

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES

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July 1, 2009  
Start: 10:25 am  
Recess: 5:58 pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers  
City Hall

B E F O R E:  
TONY AVELLA  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Simcha Felder  
Eric N. Gioia  
Robert Jackson  
Melinda R. Katz  
Larry B. Seabrook  
Helen Sears  
Albert Vann  
Kendall Stewart  
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.  
David I. Weprin  
David Yassky

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

Marty Markowitz  
Borough President

Seth Pinsky  
President  
New York City Economic Development Corporation

Madelyn Wils  
Executive Director for Planning, Development &  
Maritime  
New York City Economic Development Corporation

Purnima Kapur  
Director  
New York City Department of City Planning

Holly Leicht  
Housing Preservation and Development

Jesse Masyr  
Wachtel & Masyr

Christopher Durmick  
Thinkwell Design & Production

Ari Shalam  
Senior VP  
Taconic Investment Partners

Marjorie Perlmeiter  
Land Use Counsel  
Russo Family

Michael Russo  
Owner  
Gargiulo's Restaurant

Dennis Vourderis  
Co-owner  
Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park

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

Dick Zigun  
Founder  
Coney Island USA

Matt Weinberg  
Property Owner  
Coney Island

Jim Seay  
Owner  
Premier Rides

Jonathan Gordon  
Owner  
Gordon Rides

Joe Montalto  
President  
High Mountain Enterprises

Jack Rouse  
Jack Rouse Associates

Steven Byrdsell  
ACORN  
Coney Island

Laverne Penn  
ACORN  
Coney Island

Carmen Gonzalez  
Resident  
Coney Island

Catherine Jenkins  
ACORN  
Coney Island

Scott Kravitsky  
Teacher  
Coney Island

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

Nicole Eiten  
On behalf of  
David Anderson  
Director of Development  
Jewish Community Council

Darnell Canada  
ReBuild

Paul Fernandez  
Chief of Staff  
Building and Construction Trades  
Council of Greater New York

Rochelle Kelly  
New York Hotel Trade Council

Marvin Abram  
Pastor  
New Freedom Baptist Church

Catherine Stutts  
Pratt Center for Community Development

John Dohlin  
Director  
New York Aquarium

Ronald Stewart  
Resident  
Coney Island

Madeline Castillo  
Housing Specialist  
Astella Development Corporation

Bay Yanintwono  
Resident  
Coney Island

## A P P E A R A N C E S [CONTINUED]

Matt Ryan  
New York Jobs with Justice

Sandra Dillon  
Resident of Brooklyn  
Mermaid in Mermaid Parade for 10 years

Reverend Connice Mobley  
Pastor  
United Community Baptist Church  
Coney Island

Al Johnson  
Resident of Coney Island  
ACORN member

Sheila Boyd  
President  
Coney Island Tower Tenants Association

Amy Park  
Resident of Coney Island

Ed Cosmee  
Founder  
Coney Island Torch Foundation

Juan Rivero  
Save Coney Island USA

Anthony Williamson  
Member, Local 79 Construction and General Building  
Laborers  
Member, Mason Tenders District Council  
Co-Chair, Coney Island CLEAR

Lowell Barton  
New York State Laborers

## A P P E A R A N C E S [CONTINUED]

Michael Halpin  
Member, CLEAR  
Organizer, International Union of Elevator  
Constructors, Local number 1

Charles Denson  
Author, Coney Island Lost and Found  
Director, Coney Island History Project

Andrew Hollick  
Vice President for Policy and Programs  
New York Building Congress

Maryann Imperator  
Policy Director  
American Institute of Architects, New York Chapter

Paul Bergandi  
Coney Island Historian  
Museum owner of Coney Island artifacts

Steve Paluso  
New York City resident  
Member of Save Coney Island USA

Charles Reichenthal  
District Manager, Community Board 13  
Member, Coney Island Development Corporation

Carolyn R. McCrory  
Resident of Coney Island  
Garden Enthusiast

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

Ronald Roth

Author

Maze of Mirrors, House of Cards: America's Classic  
Amusement Parks

Michael White

Attorney, Urban Planner

Noticing New York

Harold Kramer

Save Coney Island

Christabel Gough

Secretary

Society for the Architecture of the City

Joan Corney

Coney Island Homeowners' Association

Queenie Huling

President

Coney Island Homeowners' and Residents' Association

Yunona Liphinchuck

On behalf of Rabbi Moshe Wiener

Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island, Inc.

Lisa Kersavage

Director of MAS Advocacy and Policy

Municipal Art Society

Nicolas Ronderos

Director of Urban Development Programs

Regional Plan Association

Darrel Kalich Blee

Fort Greene Empowerment

Carol Hill Albert

Former owner of Astroland

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

Marion Kennedy  
Youth and Community Awareness

Trisha Veta  
Resident

Cheryl Robertson

Barry Flynn  
Manager of Boardwalk Restaurant

Margaret Gorlick  
Resident of Seagate

Joseph Packer  
Community Organizer and Activist

Georgia Betgrave  
Teacher  
New York City Department of Education

Steven Pong  
Resident

Astrudge McLean  
Resident and business owner

Lynn Kelly  
President  
Coney Island Development Corporation

Nathan Bliss  
Coney Island Development Corporation

Daniel Mulette  
Coney Island Development Corporation

Pam Harris  
Executive Director  
Coney Island Generation Gap



1  
2                   CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Good morning,  
3 everyone. I'd like to call this meeting on the  
4 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises to order.  
5 We're obviously all here for a very important  
6 issue facing the Council and the city and that is  
7 the redevelopment of Coney Island.

8                   The Administration is here to give  
9 the initial presentation, we also have a number of  
10 the property owners here, and the community as  
11 well. Obviously this is a very important thing  
12 for Coney Island and Brooklyn and the city, and I  
13 ask for your cooperation as we go throughout the  
14 hearing today.

15                   Let me introduce the members of my  
16 committee that are here: first, on my left Council  
17 Member Robert Jackson, Melinda Katz, Helen Sears;  
18 on my right, Council Member Simcha Felder. We're  
19 also joined by Council Member Domenic Recchia and  
20 Kendall Stewart.

21                   First I'd like to allow Council  
22 Member Domenic Recchia to make an opening  
23 statement, since most of this project, if not all  
24 of it, is in his Council district. Council  
25 Member.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Thank you.

3 Good morning. My name is Councilman Domenic M.  
4 Recchia, Jr., and I'm the Council Member for Coney  
5 Island. I would like to thank Council Member Tony  
6 Avella for hosting this important hearing as well  
7 as my colleagues for being here today.

8 It's hard to believe that after all  
9 the negotiations, meetings, and planning, and  
10 discussions that were this close to realizing the  
11 dream that pushed me to run for office in 2001--a  
12 Coney Island that thrives every single day of the  
13 year with good paying jobs with livable wages,  
14 affordable housing, and a world-class  
15 entertainment and amusement arena. This has been  
16 a long process, there's a lot of emotion involved  
17 because Coney Island isn't just a tourist  
18 attraction. It's not just a collection of rides  
19 and games, it's home to over 50,000 people.  
20 Everyone I meet has a story to tell me about Coney  
21 Island. It's a place unlike any other in the city  
22 and we owe it to ourselves and to all New Yorkers  
23 to move forward with the best possible plan.

24 I've said from the start there's no  
25 way to make everyone happy--the trick is to make

1  
2 everyone a little happy because that's the nature  
3 of compromise. Despite the differences in this  
4 debate, there are things we all agree on, like the  
5 need for world-class amusements, the protection of  
6 local businesses like Deno's Wonder Wheel and  
7 Gargiulo's Restaurant, who stuck by the committee  
8 during the darker days and making sure that we  
9 provide good paying jobs that pay livable wages,  
10 affordable housing for the people who call Coney  
11 Island home year-around and make sure that jobs go  
12 to Coney Island residents. If we can achieve  
13 these goals and reconcile our differences, we can  
14 create a plan that includes thoughtful  
15 redevelopment so we can make our dream a viable  
16 and sustainable reality.

17 I'm very pleased that today will  
18 give us another chance to hear from the community  
19 on the impact of this plan because we can't think  
20 about it as a property lines and acreage--this is  
21 about people.

22 I've said enough, I want to thank  
23 everyone for being here today, and I look forward  
24 to hearing for what everyone has to say.

25 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you,

Council Member.

Normal procedure would be to have the Administration now testify, but I'd like to vary from that for one instance, we have here the Borough President of Brooklyn Marty Markowitz, who is probably the biggest supporter of Brooklyn in the history of Brooklyn, and I know he's got another event that he has to go to, so I'd like to call upon him to give his testimony.

[Off mic]

BOROUGH PRESIDENT MARTY MARKOWITZ:

Thank you very, very much Mr. Chairman and Domenic Recchia, thanks, great job done, and the members of the Committee, thank you very, very much.

Worldwide, the words Coney Island conjure America's playground renowned for its outlandish amusements, beautiful beach, bustling boardwalk, food and entertainment, and unique sense of affordable family fun.

As you may know, I grew up in poverty in Brooklyn in Crown Heights. We never heard of the Hamptons when I was growing up or the Berkshires, but just about every weekend my mom would take me and my two younger sisters and drag

1  
2 us--not drag us, we were eager to go on the BMT in  
3 those days straight to Coney Island. My mother  
4 took my younger sisters and I there because it was  
5 fun and it was affordable, as it is today, and we  
6 must ensure that it remains so for families today  
7 and in the future.

8 We're now well into a very active  
9 2009 season. I'm proud to say that all of Coney  
10 Island stakeholders have stood together to say  
11 loud and clear that Coney Island is indeed fun and  
12 really open. As we speak, families are  
13 experiencing the thrill of Deno's Wonder Wheel and  
14 the world-famous Cyclone, the energy of our great  
15 minor league baseball team the Cyclones--by the  
16 way, nine to two and three over Staten Island  
17 Yankees, I'm proud about--Friday night fireworks,  
18 aquatic adventures at the New York Aquarium, and  
19 the sideshow wackiness of Coney Island USA.

20 Thanks to the Mayor and Taconic and to Dom Recchia  
21 we've got Ringling Brothers, Coney Island  
22 Boomerang, and Thor Equities has brought us  
23 Festival by the Sea. Coming soon there is this  
24 weekend's Nathan Hot Dog Eating Contest and later  
25 this summer the Siren Festival, as well as the

1  
2 Seaside Summer Concert Series, which I host at  
3 Asser Levy Park for our 31st year, which will  
4 include Creedence Clearwater, Gladys Knight, Hall  
5 & Oates, Blondie, Pat Benatar, and Donna Summer,  
6 to name a few of the stars.

7           Let's face it, as we continue to  
8 work to ensure Coney's bright future, we don't  
9 always agree on everything, but Coney Island is  
10 bigger than all of us. The City has Broadway, the  
11 Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, the  
12 Brooklyn Bridge, and, yes, Coney Island. It was  
13 here before we were ever thought of and, with our  
14 strong commitment, it will be here and thriving  
15 long after we're gone. We must protect it and  
16 sure it in the 21st century and beyond.

17           As we move forward, I'm tempted to  
18 offer the City Council the sage advice of Yogi  
19 Berra who said when you come to a fork in the  
20 road, take it. I am sure all of us wish that the  
21 decisions that must be made about the future of  
22 Coney Island could be that simple.

23           Now we all know there are real  
24 differences of opinion between the Mayor and Thor  
25 Equities, the majority property owner in Coney

1  
2 Island's amusement area. Today, those differences  
3 may seem insurmountable, just as they seemed to be  
4 when the Council and the Mayor successfully  
5 addressed plans for the redevelopment of Willets  
6 Point in Queens. I'm confident that under the  
7 leadership of Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Christine  
8 Quinn, our Speaker, and Council Member Domenic  
9 Recchia, and the Brooklyn delegation that a  
10 solution will be found that will create a Coney  
11 Island greater than it has been and respects all  
12 of the area's property owners.

13 Now let me get to the matters at  
14 hand. I commend the Mayor and the city officials  
15 for this Coney Island plan which prioritizes the  
16 creation of a year-round affordable Coney Island  
17 for the 21st century. And in my charter-mandated  
18 land use role, I was pleased to approve the city's  
19 plan, but with solid recommendations that you and  
20 only the City Council can adopt.

21 Let's start with my call for more  
22 amusements. It has always been my view that Coney  
23 should never be a place for big-box retail.  
24 Clubs, yes; restaurants, for sure; bowling alleys,  
25 for sure; waterpark, absolutely; a convention

1 center, of course; hotels, of course, hotels are  
2 part of the Coney Island tradition, in fact, way  
3 before I was born, there was a hotel shaped like  
4 an elephant in Coney Island. But Coney Island  
5 must not become a mall. Coney Island must be an  
6 amusement park--a vibrant part of the city's  
7 tourist economy.  
8

9 To that end, I'm overjoyed that the  
10 Planning Commission adopted my call for more  
11 ground-floor amusements. They agreed that when  
12 families walk to the beach along Stillwell Avenue  
13 and West 10th Street, they should feel they have  
14 entered a very special place.

15 My recommendation went further, and  
16 I hope the City Council adopts it, calling for  
17 amusement space of no less than 150,000 square  
18 feet in the special Coney Island district, and I  
19 urge the Subcommittee to call for this as well.

20 As I said, families coming to Coney  
21 should be filled with awe and excitement. It is  
22 book Coney Island, Lost and Found author Charles  
23 Denson describes Coney's Luna Park at the turn of  
24 the 20th century as a place filled with fantasy  
25 architecture, towers, minarets, colonnades,



1  
2 castles, spires, domes, and globes--every inch of  
3 them strong with light bulbs. The park was then  
4 known as the Electric Eden. I say we need to  
5 establish a design committee to ensure that Coney  
6 Island's amusement area remains unique, creative,  
7 and iconic in its architecture, signage, lighting,  
8 and preservation of appropriate buildings and  
9 amusements, prioritizing over-the-top design. Now  
10 this is not a place, Chairman, that we should  
11 follow Park Avenue in Manhattan, this is Brooklyn  
12 and it's Coney Island, and I urge you to take up  
13 this recommendation as your own.

14 Finally, and perhaps most  
15 important, I ask that when we implement the plan,  
16 we build with Coney by Coney and for Coney by  
17 guaranteeing local jobs, affordable housing,  
18 rewards and resources for residents and businesses  
19 who have kept the faith throughout Coney Island's  
20 lean times. I called on the city to require the  
21 following in all requests for proposals and  
22 initiatives: number one, that there be a targeted  
23 outreach so residents of Coney island will benefit  
24 from not less than 50% of the jobs resulting from  
25 the Coney Island plan; that union labor be used

1  
2 where appropriate and all contractors and  
3 employers pay prevailing or area-wide wages for  
4 every trade and position; that to the greatest  
5 extent possible, contracts and suppliers be  
6 minority and women-owned businesses enterprises  
7 and Brooklyn business enterprises as well; that  
8 employers have a track record of successfully  
9 performing services, paying livable wages, and  
10 complying with all laws--health and safety, wage  
11 and hour, environmental and antidiscrimination  
12 laws; that all building service workers be paid  
13 prevailing wages and supplement rates; that  
14 livable wages be paid for all nonunion eligible  
15 jobs; and that developers be encouraged to provide  
16 space for small local entrepreneurs and  
17 businesses.

18 Bottom line: if you live in Coney  
19 you should benefit from its rebirth.

20 And since Coney residents will play  
21 host to the world, I have asked for something that  
22 I hope you adopt, Chairman, and that is that we  
23 show appreciation to Coney Island families by  
24 providing local resident discounts for a  
25 amusements to the residents of ZIP code 11224,

1  
2 that would be modeled on discounts provided to  
3 residents of Richmond, Virginia, who visit Kings  
4 Dominion and Southern Californians who get  
5 discounts for Disneyland, Legoland, and other  
6 attractions.

7 My recommendation also suggested  
8 that we show appreciation for businesses loyal to  
9 Coney Island--Deno's Wonder Wheel and Gargiulo's  
10 Restaurant by working with them on their specific  
11 zoning requests.

12 Anyone who knows me knows that  
13 affordable housing is near and dear to my heart  
14 and that is why I recommend that the city increase  
15 affordable housing in the Coney West and or Coney  
16 North districts from 20% to no less than 35% of  
17 the total units through the disposition of city  
18 properties.

19 Coney Island is indeed a  
20 neighborhood with many needs, and I believe the  
21 city should advance design and construction to  
22 bring a desperately needed gymnasium to PS 188 for  
23 use by residents on Coney Western end.

24 I ask that the Abe Stark Ice Rink  
25 operate until a replacement is constructed at an

1  
2 alternative location.

3 I recommend that as a comeback, a  
4 lack of supermarkets in Coney Island that the city  
5 require in future RFPs that the developer of one  
6 of the city-owned properties in Coney West to  
7 Coney North provide a quality supermarket for the  
8 residents.

9 In conclusion, Coney Island must  
10 retain that special ambience and class--you know  
11 what that means, Chairman--it could charm your  
12 socks off or be in your face. So I asked that the  
13 city look into the feasibility of bringing  
14 Brooklyn's Eiffel Tower, the landmark parachute  
15 jump back to life as a thrill ride as it was when  
16 I was a kid. What better symbol of rebirth could  
17 there be than to have this icon updated with the  
18 latest technology? In Coney, it's always been  
19 anything's possible and I believe it can happen.

20 As we know, Coney Island's 19th and  
21 20th century heydays inspired every single great  
22 amusement park in this nation that came after it,  
23 and it must live on as a place where families of  
24 every means can come to play and to dream. We owe  
25 it to these families to work together now to get

2 the job done, to make Coney Island once again the  
3 amusement epicenter of America for the rest of the  
4 century and beyond.

5 Thank you very, very much, Mr.  
6 Chairman, thank you. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you, Mr.  
8 Borough President. I think you certainly gave us  
9 enough to consider and started off this public  
10 hearing in the right way, thank you.

11 PRESIDENT MARKOWITZ: Thank you,  
12 Chairman, thank you.

13 [Off mic]

14 MALE VOICE: But you can zone this-  
15 -

16 [Crosstalk]

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Next I'd like  
18 to call up the Administration to outline their  
19 proposal.

20 MALE VOICE: ...if they own it. So  
21 what's the sense? We're going to vote and make  
22 this - - what happens if they never buy it? It's  
23 going to wind up in court.

24 [Off mic]

25 PRESIDENT SETH PINSKY: Thank you,

1  
2 Chairman Avella and members of the Subcommittee  
3 for inviting us here today. I'm Seth Pinsky,  
4 President of the New York City Economic  
5 Development Corporation. On behalf of our agency  
6 and City Planning Commissioner Amanda Burden, who,  
7 unfortunately, could not be here due to a public  
8 hearing that she is chairing, I am pleased to  
9 discuss the opportunities presented by the city's  
10 plan for redeveloping and revitalizing Coney  
11 Island.

12 We find ourselves at a critical  
13 juncture in this development process--a process  
14 that started many years ago, and now places us at  
15 the threshold of a new dawn for this important  
16 neighborhood. Your vote of support for this  
17 development has the potential to alter in dramatic  
18 and positive ways the lives and futures of Coney  
19 Island's 50,000 residents and the millions of  
20 visitors who could once again flock to this fabled  
21 area known as the People's Playground.

22 Coney Island's legacy as an  
23 amusement district is no doubt well-known to all  
24 of you. Likewise, you are probably aware that the  
25 area has been in a lengthy period of decline after

1  
2 decades of neglect, disinvestment, and  
3 speculation. As recently as three years ago,  
4 there were more than 10 acres of rides, arcades,  
5 putt-putt courses, batting cages, and go-kart  
6 tracks in Coney Island. Today, fewer than three  
7 acres remain. One well-known park, Astroland, was  
8 forced to shut down earlier this year, adding to  
9 the long list of departed amusement areas,  
10 including Luna Park, Dreamland, and Steeplechase  
11 Park.

12 The dire state of Coney Island's  
13 entertainment district has taken a toll on, and  
14 been mirrored in, the current state of the  
15 surrounding community. Of the area's 50,000  
16 residents, one in six resides in NYCHA housing.  
17 Those living in the area have longer commutes than  
18 the residents of any other New York City  
19 neighborhood. The unemployment rate in the area  
20 is more than twice the city average. And it is  
21 hard to find many of the basic amenities that New  
22 Yorkers across the five boroughs take for granted,  
23 including supermarkets and pharmacies. Yet  
24 despite these challenges, we are confident that a  
25 bright future remains possible for the area, for

1  
2 Coney Island has an invaluable brand that is  
3 recognized all over the world, a brand that not  
4 only is worth preserving, but could be leveraged  
5 to create new jobs and bring in new visitors. To  
6 this end, over the past six years, we have held  
7 literally hundreds of meetings with residents,  
8 businesses, elected officials, developers, and  
9 experts in the amusement industry. As a result of  
10 these meetings and the ongoing public review  
11 process through which we have been taking our plan  
12 in recent months, we have continued to refine our  
13 plan to revive and improve upon this great New  
14 York neighborhood.

