problem in Queens. I welcome the

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Authority for their effort.

But, in this connection, I'd like to focus on some hard facts and request them to give a thought over it that would comfort some families who are really living in distressed condition. This is very crucial issue of the house rent in Queens County, which has been raising so much day by day. That is beyond capability to bear anymore.

There are numerous working people living here and their income is very, very low, whereas house rent is so high. So, that sometimes they think about food, medicine, with house rent and also two or three families, they combine the rent in an apartment and they share kitchen, bathroom, everything. So, miserable that very often a - - situation raising over there and some people living in basement, very often they got sick due to that stuffy condition, humid and water soaks in there.

So, I would like to request you if you allotted for only 20% for 25,000 and less, 20%, 25,000 to 60,000 and 20% for 60,000 to 100%, they will be very, very grateful to you. Thank

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you all.

QUASI RAIHAN: Hi. Good morning, everyone. I'm Raihan from Queens Community House. I live in Woodside in Queens, now it is very big problem of housing. And, affordable housing is a dream of us, those people are low income. I give personal thanks to Councilperson Gioia because of his support of the low-income people. If anyone wants to know about the condition of low-income people in Queens, he can come to our house and can see own what the condition, how they live in Queens.

I cannot rent a one-bedroom house because one-bedroom house rent is 1,300 now and the bill also, right now, I rent a two-bedroom house and then I share one bedroom and another bedroom one family. I and my husband and my son, same like the other family, in one bedroom and one kitchen. Sometimes we are doing, in morningtime, we are very terrible conditions, we are fall in a terrible condition and then, we cannot go to the bathroom. We cannot go to the properly and then sometimes, we cannot use the kitchen also same times. So, now, those people who are in this

1  
2 condition only he will know what the condition is.  
3 But, other people don't know. So, I request the  
4 City please don't make us-- to give us the dream  
5 to go to the-- to take this apartment, this  
6 Hunters Point South. Thank you. Thank you,  
7 everybody.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

9 ERICKA STALLINGS: Good morning.  
10 My name is Ericka Stallings. I'm from the New  
11 York Immigration Coalition. I'd like to thank you  
12 all for allowing us to testify at the hearing  
13 today.

14 While it is clear that affordable  
15 housing is an issue that affects nearly all New  
16 York residents, immigrant New Yorkers, as you've  
17 seen testimony today, particularly immigrants of  
18 color, are disproportionately impacted by the  
19 City's increasing lack of decent affordable  
20 housing. Immigrants make up two-thirds of New  
21 York City's low-wage workforce and have lower  
22 incomes on average. Immigrants are much less  
23 likely than comparable native-born New Yorkers to  
24 live in affordable housing created through public  
25 programs. Substantial portions of the immigrant

1  
2 population have extremely high rent burdens, often  
3 spending more than 50% of their income on rent.

4           Housing affordability directly  
5 impacts housing quality. As a result, many  
6 immigrants find themselves in dangerous housing  
7 situations. New York's immigrant renters are 62%  
8 more likely to live in substandard housing  
9 conditions and are three times as likely to live  
10 in overcrowded conditions than native-born  
11 residents, like in basements and doubled up with  
12 other families. Many immigrants often rely on the  
13 informal housing market as a last resort.

14           One of the major causes of this  
15 problem is the fact that there is an inadequate  
16 investment in affordable housing in areas with  
17 large and growing immigrant communities. Queens  
18 is a clear example of this, despite being the  
19 borough with the highest proportion of immigrants  
20 and a quarter of the families earning less than  
21 \$50,000 a year, little truly affordable housing  
22 for low and moderate-income families has been  
23 produced in Queens.

24           This situation can be expected to  
25 get worse as Queens is expected to absorb the

1 majority of the City's future population growth.  
2 Therefore we need greater investment in affordable  
3 housing in Queens to address the needs of both  
4 current and future residents.  
5

6 We are therefore, deeply  
7 disappointed that the Hunters Point South project,  
8 as currently described, fails to address the  
9 housing concerns of many of our constituents.  
10 Many of our constituents are eager to see housing  
11 developed on the Hunters Point South site,  
12 unfortunately, the income guidelines, as proposed,  
13 will exclude many of them and most Queens  
14 families. We expect this will have a particularly  
15 negative impact on immigrant families.

16 So, we would basically encourage  
17 the development of the affordable housing units to  
18 have 20% accessible to families earning 25 and  
19 under, 20 for those making between 25 and 60 and  
20 20 for those making less than 100 and leaving room  
21 for people who make over 100 and market rate.  
22 And, so that's the basic principle. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

24 Next panel is a panel in favor, Carol Waaser,  
25 Joseph Benincasa and Nancy Fox. I don't see

1  
2 anybody getting up. Are they here?

3 FEMALE VOICE: [Off-mic] already  
4 gave his testimony. I don't have the copy.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Is the  
6 representative of Congressman Maloney, because I  
7 see somebody submitted testimony? She left. The  
8 mic's not on.

