

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

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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--

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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

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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.

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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,

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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.

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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,

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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

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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.

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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

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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.

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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

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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

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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,

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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

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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

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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.

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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.

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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

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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

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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 57th 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

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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.

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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.

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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

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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

1
2 there. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

4 WINIFRED BURKE: Okay. Good
5 morning. My name is Winifred Burke. I've lived
6 in Queens my entire life, but I could not qualify
7 for this development. This is a large development
8 being built on public land, yet the City's
9 proposal excludes the average working family
10 living in Queens. They're planning to build the
11 5,000 units with 60% of them solely for families
12 meeting their definition of affordable, which is
13 60 to 158,000.

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

23 I can think of no explainable
24 reason why the City has excluded from this
25 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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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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

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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
3 Therefore we need greater investment in affordable
4 housing in Queens to address the needs of both
5 current and future residents.

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

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anybody getting up. Are they here?

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

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

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

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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

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2 these units.

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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

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

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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 language.]

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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

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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 12th. 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

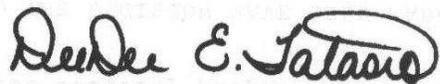
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recessing? Closing this meeting of the meeting of
Zoning & Franchises. Thank you everybody.

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