15           The modifications that we have made  
16 to our plan after feedback from Community Board  
17 13, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz,  
18 and the many stakeholders who testified throughout  
19 the ULURP process will not only enhance the  
20 amusement district of Coney Island, but more  
21 importantly, address the needs of the tens of  
22 thousands of residents that call this neighborhood  
23 home.

24           The plan before you today carefully  
25 balances a number of priorities--spurring job



1  
2 creation and economic development, creating new  
3 residential and retail opportunities for the  
4 community, and preserving and enhancing the  
5 entertainment district. As you know, we have to  
6 date received support for our plan from the  
7 Community Board, the Borough President, and the  
8 City Planning Commission. Therefore, we stand on  
9 the brink today of being able, with your support,  
10 to create 500,000 square feet of new retail and  
11 neighborhood services, 4,500 units of new housing,  
12 including nearly 1,000 affordable housing units,  
13 and a 27-acre entertainment and amusement  
14 destination that includes nine acres of new mapped  
15 parkland. All of this will result in 25,000 new  
16 construction jobs, 6,000 permanent jobs, and \$14  
17 billion in new economic activity over the next 30  
18 years--results that are important in any  
19 environment, but are particularly critical during  
20 a challenging economic downturn such as the one in  
21 which we now find ourselves.

22 Our commitment to bringing jobs to  
23 the area also includes encouraging participation  
24 by minority and women-owned business enterprises.  
25 In connection with the project, not only do we

1  
2 intend to meet or exceed city and EDC goals of 20%  
3 participation by MWBEs on applicable contracts for  
4 city-funded construction projects and 22%  
5 participation on applicable city-funded  
6 professional service contracts, but we also intend  
7 to utilize our marketing resources to explain and  
8 promote contracting opportunities to the MWBE  
9 community.

10           Additionally, for any development  
11 RFPs that we issue to private companies relating  
12 to city-owned sites, it is our intention to  
13 require respondents to include MWBE and Targeted  
14 Hiring Initiative plans, which will be designed to  
15 encourage participation by MWBEs, local  
16 businesses, and local residents.

17           Another topic that I think is  
18 important to address today is the anticipated role  
19 of organized labor in this project. Over the past  
20 several months, the Administration has been in  
21 productive discussions with organized labor to  
22 ensure that the transformation of Coney Island  
23 results in good jobs, while simultaneously  
24 remaining economically feasible. We intend to  
25 continue these conversations and hope to reach an

1  
2 agreement with each interested union that takes  
3 into account the unique challenges presented by  
4 Coney Island. When we have more to report on this  
5 subject, we will of course come back to you.

6 Before concluding, let me take a  
7 moment to address a particular element of our plan  
8 that has received attention of late, specifically,  
9 the mapping of parkland. As you know, the Special  
10 Coney Island District utilizes the most up-to-date  
11 zoning practices to provide for both orderly  
12 growth and the preservation of historic amusement  
13 uses, building upon the strengths of Coney Island  
14 and providing for its long-term needs. Over the  
15 last decades, we have seen that zoning alone  
16 cannot protect and expand amusements in this area.  
17 Therefore, we have put forward an additional layer  
18 of protection: mapping what will become a 12-acre  
19 portion of the amusement district as parkland. By  
20 mapping this parkland, we can ensure that Coney  
21 Island's amusements are protected in perpetuity--a  
22 worthy goal in and of itself and one that we, as  
23 the City of New York, can accomplish without  
24 further assistance.

25 Another reason that we are mapping

1  
2 parkland in the amusement district is because it  
3 will allow us to de-map two tracts of land to the  
4 west of the Cyclones' stadium. These two tracts  
5 are technically parkland, but neither is more than  
6 paved surface parking. In the case of each, we  
7 are seeking to transform it into a developable  
8 site, opening the way for housing, retail, and  
9 thousands of jobs, as well as new parking spaces  
10 to replace those already located on the sites. In  
11 order to accomplish this, which requires  
12 assistance from the state legislature, it is  
13 necessary for us to replace this parkland with an  
14 equal or greater amount of new parkland, which is  
15 exactly what we intend to do in the amusement  
16 district.

17 Put simply, without the mapping of  
18 parkland in the amusement district, the de-mapping  
19 that we are seeking is unlikely to happen and  
20 without this de-mapping--again, a land-use action  
21 involving an area that is little more than  
22 blacktop--the full development of the western  
23 section of Coney Island cannot move forward. That  
24 means the loss of 60% of the new housing units and  
25 thousands of new parking spaces that are planned

1  
2 for the neighborhood; that means diminished  
3 traffic circulation; and, most importantly, that  
4 means the loss of hundreds of new permanent jobs  
5 and 9,000 construction jobs. In short, vast  
6 tracts of Coney Island will remain exactly what  
7 they have been for far too long--abandoned lots.  
8 We must not allow this to happen.

9 We must move forward with our plan,  
10 which is the result of years of community and  
11 stakeholder involvement. It is a plan designed to  
12 meet the diverse needs of local land owners and  
13 businesses and to generate much-needed economic  
14 activity in a neighborhood that is in dire need of  
15 growth and investment.

16 I want to thank Councilman Domenic  
17 Recchia for his strong leadership on these issues.  
18 I hope that when we are done with the process in  
19 which we are currently engaged, the City Council  
20 will see the wisdom of what we have put forward  
21 and will cast a strong vote in favor of  
22 reestablishing this area's prominence and ensuring  
23 that tens of thousands of New Yorkers have access  
24 to the services, resources, and opportunities that  
25 they so deserve. Coney Island and its residents

1  
2 have been neglected for far too long and now  
3 they're counting on all of us. Let us be sure to  
4 seize this opportunity.

5 Thank you.

6 [Applause]

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay. This is  
9 the first warning--that will not happen again.  
10 I'm serious about this. We will stop the hearing  
11 and at the next warning I will start asking the  
12 Sergeant-at-Arms to pick out people who are doing  
13 this, because when you applaud, you intimidate  
14 people who may not be in agreement with you--that  
15 will not be allowed in this hall, is that  
16 understood?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Yes, Mr.  
18 Chairman.

19 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Mr. Chairman,  
20 I'd like to introduce a couple of my colleagues  
21 who are going to provide a further presentation on  
22 the plan that we have before you today: Madelyn  
23 Wils from the Economic Development Corporation and  
24 Purnima Kapur, from the City Planning Department.

25 Oh, and I'm sorry Holly Leicht also

1  
2 from Housing Preservation and Development.

3 MS. MADELYN WILS: Thank you. Is  
4 this on? Hello? Oh, there it is.

5 Thank you, Council Member Avella  
6 and members of the Zoning and Franchises  
7 Subcommittee. It's a pleasure to be before you  
8 once again to present the great opportunity we  
9 have for the redevelopment and revitalization of  
10 Coney Island.

11 Our plan is the culmination of  
12 years of work with Council Member Recchia and the  
13 community, and concretely addresses the goals and  
14 objectives set forth in the 2005 Coney Island  
15 Strategic Plan. It is a rational, feasible, and  
16 practical plan that will meet the needs of this  
17 underserved community by creating jobs and  
18 services, and enhancing one of New York's greatest  
19 treasures--the Coney Usland amusement district.

20 But time is an enemy to Coney  
21 Island. We must show decisive action and move  
22 forward with this plan now, we cannot afford to  
23 wait. Both the amusement district and the  
24 surrounding neighborhoods continue their downward  
25 spiral. We must show our collective resolve and

1  
2 work together to build upon Coney's unique brand  
3 and character, leverage its unique assets and its  
4 potential, and provide the community with the  
5 support it deserves.

6 Over the past six years we have  
7 held hundreds of meetings and charrettes, and  
8 engaged nearly 2,000 residents, businesses,  
9 elected officials, developers, and experts in the  
10 amusement industry. From those meetings, the city  
11 devised a comprehensive and progressive plan for  
12 the revitalization of Coney Island--a shared  
13 vision that reflects the diverse goals and the  
14 needs of the entire neighborhood.

15 Let's talk for a moment about what  
16 we call a Tale of Two Coneys. Despite the lengthy  
17 discourse of the Coney Island, many people either  
18 don't realize or simply forget that the area is  
19 just not an amusement area only, but home to more  
20 than 50,000 residents. It is a neighborhood with  
21 very real and serious challenges. Today in Coney  
22 Island, as Seth said, one out of every six people  
23 live in NYCHA housing, and the average resident  
24 commutes more than 45 minutes to get to work each  
25 day, luckily, if they have a job. Approximately



1  
2 20% of the residents in Coney Island are currently  
3 out of work. Clearly something needs to be done.  
4 The key to the city's comprehensive plan is a  
5 strategy for addressing this issues and bringing  
6 much-needed services, amenities, and quality of  
7 life improvements to the neighborhood.

8 The long decline of the amusement  
9 area is well known. The People's Playground has  
10 been shrinking for decades, with the closure of  
11 Luna Park, Dreamland, Steeplechase, and earlier  
12 this year Astroland. Over the last few years, the  
13 decline in Coney East has been accelerated as real  
14 estate speculation has intensified and  
15 disinvestment has forced property owners and  
16 amusement operators to close their doors, leaving  
17 a mass of vacant lots and a shell of the  
18 amusements. Just look at these boards.

19 Just three years ago there were  
20 almost 12 acres of rides and amusements in Coney  
21 Island that included putt-putt courses, batting  
22 cages, rides, and arcades. Today, barely three  
23 acres of active amusements remain, and much of  
24 that property is city-owned, adjacent to the  
25 Wonder Wheel and the Cyclone, both city landmarks.

1 Today, Coney Island is a shadow of its former  
2 self.  
3

4 Since the Mayor and Council Member  
5 Recchia unveiled a strategic plan, we have been  
6 investigating Coney Island's history, gaining a  
7 better understanding of its assets, while at the  
8 same time discussing its future with a cadre of  
9 professionals. Out of this, we crafted a three-  
10 part vision for the area.

11 One is to establish and grow a 27-  
12 acre amusement and entertainment district where  
13 the amusements are currently under threat. Second  
14 is to activate long-vacant lots outside of the  
15 amusement area with new and affordable housing, as  
16 well as retail and services for the neighborhood.  
17 And three, and most importantly, is to stimulate  
18 economic activity and create job opportunities for  
19 the local community.

20 Purnima?

21 MS. PURNIMA KAPUR: I'm going to  
22 walk you through how we take these goals and  
23 translate them into a zoning and planning  
24 framework and how this plan works.

25 In recognition of Coney Island's

1  
2 unique character and legacy as an amusement  
3 district, as well as the needs of the larger Coney  
4 Island community, we've created a new--or we  
5 propose to create a new Coney Island Special  
6 District. The Special District will look at Coney  
7 Island, these comprehensive 19 blocks in three  
8 distinct subdistricts using the ballpark and 120-  
9 foot wide Surf Avenue as natural dividers between  
10 these districts re-create a Coney East District  
11 dedicated entirely to amusement and entertainment  
12 uses.

13 Is this better? Okay.

14 We will grow the barely 3-acre  
15 remaining amusements into an open, accessible,  
16 affordable, urban 27-acre amusement and  
17 entertainment district to the east of the ballpark  
18 and west of the aquarium. In Coney North and  
19 Coney West, we will create opportunities for  
20 expansion of the residential and retail community  
21 and create opportunities for thousands of units of  
22 housing at all income levels, as well as  
23 opportunities for a substantial amount of retail.

24 This plan illustrates the potential  
25 of development in the rezoning area. Coney East,

1  
2 which is the area here in the blue and the green  
3 to the east of the ballpark. It will become the  
4 year-round 27-acre amusement and entertainment  
5 district. The centerpiece of this area is a 9.39-  
6 acre new park we are proposing to map along the  
7 boardwalk here. This, when combined with the  
8 existing Cyclone and the Steeplechase Plaza, it  
9 becomes a 12 1/2 acre open urban amusement park  
10 that is accessible both from the boardwalk, as  
11 well as the larger community.

12 In tandem with that, we are  
13 creating opportunities for new development in  
14 amusement and entertainment uses, including a  
15 whole range of amusement and entertainment uses,  
16 as well as hotels.

17 Outside of the amusement district,  
18 in these areas to the north and west of the  
19 ballpark, we will be creating opportunities for  
20 housing and retail. Surf Avenue will become a new  
21 retail corridor with entertainment uses, amusement  
22 uses, as well as retail uses integrating all three  
23 subdistricts. Mermaid Avenue, the current  
24 neighborhood spine, is being strengthened with new  
25 opportunities for housing, including affordable

1 housing, as well as retail opportunities for the  
2 entire community. The boardwalk experience will  
3 now extend all the way from the aquarium here  
4 through the new entertainment and amusement  
5 district onto the boardwalk here in Coney West,  
6 which will continue to remain nonresidential  
7 amusement and entertainment uses down to the new  
8 Highland View Park, a neighborhood park that will  
9 be a traditional Parks Department recreation park.  
10

11 Thank you.

12 What this does to the--the way this  
13 places the new amusement and entertainment  
14 district in this area is to create 60 acres of  
15 amusement and entertainment uses along the  
16 boardwalk and the beach in Coney Island, starting  
17 from the new Highland View neighborhood park  
18 through the existing ballpark and Steeplechase  
19 Plaza. The new amusement and entertainment  
20 district, aquarium, and Asser Levy Park, where, as  
21 you all know, the Brooklyn Borough President is  
22 proposing to create a new entertainment venue for  
23 concerts. This 60 acres integrates all the way  
24 from Ocean Parkway and extends it to the  
25 westernmost part of our rezoning area.

Looking closely at the Coney East development, where today we have barely three acres of amusements, we will be creating 27 acres of amusement and entertainment uses. This will include the whole range of amusement uses--the traditional Coney Island amusements, as well as the more state-of-the-art new amusements. One of the important things we are doing here is also integrating the open amusement district, which historically has been seasonal use going largely from Memorial Day to Labor Day, through the integration of the new opportunities for open and closed amusements; restaurants, a whole range of eating establishments; indoor bowling alleys; skating rinks; as well as hotels, limited only to the Surf Avenue frontage which can take the density it 120-foot width, creating a new amusement and entertainment district that integrates the existing parachute jump, Wonder Wheel, as well as the Cyclone into a cohesive amusement area that is 27 acres.

We looked very closely at the history of Coney Island to arrive at the right mix of uses because we believe that is crucial to

1  
2 making this a successful amusement and  
3 entertainment district. We all agree that  
4 residential uses and large-scale retail do not  
5 belong in an amusement district, but what does  
6 belong, and what has historically been in Coney  
7 Island, is actually a very vibrant mix of uses  
8 often very densely packed together. That is what  
9 gave Coney Island its energy, its historic  
10 amusement concentrations, and its attractions.

11 This is a picture that shows from  
12 1905 the mix of uses that existed in Coney Island.  
13 It's a mix of open and enclosed uses--hotels along  
14 Surf Avenue, as well as along the beach and the  
15 boardwalk; and restaurants, lots and lots of  
16 restaurants.

17 The current C7 zoning does not  
18 allow a sit down as a restaurant as of right. It  
19 allows fast food restaurants, it will allow a  
20 large restaurant with entertainment, but a basic  
21 restaurant today is not permitted in Coney Island.

22 So looking at the history and the  
23 mix of uses that have existed here, we have  
24 created very careful mix of uses that we think  
25 will create this new energy and vibrancy in Coney

1  
2 Island. The predominant use will remain  
3 amusements and, in fact, the historic Coney Island  
4 amusements--the arcades, the carnivals, the roller  
5 coasters, the Wonder Wheels--will remain the  
6 center of the amusement district. There is no  
7 prohibition in their location either in the park  
8 area or in the new development area at any  
9 density, any amount of amusements are permitted  
10 throughout the amusement district.

11 In addition, we've added the newer  
12 amusements--the water parks, the ice skating  
13 rinks, the bowling alleys--that are also  
14 permissible uses in Coney East. The enhancing  
15 uses are critical here and, again, the eating and  
16 drinking establishments--the restaurants being the  
17 centerpiece of that. We will allow a whole range  
18 of enhancing uses that are traditionally found in  
19 any amusement district.

20 Limited retail that serves to  
21 enhance the amusement experience, as well as the  
22 beach and boardwalk experience, would be  
23 permitted, this would be limited to 2,500 square  
24 feet.

25 Hotels, we are reintroducing hotels



1  
2 in Coney Island; however, we are doing this very  
3 carefully by locating them only on Surf Avenue,  
4 not in the center of the amusement district, and  
5 limiting their footprints and their locations on  
6 street intersections.

7           One of the key things in Coney  
8 Island and unique experiences is the relationship  
9 between the beach, the boardwalk, and the  
10 amusement district--you can walk back and forth  
11 between the three unobstructed. Our plan by  
12 mapping the park at the edge of the boardwalk,  
13 will continue to keep this relationship between  
14 the beach, the boardwalk, and the amusements.

15           The historic - - which exists  
16 today, just south of Surf Avenue, historically was  
17 a 40-foot wide street that had a bazaar-like feel  
18 with an intense experience of amusements, and in  
19 the winter months in particular, this becomes the  
20 center of the amusement district.

21           Our proposal takes that history and  
22 creates the framework for revitalizing the - - in  
23 its historical low scale requiring multiple  
24 storefronts and requiring amusements and  
25 entertainment enhancing uses in it.

1  
2 Outside of the amusement district  
3 and equally important part of this plan is the  
4 Coney North and Coney East, Coney West  
5 development. These 11 blocks would be rezoned to  
6 provide opportunities for 4,500 residential units,  
7 including 900 affordable units, and a very wide  
8 variety of retail and amusement uses. Surf Avenue  
9 will continue to integrate the amusement district  
10 into the new residential and retail complex we are  
11 creating here, ending in the Highland View Park, a  
12 neighborhood park that is being created as part of  
13 this plan.

14 For the first time in South  
15 Brooklyn we will be using the city's inclusionary  
16 zoning program to incentivize the creation of  
17 affordable housing. This is the standard  
18 inclusionary zoning program we've applied  
19 elsewhere in the city, in exchange for 33% floor  
20 area bonus, 20% of the floor area would have to be  
21 affordable housing, units have to be permanently  
22 affordable, and on- and off-site units are both  
23 permitted. The city has already started working  
24 in this direction. The three years of meetings  
25 with the community has already lead to the Coney

1  
2 Island Commons project that the City Council  
3 approved just last month. This will create  
4 opportunities for 180 units of affordable housing,  
5 as well as South Brooklyn's first YMCA. And this  
6 came directly out of the requests from the  
7 community for both housing and opportunities for  
8 youth to congregate after school hours.

9           This is showing you some images of  
10 what our new plan does. Surf Avenue, which today  
11 acts as more of - - will become the primary  
12 commercial retail entertainment spine of this area  
13 with ground floor retail, including bookstores,  
14 cafés, drugstores, shoe stores, clothing stores,  
15 and residential uses on top. This new street will  
16 lead you directly from Surf Avenue to the  
17 parachute jump and the beach.

18           The boardwalk experience, this we  
19 think is very important. The child's restaurant  
20 which exists on the boardwalk is about 40 feet  
21 tall. We've taken our cue from that restaurant  
22 and restricted the height of the buildings along  
23 the boardwalk to that same height and also  
24 mandated nonresidential retail amusement,  
25 entertainment-related, and beach-related uses.

1  
2 This is really to extend the amusement and beach  
3 experience all the way closer to Western Coney  
4 Island.

5 Mermaid Avenue, which is currently  
6 your neighborhood spine, consists of several  
7 buildings in good physical form, often vacant on  
8 the above floors and sometimes on the ground  
9 floor. The new rezoning will create an infill  
10 framework here to encourage new housing above,  
11 including affordable housing and also retail on  
12 the ground floor.

13 Coming to the issue of the parks  
14 and why parkland is an important tool here. Parks  
15 have historically been created by cities and  
16 states, all are well-known parks--Prospect Park,  
17 Dyker Beach. In this particular area, the Cyclone  
18 is on parkland, as well as the ride, Playland.  
19 They all exist on parkland created by the city, by  
20 the state for the enjoyment of its people and for  
21 public good.

22 The parks here that we are  
23 proposing to de-map, I want to point out where  
24 they exist. This is the Keyspan Ballpark today,  
25 this is the area west of the ballpark. These are

1  
2 the two parking lots, the larger parking lot also  
3 contains the Abe Stark Rink, which is the active  
4 recreation use in this area, it's a hockey rink.  
5 Our proposal would de-map both of these pieces of  
6 parkland, parking lots that are mapped as  
7 parkland, and replace both the parking that exists  
8 here, as well as the skating rink that exists here  
9 in the new proposal.

10 So this shows you how the mapping  
11 and the de-mapping work and I want to reiterate  
12 Seth's point about why this is important. There  
13 are two reasons, this is very important. First  
14 let me show you what we are doing, we are de-  
15 mapping the two parking lots I just showed you and  
16 replacing them with two separate parks--an acre  
17 and a half Highland View Park here, which would be  
18 your neighborhood park, as well as a 9.39 acre  
19 amusement park, which will integrate with the  
20 existing amusements here.

21 The mapping of the amusement park  
22 is important in and of itself in that this is the  
23 best preservation that we can offer to amusements  
24 in the long run. It is not perfect, but it is the  
25 best tool that we have available today to ensure

1  
2 that amusements and the historic legacy of Coney  
3 Island is not lost moving forward.