9 CAROL WAASER: It's not on. I  
10 speak on behalf of 15,000 members of Actors'  
11 Equity who live in New York City. We, along with  
12 our sister unions, the Screen Actors Guild and the  
13 American Federation of Television and Radio  
14 Artists, support the Hunters Point project.  
15 Theater, film and television are a vital part of  
16 the New York City economy. But, they depend on  
17 the proximity of the services and talent pool in  
18 this geographic area. Without this close-knit  
19 fabric in easy reach of midtown Manhattan, the  
20 industry will become less efficient and more  
21 expensive. It is essential that the rezoning of  
22 any area within easy commuting distance of  
23 Manhattan be tailored to produce the most units  
24 possible for moderate and middle-income  
25 entertainment industry professionals.

1  
2 We also urge that the guidelines  
3 for eligibility be flexible enough to account for  
4 people with episodic employment and cyclical  
5 earning patterns by allowing for income averaging  
6 in the qualifying process for workers in the  
7 entertainment industry, where incomes fluctuate  
8 annually. Only in this way will the entertainment  
9 industry professionals be able to meet eligibility  
10 and continue to live in proximity to their varied  
11 industry work locations. And, only in this way  
12 will the entertainment industry continue to  
13 flourish in New York City.

14 Looked at from a different  
15 perspective, the more the talent and craft workers  
16 move to Connecticut and New Jersey, the better  
17 able those states are to compete for film and  
18 television projects and the more costly it is for  
19 Broadway and off-Broadway productions to be  
20 mounted. It is clearly within the City's best  
21 interest to provide affordable housing for this  
22 group of workers.

23 We ask that the City Council  
24 approve the Hunters Point South development  
25 project with the following small modifications;

1  
2 provide a preference of 5% of marketed units to be  
3 set aside for professional entertainment industry  
4 workers and modify the eligibility guidelines to  
5 allow for income averaging over a three-year look  
6 back for qualification within the income brackets  
7 in order to account for the cyclical income  
8 patterns of entertainment industry professionals.  
9 This latter might also apply to construction  
10 trades employees.

11 We are fully supportive of the plan  
12 to provide 60% of available units to moderate and  
13 middle-income workers. The location of this  
14 project within an easy commute to midtown  
15 Manhattan, as well as the film and television  
16 studios of Queens, makes it ideal for the artists  
17 and artisans of the entire entertainment industry.  
18 And, the scope of this project will begin to  
19 address the critical shortage of housing options  
20 for middle-class within New York City.

21 We thank the Council for its  
22 serious consideration of these requests. The goal  
23 for all of us is for a thriving, vibrant,  
24 culturally and economically diverse neighborhood  
25 that helps support an industry so vital to New

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York City. Thank you.

NANCY FOX: There we go. Okay. My name is Nancy Fox. And, I'm here representing 25,000 members of the Screen Actors Guild of the New York Division. We, along with our sister union, Actors' Equity, are very interested in the Hunters Point South project. And, we believe projects like these are critical and help contribute to the financial and cultural wellbeing of New York City.

As evidenced by the successful fill-in [phonetic] tax incentive program just passed a few years ago by New York City and New York State, the entertainment industry is an essential part of the New York City economy. After the initial passage of the tax program, employment numbers for SAG members increased dramatically. More of our members qualified for health insurance. More of our members moved from poverty and low-income into just reaching the middle-income. That's all great news but only if our members can afford to live here.

Actors and other industry workers depend on the proximity to their work place. And,

1  
2 of course, it's desirable for all workers to be  
3 close to their workplace. But, those who work in  
4 the entertainment field find it a necessity if  
5 they are to continue to work. Actors often work  
6 until 11 p.m., depending on the needs of the  
7 production, or start at 5 a.m. for an early  
8 morning shoot. Actors also deal with erratic work  
9 hours and must continually search out new work  
10 every day by going on auditions, attending classes  
11 and generally honing their skills.

12 Without reasonably affordable  
13 housing for middle-class actors, New York City--

14 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Sum up,  
15 please.

16 NANCY FOX: Okay. We join Actors'  
17 Equity in asking the City Council to approve the  
18 Hunters Point South project, but with small  
19 modifications; providing for a 5% of market units  
20 to be set aside for entertainment professionals,  
21 modify the eligibility guidelines for income  
22 averaging over a three-year lookback in order to  
23 account for the cyclical income patterns of the  
24 entertainment industry professional.

25 We thank the Council for their

1  
2 consideration.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

4 NANCY FOX: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: The next panel  
6 is a panel in opposition, Elena Conte from Pratt,  
7 Father DaCosta and, although this individual  
8 didn't indicate, I assume it's in opposition,  
9 Jesse Rodriguez. Is Elena here?

10 ELENA CONTE: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay. Father  
12 DaCosta's here and Mr. Rodriguez, I assume you're  
13 in opposition?

14 JESSE RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay. Okay.

16 DARRELL DaCOSTA: I thank the  
17 Council for allowing us to speak at this hearing.  
18 I'm Father Darrell DaCosta and I'm the pastor of  
19 St. Paul the Apostle Church in Corona. And, I'm  
20 asking for that the Council did not consider-- to  
21 not approve the Hunters Point project unless it  
22 has 20%, at least 20% for incomes under 25,000 and  
23 between 25,000 and 60,000. Particularly, the  
24 median income for my parish is 41,253. And,  
25 there's many people who will not benefit from

1

2 these units.