4           The alienation of the parkland on  
5 these two parcels creates the framework for over  
6 2,000 units of housing, including affordable  
7 housing, as well as retail and a very, very  
8 substantial number of jobs. In order to alienate  
9 these two pieces of parkland, there's the de-  
10 mapping part that's the ULURP part, and then the  
11 alienating part that the state has to act on. In  
12 order to alienate those two parks, we need to  
13 replace them with equivalent parkland. The  
14 mapping of this neighborhood park here and this  
15 amusement park here serves that purpose as well.

16           So not only is the mapping  
17 important in and of itself, it also helps create  
18 the opportunities for housing and retail and jobs  
19 in Coney West.

20           I want to take a minute to show  
21 what actually happens in Coney West with de-  
22 mapping of this larger parcel here, which is the  
23 larger parking lot and a satellite parking lot  
24 here. We would be creating six new blocks, the  
25 city would be mapping these streets that do not

1  
2 exist today as new streets within the footprint of  
3 this park here. The new Ocean Way, which starts  
4 to integrate this parcel with the amusements on  
5 this side, this will help create 2,700 units of  
6 housing; 2,000 parking spaces, including the  
7 parking spaces that exist today for the Cyclones  
8 in structured parking facilities in the center of  
9 these doughnuts here, these are structured parking  
10 with green or blue roofs on top, as well as 900  
11 permanent jobs; 10,000 construction jobs; and  
12 approximately 400,000 square feet of badly needed  
13 retail that serves not just this new community,  
14 but the larger Coney Island community as well, and  
15 a new neighborhood park.

16 If we do not de-map those parking  
17 lots, not only do we lose the development in the  
18 footprint of the parking lot, but, because these  
19 are mapped parks, development on the blocks in the  
20 center is also impacted because new development is  
21 required to set back 30 feet from the park line  
22 per zoning requirements. So this would mean 1,500  
23 fewer parking spaces, we lose 2,000 out of the  
24 2,700 units of housing that we are creating here,  
25 500 fewer permanent jobs, 7,500 fewer construction

1  
2 jobs, 200,000 square feet of retail is lost, and  
3 the neighborhood also will lose the new  
4 neighborhood park that is proposed to be created.

5 On the other side, without the  
6 parkland designation, the unprotected speculation  
7 that has been going on in Coney East and has led  
8 to the pictures that you see to the right here  
9 will continue. We will not have the ability--the  
10 city will not have the ability to acquire the  
11 property for an amusement park and we will not be  
12 able to issue an RFP to create the new amusement  
13 park in the form that we all want to see. As well  
14 as without the parkland actions, there's a loss of  
15 jobs and the economic activity that it creates in  
16 that part of Coney East.

17 I'm going to hand it back to you,  
18 Madelyn.

19 MS. WILS: Thank you. 127. As the  
20 city crafted its plan, it has relied on the  
21 expertise of professionals from the amusement  
22 industry. It is through partnership with these  
23 experts that the formation and execution of this  
24 plan is achievable. Recently, the city formalized  
25 this partnership by convening the Coney Island



1  
2 Amusement Advisory Panel to provide advice and  
3 create a series of recommendations reflecting  
4 their knowledge--

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]  
6 Some of my committee members don't know where you  
7 are, and is this part of the testimony that you  
8 submitted?

9 MS. WILS: Yes, it is.

10 MR. PINSKY: It's slide 27.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: What page are  
12 you on if that--

13 MR. PINSKY: Slide 27.

14 MS. WILS: Did I skip a slide?

15 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Is it on here?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: No, what  
17 page is she reading--

18 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: What page are  
19 you on?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: --reading  
21 from her--

22 [Crosstalk]

23 MS. WILS: Okay. It's--

24 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: What are you  
25 reading from?

2 MS. WILS: Slide 27.

3 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Page 12.

4 MS. WILS: Yes.

5 [Crosstalk]

6 PRESIDENT PINSKY: It's page 12 in  
7 the testimony. Slide 27. Sorry, I'm sorry, page  
8 9 in what you have, slide 27.

9 MALE VOICE 2: What page is it?

10 MALE VOICE 3: Slide 27.

11 MS. WILS: Should I go ahead?

12 Recently, the city formalized this  
13 partnership by convening the Coney Island  
14 Amusement Advisory Panel to provide advice and  
15 create a series of recommendations reflecting  
16 their knowledge and experience.

17 The panelists listed on this slide  
18 are world-renowned and represent a diverse cross-  
19 section of the amusement industry today. They  
20 provided their services pro-bono because of their  
21 shared passion for the common goal of seeing a  
22 revitalized Coney Island. You will hear more from  
23 them later on in this morning.

24 First and foremost, Coney Island's  
25 future is as a unique 21st-century urban, seaside

1  
2 amusement park. There is no need to create a  
3 theme park because Coney's brand is iconic and,  
4 with the right operator, will stand on its own.

5           According to our experts, the 12-  
6 acre amusement core is appropriately sized for a  
7 critical mass of outdoor amusements and should  
8 consist of 25 to 30 rides filled with coasters,  
9 water rides, and family friendly in-your-face  
10 rides focused on speed and thrills.

11           While most of Coney should be about  
12 the outdoors, the need for indoor attractions,  
13 rides, entertainment, and hotels will round out  
14 the experience, allowing for year-round economic  
15 activity and opportunities to visit in bad  
16 weather, such as we've seen this June.

17           Our experts warn that general  
18 retail in the entertainment district will dilute  
19 the brand and hamper the experience--entertainment  
20 areas do not succeed with general retail. The  
21 City should consolidate the land, but allow an  
22 amusement developer to operate the park. Our  
23 panelists warned that the balkanization of Coney  
24 Island is unsustainable.

25           The panelists also emphasized that

there is only one chance to get this right.

Identify and engage an industry operated developer and phase in the amusements while continuing to provide seasonal shows, such as the one we are providing this summer, all summer, Ringling Brothers.

Our moderator and the chair of the Amusement Advisory Panel traveled from Baltimore and Cincinnati respectively to testify in front of you this morning, and you will hear more from them later.

We have already shown what can be accomplished when we work together to make Coney Island a success and how much potential there is for Coney Island's future when the right mix of professionals are involved. In just a few short weeks, the city worked with Feld Entertainment and Taconic Investment Partners, and we were able to forge a deal to bring the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus to Coney Island, creating over 100 jobs for local residents and providing a welcome and active addition to the amusement district this summer. We have already received numerous thank you letters from the thousands of

1  
2 Coney Island children who were invited to attend  
3 the circus for free.

4           Where disinvestment from the  
5 private sector led to vacant, trash-strewn lots,  
6 the city succeeded in bringing a major new  
7 attraction to Coney for this summer. On city-  
8 owned property, the Cyclone roller coaster is  
9 active, across the street is private property once  
10 filled by Astroland; Keyspan Stadium is a state-  
11 of-the-art facility on city-owned property and,  
12 again, across the street are vacant, private lots,  
13 long overgrown; the city saved the historic B&B  
14 Carousel and is in design for a brand new  
15 boardwalk pavilion and park, which will start  
16 construction in 2010; the city provided resources  
17 for boardwalk renovations this year; the city  
18 worked with local stakeholders on a coordinated  
19 marketing effort for this summer and invested in  
20 the fireworks. Ultimately, the city's investment  
21 in this neighborhood has been critical to its  
22 survival, and the city is similarly prepared to  
23 play a considerable role in its revival.

24           The development of a Comprehensive  
25 Plan for Coney Island has allowed the city to take

1  
2 a hard look at the peninsula's aging  
3 infrastructure, and passage of this rezoning will  
4 have the effect of catalyzing long-planned  
5 improvements. The city has completed a  
6 comprehensive Hydraulic Study of sanitary and  
7 storm flow systems and is completing an Amended  
8 Drainage Plan that will facilitate design and  
9 constructure of infrastructure improvements. The  
10 infrastructure in Coney Island is already more  
11 than 40-years-old, and improvements to various  
12 systems will be a major, phased undertaking--the  
13 first phase of which is funded and ready to  
14 implement.

15                   Following rezoning, design will  
16 commence and this vital infrastructure  
17 construction can begin within two years. Although  
18 it will be many years before full build-out,  
19 select sites will be shovel-ready and ready to go  
20 in development immediately.

21                   Coney Island's redevelopment will  
22 produce over 6,000 permanent jobs and more than  
23 25,000 construction jobs. And, as you heard  
24 earlier, this is in a neighborhood with an  
25 employment rate that's consistently twice the

1  
2 citywide average. As part of our ongoing work in  
3 the community, we already have a job access and  
4 workforce preparedness strategy underway.

5 Indicative of the city's efforts to proactively  
6 engage the local workforce, more than 2,000 Coney  
7 Island residents have attended Coney Island  
8 Development Corporation workforce events in the  
9 past year. Ringling Brothers was another success  
10 and, as I said, it hired over 100 local workers  
11 for the circus this summer.

12 And if you vote yes on this  
13 rezoning, the city will continue to expand these  
14 initiatives and workforce efforts, and will  
15 continue to partner with labor to ensure that  
16 local residents get the workforce opportunities  
17 they want and deserve.

18 It can not be repeated often enough  
19 that now is the time for Coney's resurgence. Over  
20 the next 30 years, this development will generate  
21 \$14 billion in economic activity, will create  
22 6,000 new permanent jobs, and 25,000 construction  
23 jobs. At full build-out, we will see an  
24 additional \$580 million in annual economic  
25 activity generated from the amusement,

1  
2 entertainment, retail, hospitality, and  
3 residential uses that we are bringing to the area.  
4 The city's plan will attract approximately \$3.8  
5 billion in private capital investment to a  
6 neighborhood that is in dire need of economic  
7 growth.

8 Coney Island's iconic amusement  
9 district is currently under threat. We will mold  
10 it into a viable 27-acre 21st-century year-round  
11 amusement and entertainment district and create up  
12 to 5,000 units of housing approximately or over  
13 900 affordable, 500,000 square feet of retail and  
14 neighborhood services, and thousands of jobs,  
15 positioning Coney Island as a new economic engine  
16 in South Brooklyn.

17 Coney Island is counting on all of  
18 us, we cannot let this neighborhood down and we  
19 will not let its residents down.

20 Thank you for your time and we will  
21 be happy to answer any questions you may have.  
22 Thank you, Chairman.

23 [Pause]

24 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: ...that I  
25 think you could have cut this presentation down to



1  
2 half an hour, you did repeat yourself over and  
3 over again. And the one thing I do want to do is  
4 get through this hearing and hear from everybody  
5 that's in the room.

6 We are going to take questions, I'm  
7 going to ask my colleagues to stick to two  
8 questions in a first round. Then after we get  
9 through the questions of Council Members of the  
10 Administration, we're going to have a special  
11 panel of the property owners who were involved  
12 here, and I think that would be helpful for my  
13 colleagues to understand the total picture here.  
14 Then we will start to proceed with the actual  
15 public hearing.

16 Do you have a slide that shows the  
17 overall plan, the three components with the use  
18 groups attached to each plan? I mean, the  
19 simplest way to do this is to show it in one  
20 screen, do you have that?

21 [Pause]

22 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Speak into the  
23 microphone.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: But that  
25 doesn't divide up because people are going to

1  
2 start referring to Coney West, Coney North, Coney  
3 East. Do you have something that shows that as  
4 how you've broken up as well?

5 MS. WILS: That's--

6 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: But you don't  
7 have--

8 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No--

9 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: --you don't  
10 have it separated in--

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --we don't have  
12 it separated but just, if you go back--

13 MS. WILS: Go back--

14 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --basically  
15 everything that's--

16 MS. WILS: [Interposing] This is  
17 one section.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Right, right.

19 MS. WILS: This is--

20 [Crosstalk]

21 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I think we  
22 know that, I'm worried about I want to have people  
23 come up. And I want you to leave that slide up  
24 even after you finish your testimony so that  
25 people when they come up can refer to that, so

1  
2 that we understand what the message they're trying  
3 to give us.

4 MS. WILS: Sure.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: And I would  
6 appreciate in the future if you can come up with  
7 one thing, one slide that you could give us, one  
8 diagram that shows the various components for each  
9 on the same page--

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: That's not a  
11 problem.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: --because it  
13 is a very complicated plan and we do want to  
14 understand all the components.

15 MS. KAPUR: Sure. This does have  
16 the colors, everything yellow and orange is the  
17 residential--

18 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Quiet, please.

19 MS. KAPUR: --and blues are the  
20 entertainment, just for your reference.

21 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I just have  
22 one question at this point, and I'm obviously  
23 going to ask you to hang around, I know you will,  
24 because we'll probably have questions that come up  
25 during the day and I'd like to call you back.

1  
2 For myself, I have one question,  
3 because part of the proposal hinges on the  
4 acquisition, the transfer of the parkland. What  
5 is the status of the state negotiation? Because I  
6 hear--am I correct that I hear the state is not  
7 willing to do this?

8 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, it's not  
9 that they're not willing to do it. It's that they  
10 haven't done it so far. We've been in discussions  
11 with the state legislature and the indication that  
12 we've gotten is that, before they consider the  
13 action, they want to see some movement from the  
14 City Council in support of the mapping side of it.  
15 What they don't want to do is go first with de-  
16 mapping until they know that there is the  
17 opportunity to map replacement parkland as we have  
18 discussed.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Do you have--  
20 and, again, this goes back to my other point about  
21 the diagram--do you have a map that shows what  
22 specifically the city doesn't own? All the  
23 properties that you don't own as part of this  
24 action?

25 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, we can

1  
2 provide that for you, we don't have it here.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: You don't have  
4 it now?

5 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, we have it,  
6 we don't have it on our PowerPoint.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I would have  
8 thought you would have prepared that as part of  
9 your presentation. I think that's important to  
10 know what the city owns and what the city doesn't  
11 own.

12 PRESIDENT PINSKY: We can certainly  
13 describe that for you if you'd like.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Why don't you  
15 do that.

16 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Sure, the land  
17 that the city owns right now is the Cyclone, which  
18 we'll illustrate behind us. We own Steeplechase  
19 Park, we own the Cyclone Stadium, which is leased  
20 to the Brooklyn Cyclones, we own the parking lot  
21 in Coney West, the large parking lot, which we're  
22 looking to de-map, as well as the small parking  
23 lot. We also are in contract to acquire about an  
24 acre of land in the parkland that's just north of  
25 the Wonder Wheel; and we own then some lots as

1  
2 well that are in Coney North that we hope to  
3 develop for affordable housing.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Can you say  
5 that again? Because that was hard to follow,  
6 quite honestly.

7 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Sure, I'll be  
8 happy to repeat it as many times as you want.

9 We own the Cyclone, the land on  
10 which the Cyclone is located; we own the, what's  
11 going to become Steeplechase Park; we own the  
12 Cyclone Stadium, which is leased to the Brooklyn  
13 Cyclones; we own the parking lot, which we're  
14 looking to de-map in Coney West, the large parking  
15 lot; we own a smaller parking lot, the satellite  
16 parking lot, which is also in Coney West and which  
17 we're also seeking to de-map; we own some lots in  
18 Coney North, which we're hoping eventually to  
19 develop for affordable housing; and we're also in  
20 contract to acquire about an acre of land that's  
21 just south of the Wonder Wheel in Coney East.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: And what  
23 properties would the city have to acquire in order  
24 to fulfill this plan?

25 PRESIDENT PINSKY: The city is

2 seeking to acquire all of the property that's in  
3 the to-be-mapped parkland in Coney East, so we own  
4 the street, so it's something less than eight  
5 acres that we would be looking to acquire.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: And if the  
7 property owner doesn't agree, are we talking about  
8 the use of eminent domain? How do you intend--

9 [Crosstalk]

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing] By  
11 law, when the City Council acts to map parkland,  
12 the city is empowered to condemn. We are not  
13 interested in or looking to condemn, our hope is  
14 that we can reach a consensual agreement. It's  
15 much faster and in the long run, we think it will  
16 be less expensive for the city as well to do it  
17 that way. We have though made several offers to  
18 the owners of all of the parcels.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: What I'd like  
20 to do now is I'll call on as courtesy Council  
21 Member Domenic Recchia, then we will proceed to  
22 questions from committee members and then other  
23 Council Members that have joined us.

24 And, again, I'm going to ask  
25 Council Members to stick to two questions in the

1  
2 first round.

3 Council Member Recchia.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Thank you,  
5 Mr. Avella.

6 Before I continue ask, I'd also  
7 like to thank my colleague Melinda Katz, who's  
8 been working closely with me for all that she has  
9 done, thank you, Melinda.

10 Mr. Pinsky, as you sit here today  
11 you choose your words very carefully. Could you  
12 please explain to my colleagues that you want to  
13 make all of that land parkland, okay, could you  
14 explain to them that if you zone it parkland, it  
15 doesn't become parkland until you own it, is that  
16 correct?

17 PRESIDENT PINSKY: That's correct.  
18 The way that the law works, the City Council,  
19 through the ULURP process empowers the city to map  
20 something as parkland. Until the city actually  
21 acquires title to that land and files the map, it  
22 doesn't become parkland.

23 In the case of the land in Coney  
24 East that we intend to turn into parkland, until  
25 such time as the city actually acquires and maps



1  
2 the parkland, it will remain under its current  
3 zoning.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: So  
5 therefore, by zoning it parkland, if you never  
6 purchase it, even though you zone it parkland, it  
7 never becomes parkland--

8 PRESIDENT PINSKY: That's correct,  
9 it's--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: --right?

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --our intention  
12 though to acquire that land and to ensure that it  
13 does become parkland.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: And if  
15 not, you're going to proceed with condemnation  
16 proceeding?

17 PRESIDENT PINSKY: As I said, under  
18 city law, if the City Council empowers the city to  
19 map parkland, which is the case anywhere in the  
20 city and happens all the time when the--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA:  
22 [Interposing] Mr. Pinsky--

23 PRESIDENT PINSKY: If I can just  
24 finish, when the city--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: --I hear

1  
2 you.

3 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --empowers the  
4 city to map parkland, in that case by law, there  
5 is the ability to use condemnation. It is our  
6 intention to reach negotiated settlements with all  
7 of the land owners.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: But if you  
9 can't reach an agreement to purchase, then you  
10 proceed to condemnation proceeding, correct?

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: I don't--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Just yes  
13 or no, just--

14 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --I don't want  
15 to deal in hypotheticals, it is not our intention  
16 to--

17 [Crosstalk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA:  
19 [Interposing] It's not the--well, you know what,  
20 it's reality and this is reality, this is not a  
21 hypothetical, this is my community. You're coming  
22 in here on saying I might do this and isn't a fact  
23 that the state legislators said to you that we are  
24 not going to de-map this parkland until you own  
25 the parkland that you want to shift it to? Yes or

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no.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, that's not

correct and--

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: That's not

correct?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --and just to be

clear, Councilman--

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA:

[Interposing] State Senator Diane Savino did not

tell you--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Just--

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: --or your

staff that they will not alienate this parkland

until you own the property. Are you saying that

State Senator Diane Savino never said that?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: May I answer the

question?

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Yes or no.

You just said no.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: May I answer the

question?

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Yes, you

may.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Thank you,

Councilman.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I think you did, you said no.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Well you asked the question again, so let me answer it again. What we have proposed to the state legislature is that we would be given the power to de-map parkland in Coney West as we map parkland in Coney East. The state legislature has said to us that they weren't willing to take the action up in the earlier session when we had requested it, but have said to us that if we own the parkland, it is something that they would be willing to consider. We have not gotten a definitive indication from them one way or another if they will in fact go forward with it, but we remain optimistic that we will succeed in Albany and we also remain optimistic that we are going to acquire the property through negotiated settlement with these landowners.

And as you know very well, Councilman Recchia, we have been engaged in very active conversations with all the landowners on these discussions.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Yes, but  
3 for you to come here and tell my colleagues about  
4 the state legislature, okay? They've made their  
5 position very clear--Alex Brook-Krasny, the  
6 Assemblyman, Diane Savino, State Senator Carl  
7 Kruger, they made their position very clear that  
8 they are not going to alienate this 'cause they  
9 don't want to be known as the elected officials  
10 that got rid of parkland without putting it back.

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: And if I--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: And they  
13 said to you and your staff--

14 PRESIDENT PINSKY: And--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: --that  
16 when you gain possession of this, come back and  
17 see us and we'll consider it, isn't that a fact?

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: And what we said  
19 to them is that, as I said to you this morning in  
20 my testimony and as Purnima said in her testimony  
21 and as Madelyn said in her testimony, that we  
22 intend to fully replace every single acre of  
23 parkland, so it doesn't sound like there's any gap  
24 between what you're saying, State Senator and  
25 State Assemblyman said, and what we're saying, so

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we're in agreement.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I don't think so. Okay? I think we're at two hearings. So--

FEMALE VOICE: Should talk about the fact--

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: --in the parkland and de-mapping it, okay, because I just want my colleagues to understand this, okay? That once you gain possession, you have to try to purchase this property, is that correct?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: That is correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Okay. And the whole point here, if this has to go to a condemnation proceeding, how many years would that take?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: I'm not going to speculate on that because we remain optimistic and we have a very good track record of being able to acquire property on a consensual basis. As you know again, and you know this very well, we've been in very active negotiations with a number of landowners in the area and we've made very generous offers to them.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Now let's talk about Dennis Vourderis and Deno's Wonder Wheel, okay? The Vourderis family, who's been there for years, they have requested numerous times since day one that their Wonder Wheel be taken out of parkland, okay, because it only has value to the Vourderis family. The Vourderis family has made it very clear that they do not want to sell their property, that they want to continue to operate their amusement park. They've been there when no one else wanted to be there, okay? Why do you continue to keep the Wonder Wheel in parkland and not work with the Vourderis family?

MS. WILS: Council Member, we are working very closely, as I believe you know, with the Vourderis family so that we can accommodate the Wonder Wheel, we've had a close relationship with the Vourderis family. We are working on a resolution on Wonder Wheel Way, so that we can help them continue their business and not eliminate any rides, and we're working successfully through that right now. And we'll continue to have conversations with them about

1  
2 where the Wonder Wheel stands. We're looking very  
3 carefully at their LPC designation and what that  
4 exactly means right now and, when we understand  
5 those issues carefully, we've been speaking to the  
6 Vourderis family today, yesterday, the day before,  
7 we continue to work through these issues with  
8 them, and as well with you and your office.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: But  
10 today's July 1st, this is supposed to be voted on  
11 July 29th. We've been working on this plan for  
12 years. Still today, the people who gave  
13 themselves to Coney Island, when practically a lot  
14 of people in here never wanted to open a business  
15 in Coney Island, are the ones that are being  
16 tormented, tortured, has to spend thousands of  
17 dollars on lawyers, and all they want is one  
18 thing--leave me alone, let me operate my park.  
19 They're crying out, and still today, they're not  
20 given what they want and this City Council--I am  
21 making myself clear, if the Vourderis family is  
22 not happy, if their Wonder Wheel is not taken out  
23 of parkland, I'm recommending to turn this down,  
24 okay? Now, Wonder Wheel Way, why cannot we take  
25 Wonder Wheel Way out of the plan? That will



1  
2 relieve every problem that a lot of people have.

3 MS. KAPUR: Council Member, we are  
4 looking at all the options and nothing is off the  
5 table. We are working, as you know, we've done a  
6 lot of the technical work that has already been  
7 done in order to enable the Council, if you so  
8 choose, to make, take a series of actions. We've  
9 presented them with a series of options.

10 We are just as committed as you are  
11 to making sure that the Vourderis family continues  
12 to operate the only remaining family amusement  
13 park in that area, we share that goal completely.  
14 What would be the best way to get there? We have  
15 presented them with options, their attorneys are  
16 talking to ours, and we would be happy to work  
17 with you and with them to arrive at a solution  
18 that continues to let them operate their amusement  
19 park. And we are committed to doing that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I thank  
21 you very much.

22 MS. KAPUR: And, Council--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: If we were  
24 to take out Wonder Wheel Way, isn't a fact,  
25 Purnima, that that would make the amusement area

larger, outdoor amusements?

MS. KAPUR: What we have explored the option of is not keeping the Wonder Wheel Way in that section as a 60-foot or 56-foot wide vehicular street, but allow pedestrian connections. In our conversations with the Vourderis family, they actually like that option because they want to be integrated with whatever else happens in the park around them.

The issue is if they are at the edge of the park and there is no connection, the new park could really wall them out, and they agree it is in their interest to have a pedestrian connection in front of the Wonder Wheel.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: But what I'm saying is if we take Wonder Wheel Way out, which a lot of people have e-mailed me, sent me letters, they would like to see the whole Wonder Wheel Way out, okay, that would relieve the Vourderis issue, that would make the amusement park area larger.

MS. KAPUR: It does not work with the traffic network within the park.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: But wait,

1  
2 wait, wait, wait, so when you presented your first  
3 plan, okay, and when you never had Wonder Wheel  
4 Way, okay? You presented it, are you telling me--

5 MS. KAPUR: [Interposing] I'm  
6 sorry, I don't know what you're referring to.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Well I  
8 have a map here where you had one road going  
9 through, okay, this was a prior map, okay? Now  
10 you had one road, are you telling me when you  
11 presented this road, you never did a traffic  
12 study? You never consulted with traffic advisors?  
13 You never consulted--

14 MS. KAPUR: Are you referring to  
15 the--

16 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Councilman, is  
17 it possible to see the map you're talking--

18 [Crosstalk]

19 MS. KAPUR: [Interposing] See what  
20 you're talking about--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Sure.

22 MS. KAPUR: --yeah? I'm not sure  
23 what you're talking about.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: This was  
25 provided by the CIDC. That was a prior map. You

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see how you have one roadway going through?

[Off mic]

MS. KAPUR: This is not our map  
though.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: That's a  
Coney Island--this is given by the Coney Island  
Development Corporation, it was given to me.

MS. KAPUR: So this is a conceptual  
map that shows the boundary of the parkland, it  
doesn't show all the streets that are mapped here  
or not or are proposed.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Well in  
that map it shows one road going across.

MS. KAPUR: No, it just shows  
proposed parkland.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, the--

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Oh, now  
it's a proposal. Before this was given to me and  
saying this is what we want to do and we want one  
road--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]  
No, no, Councilman, the map that you're referring  
to, which I now have in front of me, doesn't show  
any of the--

MS. KAPUR: Any of the streets.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --proposed  
roads.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Well,  
well, now it doesn't, okay.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, no, no,  
Councilman--

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: So--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --wait--

MS. KAPUR: No--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --Councilman--

MS. KAPUR: --it doesn't--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --it never  
showed those roads, that's not what it was  
intending to show.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Listen,  
Mr. Pinsky, I can show you numerous maps that had  
one road going through, okay? And that said this  
is what they want to do. Later on, they added a  
second street and what I'm saying, when you first  
did this and showed the maps with one road going  
through, didn't you consult with traffic advisors  
and traffic engineers? So it was good then. My  
whole issue here is that people want Wonder Wheel

1  
2 Way out completely and it could be done. If we do  
3 that, we make the amusement park larger, we  
4 address the Vourderis family and a lot of issues  
5 and we make a lot of people in this city happier.  
6 But--

7 PRESIDENT PINSKY: And, Councilman,  
8 I think that what Purnima is saying is that we've  
9 been working with you, we will continue to work  
10 with you, we understand your issue and we will see  
11 if there's a way to resolve it that's  
12 satisfactory.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: And number  
14 two, all right, Steeplechase Park, there was a  
15 plan in there to put a skateboarding park, to put  
16 the B&B Carousel, okay? And that you were going  
17 to RFP it and start construction that, okay? Why  
18 can't we, instead of building a skateboarding  
19 park, why can't we put more rides in that area and  
20 RFP out that area so we can make the amusement  
21 park larger?

22 MS. WILS: Council Member, we have  
23 been working with the Parks Department, as you  
24 know, on a design for a Steeplechase Plaza. We  
25 have certainly showed you the design in the past,

1  
2 if you would like to discuss this further with the  
3 Parks Department and EDC, we'll have conversations  
4 with you about it.

5 The Parks Department felt strongly  
6 that its constituents wanted a skateboard park.  
7 Steeplechase Plaza is one of the entrances from  
8 the west side to the new Coney Island, it'll have  
9 the carousel, have open space, it'll have seating,  
10 picnic areas, and the skateboard park was  
11 something that the Parks Department felt strongly  
12 about. But certainly, if you want to have further  
13 conversations about it, we'll do so.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Okay.  
15 I've asked you enough questions, I have many more  
16 questions about building union and affordable  
17 housing, but I will come back. Thank you.

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: The next  
20 series of questions will be first Council Member  
21 Katz, then Council Member Sears, and then Council  
22 Member Jackson.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Thank you,  
24 Mr. Chair. I actually will be brief, I don't have  
25 too much of a series of questions, basically, just

two.

I thank you for your testimony, and I know that we've talked about the mapping and the de-mapping to a large extent for many of the questions. I was up in the state legislature for five years, I was a New York City Assembly Member, so I guess my question is twofold. What happens to the property that is mapped and de-mapped both if the state legislature ceases to act on this, number one. Number two, according to your testimony, if we don't have the parkland alienation, you're going to have 7,500 fewer construction jobs, 500 fewer permanent jobs, 2,000 fewer housing units, so it seems to me that the answer to that question, considering there is absolutely no state legislator carrying this legislation is an important one.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, so first of all, just to answer the technical question first. Without action in the state legislature, we can't alienate or de-map the parkland. So--

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: I know that.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --so, just to--

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: That's why



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I'm asking the question.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, so just to clarify--

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: So--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --so what we're saying would happen in that event is that we would not be able to develop the large parking lot in Coney West, it would also impinge upon the development of the privately owned sites next to it, and it would also prevent us from doing the land swap that we're looking to do in Coney West with the small parking lot that, in turn, allows us to build the neighborhood park.

So what we're saying is that without the alienation legislation in the state legislature, we wouldn't be able to construct a significant amount of the housing, including affordable housing, the services, the infrastructure, the retail, and parkland that we were intending to build.

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Does it not seem to the Administration that that is an awful lot of things not happening, that are major parts of this application dependent upon--

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PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]

Absolutely, which is why--

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: I'm not finished.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Sorry, go ahead.

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Depending upon the actions of the state. Now with all due respect to the state, it's clearly difficult to get many things done right now, and I understand that, but, you know, they will be able to get things done. And the question is that right now, even in the House, you know, which, clearly, you could've had an Assembly Member pick this up, anything, you have nobody doing it and it's almost as if the entire project is dependent upon a legislative body that you have no support in.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Well, it's not the entire project, it's a significant part of the project, and that's exactly why we're here before you today because we feel--

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: [Interposing]  
We're not the problem though--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, no, we understand.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: --even if we  
3 pass this--

4 PRESIDENT PINSKY: May I finish?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: --exactly the  
6 way you want--

7 PRESIDENT PINSKY: May I finish--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: --it's not  
9 the problem.

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --Council  
11 Member? Which is exactly why we're here before  
12 you today, because the very first step that's  
13 necessary before we'll have any support, we've  
14 been told, in the state legislature, is that the  
15 City Council needs to signal to the legislature  
16 that there is parkland for us to replace the  
17 parkland that we're requesting alienation on. And  
18 so that is why we're here before you today, among  
19 many other reasons, it is to ask you for your  
20 support on mapping the parkland, which, as was  
21 mentioned, is important, both because it will  
22 preserve the amusements in the Coney East district  
23 and because it is the first step in what, I agree  
24 with you, is a two-step process, the second step  
25 of which relies on the state legislature.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Well having  
3 served in Albany for five years, I would make a  
4 suggestion to the Administration that they get  
5 folks from the Assembly and from the Senate to be  
6 in contact with this body, with the Councilman,  
7 with the Chair, and talk about the fact that if we  
8 were even going to give them the opportunity to do  
9 this, that they actually would do it.

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: And that's an  
12 important part of this project, it's a key part,  
13 it's not just a large part, it's a key part of the  
14 project.

15 Second question, - - can you go  
16 over very quickly please the amount of public RFPs  
17 that will be issued from this property?

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: The RFPs that we  
19 would be intending to issue would be first of all  
20 for the amusement area. We would be looking for a  
21 phased development of the amusement area and we  
22 would hope to issue the first RFP to allow the  
23 first phase to go forward before the summer of  
24 next year. We would also, eventually, if we are  
25 granted the ability to alienate, be issuing an RFP

1  
2 for development of the large parking lot to the  
3 west of the Cyclone Stadium in Coney West. There  
4 will also be RFPs for the infrastructure work that  
5 would take place in the area, and potentially for  
6 some affordable housing sites as well.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: And Coney--

8 [Crosstalk]

9 PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]

10 And, sorry, for Highland View Park as well. The  
11 affordable housing RFPs would likely be in Coney  
12 North.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Who's

14 building those projects?

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Which projects?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: All of them.

17 PRESIDENT PINSKY: They're going to  
18 be determined based on the responses to RFPs.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: In the RFP,  
20 what's going to be the criteria for those  
21 responding when it comes to labor?

22 PRESIDENT PINSKY: We're currently  
23 working with organized labor and our hope is that  
24 we'll have an agreement with them before the vote.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: What does

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that mean?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: I don't know, I thought it was fairly clear, it means that we're talking to organized labor, we're having constructive conversations and our hope is that we can reach an agreement that will be satisfactory to organized labor relating to RFPs and other processes involved in the Coney redevelopment.

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: So does that mean that in the RFP for the four public RFPs that we are putting out for our properties, that there is going to be a PLA agreement and we're going to make sure that it's union labor?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: I think, as I said, it means that we're in discussions with organized labor and we hope to reach a resolution that's satisfactory to them and that also protects the economics of the project.

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: When is the drop-dead date on this project? Mr. Chair, I think the drop-dead date is like July 28th or something.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Twenty-ninth.

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Twenty-ninth?

2 So can I assume that those agreements will be  
3 worked on and avidly pursued before July 29th?

4 PRESIDENT PINSKY: You can assume  
5 both of those things, yes.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Okay. We did  
7 do a PLA agreement for Willets Point.

8 PRESIDENT PINSKY: There was an  
9 agreement with organized labor, yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Okay. Now  
11 can I also ask, when we were in discussion we were  
12 talking about the amusement park area. The  
13 discussions that you're going to have is going to  
14 include the parkland area and the amusement park  
15 area, correct?

16 PRESIDENT PINSKY: The discussions  
17 with...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: For the PLA  
19 agreement for the trades.

20 PRESIDENT PINSKY: The discussions  
21 with organized labor encompass the entirety of the  
22 project.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Okay. Just  
24 want to make sure, because when we were discussing  
25 this, we had a question on the amusement park,

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and--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Again--

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: --since then I did find out that Six Flags in Jersey was built in this fashion with trades.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --again, we are having discussions on the entirety of the amusement park. How those discussions will end up, I can't predict for you, but we are hopeful that we will reach a resolution that's satisfactory to organized labor and also allows us to move forward with this project.

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Can I make a prediction?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: It'll be successful.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: Thank you.

[Pause]

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll be very, very brief.

First, if you can, how long is this project supposed to be from beginning to



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completion? What is the estimated time?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Well, the beginning will be immediately. We are already--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS:  
[Interposing] If everything--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --we are already--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: -- immediately, if you clear up the confusion.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, well in fact--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Okay.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --we're already moving forward with a number of improvements in Coney Island. I think it's very important just to repeat something that Madelyn Wils said in her testimony, which is that the city and this Administration have been making significant investments for a number of years, but we would of course move forward with the specifics of this plan immediately upon approval and ULURP. We think that because this is a major development that involves a significant amount of construction, it would probably take somewhere

1  
2 between 10 and 15 years to build out the entirety  
3 of the project.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Ten to 15  
5 years--

6 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Correct.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --okay.  
8 What was the estimate for Willets Point?

9 PRESIDENT PINSKY: It was roughly  
10 in the same timeframe and we still intend--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Same  
12 timeframe.

13 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --to build that  
14 in the same timeframe.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Okay. There  
16 are and you really need us to de-map so that if  
17 you had to, then you would impose eminent domain.

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Again, the  
19 purpose of the mapping--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS:  
21 [Interposing] No, it's either yes or a no, we know  
22 the purpose, my question is--

23 PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]  
24 Well there wasn't, the--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --that you

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need us in order to do that--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]

No, just to be clear--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --for the state to do it, so you can impose eminent domain.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, no, I don't think that's a fair characterization of it. The fact of the matter is--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS:

[Interposing] We're talking about a procedure.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Well the fact of the matter is that what we are seeking from the City Council is the right to map this is parkland, the City Council maps parkland across the city. Every single time the City Council--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I understand that.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: If I may just finish, Council Member.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Yeah, I know.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Every single time, the City Council empowers the city to map parkland, it also gives the city the right to

1  
2 condemn that property. We do not intend to  
3 condemn this property and we are not asking for  
4 this power to map the parkland because we seek to  
5 condemn it, however, that comes with the mapping  
6 of the parkland.

7           And also, just to be clear, the  
8 state legislature doesn't have to act in order to  
9 map the parkland, the state legislature has to  
10 only act in connection with the alienation of the  
11 parkland in Coney West.

12           COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I know, but  
13 one goes with the other, otherwise you've got a  
14 wasteland that will never have anything done with  
15 it.

16           PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, no, that's--

17           COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: So I think I  
18 know the process, Mr. Pinsky.

19           PRESIDENT PINSKY: --that's not  
20 correct though, Council Member.

21           COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Okay. Well  
22 I don't think you're right. The second part is--

23           PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]  
24 Well I'd like--

25           COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Okay.

2 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --to disagree  
3 with that because there are very important parts  
4 of this project--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS:  
6 [Interposing] But I understand what you're saying-  
7 -

8 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --that have  
9 nothing to do with the alienation.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --you're  
11 saying that, okay, we have to de-map and do it so  
12 that then the state will come along so that you  
13 being enable to alienate that land. I understand  
14 the process totally.

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: But--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: What I am  
17 saying to you and asking you, and I think it's a  
18 very simple question--

19 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --that you  
21 really need us to do a process so that ultimately  
22 you - - so that you can use eminent domain if need  
23 be. You can't do that without us de-mapping to  
24 begin with.

25 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, it's not de-

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mapping, it's mapping.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Mapping--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --mapping, I used the wrong word.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: And, again, we do not intend to get to the point where we need to use condemnation. We believe that we have put very generous offers on the table--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Yeah.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --we've been working with the assistance of the Council--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Okay.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --and reaching agreements with the--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: Can--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --land owners and we feel confident--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --can I tell you, you did not--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --that we will be able to reach--

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --answer

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the--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --agreement.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --question,  
all right, which--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: I believe I did.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --leads to--  
you didn't.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: So why don't you  
ask it again?

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: And it leads  
to my--no, you don't have to repeat it, you--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: --didn't ask  
it. And the next question is, is that--and I have  
to say that, between Willets Point and this  
process, now I may come from Queens, but I'm a  
Brooklyn gal, I grew up in Brooklyn and I used  
Coney Island many, many times in my childhood, so  
I'm very familiar with what it was, what it isn't,  
and what the objective is to make that happen. So  
I just believe that there are a lot of flaws here--  
and I'm going to end my question with this, it's  
really a comment--there are a lot of flaws here  
that, before we can really do what is essential

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2 for you to be even to begin to do your process,  
3 they need to be cleared up.

4 And, Mr. Chairman, I don't know  
5 about the timeframe, but I do think these flaws  
6 need to be cleared up in order for us to do what  
7 is expected of us to do 'cause there are many  
8 questions and they're not going to be resolved in  
9 this issue.

10 I think it's flawed, I think you  
11 didn't answer my question, and I also think that  
12 the timeframe for Willets Point and Coney Island  
13 is overwhelming. And quite frankly, I'm not sure  
14 where all this money is coming from.

15 And so I'll end with that point,  
16 and we'll move on. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you,  
18 Council Member, and I certainly agree with you  
19 that Seth Pinsky didn't answer your question.

20 And you know, as a quick comment,  
21 Seth, EDC's record, in my opinion, of failing  
22 negotiating with property owners is dismal and I  
23 think the answer is Willets Point, where the  
24 Administration said--

25 [Crosstalk]



2 PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]  
3 62% of the land.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Well, I can  
5 bring in property owners from Willets Point who  
6 will disagree with you, and I don't think the  
7 Administration or EDC has a good record in that  
8 respect.

9 So I think the very fact that there  
10 is a possibility of eminent domain, I mean, is a  
11 reality, as Council Member Recchia said, and I  
12 think until you admit that, you're not being  
13 truthful, I'm sorry.

14 PRESIDENT PINSKY: All right, well-  
15 -

16 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Council  
17 Member--and I'm not asking for a response because  
18 I know I'm not going to get a response. Council  
19 Member Jackson.

20 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Well would you  
21 like a response or not? I don't think it's fair  
22 for you to make statements and not allow the  
23 Administration to respond.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Council Member  
25 Jackson.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay. Thank  
you.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you.  
Good morning. Good morning, sir.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Good morning.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I have a  
lot of questions, but obviously this is the first  
round of questionings. Can you tell me of the  
land that you're looking at there on that map, how  
many property owners, private property owners are  
there and what's their position about the city's  
position to move forward with this plan?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: In the parkland,  
I believe there are four or five land owners--can  
you--

MS. WILS: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I'm  
talking about overall. In whole areas, North,  
East, South, West that you're looking to rezone--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]  
There are a number of different owners in the  
entirety of the project. Again, with respect to  
the rest of the project, nobody's property that  
currently exists would be impacted, all that would

1  
2 be impacted is the ability of people to change the  
3 uses of their property going forward. Everyone  
4 would be able to continue to use their properties  
5 for exactly what they're using it today, except  
6 for the land in the parkland which we're looking  
7 to acquire.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. And  
9 so that area, as my colleague Domenic Recchia  
10 said, until the city acquired that, it could not  
11 be then de-mapped to parkland, is that correct?