3

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I particularly know two people in my parish, quality people, who have served the parish for over five years. And, they [pause]

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One of the qualities of a governing body is to provide for the needs of those whom they govern. So, I ask that you please provide for the needs of those with this great necessity of housing so that they will also have a quality of life. They don't have to have overcrowding. And, they also will have resources in order to improve their lives in this neighborhood and they don't have to move out. So, again, I ask you. And, I thank you for your hearing us. And, I ask that you support this Hunter Point project only if it provides for those with-- have a median income or less than 51,000, which is the median income of Queens, actually. So, I thank you very much for your hearing.

21

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

22

23

24

25

JESSE RODRIGUEZ: Thank you for giving us the opportunity. Part of the Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church and the Queens Congregation United for Action, I'm speaking on

1  
2 behalf of Jose Cariella [phonetic]. And, he's a  
3 disabled man. He lives with his wife and two sons  
4 more apartment and he has two sons and lives with  
5 his wife and recently disabled. He earns 710 from  
6 disability and he just wants to share his part of-  
7 - trying to be a part of the housing to be  
8 affordable for him. And, he urges to vote no for  
9 the Hunters Point South project and to includes  
10 real affordable housing, like 20% for, like the  
11 Father was saying, families earning 25,000 and  
12 less; 20% for families earning 25,000 to 60,000;  
13 20% for families earning 60,000 to 100,000; 10%  
14 for families earning 100,000 to 125,000; 30%  
15 market rate. And, this is his testimony. Thank  
16 you very much for giving this opportunity.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

18 ELENA CONTE: Sorry. Good morning.  
19 My name is Elena Conte. I'm with the Pratt  
20 Center. Thanks for the opportunity to speak. We  
21 are a member of, and in support of, Queens for  
22 Affordable Housing. I'm going to try to highlight  
23 a couple of things that I feel like haven't gotten  
24 across maybe yet.

25 The first being that the numbers

1  
2 that are being put out there by HPD and EDC  
3 talking about cops and nurses are not really  
4 completely accurate in terms of the reality. The  
5 reality, when you look at the income requirements  
6 for this project, is that it will exclude 60% of  
7 the borough. Yes, we have members and  
8 constituents that represent the lowest portion of  
9 that. But, we also feel like this is a  
10 development that is going to exclude the very  
11 people that HPD and EDC is saying that it is for,  
12 when you actually look at those numbers. So, I  
13 wanted to clarify on that.

14 And, in terms of why we feel like  
15 affordable housing is so crucial here, it is in  
16 the context of overall what is happening in Queens  
17 and how Queens has not gotten its fair share.  
18 It's true that there are limited public spaces in  
19 Queens. That means that what happens on these  
20 public spaces are all the more necessary to undo  
21 this terrible inequity of the fact that just 3.7%  
22 of units that have been created for folks earning  
23 less than 50,000 a year have been created in  
24 Queens. And, that the subsidies exist already in  
25 the New Housing Marketplace program. They need to

1  
2 be decided and ordered to be utilized on this  
3 site. And, these can be applied without adding  
4 additional cost, without compromising the labor  
5 agreements, doing project-based Section 8  
6 vouchers, does nothing to alter the economics of  
7 this program. But, it allows folks in the low  
8 income level to be part of this development that  
9 their tax dollars are also contributing to.

10 We want to support our folks in  
11 labor. There are some handouts there that  
12 identify those programs that we feel can, and  
13 should, be utilized there. And, there's longer  
14 testimony. But, we really urge the Council to not  
15 let this one go by under the radar because of term  
16 limits, under the radar because of Willets Point.  
17 It is as crucial as anything in Queens for the  
18 housing stock. And, we absolutely need and are  
19 counting on you to support the entire Borough of  
20 Queens, including the 60% that are going to be  
21 locked out of this. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: One quick  
23 question.

24 ELENA CONTE: Yes.

25 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: First of all,

1  
2 we don't say this enough. But, we thank, you  
3 know, the contributions of the Pratt Center on  
4 this project and, a lot of the projects that  
5 you've come to testify. I just have one quick  
6 question. Are you included in the discussions  
7 with the City? I mean, have they talked to you  
8 directly? Do they do that? I'm just curious.

9 ELENA CONTE: We have, you know,  
10 requested meetings. We've had meetings.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Yeah.

12 ELENA CONTE: Folks are sick of  
13 seeing us I think. I mean, I think that the point  
14 that we're at in terms of, and, you know, they  
15 can, you know, correct it, is they're saying that  
16 they're making a policy choice here to create  
17 these what we call very upper middle income units.  
18 In Queens, they're doing at based on the field of  
19 what is the sense in the City. And, they are not  
20 looking at, or trying to take any special measures  
21 to account for the inequity that has existed in  
22 Queens. They want to use this just for middle  
23 income. It's a choice that they're making. They  
24 want to allocate the subsidies elsewhere. They're  
25 not compelled by the community argument, the local

1  
2 argument, the Borough argument or the need to  
3 diversify the City. And, I hope I'm not  
4 overstepping. But, another thing, they're not  
5 compelled by it. Maybe they are personally  
6 compelled. But, they're nevertheless choosing to  
7 have the citywide vision take precedent over  
8 Queens.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay. Thank  
10 you.

11 ELENA CONTE: And, I hope that's  
12 fair. But, you can ask them.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Next panel is  
14 a panel in favor, Roland Lewis, Joe Conley and  
15 Jack Friedman. Next panel.

16 MALE VOICE: I'll give it to you at  
17 the end.

18 JACK FRIEDMAN: Good morning,  
19 Councilman Gioia, Councilman Felder, Councilman  
20 Avella. I'll be brief. I promise not to extend  
21 my term, I mean time, limits. Okay. My name is  
22 Jack Friedman. I'm the Executive Vice President  
23 of the Queens Chamber of Commerce. For 97 years,  
24 the Queens Chamber has strived to increase  
25 economic development opportunities, support

1  
2 workforce and job growth opportunities and, in  
3 general, support projects favorable to commerce in  
4 the Borough. The re-zoning and re-development of  
5 Hunters Point is a plan that will accomplish all  
6 three.

7           In creating this sustainable and  
8 well-designed mixed-use urban community and  
9 waterfront park, Hunter's Point South offers  
10 tremendous opportunities. These are tough times.  
11 The market's down another 400 points today. The  
12 need for affordable housing is dire and it is  
13 expected that need will only grow. Unemployment  
14 is becoming a greater concern and this is an  
15 opportunity for new and temporary, permanent jobs.  
16 With over 5,000 units of housing, many affordable,  
17 over 125,000 square feet of retail, school,  
18 community facilities, parking, this under-utilized  
19 area will act as a job creator offering over 1,000  
20 temporary construction jobs and hundreds of  
21 permanent jobs. Many of these jobs are good union  
22 jobs or jobs that pay prevailing wage. Many of  
23 these jobs at Hunters Point South were reserved  
24 for women, minority and Queens-based businesses.  
25 New York City and its residents need these jobs,

1  
2 especially in tough times. And, the Queens  
3 Chamber of Commerce has been pushing to keep it in  
4 Queens.

5 This vacant underutilized site  
6 envisions create a vibrant, sustainable, mixed-use  
7 and mixed income neighborhood. We sincerely  
8 believe it is an important initiative and  
9 opportunity for the Queens construction industry  
10 and business community. I urge you to support  
11 this application. In doing so, you are breathing  
12 life into an area that has enormous potential.

13 I'll just end by saying, similar to  
14 Willets Point, we can argue about the math of  
15 affordable housing, whether it should be 20% or  
16 40%, but if we don't have this project, we'll have  
17 no affordable housing. And, we can argue where do  
18 jobs go, whether they're union jobs or minority  
19 jobs or Queens-based jobs. But, again, if we stop  
20 a project like this, we have no jobs to discuss.

21 ROLAND LEWIS: Okay. I'm Roland  
22 Lewis, the President of the Metropolitan  
23 Waterfront Alliance. And, I thank the Committee,  
24 and, Councilman Gioia, good to see you, for the  
25 opportunity to talk about Hunter Point South. I'd

1  
2 like to just note that Council, just about two  
3 weeks ago, passed Resolution 809-A, which was a  
4 call for every ten years to do a comprehensive  
5 waterfront plan for the entire City. It's a great  
6 piece of legislation. And, if enacted, and made  
7 multi-agency, can be a great step forward.

8           And, this is a, perhaps, sort of  
9 down payment toward that comprehensive waterfront  
10 planning. There's many things to applaud in the  
11 design, the waterfront park, the variegated  
12 coastline, the opportunity for real access.  
13 Perhaps, we could put the Long Island City  
14 boathouse into that park and allow that  
15 educational and recreational great Queens  
16 institution to have a permanent home. But, there  
17 are a couple things I'd like to note that we'd  
18 like to perhaps redress.

19           And, one of those is the wall of  
20 high-rises that the current plan calls for. It  
21 continues what's been going on in Long Island  
22 City. It creates, essentially, a walled off  
23 waterfront of luxury high-rises. It doesn't have  
24 to be like that that you could also vary the  
25 height. I'd also like to note that we're

1  
2 abutting, with residential, a still vital  
3 industrial area, up Newtown Creek. Those are  
4 blue-collar jobs that should be preserved. And,  
5 it's a bad mix to put those two things together.

6 Also, a line of commercial that's,  
7 and this is more to equity, with commercial that  
8 is there for everybody, not just fancy  
9 restaurants, but all kinds of commercial activity  
10 that would be a destination for folks to get down  
11 to the water. So, I think this is a good start.

12 And then, last, but not least, I  
13 will take off my waterfront hat for one second and  
14 put back on the housing hat that I used to wear as  
15 head of Habitat for Humanity. And, I am very  
16 sensitive to the--

17 MALE VOICE: [Off-mic]

18 ROLAND LEWIS: -- just as we want a  
19 waterfront that's as diverse and lively as the  
20 City that surrounds it, we need to have housing  
21 that reflects the community and the diversity of  
22 what New York City is and must continue to be.  
23 So, there are subsidies available. We've done it  
24 before. And, we should find it so that all sorts  
25 of folks can live in this great new community.

1  
2                   JOE CONLEY: Here we go. Good  
3 morning, Council Members, Council Member Gioia.  
4 My name is Joe Conley, from Community Board 2.  
5 And, greetings from Hunters Point. Hunters Point,  
6 which was once a blue-collar community,  
7 industrial, has been redefined by what is termed  
8 now as market rate. Market rate to probably 95%  
9 of the people in this room, it's out of their  
10 reach. What we had envisioned for Queens West  
11 back in the early '80s was an opportunity to  
12 redevelop that area. And, we all gleefully stood  
13 on the shorelines and said wow, we had million-  
14 dollar views of Manhattan. But, never do we  
15 think, in the year 2008, you would need a million  
16 dollars to move into the community.