12 PRESIDENT PINSKY: That's correct,  
13 it does not become mapped parkland until the city  
14 owns the property.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Does that,  
16 if in fact it goes through as you plan to, does  
17 that devalue the property? Meaning, if I owned a  
18 big track of that area that has been now de-mapped  
19 for parks, can I sell it to somebody else and they  
20 can build whatever they want to build within the  
21 zoning regulations?

22 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yes, they can.  
23 And, just to be clear, it's the mapping action and  
24 what happens in our proposal is that, until the  
25 city owns the property and until the map is filed,

1  
2 the zoning is exactly the same after the ULURP  
3 action as it was before the ULURP action.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And the--

5 PRESIDENT PINSKY: And you can sell  
6 it and someone else can do exactly the same thing.

7 [Crosstalk]

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --build,  
9 as long as you're--

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Absolutely.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --comply  
12 with the zoning - -

13 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Correct.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Does that-  
15 -and I'm not a real estate person--does that  
16 negatively impact the value of my land? I'm being  
17 real.

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, I mean, I  
19 think you're going to have to ask landowners. The  
20 fact is that the land will be zoned exactly the  
21 same tomorrow as it was yesterday. How people  
22 react to it is a different question. The fact is  
23 that today it's zoned only for amusements,  
24 tomorrow it will be zoned only for amusements, and  
25 the only question is whether the city ultimately

1  
2 will acquire it and therefore be able to map it as  
3 parkland.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: But if I  
5 own it and my understanding if an area is zoned  
6 for let's say amusement and if I wanted to try to  
7 build housing on it, affordable housing or high-  
8 luxury housing or hotels, I'd have to go to the  
9 city to try to get it rezoned.

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, you aren't  
11 able to build housing on that land today, you're  
12 not changing--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:  
14 [Interposing] No, but if I went--

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --the zoning at  
16 all.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --if I  
18 wanted to go to get it rezoned, I would not be  
19 able to do that because it's already been zoned  
20 for parkland, is that correct?

21 PRESIDENT PINSKY: It would require  
22 rezoning just like--

23 MS. WILS: Yes.

24 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --it would  
25 require rezoning today if you wanted to build

housing on it.

MS. WILS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Even if it was de-mapped for parkland?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: The mapping-- just to be clear, it's mapping--the mapping of the parkland has nothing to do with that.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. So in essence, you're saying to me that I would have to really ask the owners of the land, and I will, but I believe you're the president of the Economic Development Corp., is that correct?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yes, that's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. Then I would assume you know about real estate, and my question--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: I do.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --is whether or not, from a realistic point of view, does it devalue the land if I own it?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: We have--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Before you respond--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, sure,  
sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --I  
clearly think that you should know that answer.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Well let me say  
this--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --we have an  
offer on the table to one of the landowners, the  
landowner who owns a significant amount of the  
land, including a significant amount of the  
parkland. Our offer is greater than the amount  
that that person paid for his land.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Right, no-

-

PRESIDENT PINSKY: That offer  
remains on the table even though we are looking to  
map the parkland. So if our offer were accepted,  
there would be not only no diminishment of value  
in that owner's property, but there would be a  
significant premium over what the owner paid.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Yeah, I  
was not going into any particular detail, I just  
wanted to know a general answer whether or not the

1  
2 value of the land would be less overall and for me  
3 negotiate to sell it overall to anyone else,  
4 that's--

5 PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]  
6 And the bottom line for us is that we want to  
7 acquire this property at fair prices. We want to  
8 reach a consensual agreement, an agreement that's  
9 fair to the sellers, but also is fair to the  
10 taxpayers of the city.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. And  
12 so, give or take, how many private owners are you  
13 dealing with? Because my colleague raised the  
14 issue of possible eminent domain and my question  
15 was, how many give or take, is there five, 10, 50,  
16 100, 'cause--

17 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, the--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --I know  
19 that the Willets Point situation, there were a lot  
20 of property owners involved in that and some major  
21 and some small ones too, so...

22 PRESIDENT PINSKY: In the parkland,  
23 there are four owners.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: In the  
25 parkland.



2 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yes.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I'm  
4 talking about, not the parkland, I'm talking about  
5 the entire rezoned area.

6 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, I will  
7 have to get you a number, but--

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:  
9 [Interposing] Five, 10, 20?

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, it's a large  
11 number, but the fact is we're not looking to own,  
12 we're not looking to acquire any of their  
13 properties, we're only looking to acquire the  
14 property in the parkland.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: In the  
16 parkland.

17 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah--

18 [Crosstalk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And so  
20 within the parkland, how many private owners--

21 PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing]  
22 About four owners.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: About four  
24 owners.

25 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah.

1  
2 MS. WILS: Council Member, this new  
3 rezoning will create appreciation of the value of  
4 the land. This is a total upzoning everywhere,  
5 other than in the parkland, the area around that  
6 you see is currently mostly C7 amusements right  
7 now. We're going to add FAR to that and allow  
8 them to build what they cannot build today. So in  
9 fact, a lot of the land owners like this plan,  
10 there are some that may not, but there are a lot  
11 that like this plan because it actually adds value  
12 to their plan.

13 But we are committed, we are  
14 committed. We made a choice here to be committed  
15 to saving the amusement industry and to saving the  
16 amusements in Coney Island, and that is the  
17 purpose of creating that parkland is to save the  
18 amusements, grow the amusements, and create a  
19 different kind of economic engine for the city--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

21 MS. WILS: --of New York and  
22 Brooklyn.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So just a  
24 final question on this question as far as the  
25 whole eminent domain situation. I heard you say

1  
2 loud and clear that you are committed to reach an  
3 agreement with the owners if at all possible, and  
4 so my question is have you threatened or  
5 intimidated any of them with respects to eminent  
6 domain?

7 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, we've been  
8 in good faith negotiations with a number of them.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: And we've put  
11 very generous offers on the table to them.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Now the  
13 second question is on housing, you said 2,700  
14 units and I heard 2,000 units, but about 180 units  
15 of permanently affordable units. Now I've met  
16 with ACORN and ACORN, have you talked to them and  
17 what are they seeking as far as permanent  
18 affordable housing?

19 MS. HOLLY LEICHT: Hi, I'm Holly  
20 Leicht from HPD.

21 We have had conversations with  
22 ACORN, those are ongoing. They haven't given us a  
23 specific number of permanent affordable housing,  
24 but that conversation's ongoing. Anything that's  
25 zoned under inclusionary housing would be

1  
2 permanently affordable. We also have the northern  
3 site which could accommodate about 400 units if  
4 it's fully assembled and we're in discussions  
5 about how much affordable--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:

7 [Interposing] Four hundred units of permanently  
8 affordable?

9 MS. LEICHT: Four hundred units of  
10 some kind of housing and we're in discussions with  
11 the councilman and with ACORN and others about  
12 what that mix will look like now.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: You mean  
14 to tell me ACORN has not put a percentage of  
15 affordable units out of the total number of units,  
16 is that what you're telling me?

17 MS. LEICHT: I believe that we've  
18 heard a couple different things with them in the  
19 conversations--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:

21 [Interposing] Well I'm asking you, I'm asking you  
22 what--I'm asking--

23 MS. LEICHT: --but one of the  
24 positions that they've taken is that anything on  
25 city-owned land should be completely affordable,

1  
2 so we have heard that position and we're in  
3 ongoing discussions about that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.  
5 Thank you. And I'll come back.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.  
7 Thank you, Council Member, and I would only just  
8 comment on your question, which I think was also  
9 not answered, is once the Administration puts out  
10 a proposal that they're interested in somebody's  
11 private property, even though they say they want  
12 to fairly negotiate, the threat of eminent domain  
13 is always there. They cannot say there's never a  
14 threat because there is.

15 Council Member Felder is next.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you,  
17 thank you very much, Chair Avella.

18 I think there may be--is it better  
19 now? Well I don't know, except putting the mic in  
20 my mouth, I don't think I could do any good.

21 [Off mic]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I may wind  
23 up doing after I'm finished.

24 But, Mr. Pinsky, I'm here to help  
25 you today. A number of my colleagues have asked

1  
2 you the same question and none of them have been  
3 satisfied with your response, neither have I, so  
4 I'm going to make it easy for you, I just want you  
5 to repeat after me, I'm very serious: I, on behalf  
6 of this Administration or that part you can say,  
7 will not use eminent domain or condemnation in  
8 this project. I know you said, and I wrote it  
9 down, we don't intend to condemn. Let's make it  
10 clear and emphatic, we say it very clearly and  
11 then it'll be over.

12 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Thank you for  
13 your help, Councilman. The answer to that is that  
14 I can't rule that out. We are not looking to  
15 condemn--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER:  
17 [Interposing] I don't want to hear this.

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, no, but that  
19 is--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER:  
21 [Interposing] No, no, no, no, no--

22 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --I think it's  
23 very important--

24 [Crosstalk]

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --excuse

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me, sir--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --you're not holding the hearing--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --you were very disrespectful to Council Member Sears--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --you can spit in my face, I don't care--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing] I'm not spitting in anyone's face.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --but you're not going to be disrespectful to my colleagues.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay, Council-- [Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I asked you a question, if you don't want to say it--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing] I answered it, no, I answered it.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --if you don't want to repeat it, that means that if you're stuck and you have an obstinate property owner,

1  
2 which may happen, you will use eminent domain and  
3 you will condemn the property, even though you  
4 don't intend to, it's very clear.

5 PRESIDENT PINSKY: I think, if I  
6 can just respond to that--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Please.

8 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --is now okay?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, now  
10 you're okay.

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay. Thank  
12 you, Councilman. The answer to your question is  
13 not that if we are stuck, we will condemn. What  
14 I'm saying is that I am not in a position now to  
15 say that we are taking that off the table. That  
16 being said, and I apologize if you think that this  
17 is repetitive, but I think it's very important to  
18 state, we do not intend to use condemnation.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Are you a  
20 lawyer?

21 PRESIDENT PINSKY: I am.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: All right,  
23 I'm not.

24 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: You can say



1  
2 it 16 times, you've said it clear that if you're  
3 stuck at the end and you want to make this project  
4 succeed and the only way you can acquire certain  
5 properties is by condemnation, you will do so,  
6 that's a fact.

7 PRESIDENT PINSKY: I'm sorry, but  
8 that isn't what I said.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Well so  
10 what did you say? I feel like I'm back yeshiva  
11 digging into some Talmudic [phonetic] passage.

12 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Which track date  
13 do you want to talk about?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: What?

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Councilman, what  
16 we're talking about is the future of the  
17 amusements in Coney Island. We believe that the  
18 best way to protect those amusements, the jobs  
19 that come out of them, the iconic history of Coney  
20 Island, is to turn these pieces of property into  
21 parkland, that is how we intend to preserve them.

22 What you are asking me is if we get  
23 stuck, which I do not believe that we will, am I  
24 saying that we will use condemnation. I'm not  
25 saying that we will use condemnation, but in

1  
2 fairness to your question, I'm also not saying  
3 that we won't.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excellent,  
5 stop, excellent. Helen, did you hear? Okay.  
6 Next--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SEARS: I heard  
8 every word and I will remember.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay. Very  
10 good, you see, I'm here to help you.

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Thank you,  
12 Councilman.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Now, you  
14 said also that you don't like talking about  
15 hypotheticals, isn't that so?

16 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Mm-hmm.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yes or no.

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yes, I'm--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay. I  
20 don't want to rule it out or something like that.

21 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Well let me  
23 tell you something, a few months ago Bob Lieber  
24 was here and testified and the language that he  
25 used in his testimony was just the opposite of

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what you have in your testimony. In the--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: What is that?

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --in slide number four or page number four, as stupid people like me call it, slide number four it says, put simply, without the mapping of the parkland and amusement district, the de-mapping that we are seeking is unlikely to happen and without this de-mapping, again, a land use action involving an area that is little more than blacktop, blah, blah, blah, blah.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: It doesn't say blah, blah, blah--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay, thanks.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --okay? You know that. He said just the opposite, he said that he was--he used words like confident, optimistic, and positive that by the time we start this hearing that the legislation would be done in Albany so that we wouldn't be talking about hypothetical things here today, do you remember that?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: I don't recall

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that, but I take your word for it.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: My gosh.

So--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: There are lots of things that--

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --let me just say--hold on a minute.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: So we have a total, total reversal of the types of order and how this--I understand you would like it to occur one way or the other way. You're coming here today and asking the Council saying, trust us, we're going to get this done in Albany, is that fair to say?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No? Okay. What are you saying?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay. A few things. First of all, there are, as we all know, a number of things in Albany that none of us predicted would happen, so that's, I think, just the first statement.

1  
2           The second statement is that our  
3 hope had always been that we would be able to get  
4 legislation in Albany through before the Council  
5 acted on alienation. As I said earlier to  
6 Councilman Recchia, what we were told by Albany  
7 was that they wanted to see action by the City  
8 Council first, which is why we've come back to you  
9 in the hope that we could do the mapping first and  
10 then the de-mapping second.

11           The important point I think to make  
12 is that the mapping is important, not just because  
13 of the alienation, although the alienation is an  
14 important piece of why the mapping is important,  
15 the mapping is also important in and of itself--

16           COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yes.

17           PRESIDENT PINSKY: --because the  
18 mapping is what allows us to create the parkland.

19           COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, I  
20 heard that before.

21           PRESIDENT PINSKY: Good.

22           COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I heard  
23 that before. You said that a number of times.

24           PRESIDENT PINSKY: And thank you.

25           COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I know, I'm

2 a slow learner, but after three times, I get it  
3 also.

4 PRESIDENT PINSKY: You are very  
5 smart, I don't--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you.  
7 Now let me just--

8 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --take you to be  
9 a slow learner at all.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --say to  
11 you--

12 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --when did  
14 Albany tell you this, when did they tell you that  
15 they want to first see what we're going to do?

16 PRESIDENT PINSKY: We've been in  
17 discussions with the legislature--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER:  
19 [Interposing] I'm not asking you for--

20 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --for several  
21 months--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --exact  
23 date or time.

24 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --for several  
25 months, we've been talking--

2 [Crosstalk]

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: But when  
4 Bob Lieber testified--

5 PRESIDENT PINSKY: It was after  
6 when Bob Lieber testified and before this hearing.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excellent,  
8 that makes me not be able to ask you a second  
9 question on it.

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Perfect.  
12 But the point is that nothing happened in the  
13 Assembly.

14 PRESIDENT PINSKY: That's correct.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Maybe  
16 nothing ever happened in the Assembly, but nothing  
17 changed, the Senate may be in, you know, but the  
18 Assembly didn't vote on this either and there was  
19 nothing going on there.

20 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Absolutely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: So you are  
22 asking us to sort of say, don't worry, things are  
23 going to work out in Albany.

24 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Well so

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explain it, I am--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: No--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --stupid,  
explain it to me.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --no, you're not  
stupid, and in fairness--look, I'm trying to be  
very respectful in my conversation with you and I  
would just ask--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: You're not  
doing too well.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay, that may  
be the case, but what I am saying to you is the  
following, what I'm saying to you is that it is  
very important for us to map this parkland for two  
reasons. The first reason is that--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER:  
[Interposing] You said that--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, let me  
finish please.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Are you--  
just one minute, are you going to repeat what you--  
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PRESIDENT PINSKY: No--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --just



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said?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --no, may I--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excellent,  
go ahead.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: --just finish?

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Please.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Thank you. It  
is very important for us to map this parkland for  
two reasons. The first reason is the reason that  
I said, that I've said now numerous times. The  
second reason is because we believe that that is a  
necessary precondition to the action that we're  
requesting in the state legislature. It is  
correct that I cannot predict, you cannot predict,  
none of us can predict whether or not the state  
legislature will act on the alienation if the City  
Council gives us the authority to map the  
parkland.

We still believe that it's  
worthwhile for the City Council to map that  
parkland. To the extent that we don't get the  
alienation legislation in Albany, that doesn't  
mean that this project is not worth doing, but it  
means that this project is diminished and it will

1  
2 absolutely be diminished if we don't get the  
3 action that we're looking for in Albany.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Understood.  
5 So let me just say to you, let me just say to you  
6 that I don't like dealing in hypotheticals either  
7 and the last time this Administration told this  
8 City Council that everything is going to work out  
9 was congestion pricing and you know what happened  
10 with that--we voted and nothing ever happened with  
11 it and I--Mr. Chair, I can't fathom that there be  
12 a vote on this matter, I think July 13th, is that  
13 the date? July 11th?

14 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: July 13th  
15 would be the day we would have to vote if we were  
16 to modify the application, otherwise, the drop-  
17 dead is July 29th.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Well it's  
19 incomprehensible to me, I would respectfully now,  
20 really, ask the Administration to pull this  
21 because I can't fathom that my colleagues--I  
22 shouldn't speak for my colleagues, I myself could  
23 never support the legislation at this point and we  
24 don't have you do--it's up to you to do whatever  
25 you want to do, but I would just request from the

1  
2 Chair that, based on the questions and the  
3 information that's needed, it would be bizarre to  
4 consider it now. I mean, who knows what if the  
5 next Mayor is Mayor Avella, not Mayor Bloomberg.  
6 What are we doing here now? We're considering a  
7 ten-year project that we don't have any--you like  
8 that one, huh? That we don't enough information  
9 on.

10 PRESIDENT PINSKY: May I just  
11 respond to that, Councilman, is that...

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Well I  
13 don't think I asked a question, but I like hearing  
14 you talk so you can say whatever--

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Great, thank  
16 you.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --you want.

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Thank you,  
19 Councilman. I just want to point out that, though  
20 it's correct that if you vote on this ULURP  
21 application, it is possible that the state  
22 legislature will not allow us to alienate the  
23 parkland. What is sure though is that if you  
24 don't vote on this ULURP application, you not only  
25 will not get a diminished plan, you will get no

1  
2 plan at all, which means no jobs, no retail, no  
3 services, no infrastructure, and the amusements  
4 will disappear.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Chair, can  
6 I just--Chairman Avella, I don't want to leave the  
7 impression with all the wonderful people who are  
8 here for jobs and for housing to think for one  
9 minute that this City Council's going to let you  
10 down and it's certainly not Domenic Recchia who  
11 represents that area, he is a hero, so don't think  
12 for a minute that whether we approve the  
13 Administration's plan or not approve it or delay  
14 it slightly, that you're going to be left out the  
15 cold. The city had three years to do work on it,  
16 we will work something out, but no one's going to  
17 leave you to drown in this.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Council Member  
19 Felder, you know, I couldn't agree more with your  
20 comments, actually, especially when you said Mayor  
21 Avella.

22 I concur with your sort of request  
23 of the Administration. I find it amazing that  
24 after three years we are in a position in such a  
25 short time frame to try and get through a major,

1  
2 major project like this, which everybody wants to  
3 go ahead, it's just a matter of how it goes ahead  
4 and what components go ahead and working with the  
5 community and the property owners. I don't see  
6 how this gets done in the time frame, to be  
7 perfectly honest, and you said what I have been  
8 feeling and I mentioned it Council Member Recchia,  
9 I believe in my own heart as Chairman of this  
10 committee that the best thing for the  
11 Administration to do is temporarily pull out the  
12 application from the ULURP clock, give us a little  
13 more time.

14 And I happen to agree with your  
15 comments that this is not an attempt to let  
16 anybody down. Not to let the unions, the jobs,  
17 the people in the community or the property  
18 owners, but you know something, there is a  
19 disadvantage to the ULURP clock. There is a  
20 specified time frame and if the Administration,  
21 which they have done in this situation, has come  
22 up with a plan which basically says we think it's  
23 the best and you can go, you know, it's our way or  
24 the highway, which is basically what the Bloomberg  
25 Administration does, gives us very little

1  
2 opportunity to amend and modify. And I know  
3 Domenic Recchia wants to do the best by his  
4 district and Coney Island and Brooklyn. Is this  
5 enough time to do it? And I would hate that we  
6 pass something or disapprove something because we  
7 didn't have enough time to do it. So I support  
8 your request that the Administration should  
9 temporarily pull out the application to give  
10 Domenic and the Council and the property owners  
11 and Coney Island the opportunity to come up with a  
12 better plan, but unfortunately, that's up to the  
13 Administration.

14 And, you know, when I say it's  
15 their way or the highway, that's the arrogance  
16 that they have shown and, you know, just for the  
17 sake of it, when we have Administration people  
18 testify, you know, we disagree on this table, but  
19 I got to tell you, we all agree the testimony has  
20 been very, very arrogant.

21 The next person is Council Member  
22 Seabrook.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: Thank you  
24 very much, Mr. Chairman.

25 Just a couple of questions that I

1  
2 have, one as it relates, 'cause I heard everyone  
3 talking about jobs and so forth, and I look in the  
4 audience and see all of the people who came here  
5 with an interest of how jobs were going to affect  
6 them, and we have a 55% unemployment rate of  
7 African American and Latino males in this city and  
8 the lack of participation. How do you craft a  
9 jobs program to deal with those individuals and  
10 what are the goals of this Administration around  
11 this project that allows jobs and participation  
12 from minority and women-owned business? What are  
13 the goals that this Administration has set around  
14 this project?