17                   And, that's why this opportunity is  
18 so important to recapture this land from New York  
19 State and from the Queens West Development  
20 Corporation. An opportunity to create a great  
21 planned community, and even though we looked at  
22 the density of this site and were concerned about  
23 it, we felt that the density far was better to  
24 have the affordable income housing component.

25                   And, we've characterized this

1 development as more than just affordable housing.  
2 But, to highlight that, what we looked at through  
3 meetings with the community, members of the  
4 community, working with HPD, working with the  
5 members of the Queens for Affordable Housing, that  
6 we think that, of the 3000 units, 1500 units  
7 should be for 80 to 145% of AMI, then another 500  
8 units should be from 50 to 80% of AMI; 500 units  
9 from 30 to 50% of AMI; and then, 500 units below  
10 30% of MAI. And, of that, we're looking for  
11 senior housing, 250 units; ownership should be 25%  
12 of the total project. We feel that ownership is a  
13 very important component of this project.

14 We're also looking for 5% civil  
15 service employees; 5% mobility impaired and 2%  
16 visually and hearing impaired. This is a great  
17 opportunity we believe to recapture this important  
18 piece of land in our community and do the right  
19 thing for housing and to redevelop this area,  
20 which I said is much more than beyond affordable  
21 housing. It's schools. It's park. It's open  
22 space. So, thank you very much for your time.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: This is  
24 Councilman Felder. The Chair of the Committee,  
25

1  
2 Councilman Avella, made the mistake of leaving me  
3 in charge of this hearing. So, before you leave,  
4 many of the Committee members have been going back  
5 and forth from an Education and Parks hearing  
6 across the street to this hearing. And,  
7 unfortunately, we're not able to hear the entire  
8 testimony. So, I just wanted to make sure you  
9 don't forget me and ask you one question, if  
10 that's okay. You're supposed to say yes.

11 JOHN CONLEY: Yes, of course.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Good. On  
13 the school issue, which is not directly your  
14 responsibility, I understand that during the  
15 testimony earlier, somebody said that they're  
16 going to build one school, that there's a  
17 commitment to build one school. Is that right?

18 JOHN CONLEY: That's right. That's  
19 what we've been told.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Right. How  
21 many children do you expect to have, you know, God  
22 willing if this is a successful project?

23 JOHN CONLEY: How many will they be  
24 able to seat at this high school? I think that's  
25 what you're talking about.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah.

3 JOHN CONLEY: I don't remember the  
4 numbers. But, I believe we were talking about  
5 1250.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: And, how  
7 many children do you expect to, you know, have,  
8 assuming that everything works the way you expect  
9 it to? I'm leading you. I'm not a lawyer. But,  
10 I'm leading you because I don't think one school,  
11 you know, if this is successful, that one school  
12 will be enough.

13 JOHN CONLEY: Well, there's also PS  
14 78 that's in the community right now. And,  
15 there's also--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: And, what's  
17 the capacity there?

18 JOHN CONLEY: Two fifty, I forget  
19 the--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Are they  
21 full?

22 JOHN CONLEY: Yes, yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: So then,  
24 you can't put any children there, if they're full?

25 JOHN CONLEY: PS 78 is full. But,

1  
2 they're planning, at the Queens West project,  
3 there's a middle school that's in the project  
4 right now, of 100,000 square feet. And, I forget  
5 the ratio of how many students will be there. So,  
6 it's from K through five and then, you have a  
7 middle school and then, from there, it'll be a  
8 high school. And, the high school's going to be  
9 planned for the Hunters Point location.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, I'm  
11 really not trying to catch you.

12 JOHN CONLEY: Yeah, that's okay.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I'm just  
14 trying to make a point that people have been  
15 raising more often now the issue of making sure  
16 that during the zoning hearings, although we don't  
17 have the mandate on education, just like you have  
18 to do infrastructure to make sure that the toilets  
19 in the bathrooms are working. You have to dig up  
20 the, you know, the streets. You have to make sure  
21 that you have enough schools and the  
22 transportation. Everyone takes that for granted.  
23 But, schools are something that people have not  
24 taken for granted. And, that's why some of the  
25 crises that we have in the City today are a direct

1  
2 outcome of development which is good without  
3 planning for that. So, I hope that those that are  
4 in charge will actually take that into account. I  
5 thank this panel. The next panel--

6 JOHN CONLEY: Thank you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- in  
8 opposition, Jaime Weisberg, Hannah Weinstock and  
9 Yuri, I think it's Ruiz. Is that correct? Are  
10 the three people here? Well, can you just say  
11 yes, if this is your name, Hannah Weinstock?

12 HANNAH WEINSTOCK: Yes, that's me.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: That's you.  
14 Yuri Ruiz? Are you Mr. Ruiz?

15 YURI RUIZ: Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excellent.  
17 Jaime Weisberg, is that you?

18 JAIME WEISBERG: It's me.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excellent.  
20 We're ready whenever you are. You have the clock?

21 MALE VOICE: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay. Go  
23 ahead, please.

24 JAIME WEISBERG: Hello, good  
25 afternoon.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, push  
3 the button again.

4 JAIME WEISBERG: Hello.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Perfect.

6 JAIME WEISBERG: Yes. Good  
7 afternoon. My name is Jaime Weisberg. And, I'm  
8 the Director of Queens Congregations United for  
9 Action. And, I'm bringing the testimony of one of  
10 my members, who could not be here today. It's  
11 written in Spanish. I'm going to read the English  
12 translation.

13 My name is Florenza Maso  
14 [phonetic]. I'm a member of QCUA and Our Lady of  
15 Sorrows Church in Corona. I've been in New York  
16 for 22 years, 16 here in Corona. My wife and I  
17 work in factories for minimum wage. We pay \$700  
18 for one room in a basement. We have to share the  
19 apartment with two other families to pay the rent.  
20 The rent is \$1500 for this basement. We pay a  
21 huge portion of our salaries in the rent and these  
22 days it's even more difficult due to the increase  
23 in other costs. I have to send money home every  
24 month to my mother and son in Mexico. And these  
25 days with the increase in train fare and food it's

1 almost impossible to live here. And, in the past  
2 few weeks, they've cut my hours at work. I know  
3 many other people who pay much more in rent in  
4 addition to paying for gas, electricity and water.  
5 And, there are landlords that don't let people  
6 move in to help with the rent.  
7

8 For this reason, it's unjust that  
9 they're going to build housing on public land,  
10 where none of us who earn a minimum wage can  
11 qualify for these apartments. For this reason, we  
12 ask the City that they include homes for us who  
13 earn less than \$60,000 and to support the platform  
14 for 20% for families earning 25,000 and less; 20%  
15 for families earning 25 to 60,000; 20% for  
16 families earning 60 to 100,000; 10% from families  
17 earning 100,000 to 127,000 and 30% market rate.  
18 Thank you.

19 YURI RUIZ: My name is Yuri Ruiz.  
20 I been living at Queen Community House. - - I'm  
21 sorry.

22 JAIME WEISBERG: - -

23 YURI RUIZ: Yeah. [Foreign  
24 language]

25 JAIME WEISBERG INTERPRETING FOR

1  
2 YURI RUIZ: So, I'm here to ask you to help us  
3 with low-cost housing because our rent is  
4 unbearable.

5 YURI RUIZ: [Foreign language]

6 JAIME WEISBERG INTERPRETING FOR

7 YURI RUIZ: The rent is very, very high and  
8 there's just not enough money to meet all the  
9 bills and also the rent.

10 YURI RUIZ: [Foreign language]

11 JAIME WEISBERG INTERPRETING FOR

12 YURI RUIZ: It's not only my family, but many  
13 families that are living through this right now.

14 YURI RUIZ: [Foreign language]

15 JAIME WEISBERG INTERPRETING FOR

16 YURI RUIZ: So, I ask you to continue supporting  
17 us and I thank you so much for helping us in the  
18 community of Queens.

19 YURI RUIZ: Thank you so much.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you.

21 HANNAH WEINSTOCK: Hi, I'm Hannah  
22 Weinstock. I'm a Community Organizer with Queens  
23 Community House. I work with immigrant families  
24 in Woodside, Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Corona,  
25 Astoria, Long Island City, all of Northwest

1  
2 Queens. And, I thank you very much for the  
3 opportunity to be here.

4 I think it's not news to anyone  
5 that we are having an economic crisis. Many of  
6 the families we work with have been feeling this  
7 for a long time. But, it's only getting worse.  
8 And, unfortunately, a lot of the experts are  
9 saying we haven't seen the worst yet and it's  
10 going to continue to get even worse. So, many of  
11 our families are in crisis over the last 30 years.  
12 Rents have risen 33% and incomes have only risen  
13 3% and that's before the economic crisis, those  
14 figures.

15 A lot of the people that I talk to  
16 on a daily basis have family incomes of less than  
17 \$25,000 a year. I know some people don't think  
18 that that exists, but I talk to people every day,  
19 you know, people earning minimum wage and a lot of  
20 times they're supporting a whole family on minimum  
21 wage. Sometimes, even extended family, supporting  
22 brothers, sisters, parents on minimum wage. Other  
23 people who can only find part-time work or  
24 temporary work and others also are seniors and are  
25 disabled, whose Social Security checks and

1  
2 disability checks are less than, you know,  
3 anything that you can find for rent and only  
4 eating because of the \$1 lunch at the senior  
5 center.

6           It's not uncommon for me to hear  
7 about 20 people living in a basement. I go into  
8 the English classes and I ask people oh, you know,  
9 who lives more than one family in an apartment.  
10 People tell me we've got 20 people in a basement.  
11 If they're single people or if they're families,  
12 it's one family per room. So, you've got  
13 sometimes teenage kids in the same room with their  
14 parents, which is very embarrassing. They tell me  
15 that the teenagers don't like that. People who  
16 pay 90% of their income on rent, you know, and  
17 that means they're skimping on food and medicine.

18           And, other people, who don't have  
19 family, so they can't be overcrowded are the  
20 people who are going into homelessness. And, we  
21 have some families now who are facing going to  
22 shelters and who I've had to refer to shelters  
23 recently. And, that's why I would really like to  
24 emphasize that, you know, do we want to build more  
25 shelters? Or, do we want to build affordable

1 housing? Do we want to have people freezing to  
2 death in the streets, outside empty luxury condos?  
3 And, the current project is closed to the majority  
4 of local families who earn less than 60,000. It's  
5 a public project. You can't exclude the majority  
6 on a public project.