15 MS. WILS: Thank you, Council  
16 Member. Job creation is something that we take  
17 very seriously. The Administration, EDC, Small  
18 Business Services, and CIDC, we did not wait for  
19 this rezoning to happen to start creating jobs in  
20 Coney Island. We have been running over--we've  
21 ran over a dozen workforce programs already in  
22 Coney Island, we've had over 2,000 people come  
23 through, they have gotten jobs, I can't tell you  
24 exactly the number, but it's certainly way over  
25 100, and we will work with the community, we reach

1  
2 out through all the local CBOs working with them  
3 to create opportunities for them, including  
4 workforce preparedness, which, as you probably  
5 know, is very important here in Coney Island.

6 So we will continue to do that  
7 because it's the right thing to do and getting  
8 jobs in Coney Island is not an easy thing because  
9 there are no jobs in Coney Island right now, so  
10 that's why it's so important to create new  
11 opportunities for all these people.

12 But in terms of creating  
13 opportunities for minorities, I believe EDC has a  
14 good record on this, we are going to put in all of  
15 our RFPs a requirement for the developers to come  
16 up with MWE programs, to work with the unions to  
17 expedite those programs and execute them and we  
18 will do whatever we have to do, whether it's  
19 creating a taskforce or whatever to make sure that  
20 that happens. We've done that on other projects  
21 and we'll do it with Coney Island.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: But I  
23 just asked a question, I didn't get the answer  
24 because--

25 MS. WILS: Okay.



1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: --there's  
3 nothing illegal about goals, goals are a part of  
4 the language in which the courts have allowed. I  
5 asked what are the goals because goodwill and how  
6 we feel is not a goal. I'm asking for goals in  
7 terms of minority and women-owned business  
8 participation and goals that are set that allow  
9 participation for people out there to work on  
10 jobs. That's what I'm looking for, not we're  
11 doing our best, we got to have some goals because  
12 this is very important when you look out in that  
13 audience and see what's out there and when you  
14 look at the unemployment level that's in this city  
15 and as it affect the African American, Latino  
16 males, there has to be and when you're doing a  
17 project of this magnitude, there has to be goals  
18 that have to be set. The courts have ruled it is  
19 nothing illegal about goals.

20 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, it's a very  
21 good point, and we intend on all the projects that  
22 we undertake as the city or as EDC to meet or  
23 exceed the goals that are currently set of 20%  
24 minority and women-owned business participation in  
25 subcontracts on construction and 22%, I believe,

1  
2 is the number for service contracts.

3 Also, in addition to that going  
4 beyond what the law requires, in any RFP that we  
5 issue, we will also require that the developers in  
6 turn have the same sorts of plans that meet the  
7 same sorts of goals.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: Okay.

9 And one other question as it relates to the  
10 housing issue: how many units of housing that you  
11 have looked at that will be proposed and as a part  
12 of this development that's not on city-owned land?  
13 It's not on city only.

14 MS. KAPUR: I don't believe I have  
15 that exact number, it's 4,500 units of housing  
16 total, out of which HPD owns most of one block  
17 that can generate about 400 units of housing. HPD  
18 also owns portions of the adjacent block, but  
19 those are smaller lots and I cannot give you the  
20 exact number. The other two parcels that the city  
21 own are currently parking lots, the larger of  
22 those two parking lots, I believe can generate  
23 upwards of 600 units of housing.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: So--

25 MS. KAPUR: So it's about 1,000 out

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23  
24  
25

of the--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: --so it's about 1,000 that the city has or could have access to have and about 4,000 thereof that's not part of city.

MS. KAPUR: Three thousand five hundred--

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: Three thousand five--

MS. KAPUR: --yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: --3005, so that percentage of the city-owned property that's there and Councilman Jackson raised the issue about the discussion with ACORN.

Now, is there a problem if there was the city-owned housing that it could all be affordable if the city decided to put a RFP out and sell the land at lesser and the value, what is the problem of doing the city-owned property as it's all affordable if you got 3,500 that's going to go out at market rate, condos, and everything else. So what is the issue and problem of that?

MS. KAPUR: Here, let me address

1  
2 that in two ways. One of the blocks here is one  
3 that HPD controls.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: Okay.

5 MS. KAPUR: The other is the  
6 potential. If we are able to de-map that and  
7 alienate that parkland, that land will become  
8 available for housing.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: Right.

10 MS. KAPUR: That piece of parcel  
11 has requirements on it that have to be met in  
12 order to develop it, which is 750 parking spaces  
13 for the Cyclones and, as part of that development,  
14 that parking would have to be provided on that  
15 site, as well as replacement of the Abe Stark  
16 skating rink that exists on that parcel. So that  
17 parcel is not unencumbered city land.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: Right.

19 MS. KAPUR: One it's potential, it  
20 is dependent on the de-mapping and when it becomes  
21 de-mapped, it still has these encumbrances.

22 The second parcel is HPD owned and  
23 I can let Holly talk to that. I would also like  
24 to remind you that the city is doing a project--  
25 the Coney Island Commons--that is all affordable

housing a little bit west of this rezoning area,  
that--

[Crosstalk]

COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK:

[Interposing] No, I understand that--

MS. KAPUR: Yeah, but I just wanted  
to--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: --but I'm  
just saying that--

MS. KAPUR: --remind--yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: --if you  
are talking about--

MS. KAPUR: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: --  
affordable housing, you know, the same people that  
might not own the amusement, but it was the same  
poor people that sustained Coney Island, those  
were the same people that went to Coney Island and  
allowed it even at its low point, these were the  
same individuals who were actually going there.

MS. KAPUR: The other thing, the  
3,500 or so other units--

COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: Yeah.

MS. KAPUR: --in order to get the

1  
2 full FAR, they would also be subject to 20% of the  
3 floor area being affordable--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: Okay.

5 MS. KAPUR: --housing, so it's not  
6 all market rate even there.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: Right.

8 MS. LEICHT: And the answer on the  
9 400 units that are currently, the potential for  
10 400 units that are currently under is we are  
11 talking to the Councilman and we'll talk to ACORN  
12 about how that's shaped, we're very open to  
13 looking at more than 20% affordable for the city-  
14 owned--

15 [Crosstalk]

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK:

17 [Interposing] Yeah, 'cause I think that that would  
18 be because when we're talking about people that  
19 had an investment, it was the people that were  
20 living in Coney Island--

21 [Crosstalk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SEABROOK: --and  
23 around those areas and poor folk, that was their  
24 amusement forever and they participated and  
25 sustained it with the little monies that they had,

1  
2 so that's just a small down payment which is given  
3 back to them.

4 Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you,  
6 Council Member.

7 The next three people we have to  
8 sign up to speak--I'm sorry, to ask questions in  
9 the first round, Council Member Stewart is next,  
10 Council Member Weprin I don't see is here, then  
11 Council Member Yassky. Then we will go back and  
12 do a second round and I know Council Member  
13 Recchia has some follow-up questions.

14 I would just ask everybody at this  
15 point, knowing that we can call back the  
16 Administration at any point, we still have a lot  
17 of people signed up to testify and, you know, the  
18 whole idea of a public hearing is actually to hear  
19 from the public, so I would ask that everybody  
20 sort of try and be concise and at least from our  
21 and get to the point.

22 Council Member Stewart.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: Thank you,  
24 Mr. Chair.

25 President, during the ULURP pre-

1  
2 certification process, the city pledged to work  
3 cooperatively with each land owner and then you  
4 back it up by saying here in your testimony it is  
5 a plan designed to meet the diverse needs of the  
6 local land owners, but after that you start  
7 talking about the potential of using eminent  
8 domain and I'm worrying here whether you're trying  
9 to force these people out, whether you're trying  
10 to force some of these land owners and the  
11 businesses out. So how do you deal with that,  
12 because you're giving mixed messages? Because in  
13 the beginning, at the pre-certification, you said,  
14 you pledged that you're going to cooperate and  
15 then also you said that you're going to work to  
16 meet to work with the diverse needs of all these  
17 folks, now you're talking about using eminent  
18 domain. So I get the mixed feeling, I get the  
19 feeling that you're trying to push these folks  
20 out.

21 PRESIDENT PINSKY: At the risk of  
22 being accused of repeating myself, I just want to  
23 make it clear first that we don't intend to use  
24 eminent domain. The area over which we're talking  
25 about which the city is talking about acquiring is



1 less than eight acres of a 47-acre redevelopment.  
2 The remainder of that redevelopment, as Madelyn  
3 pointed out, is a substantial upzoning, increasing  
4 the value of the land to the owners of all of that  
5 land. And with respect to the eight acres that  
6 we're talking about, we're not proposing changing  
7 the zoning in any way on their property, simply of  
8 allowing the city to acquire that land. We have  
9 put very fair offers on the table and we're  
10 looking to reach consensual agreements that are  
11 very fair to these land owners.  
12

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: But if you  
14 don't reach a consensus and those folks want to  
15 use their own developers or they want to develop  
16 their portion themselves.

17 PRESIDENT PINSKY: They are able to  
18 develop their land according to the zoning that  
19 exists today, that will not change. We are  
20 looking to acquire that land though from them  
21 because, again, I think it's really important not  
22 to lose sight of the fact that we are talking  
23 about the future of the amusement district of  
24 Coney Island, which has been shrinking  
25 precipitously and the parts of Coney Island that

1  
2 have been shrinking, the area where businesses  
3 have been kicked off their land has been owned by  
4 private owners, we are looking to stop that  
5 decline. We believe that the only way that you  
6 can stop that decline, just look at Astroland,  
7 which was an amusement park that's been active for  
8 decades, it was owned by a private owner, the city  
9 had no control over it, and the private owner was  
10 able to kick Astroland off that site. We are  
11 looking to staunch this decline, which is why  
12 we're looking for the right to acquire this  
13 parkland, to map at this parkland, to permanently  
14 protect it.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: Are there  
16 any other plans that was presented for the  
17 development of this area?

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: There have been  
19 many discussions about the redevelopment of Coney  
20 Island. As far as I understand, there is no  
21 specific comprehensive plan, there have been other  
22 people who have put forward ideas about the  
23 rezoning that are different from ours, but it's I  
24 think important to remember that this plan was  
25 developed in communication with the community,

1  
2 with local elected officials through hundreds upon  
3 hundreds of meetings. We have the support for  
4 this plan from thousands of local residents, we  
5 have support for this plan from local businesses.  
6 And so, while, of course, like anywhere there are  
7 likely to be alternative ideas for how the area  
8 should be redone, we think that this is a  
9 consensus plan, it's a plan that makes sense, it's  
10 a plan that's going to create thousands of jobs,  
11 improve infrastructure, create retail, and put  
12 people in Coney Island to work.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: Do we have  
14 any developers and what is the timeline? Do we  
15 have any timeline and is there any funding that's  
16 set aside for this development?

17 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yes, we have  
18 about \$200 million in the capital budget right now  
19 for improvements to the area. We're also working  
20 with DEP to put something north of \$100 million in  
21 DEP's budget for the infrastructure work which  
22 will take us through the first phase of  
23 infrastructure development in Coney Island. And  
24 we're using those monies, as well as stimulus  
25 money which we've secured from the federal

1  
2 government to make improvements even today to  
3 Coney Island. We believe that with the funds that  
4 we have, if this ULURP is passed, we will be able  
5 to start to revamp and improve this neighborhood  
6 literally the day after approval.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: So what  
8 you're saying basically that you have a developer  
9 or some developers ready to start to - - so is  
10 there a timeline?

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, there are  
12 developers who currently own property who have  
13 told us that they are ready to develop as soon as  
14 the ULURP goes through. We're also ready to work  
15 on the property that we own to try to develop that  
16 as quickly as we can as well.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER STEWART: Thank you,  
18 Mr. Chair.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you.  
20 Council Member David Yassky of Brooklyn.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: Thank you.  
22 I share the really grave concerns that a number of  
23 colleagues have expressed here about designating  
24 property as parkland, all the more so in truth  
25 given your statement that you don't intend to take

1  
2 it through eminent domain. We are in a few months  
3 I think or maybe a matter of weeks going to be  
4 changing the zoning in Williamsburg to undo 30  
5 years of damage done by a very similar idea where  
6 property in Williamsburg, a big swath of property  
7 was made subject to condemnation, no condemnation  
8 took place. As a result, the property owners were  
9 rendered practically unable, I mean practically  
10 meaning as a practical matter, unable to develop  
11 and do anything with their property because no one  
12 would finance it. And I think that your answer  
13 when people have asked you what does it do to the  
14 value of property and can people still develop it  
15 and you say well the zoning is unchanged, I don't  
16 think that's correct. I think that once property  
17 is made subject to condemnation like this, it is  
18 rendered effectively unusable by the current  
19 owners, unusable for anything that requires  
20 investment because no one will finance investment  
21 on property that's subject to condemnation. I  
22 think that is, as a policy matter, a big mistake  
23 and a risk not worth taking.

24 PRESIDENT PINSKY: And I appreciate  
25 that comment. I'd like to just make one comment,

1  
2 I think Madelyn has a comment as well. I think  
3 it's important to understand that here at least  
4 there has been no development by the owners of  
5 these properties under the current zoning for  
6 decades and, in fact, there's been disinvestment.  
7 What we're looking to do as occurs throughout the  
8 city when parkland is designated by the City  
9 Council is to have the right to acquire this  
10 property. Because the bottom line is, and I  
11 appreciate very much that there's some  
12 disagreement between us on this, but the bottom  
13 line is that without mapping this parkland, we  
14 truly believe that there is not a realistic  
15 opportunity to preserve the amusements in Coney  
16 Island and we will lose those amusements.

17 MS. WILS: I'm going to echo a  
18 little bit about what Seth just said because this  
19 particular area is so unusual, but you have to  
20 remember that in parkland, it's usually acquired  
21 by both acquisition and, if needed, condemnation--  
22 Dreier, Offerman, Kaiser, Prospect Park, all  
23 acquired and/or condemned to create the parkland.

24 In this particular area it's the  
25 city's land that has the investment on it. It's a

1  
2 very unusual--it's a good argument that you make,  
3 but this is a different type of project. We have  
4 not seen a true entertainment or amusement project  
5 that has been put forward to us in all these years  
6 that will allow Coney Island to thrive as an  
7 amusement district. We do understand that you  
8 could put--change the zoning and put condominiums  
9 and a Macy's on there and a Bed, Bath & Beyond,  
10 but that's not where the city sees value, we don't  
11 believe that's where the neighborhood sees the  
12 value. We believe the long-term value in Coney  
13 Island is in the amusement district and in  
14 creating a new engine for this part of Brooklyn,  
15 and in doing so, we need to protect the area that  
16 we would like to see amusements and a growing  
17 entertainment district. And this is the best  
18 tools, Purnima said, to make this happen.

19 It's a very different area, it's a  
20 different set of circumstances and I understand  
21 your--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY:

23 [Interposing] No, and I--

24 MS. WILS: --reluctance on it.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: --and I

1  
2 hear what you're saying back, and I don't want to  
3 be picky, but when you say it's not where we see  
4 the value, I think what you mean is this is not  
5 where we see kind of the public interest as being,  
6 I mean presumably the whole reason for this is  
7 that the--

8 MS. WILS: It is.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: --market  
10 would value other uses more highly, and I'm not  
11 saying that we should do that--

12 MS. WILS: Yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: --but  
14 you're saying what we see the public interest is  
15 in not realizing the full value that the market  
16 would put on it, fine, that's fine.

17 MS. WILS: But this plan will allow  
18 for over a half a million square feet of--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY:  
20 [Interposing] Of the amusement and then--

21 MS. WILS: --of--no, no, of retail  
22 around it in the Coney North and Coney West area  
23 and you cannot do that now, so it does--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: And then--

25 MS. WILS: --have that higher and



1  
2 best use.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: I hear, but  
4 what you're response to my concern about the, you  
5 know, subject to condemnation problem, just I  
6 guess reveals--I really do have a philosophical I  
7 guess difference in how do you pursue this? I  
8 share the vision that you've put forward for Coney  
9 Island, I hope that the city as a whole, the  
10 Administration and the Council together can be  
11 successful in realizing this vision, but I think  
12 that we do better when we rely more on private  
13 actors to execute, we rely on the city to put  
14 forward a zoning vision, and private actors to  
15 execute. And, you know, you just have to look a  
16 few blocks away at Ground Zero, the part that the  
17 private sector was tasked to do is a tenanted  
18 building; the part that the government was  
19 supposed to do is a hole in the ground, is barely  
20 now getting out of that stage; and, you know, and  
21 this has been Willets Point and every project  
22 that's come through here. In Willets Point, the  
23 argument was, well the only way to get the  
24 environmental done is to bring it together.

25 And I know I'm ranging a little off

1  
2 topic, but I truly think that you make good  
3 vision, but then you make a mistake when you take  
4 it too far and say we've got to do it.

5 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Can I--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: That is the  
7 error here and I really urge you to rethink it and  
8 to say we put out a zoning vision, then we let the  
9 private sector do what it does best. And let me--  
10 before you respond, I'll just say--

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, sure.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: --because I  
13 heard--and certainly you should respond, because I  
14 do take issue with what you said to Council Member  
15 Felder that, you know, if this doesn't go through,  
16 then nothing happens. You know, yesterday we  
17 voted on a proposal for a new school in my  
18 district that is a deeply flawed proposal that was  
19 misguided in a number of individual respects, but  
20 at the end of the day, better to have the seats  
21 than not to have the seats and the Administration,  
22 which was a wholly different group of people, no  
23 one sitting here before me, position was well it's  
24 this way or no new seats at all. And at some  
25 point, the other branch that also is elected to

1  
2 represent people says, you know, enough is enough  
3 of that and I'm not going to, you know, there's  
4 only so many times you say well I'll take it  
5 'cause it's better than nothing, even though  
6 there's been no effort made to correct the flaws.  
7 And so I just say that's my response to your point  
8 about nothing's going to happen.

9 PRESIDENT PINSKY: And do you mind  
10 my just--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: Please do--

12 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: --please  
14 do, 'cause...

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: I think just a  
16 few comments. First of all, obviously I can't  
17 speak to the particular topic that you raise, but  
18 I think that Coney Island, as Madelyn said, is  
19 different from, for example, Ground Zero in that  
20 it's actually the exact opposite of what you're  
21 describing. If you walk down the boardwalk in  
22 Coney Island and you look at improvements that  
23 have been made almost to a piece of property, the  
24 properties on which improvements have been made  
25 are city-owned properties and the properties on

1  
2 which decay has occurred and disinvestment has  
3 occurred are privately owned properties, so that's  
4 I think an important distinction to make.

5           The second thing I would say is  
6 that, you know, this Administration is obviously a  
7 firm believer in private development as well. The  
8 one thing that we've never relied on the private  
9 sector to do though is to create parks and that's  
10 what we're talking about here is the creation of  
11 parks.

12           And then the third thing that I'd  
13 say, just to make sure that this is clear, and I  
14 think you understand this, but just to make sure,  
15 what we're proposing is city ownership of the  
16 parkland, but then to seek a private operator and  
17 developer for the amusement park. So it's a  
18 hybrid and I think it responds to at least one of  
19 your concerns, which is let the market figure out  
20 how best to develop this parkland. Our aim in  
21 developing this amusement park is to issue an RFP  
22 and let the market tell us what the best way to  
23 develop that amusement park is. What we want to  
24 make sure though is that the use on this land is  
25 permanently an amusement park.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: Okay. And  
3 we can leave it there, that's a zoning--I mean to  
4 me the way to achieve that objective is through  
5 the zoning. This is not a park, I mean it's a  
6 distinctive kind of business and it's one the city  
7 wants to make sure continues, I think this is a  
8 business rather than a park.

9 PRESIDENT PINSKY: But I'm sorry,  
10 one point is it's not just zoning because right  
11 now it's zoned only for amusement and the private  
12 sector ownership is what has led this area to be  
13 underdeveloped, disinvested in and it's the  
14 combination of the zoning, which I agree with you,  
15 and the city ownership that we think is the best  
16 protection.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: We are now  
18 into the second round and what I would ask is if  
19 we can limit it to one question for the second  
20 round so we can move on to the other panels.

21 Council Member Recchia, then  
22 Council Member Katz, and Council Member Jackson.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Yes, well  
24 the other aspect I'd like to question, and in the  
25 amusement area, Mr. Pinsky, in the ULURP it says

1  
2 that if a restaurant is to open, the restaurant  
3 must find offsite parking, okay? Where are they  
4 going to find the offsite parking?

5 MS. KAPUR: All uses in every  
6 subdistrict here will require parking, depending  
7 on the size and the kind of use.

8 In the entire Coney Island  
9 peninsula is in a flood plain, as you all know.  
10 What we have done through zoning is provided for  
11 parking in enclosed structures, it is permitted  
12 throughout this area and in order to encourage  
13 parking to be provided, we are also not counting  
14 it towards the floor area.

15 In Coney East, the amusement side,  
16 that problem becomes particularly exacerbated on  
17 some of the blocks because we are trying to  
18 reconcile having open active amusements that  
19 require the ground floors which are also often the  
20 areas that are used for the parking. In the  
21 housing area, we can wrap retail and residential  
22 and leave the center of it for parking.