7  
8 We also want for middle-income, as  
9 people have said before, 20% for families earning  
10 25,000 or less; 20% for 25,000 and 60,000; 20% for  
11 60 to 100 and this is a reflection of who's in our  
12 community.

13 Also, I just want to mention really  
14 quickly, we hope that this can be done also with  
15 union jobs. We shouldn't have to choose between  
16 good jobs and affordable housing. We should be  
17 able to do both. And, this has to happen, you  
18 know, we represent your constituents.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay.

20 HANNAH WEINSTOCK: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

22 Next panel is the last panel in favor. John, am I  
23 pronouncing it right, Penotti, and Robin Bronk.  
24 They here? Okay. Because I think we have enough  
25 seats. There's only a couple people in the other

1  
2 room. I just checked. So, next panel will be a  
3 panel in opposition, Dolly Velasquez, Quasi, is it  
4 Quasi Raihan--

5 FEMALE VOICE: She already went.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: She already  
7 went. How did some.. Alvia Vizveta, is it Vizveta?  
8 And, Maria Esther Romero. Yeah, I know.

9 JAIME WEISBERG: Just going to  
10 translate.

11 MALE VOICE: You're going to  
12 translate?

13 JAIME WEISBERG: Yeah.

14 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: Okay. Thank you.  
15 [Foreign language.]

16 JAIME WEISBERG: I'm a citizen,  
17 Dolly Velasquez.

18 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign  
19 Language.]

20 JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
21 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: I worked for 20 years as a home  
22 attendant.

23 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign  
24 Language.]

25 JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR

1  
2 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: I worked 24 hours and they only  
3 paid me for 16.

4 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign  
5 Language.]

6 JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
7 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: I also worked Saturdays and  
8 Sundays, many hours.

9 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign  
10 Language.]

11 JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
12 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: I paid taxes.

13 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign  
14 Language.]

15 JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
16 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: But, when I got my Social  
17 Security checks, it was only for working five days  
18 a week, 40 hours a week, which was much less than  
19 what I worked.

20 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign  
21 Language.]

22 JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
23 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: And, my check is very small.  
24 It's just enough to pay maintenance.

25 DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign

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Language.]

JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR

DOLLY VELASQUEZ: But, the apartment where I live in is owned by my children and they're letting me live there while I need to.

DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign

Language.]

JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR

DOLLY VELASQUEZ: And, what happens if they need this apartment back and with this recession, my check is so small.

DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign

Language.]

JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR

DOLLY VELASQUEZ: So, I don't know what I will do. Please help us with low-cost housing.

DOLLY VELASQUEZ: [Foreign

Language.]

JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR

DOLLY VELASQUEZ: Thank you.

ALICIA VIZUETA: Hi. My name is

Alicia. [Foreign language.]

JAIME WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR

ALICIA VIZUETA: I'm very thankful for this

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opportunity to talk to you.

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR ALICIA VIZUETA: Thank you. I want to give applause for you guys for supporting us and giving us time--

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR ALICIA VIZUETA: --to hear about our needs--

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR ALICIA VIZUETA: --for the people in Queens.

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR ALICIA VIZUETA: My husband is disabled.

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR ALICIA VIZUETA: We only receive \$650 a month.

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign

language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
ALICIA VIZUETA: We're paying 400 a month in rent.

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign  
language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
ALICIA VIZUETA: But, our landlord is now asking  
us to leave.

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign  
language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
ALICIA VIZUETA: And, we can't find anything else.  
We don't know what we're going to do.

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign  
language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
ALICIA VIZUETA: We have tried to apply for all  
the affordable housing.

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign  
language.]

JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
ALICIA VIZUETA: But, they tell us you have to  
wait five years.

ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign

1  
2 language.]

3 JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
4 ALICIA VIZUETA: We ask that you help us and we  
5 will help you.

6 ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign  
7 language.]

8 JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
9 ALICIA VIZUETA: So, that we can get low-cost  
10 apartments.

11 ALICIA VIZUETA: [Foreign  
12 language.]

13 JAMIE WEISBERG, INTERPRETING FOR  
14 ALICIA VIZUETA: Please, it's so necessary for  
15 housing for disabled, low-income disabled people.

16 ALICIA VIZUETA: Thank you.

17 MARIA ESTHER ROMERO: Hi. I'm  
18 Maria Esther Romero, Volunteer with Queens  
19 Community House since the beginning of the year.  
20 I'm concerned about what is going on with housing  
21 for immigrants and for everyone in Queens. I'm  
22 retired at 70 years old. And, I live in Jackson  
23 Heights for the last 38 in the same place. I work  
24 36 years, but my Social Security check is only 718  
25 a month. My rent is 853.70. And then, I have

1  
2 utilities, food, medicine, transportation and  
3 other expenses. My daughter help me with what she  
4 can. But, for her, it is difficult because she  
5 has her own family and children to support and  
6 it's not easy.