23 In order to facilitate the  
24 provision of parking which every development  
25 throughout the city requires, we have made

1  
2 provisions in Coney Island such that if you are  
3 not able to satisfy the parking requirement on  
4 your site, the area available to provide that off-  
5 street parking is much larger. There's an area  
6 that is defined. Within the plan there are sites  
7 that can take more parking than they would be  
8 required to provide and in order to encourage that  
9 to be public parking if a site provides parking  
10 over its required parking and makes that available  
11 as public parking, that parking is not counted  
12 towards the FAR.

13           There is capacity in this block  
14 here for about 600 parking spaces, these five  
15 blocks combined create ability to provide, I  
16 believe, about 200 spaces in excess of what is  
17 required on those sites. In addition to that,  
18 anywhere from Ocean Parkway to West 26th Street  
19 from the boardwalk to the creek, there are several  
20 sites available which can be developed for  
21 parking. The city controls one particular site on  
22 Stillwell and the creek and the RFP that is being  
23 put out for that site would also provide public  
24 parking.

25           So we've sort of tried both through

1  
2 our own sites, as well as encouraging the  
3 provision of public parking throughout this area  
4 to provide for that parking.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: It all  
6 sounds good, but the bottom line is this:  
7 restaurants are not going to come in to the  
8 amusement area and open up because what the city  
9 couldn't do, you're now pawning it off to the  
10 owners. So you're telling the owners who want to  
11 come in and open a business, go find your own  
12 parking or else you can't do this and they're  
13 going to say where are we supposed to find this?  
14 Where is the parking? You're taking away Keyspan  
15 Park, okay, you're telling these owners who want  
16 to come in to open a business, a restaurant, that  
17 they have to find offsite parking and it's almost  
18 impossible what you're doing. And I'm requesting  
19 that that be taken out because it will be  
20 impossible and it'd be a detriment for businesses  
21 to come in and open up.

22 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Council Member,  
23 we're, of course, as with all these topics,  
24 willing to speak to you about all of your ideas  
25 and are willing to discuss ways to improve upon



1  
2 the plan. One thing that I would just say is that  
3 I think it's important to remember here that what  
4 we're doing on these sites is that we're actually  
5 increasing substantially the value of these  
6 properties by giving a substantial amount of  
7 additional FAR and different uses than what are  
8 currently allowed.

9 My assumption of the way that it  
10 would work is not that the restaurant comes in and  
11 provides the off-street parking, it's that when  
12 the developer builds the building on the site  
13 which will generate a significant amount of value  
14 that as with developers of buildings all over the  
15 city where there are parking requirements, part of  
16 the economics of building that building will be  
17 paying for the offsite parking.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: But the  
19 problem with Coney Island is that you can't go  
20 down--

21 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Correct.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: --okay?  
23 You can't go up because there's a height  
24 restriction and you got to go five feet above  
25 because of a flood zone. So what I'm saying here

1  
2 is, okay, where is this parking going to be? It's  
3 not going to be anywhere near it--

4 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Well and I--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: --'cause  
6 there are no places for it.

7 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --I think that  
8 it's actually beneficial what's been proposed for  
9 this plan.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA:  
11 Beneficial?

12 PRESIDENT PINSKY: The--yeah--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: If I want  
14 to open up a business, you're going to tell me I  
15 have to go find my offsite parking, the developer.

16 PRESIDENT PINSKY: No, what's  
17 beneficial is that the offsite parking is likely  
18 to be less expensive than it would cost to build  
19 on-site parking. So in fact, that's a benefit to  
20 the owners of these properties.

21 Again, you're taking property right  
22 now that you can't build anything on and you're  
23 allowing these owners to build profitable  
24 buildings on them at much higher densities than  
25 are currently allowed and part of the economics of

1  
2 that value that is being given through this action  
3 to the land owners will have to include finding  
4 parking, which is exactly what happens in  
5 buildings all over the city where there are  
6 parking requirements.

7 But, again, we're happy to talk to  
8 you about it and we're happy to have further  
9 discussions.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Well my  
11 colleagues have a lot of questions and the public  
12 wants to talk. I just want to just say that, you  
13 know, there are a lot of issues still that have to  
14 be resolved, but in this whole area where you want  
15 to make parkland, there is another way to do this  
16 and that is by creating an amusement district,  
17 okay? I brought this up three years ago to the  
18 Administration, three years ago when you first  
19 brought this to me about making this parkland.  
20 There is another way to do this, but you choose  
21 not to, you want to put the amusement district,  
22 okay?

23 Second, I--

24 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

25 [Crosstalk]

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: --just  
3 want to say is that the state, the elected  
4 officials from the state, when they told the  
5 Administration, when they wanted to see action,  
6 they did not mean action by the New York City  
7 Council, they meant action by the Administration  
8 in purchasing the property, that's what they  
9 meant, okay?

10 So we're back here again and my  
11 colleagues have questions, and I just want to just  
12 go into HPD to ask and request and maybe--we're  
13 very interested in home ownership and in this time  
14 of crisis, I know a lot of banks, but we would  
15 like to present the program for homeownership and  
16 a program--could we create a program where we  
17 could implement some type of program to help  
18 people with their down payment 'cause there's a  
19 lot of people, middle-class in Coney Island who  
20 live, but they can't afford the down payment and  
21 we could help them with that. But some type of  
22 program, could you be helpful to us and giving  
23 them preference?

24 MS. LEICHT: Sure, we actually have  
25 a down payment assistance program at HPD called

1  
2 Home First that gives about \$18,000 per home to  
3 homeowners, and I think we can definitely look  
4 into whether there is an ability to do preference  
5 there for some number of units or number of  
6 dollars for Coney Island.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Okay.

8 Thank you very much. I have no further questions.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Council Member  
10 Katz and then Council Member Jackson.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: This should  
12 be a relatively simple. How much have you  
13 allocated the infrastructure to cost after this  
14 project's completed?

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: I'm sorry.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: The  
17 infrastructure of the property, it's a lot of  
18 property--

19 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: --a lot more  
21 building going on, how much is the infrastructure  
22 going to cost?

23 PRESIDENT PINSKY: We are in the  
24 process of doing the studies that will allow us to  
25 determine the full extent of the infrastructure.

1  
2 We have completed studies that allow us to  
3 understand what the first phase of infrastructure  
4 is which will take us through about the next five  
5 years or so and we think it's going to be  
6 somewhere north of \$100 million. And we're  
7 working with DEP to ensure that that money is in  
8 the budget so that for the next five years we will  
9 have sufficient funds to allow us to do the  
10 construction.

11 As we complete the studies that  
12 we're currently undertaking, we'll obviously have  
13 more, better information about what the cost of  
14 the rest of the fit-out will be and then we'll  
15 work with DEP to put those monies into the budget.

16 But I don't think that between now  
17 and around 2014 we're going to need additional  
18 monies in.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: So that  
20 answers my second question, which is so the city's  
21 just going to pay for the infrastructure, it's not  
22 part of the RFPs.

23 PRESIDENT PINSKY: That's - - there  
24 will be some infrastructure, for example, in  
25 mapped streets, the utilities are required to put

1  
2 the infrastructure in. Also, it's possible that  
3 on-site infrastructure will be built by the  
4 developers of the projects. But the backbone of  
5 the infrastructure will be paid for by the city.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: So it's more  
7 than 100 million, right? 'Cause you're saying  
8 that you're putting in 100 million for Phase 1,  
9 but the private owners then pay the rest if it's  
10 under their property.

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: For Phase 1,  
12 that will fully pay for Phase 1--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: [Interposing]  
14 That will fully pay for everything--

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KATZ: --for Phase  
17 One. Okay. That's fine, thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Council Member  
19 Jackson and then the last two--

20 [Off mic]

21 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: --the last two  
22 Council Members will then be Council Member Al  
23 Vann and Simcha Felder.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you.  
25 Good afternoon, I did say good morning, the first

time I spoke to you--

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Good afternoon.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: With respect to a follow-up on my colleague Domenic Recchia as far as restaurants and off-site parking, in the area that you have zoned there, so if I own a restaurant based on the zoning that you want to move forward on or the city does, will patrons be able to drive up to the restaurant and then they have valet parking half a mile, a mile away or will they have to go straight to the parking lot and then walk to the restaurant or take a cab or whatever?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Well, as in much of the city, a very large percentage of the people who use Coney Island come by mass transit, so they won't be impacted.

With respect to people who drive, there will be off-site parking whether they do it through valet or otherwise will be something that the restaurant owners, I guess will have to decide.

A lot of the parking that is quote off of these specific blocks is very close, it's,



1  
2 you know, a block or two away from the building  
3 sites, which is something similar to what you  
4 find, I think, in many places in the city today.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I believe  
6 in the presentation within the zoning area, are  
7 you going to have parking facilities within that  
8 zoned area? Because I thought that's what I heard  
9 earlier.

10 [Off mic]

11 MS. KAPUR: All of the blocks here-

12 -

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: All of  
14 what? Say that again.

15 MS. KAPUR: All of the development  
16 here--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Yes.

18 MS. KAPUR: --here, and this block  
19 here have the ability to provide parking onsite  
20 for anything that develops there. The blocks that  
21 don't have that ability are these ones here.  
22 However, built within this blocks here and blocks  
23 here is the ability to provide parking in addition  
24 to what these blocks need for themselves. So--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. So-

2 -

3 MS. KAPUR: --that would be the  
4 publicly accessible and publicly available  
5 parking. Remember, we are also replacing the  
6 1,100 parking spaces that exist today for the  
7 Keyspan Ballpark onsite between this and this  
8 block here.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

10 MS. KAPUR: That parking, other  
11 than the game days, is available for everyone.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So if in  
13 fact, if this zoning went through and I'm looking  
14 at this map, the blue area here, or where the  
15 first red line, if there was restaurants, most, I  
16 guess, that's north towards the end of this way  
17 here--

18 MS. KAPUR: It's these lots here.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --it would  
20 be kind of far as far as from a parking point of  
21 view to patronize a restaurant there, unless I'm  
22 really willing to walk about a half a mile.

23 MS. KAPUR: It's across the street.  
24 It's a--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Oh really?

2 MS. KAPUR: Yeah, these blocks are  
3 literally across Surf Avenue.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Oh, okay,  
5 because it looks kind of far on this map.

6 MS. KAPUR: I understand.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And this  
8 map is not--you know, this is probably like  
9 1/200th of the actual street and so--

10 MS. KAPUR: [Interposing] I think  
11 that a variety--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --I'm  
13 saying if I'm parked--if the restaurant is over  
14 here and they have parking over here, that's  
15 pretty far, people are not going to be walking  
16 that distance, especially if it's raining or  
17 whatever the situation is.

18 MS. KAPUR: Many restaurants will,  
19 I think, each use will determine how its patrons  
20 are getting there. The restaurants that do get a  
21 lot of people drive up will probably provide valet  
22 parking--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And  
24 that's--

25 MS. KAPUR: --as it is provided in

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many parts of the city--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And will--

MS. KAPUR: --the subway stop is here for your reference, is right here--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

MS. KAPUR: --at this junction, and today people get off here and go to the beach, to the amusement area, to this ballpark--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

MS. KAPUR: --and we're talking about the same walking distances.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. So question to you, under your proposal, if there were restaurants here, are these streets open to people to drive up to the restaurant?

MS. KAPUR: These streets here?

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: No, no, all the side streets going down--yeah, all of those--

MS. KAPUR: These streets--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --yeah.

MS. KAPUR: --here. Yes, I mean the current--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: That will

1  
2 be open.

3 MS. KAPUR: Yes, currently our  
4 proposal is to allow traffic through these  
5 streets. It's likely that during the summer  
6 months when the amusement park is at full working  
7 capacity some of these streets are not vehicular  
8 at that point--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

10 MS. KAPUR: --and they are more  
11 pedestrian streets.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

13 MS. KAPUR: One of the things that  
14 the Council Member was talking about earlier was  
15 not having this street here at all, this Wonder  
16 Wheel Way. We are looking at options of making it  
17 smaller, because we think you do need a traffic  
18 network here, but it doesn't all have to be open  
19 to cars.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. I  
21 was just following up on his question.

22 But my question is, my  
23 understanding--and correct me if I'm wrong--that  
24 the whole issue of rezoning, that this is not the  
25 first time that the city of New York attempted to

1  
2 create sort of like an amusement park in Coney  
3 Island. My understanding--correct me if I'm  
4 wrong--in 1968, the city condemned private land  
5 with the intent of creating an amusement park and  
6 more than 30 years later, after several  
7 development attempts, the city admitted failure  
8 and abandoned its plan and decided to build  
9 Keystone Park--Keyspan Park, I said Keystone,  
10 that's in Philadelphia, right? Okay. Keyspan.  
11 Is that true that that's basically in summary,  
12 what occurred and from a previous administrations  
13 attempting to redevelop--

14 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Yes.

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: I'm not sure of  
16 the exact history, but I assume that that's  
17 correct. I think that the difference here is  
18 again that if you look at the Coney island of  
19 today with the Administration that's in place  
20 today, and you look at the privately owned land  
21 and you looked at the publicly owned land, the  
22 privately owned land is largely empty and has  
23 suffered from tremendous disinvestment. Just last  
24 year there was a privately owned piece of land  
25 that had a very active amusement park on it--

1  
2 Astroland, Astroland was forced to leave that  
3 land. The public--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA:

5 [Interposing] You know, I have to object to that.  
6 You know what, they weren't forced, they sold it  
7 for \$30 million, all right?

8 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: And I'm  
10 tired of him saying they were forced out, they  
11 sold it for \$30 million.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

13 [Crosstalk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: So if  
15 we're going to be truthful, be truthful.

16 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I know you're  
18 passionate about this, but I would ask that you go  
19 through the Chair.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So then  
21 let me ask this question. You say that they were  
22 forced out, were they forced out or did they  
23 negotiate a settlement to sell--

24 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, they had--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --it for

\$30 million?

PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, I mean I think the owner of Astroland will be speaking for herself, but she had a lease on the land and the lease was not renewed by the private owner.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: So you can characterize that however you want.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. And I assume, like you said, if the owner of Astroland, if that's the property we were talking about, the owner could speak for him or herself.

PRESIDENT PINSKY: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: But go back to my question about several attempts to redevelop. So, what guarantees, 'cause, you know, the Bloomberg Administration, assuming that he's reelected, and I don't make that assumption, is only going to be in office for another four years and my understanding that this whole redevelopment is going to take at least 10 years. What kind of guarantees are you going to give to this City Council, to the community that this may not be another abandonment of a redevelopment plan?



1  
2 PRESIDENT PINSKY: If the  
3 Administration is reelected, which is an if,  
4 hopefully if Councilman Avella is elected, the  
5 same thing would occur. We believe that we can  
6 put on the temporary--the parkland in Coney Island  
7 the first phase of amusements by next summer and  
8 we will commit to do that to you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Well, and  
10 just finally as far as how much money are we  
11 talking about overall to redevelop all of this and  
12 rezone it and, you know, the city of New York--I  
13 sit on Finance, I'm on the budget negotiating team  
14 of the City Council--as you know, we're in the red  
15 and we're expected to be \$5 billion in the red  
16 next fiscal year, and \$5 to \$7 billion in red the  
17 following fiscal year - - 2011/2012, and the  
18 Administration has already expanded their capital  
19 plan, reduced it by 30%. So stuff that was  
20 scheduled for two, three, four years is out five,  
21 six, seven years out because of the economic  
22 situation. How much is this going to cost and  
23 understanding the fiscal reality, I mean--and let  
24 me just digress for a second because they did not  
25 approve our financial situations that we submitted

1  
2 up to them, Mayor Bloomberg said \$60 million for  
3 every month, Christine Quinn, our Speaker, says \$2  
4 million every single day that our financial plan  
5 is not approved in Albany. How much is it going  
6 to cost and where--

7 PRESIDENT PINSKY: It's a good  
8 question.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --are we  
10 going to get all this money from?

11 PRESIDENT PINSKY: We have in the  
12 budget that you recently approved, there's \$200  
13 million in that budget for work in Coney Island.  
14 There is also, as I said, in DEP's budget  
15 somewhere north of \$100 million for the first  
16 phase of infrastructure. We believe that those  
17 monies will carry us through the first several  
18 years of development.

19 There's going to be a substantial  
20 amount more that will need to be spent on this,  
21 most of that will be spent by the private sector,  
22 not by the public sector for development.

23 With respect to your comment on the  
24 fact that the city is in the red, we believe that  
25 the best way for this city to get out of its

1  
2 deficit situation is to grow the economy, and I  
3 think this is consistent with what you're hearing  
4 in Washington, as well, that the best way to grow  
5 the economy is to make investments in areas that  
6 have suffered from underinvestment, which is what  
7 we're planning on doing here.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And is the  
9 owners of the properties who own the property, are  
10 they not looking to develop and provide jobs,  
11 union jobs, and affordable housing and stuff like  
12 that?

13 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, and to be  
14 clear, the owners of all the property except for  
15 the property in the parkland, are not able on most  
16 of Coney Island to develop today because of the  
17 zoning. With your help, if we're able to approve  
18 this ULURP, we will for the first time enable  
19 these people to actually develop on their  
20 property, and I think they would be very  
21 interested in doing that.

22 On the parkland, as I've said  
23 before, we do not believe that the best use for  
24 there is development, we believe that we must  
25 preserve the amusements and that's why we're

2 seeking ownership of that. Again, our goal is to  
3 acquire that at a fair price from the owners.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Council Member  
6 Vann and then finally Council Member Fidler and we  
7 will then go on to the next panel.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER VANN: Yeah, Mr.  
9 Chairman, I'll be merciful and I think our  
10 colleagues have covered it very well, very  
11 completely, and I just would like to be associated  
12 with most of their concerns. Your concerns,  
13 definitely Larry Seabrook's concerns, as my  
14 colleague here, so let me be associated with them  
15 and I will avoid all the redundancy and let that  
16 for the record, that's my position. Thank you.

17 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Thank you,  
18 Councilman.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER:  
20 Embarrassed.

21 [Pause]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I'm  
23 embarrassed, I said I'm embarrassed to ask  
24 anything after Council Member Vann and he said my  
25 embarrassment won't last long.

2 Okay. I just wanted to know, Mr.  
3 Pinsky, did you ever ride the Teacup? No, I'm  
4 very serious.

5 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yeah, I have  
6 not, no.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Did you  
8 ever ride the flume?

9 PRESIDENT PINSKY: In Coney Island?  
10 I'm not sure if I have--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Yes, we're  
12 not talking about any place but Coney Island.

13 PRESIDENT PINSKY: I believe I  
14 have, but I'm not positive.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: All right,  
16 so I'll assume you haven't. Do you know where the  
17 bumping cars are?

18 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Yes, I was on  
19 them, in fact, three weeks ago.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Excellent.  
21 So would it be fair to say--let me just ask you  
22 I'm sorry my mind--what's your name again?

23 MS. WILS: Madelyn Wils.

24 [Crosstalk]

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Madelyn

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Wils.

MS. WILS: --I rode many rides on  
Coney Island.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I didn't  
ask you that.

MS. WILS: I just wanted to tell  
you.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: You want to  
talk about anything else that you have on your  
mind?

MS. WILS: Anything you'd like.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: When was  
the last time you walked Surf Avenue from one end  
to the other?

MS. WILS: Well I walked Surf  
Avenue--

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Yeah.

MS. WILS: --a couple weeks ago,  
but I can't--

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: No, I--

MS. WILS: --tell you if it was one  
end to the other.

COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: From one  
end to the other, you know, from Seagate to where

1  
2 it starts.

3 MS. WILS: Oh, I haven't done that-

4 -

5 [Crosstalk]

6 PRESIDENT PINSKY: [Interposing] I  
7 did about three months ago.

8 MS. WILS: Okay.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Excellent.  
10 I'm not going to ask Purnima, I'm not going to ask  
11 you about any rides that you went on.

12 The reason I ask you that is that I  
13 wanted to, you know, to be concise in trying to  
14 make it clear that I think everyone who's in the  
15 room loves Coney Island and wants to make sure  
16 that something nice is built there that will  
17 really, really provide enjoyment to all of us, the  
18 issue is how we get there. And I want to repeat  
19 again that a lot of the questions that were raised  
20 clearly indicate that a lot remains to be  
21 resolved. And for the benefit of the city and for  
22 the benefit of the people of the city, I would ask  
23 you again to do what's right, not what you think  
24 may be expedient because, as Chair Avella said, I  
25 think that the best thing would be to delay this,

1  
2 I don't like delaying anything, I'm somebody who's  
3 usually very spontaneous as you can see--here's a  
4 peppermint candy, in fact.

5 PRESIDENT PINSKY: Oh, thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: I don't  
7 have anymore, I'm sorry. So I just ask you to  
8 consider that seriously, thank you.

9 PRESIDENT PINSKY: I appreciate  
10 that and just also for the record, as I understand  
11 it, the ULURP clock runs until August 20th, I  
12 think the Council's decision so far has been to  
13 try to advance that clock and make a decision  
14 prior to that, but there is some additional time  
15 that's on the ULURP clock.