7 I'm looking for a part-time job so  
8 I can work and pay my bills. But, I can't find  
9 anything. In order to eat, I have to the senior  
10 citizen for a \$1 lunch. My friends also help me.  
11 Every day, I'm thinking how will be the next,  
12 tomorrow. As you know, the Hunters Point South  
13 project is excluding people who makes less than  
14 25,000 a year. We are asking for a minimum of 20%  
15 for low-income families making 25 or less. Since  
16 the project is owned by the City and it's where  
17 that people with low income to get a percentage of  
18 these apartments. The public land should be for  
19 all of us. Public land for the public.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you for  
21 your testimony. Thank you. Next panel is Uzma,  
22 am I pronouncing it right, Murir, M-U-R-I-R.

23 FEMALE VOICE: She had to leave  
24 already.

25 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: She had to

1  
2 leave. This one we called already. Natividad  
3 Hernandez and Peter Branson. And, Peter, you  
4 signed up both in favor and opposition. That's a  
5 new one.

6 PETER BRANSON: Well, I didn't - -  
7 be against.

8 NATIVIDAD HERNANDEZ: Hello? Okay.  
9 Good afternoon. My name is Natividad Hernandez.  
10 I'm from Centro Hispano Cuzcatlan. And, we have  
11 the experience of Jamaica rezoning where create a  
12 lot of displacement in our community because all  
13 this project sounds good, which is good. But, our  
14 real working people is not include on those  
15 rezoning or new project.

16 I really I don't understand why is  
17 everybody known that we have a housing crisis.  
18 And, it will be worse if we don't do anything.  
19 The rezoning and the new project should be  
20 opportunity, but is not happen. Hunter Point  
21 South is one example where affordable housing is  
22 only for families who make more than 66,000 per  
23 year. And, name of Centro Hispano Cuzcatlan and  
24 Queens for Affordable Housing, their tenants that  
25 we represent. We ask Council Member to vote no

1  
2 unless we have the changes on this plan including  
3 affordable housing for low-income families and  
4 leave and Hunter Point South. Thank you.

5 PETER BRANSON: My name is Peter  
6 Branson. I want to thank you for allowing me to  
7 testify. I represent the Queens for Affordable  
8 Housing and the Coalition of Veterans in Pain and  
9 Distress.

10 I've testified before many times on  
11 veterans' homelessness. And, Mr. Avella, we've  
12 spoken often. Recently, there have been some  
13 developments in Mr. Gioia's district involving the  
14 homeless shelter at Boardman's Avenue, very  
15 unpleasant ones. And, the problem of veterans'  
16 homelessness is very serious. And, in spite of  
17 City government's promises to house homeless  
18 veterans, the veterans' community hasn't seen,  
19 under the last eight years, much progress.

20 And, I feel that the problem is the  
21 same one when they describe the income levels of  
22 the workers, the firemen and the teachers and the  
23 construction workers. Nobody mentions the home  
24 care worker, the person that's going to be taking  
25 care of us when we get old; the person that washes

1  
2 the dishes in the restaurants where most middle  
3 and upper middle-class people eat. These are also  
4 part of the New York City fabric. And, I think  
5 the plan is a great plan. But, it doesn't have  
6 any provision-- when Mr. Conley spoke from  
7 District 2, he mentioned all groups. But, he  
8 didn't mention veterans.

9 We have veterans who get their  
10 benefits are \$900 a month, on total disability.  
11 They can't live on that \$900 a month. And, they  
12 should have a stake in affordable housing, too.  
13 The housing that's being built should be  
14 inclusionary, both by race and income and people  
15 should live together 'cause that's the American  
16 way. It's not to keep people segregated the way  
17 public housing that did that has failed. And,  
18 developments all over the country have been torn  
19 down because they didn't work. And, in a New York  
20 that I envision, I've lived here 74 years, I've  
21 lived here all my life, I envision a New York  
22 where everybody is celebrated and we all live  
23 together in harmony. And, that won't happen  
24 unless veterans are considered.

25 One last thing. Vietnam Veterans

1  
2 Against the War had an expression. They used to  
3 say "We honor the dead, but we fight for the  
4 living." That's what we're doing. We're taking  
5 care of the brothers who are here now. We  
6 remember the ones who aren't. But, it's more  
7 important to provide for the ones who are here now  
8 and that are suffering. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.  
10 And, I'd like to thank everybody that came and  
11 testified. And, I know, if I can speak for  
12 Councilman Gioia, both he and I are obviously  
13 listening very closely and take into account the  
14 concerns of real affordable housing for this  
15 project and, at the same time, trying to maintain  
16 the union workers and union wages and benefits.  
17 And, I think we urge the City to listen very  
18 carefully to what has been said. And, I know  
19 Councilman Gioia will have discussions with you.

20 In the interim, the vote, at this  
21 point, will be scheduled for my meeting-- no, I  
22 know what the day was, I was just clearing my  
23 throat here-- of November 12<sup>th</sup>. Seeing no one else  
24 to speak on this item, I will close the public  
25 hearing and close this meeting. Am I closing or

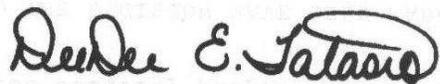
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recessing? Closing this meeting of the meeting of  
Zoning & Franchises. Thank you everybody.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, DeeDee E. Tataseo certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "DeeDee E. Tataseo". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Date November 2, 2008