16 I do think though, if I can just  
17 add one additional point, which is that, I  
18 appreciate and respect your request for a delay.  
19 I think from the Administration's perspective  
20 delay would not be the right thing to do for the  
21 community, but I do appreciate and respect the  
22 fact that all of us are looking to do what's right  
23 by Coney Island.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: And let me  
25 just say that it sounds like that's not something



1  
2 that you are considering at all and, if that's the  
3 case, I'm telling you point blank, I'm not leaving  
4 it up to anybody's imagination that if the vote  
5 comes unless something miraculously--and I don't  
6 like talking about hypotheticals, I know you're  
7 involved in holy work--but I don't see a miracle  
8 happening here. And if that's not the case, if  
9 that's not the case, then there's no way that I  
10 could support it as is, and I would like to, I  
11 would like to, I don't want to vote no, but you in  
12 essence, you're not going to be putting me in a  
13 position to vote no and me being the bad guy. I'm  
14 going to be the good guy and vote no.

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: We hope--

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FIDLER: Okay?

17 PRESIDENT PINSKY: --that we can  
18 get your vote, we hope we can get the vote of your  
19 fellow Council Members, and I just want to  
20 acknowledge also especially Council Member Recchia  
21 who has been making extremely productive  
22 recommendations throughout this process, and we  
23 will continue to work with him and all of his  
24 colleagues. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I have to make

1  
2 a comment because what Mr. Pinsky said about  
3 having 'til August, based upon the calendar of the  
4 City Council Stated Meeting and the calendar of  
5 the City Planning Commission, that is not a  
6 possibility--July 29th is the drop-dead date.  
7 Let's not talk about any other dates, that's it.  
8 And if we want to modify the application, we have  
9 to do it by July 13th in order to get back to City  
10 Planning Commission for the modifications.

11 So I think any other description or  
12 timeline is simply not accurate and I think that's  
13 got to be quite clear. So saying that we have  
14 'til August is not true.

15 PRESIDENT PINSKY: And, Councilman,  
16 thank you. We hope that you vote on this by the  
17 end of July and we hope that we receive an  
18 affirmative vote. We think this is the right  
19 thing to do for Coney Island.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.  
21 I'll ask Council to call the next panel, which  
22 will be a panel of the property owners, and I hope  
23 this will be some very interesting testimony.

24 COUNSEL: Michael Russo, Marjorie  
25 Pearlmutter [phonetic], Ari Shalam [phonetic],

Jessie Masyr, Chris Durmick, Dennis Vourderis.

[Long Pause]

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: If I could ask the administration, I mean, are you guys going to be using that?

FEMALE VOICE: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Oh, they are okay.

[Long Pause]

FEMALE VOICE: --to speak.

[Long Pause]

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: If we can't fit--shh. If we can't fit everybody up there, after you testify, you'll get up and then the next person will sit down.

I mean, what we're trying to do is trying to put together, you know, a real clear picture of the issues here. Especially when, you know, the Administration didn't even have a diagram to show what property was privately owned, which is astounding in my opinion, but obviously deliberate.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Excuse me, did they leave the map up there?

2 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I actually  
3 asked them, they're going to use that.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: So you  
5 asked for the map to be left there.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: They're going  
7 to use that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I noticed  
9 they left their photographs, but they didn't leave  
10 the map that we requested.

11 FEMALE VOICE: They're using the  
12 PowerPoint.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Oh,  
14 they're going to use the PowerPoint? Okay. Okay.

15 MR. JESSE MASYSR: Good morning.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Recchia's  
17 going to take care of the photographs.

18 MR. MASYSR: Actually, good  
19 afternoon.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Well I  
21 wonder if they call the Sanitation Department to  
22 clean them up.

23 MALE VOICE: Yes.

24 MR. MASYSR: Thank you, Mr.  
25 Chairman, Members of the Committee. My name is

1  
2 Jesse Masyr, I'm a member of the law firm of  
3 Wachtel & Masyr, and we are land use counsel to  
4 Thor Equities, the largest private property owner  
5 in the Coney Island East area.

6 On behalf of my client, I welcome  
7 this opportunity to appear before you today. We  
8 have provided your subcommittee with copies of our  
9 previous testimony at the Community Board, the  
10 Borough President, City Planning Commission  
11 hearings, as well as comments--

12 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]  
13 Jesse, Jesse, if I can interrupt for one second.

14 MR. MASYR: Yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: And this is  
16 appropriate for you and for all the other property  
17 owners, and I know this is probably what you  
18 wanted was to have the map of the area behind us,  
19 if we could have that up and then you can point  
20 to, so everybody understands what section  
21 everybody owns, because otherwise we're not going  
22 to understand. I mean I understand because I met  
23 with most of you but--

24 MALE VOICE: Okay.

25 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: --for my

1  
2 committee members and for the public, it'll be  
3 helpful.

4 MALE VOICE: There we go.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: So when you  
6 start your testimony, if the first thing you can  
7 do is show what properties you're representing.  
8 Use the hand mic, the hand mic.

9 MR. MASYR: The properties that  
10 Thor currently owns and is only in Coney East and  
11 Coney East is this area here, the properties we  
12 own are former Astroland site and we own  
13 properties on Surf, as well as on both sides of  
14 Stillwell Avenue, all the way down to the  
15 boardwalk.

16 As I said, we are submitting all  
17 our prior testimony and, while I will not  
18 reiterate everything in our prior testimony, we'll  
19 be happy to answer any questions you may have on  
20 any topic that we have previously raised.

21 Today, however, I'd like to focus  
22 on how an approval by the City Council of this  
23 legislation will compromise the City Council's  
24 power to participate in the shaping of Coney  
25 Island's future and its ability to oversee

1  
2 development of Coney Island's amusement area.

3           The Administration's plan for Coney  
4 Island proposes mapping a park in Coney East. In  
5 the City's opinion, the park mapping and  
6 subsequent process will protect the amusement area  
7 in perpetuity. The opinion, which has been  
8 repeated numerous times today by the city  
9 officials, is far from reality. Just as the city  
10 is proposing to de-map parkland in Coney West, so  
11 too, could the city, at a later date, de-map the  
12 proposed parkland in Coney East.

13           The mapping of parkland in Coney  
14 East affords no greater protection to the  
15 amusement area than an Urban Renewal Plan which  
16 was used at Willets Point or a Special District  
17 which was used at Hunters Point South--two of the  
18 Administration's other major economic development  
19 initiatives. Any future change to those plans  
20 would have to come back to this Council for  
21 approval. A change in the use of the proposed  
22 parkland in Coney Island would not.

23           The City's plan to map the  
24 amusement area parkland is in fact no plan at all.  
25 There are no specifics on what the amusement area

1  
2 will contain. The general language of affordable,  
3 accessible, world class, etc., does not provide  
4 any detail. The non-park properties in Coney  
5 East--and allow me to stand up and point to them.  
6 And by that I mean--

7 [Off mic]

8 MR. MASYR: I turned it on, I  
9 should...

10 [Off mic]

11 MR. MASYR: Needs to warm up? The  
12 properties in the non-parkland that I'm referring  
13 to are all of these properties still in the Coney  
14 East area.

15 Those areas outside the parkland  
16 are subject to pages of regulations controlling  
17 height, setbacks, transparencies, types, and  
18 locations of uses. The parkland has nothing at  
19 all. And the Council will only learn the details  
20 if the Administration wants you to know.

21 But we're getting ahead of  
22 ourselves, as you know. The city and the state  
23 have acknowledged that there is no alienation  
24 legislation moving forward. And to date, attempts  
25 by Thor to find an equitable solution have been



1  
2 met by the city actually lowering their offers  
3 from subsequent positions--clearly not a  
4 meaningful way to find common ground. And,  
5 despite stating on the record that the city will  
6 not use eminent domain, we have actually been put  
7 on official notice by the city of their potential  
8 use of eminent domain to take Thor's property.

9           Should the land be acquired from  
10 private landowners, an RFP for a private outdoor  
11 amusement developer/operator will be issued.  
12 Depending on the responses, if any, the uses in  
13 the parkland will be established and a long-term  
14 concession only if the State legislature permits  
15 will be granted. All of this without a formal  
16 Council role. All of this, without a promise of  
17 meaningful public input. The city has completely  
18 left the Council and the public in dark as to what  
19 will happen to the nine acres of proposed parkland  
20 in Coney East, and even more obscure is what  
21 happens if the city doesn't acquire the private  
22 properties for which, in the present, is a much  
23 more likely event. There are no guarantees here.  
24 The city has left no room for the possibility that  
25 the mapping may not happen.

1  
2 In fact, the city is leaving the  
3 current C7 zoning on the properties proposed to be  
4 mapped as parkland. This is the same C7 zoning  
5 that the city states is outdated and restricts  
6 growth and expansion of the amusement area because  
7 of low density and restricted uses of the current  
8 C7 zone limitations. Therefore, if the city does  
9 not implement its acquisition plan, this outdated  
10 and restrictive zoning will remain in place. The  
11 reliance on the State legislature to allow a long  
12 term concession of parkland in Coney Island, with  
13 no fall back, is incredibly short-sighted. There  
14 is no rush here. The State is not moving any  
15 legislation, much less has not even introduced any  
16 legislation with regard to the parkland. If this  
17 does not miraculously happen under the  
18 Administration's plan, the City Council will lose  
19 any control over the future of the iconic Coney  
20 Island and that which Councilman Recchia and  
21 Speaker Quinn and all of your members have been  
22 fighting to protect.

23 If the Administration's goal was  
24 truly protect the Coney Island amusement area, the  
25 Administration could have adopted an Urban Renewal

1  
2 designation like they did at Willets Point, or  
3 they could have rezoned Coney Island and placed  
4 restrictions on the bulk and uses for each  
5 property with the zoning, as was done in Hunter's  
6 Point South. Certainly an area as special as  
7 Coney Island is worthy of a special zoning  
8 district.

9                   Why the Administration is mapping  
10 amusement area as parkland, thereby removing any  
11 zoning restrictions and placing the future  
12 development in the hands of the Parks Commissioner  
13 is truly inexplicable. And the prospect of the  
14 future of Coney Island absent public input should  
15 be unacceptable.

16                   One would hope that the experience  
17 in the 1960s when the City used eminent domain to  
18 condemn the Steeplechase Amusement Park site and  
19 then left the parkland vacant for over 40 years  
20 because city agencies--namely the Department of  
21 City Planning and the Department of Parks and  
22 Recreation--disagreed as to how the land should be  
23 utilized and efforts to attract private amusement  
24 developers through RFPs failed and then failed  
25 again.

1  
2                   The Administration's sense of  
3 urgency that caused an incomplete plan, which, in  
4 the last two months have seen two revisions and is  
5 now advancing, is alarming. There are missing  
6 details, including how the State legislation will  
7 be passed, how the land will be acquired for the  
8 proposed parkland, what the outline of the RFP  
9 will look like--these would normally be known to  
10 the Council before your actions would be taken.  
11 Why the rush? Why not spend the time putting  
12 together a well thought out plan that will  
13 succeed? Coney Island deserves better--it  
14 deserves a chance for success.

15                   MR. CHRISTOPHER DURMICK: I'm  
16 Christopher Durmick, I'm with Thinkwell Design &  
17 Production, I'm speaking on behalf of Thor  
18 Equities.

19                   We did some early conceptual design  
20 work for Thor with some of the properties at Coney  
21 Island, and I've been in the themed entertainment  
22 industry my entire adult career life and, as such,  
23 I have the same passion that is shared by everyone  
24 in this room about what Coney Island wants and can  
25 and should be.

1  
2           It's the genesis of the amusement  
3 park industry, I've said that many times before,  
4 and it really is true, this is the place where  
5 this amusement industry started. It defies any  
6 comparisons, however, to what exists right now.  
7 There's no destination in the world that operates  
8 the way this one is planning to operate with no  
9 gate, totally democratic.

10           But there's a disconnect between  
11 the design of this as a world-class year-round  
12 destination and the plan which will guarantee its  
13 success as a regional seasonal park.

14           The master plan, in my mind, should  
15 create a balanced mix of attractions and services  
16 and should also drive the zoning, not the other  
17 way around. For that reason, I'm not in favor of  
18 the plan.

19           In my opinion, it separates Coney  
20 Island into two specific zones of activities.  
21 Basically, all boats rise with the tide and if I  
22 were to go and just ride the rides, then the  
23 restaurants are going to suffer; if I'm coming to  
24 go to a restaurant, then the rides aren't going to  
25 get my business. The only way for it to succeed

1  
2 as a year-round world-class business is for all of  
3 those destinations, all of those businesses to  
4 share the revenues of the people coming to visit.

5 The plan also does not support a  
6 workable year-round business plan. We can call it  
7 an amusement park but, as the Councilman said, it  
8 is actually a business.

9 World-class destination is a very  
10 expensive proposition, and this plan provides very  
11 little opportunity to attract the dollars to build  
12 those attractions. For Coney to succeed as a  
13 world-class destination, it cannot be business as  
14 usual. It has to have new groundbreaking custom  
15 rides, shows, and attractions and these are the  
16 most expensive things out there, and yet they  
17 typically do not earn huge profits.

18 So who's going to pay for them?  
19 With such a low return on investment, the initial  
20 cost has to come from somewhere and, by limiting  
21 the size of retail--and I want to be very clear  
22 about this--no one in any of my contact with Thor  
23 has ever stated a desire to bring big boxes or  
24 malls to this place. But by limiting the size of  
25 retail or the brand names, the plan essentially

1  
2 closes the door on a massive revenue source--  
3 companies that have the means and the interest to  
4 fund, maintain, operate, maybe all three, some of  
5 the site's most expensive rides.

6 Also, the isolation of the  
7 amusements in one zone along boardwalk doesn't  
8 support year-round activation. The amusement area  
9 along the boardwalk obviously works fine in the  
10 summer when the weather is good and the crowds are  
11 already coming; but in inclement weather or during  
12 the off-season, you're not going to be able to  
13 operate all the rides, and if you close one ride,  
14 that's surmountable for a larger park, in this  
15 place, since it's so small, it's going to create a  
16 huge gap in the programming. And when you  
17 multiply that closure, you're going to get a zone  
18 that is as dead and lifeless as the boardwalk  
19 currently is in mid-January.

20 Now while the zoning plan reflects  
21 the city's desire to enliven the Coney Island, and  
22 it's absolutely a step in the right direction--  
23 again, we all support making this place all it  
24 can be--it needs careful master planning and a  
25 single vision before the zoning plan can be

1  
2 defined. This plan, I think, is too restrictive,  
3 it handcuffs the design process, it limits the  
4 operator's flexibility to respond to future  
5 expansion, modification and, most damaging of all,  
6 tenant turnovers.

7 Now I completely support the  
8 renewal of Coney Island, its success will be good  
9 for New York, it's going to be a great sign to  
10 this country that we're on the mend, and it's  
11 certainly good for my industry. But its success  
12 depends on a creative master plan with a single  
13 vision that clearly and specifically defines the  
14 programming, not an urban zoning plan that  
15 attempts to define, but will actually limit Coney  
16 Island's long-term potential.

17 Thank you.

18 ARI SHALAM: Good afternoon  
19 Chairman Avella and members of the Council. My  
20 name is Ari Shalam and I am Senior Vice President  
21 of Taconic Investment Partners. As one of the  
22 principle property owners within the proposed  
23 rezoning area, Taconic strongly supports the  
24 city's rezoning plan. The City has crafted a  
25 comprehensive strategy for revitalization that



1  
2 will restore Coney's energy and excitement. This  
3 thoughtful plan presents a unique opportunity to  
4 move forward with a plan that fosters job growth,  
5 economic opportunity, affordable housing, and  
6 neighborhood amenities. This side shows Taconic's  
7 site plan for Coney West and Coney North. Coney  
8 West will be built on 6.8 acres and four sites  
9 between 20th and 22nd Street, Surf and the  
10 Boardwalk. These are the four sites. This is  
11 Taconic's plan. Coney North will be built on 3.2  
12 acres on two sites and is located between Surf and  
13 Mermaid and between 16th and 19th Streets. It is  
14 important to note that development on Coney West  
15 and Coney North will take place on vacant land  
16 outside of the amusement park district. Our  
17 development is residential and will include much-  
18 needed affordable housing and new neighborhood-  
19 oriented retail. This rezoning will create  
20 lively, vibrant street life and involve  
21 neighborhood-oriented businesses and small shops,  
22 arcades and restaurants along the Boardwalk.  
23 Taconic plans to participate in the City's  
24 Inclusionary Housing Program which mandates that  
25 20% of the units are affordable. This means that

500 of our new units of urgently needed affordable housing will be created by our project alone.

There will be 80% developed at market rate, which is critical to balance the heavy financial demands on this project. This rendering shows how the completed development in Coney West and Coney North will look. Again, you can see our six sites; these two on Coney North and these four here. We did not render the KeySpan lots or the HPD building in great detail because those are not our sites. One of the key highlights of our plan is the restoration of the Childs Building which is one of the most beloved landmarks in Coney Island. Its restoration will be a centerpiece for new development. Plans include an outdoor rooftop terrace for weddings and other events overlooking the beach. This slide gives you a sense of the before and after and you can see how the restored Childs will look here at the bottom. Another key element of Taconic's development in Coney West and Coney North is the stimulation of significant economy development in the area. It will create thousands of new construction jobs and very importantly some 1,200 permanent year round jobs.

1  
2 Taconic is committed to exploring all possible  
3 avenues to maximize local hiring. We strongly  
4 believe that workforce development will offer a  
5 significant number of Coney Island residents the  
6 opportunity to expand and enhance their skills and  
7 prepare them for jobs, not just in Coney Island  
8 but anywhere in the city. At this moment, Taconic  
9 is in discussions with a number of labor unions to  
10 explore the inclusion of union labor in Taconic's  
11 revitalization. Those discussions are advancing.  
12 Taconic recognizes and appreciates that this  
13 rezoning plan is a result of some six years of  
14 effort during which time the administration has  
15 worked closely with all of Coney Island's key  
16 stakeholders, including Taconic as well. There  
17 are, however, several unresolved critical issues  
18 that I would like to address. The most important  
19 issue, as we've discussed, the relocation of  
20 parkland or otherwise known as parkland alienation.  
21 Parkland relocation is essential to Coney West.  
22 Without it, our development will be fatally  
23 constrained. While mapped as parkland today, the  
24 current park parcels serve only as underutilized  
25 parking lots for approximately 30 baseball games a

1  
2 year. Without parkland relocation, Coney West,  
3 for all practical purposes, may not be buildable.  
4 On this slide you can see the dramatic loss of  
5 jobs and neighborhood amenities throughout the  
6 proposed rezoning area. Within Coney West alone,  
7 the large X's indicate three residential buildings  
8 that would not be constructed out of the six  
9 sites, including a significant number of  
10 affordable housing units. That's here, here and  
11 here in Coney Wes. The X on the far left also  
12 indicates that the new park would probably not be  
13 created as part of this process. This is a  
14 recreation park that replaces the parking lot that  
15 gets used 30 days a year. Finally, the three X's,  
16 just kind of running through the streetscape,  
17 indicate new streets that would not be built,  
18 which would then hamper neighborhood-oriented  
19 retail and the ability for the remaining buildings  
20 to be viable. If the full site plan cannot be  
21 implemented, the one that was shown to you earlier  
22 today, then Taconic supports the City's recently  
23 developed two-phase for de-mapping and relocating  
24 the parkland. The City's two-phase plan clears  
25 the way for crucial parkland actions needed to

1  
2 enable development to proceed in Coney West  
3 independent of what occurs in Coney East. And to  
4 be clear, it basically creates a street here,  
5 takes a little bit of the park to create the loop  
6 and it allows this satellite lot to be replaced  
7 here. These two city-owned parcels would be re-  
8 mapped and there's enough foot for foot footage to  
9 accomplish the state legislature goals of  
10 replacement, which is usually the key criteria to  
11 approve alienation. The second phase can happen  
12 independently later on. There are three  
13 additional issues for the city to consider besides  
14 parkland. One is infrastructure. We urge the  
15 city, as it was discussed before, to move forward  
16 on infrastructure improvements as expeditiously as  
17 possible so that residential construction is not  
18 delayed. This includes storm water drains, sewers  
19 and other subsurface infrastructure. Two, street  
20 mapping, the grades of Ocean Way and 21st near  
21 Childs are mapped to elevations far below levels  
22 necessary to comply with federal FEMA flood plain  
23 regulations. We encourage the city to correct  
24 this condition following ULURP in order to create  
25 vibrant streetscapes and easily accessible

1  
2 buildings throughout Coney West and avoid ramps  
3 and steps. Finally, the floor plate efficiency.  
4 Taconic has proposed alternative dimensions for  
5 residential floor plates that will improve  
6 significantly on the quality and constructability  
7 of residential buildings while preserving the  
8 plan's design integrity. The current options in  
9 the rezoning plan are somewhat rigid and do not  
10 allow enough flexibility to provide for cost-  
11 efficient construction and development. Please  
12 consider adopting a minor adjustment of no more  
13 than ten feet in either direction on some of the  
14 floor plates in the larger buildings. This would  
15 greatly improve flexibility and efficiency in the  
16 building and allow us to accomplish other goals  
17 that everybody wants to see occur. Finally, the  
18 process to arrive at this moment has been lengthy  
19 and thorough. There have been compromises and  
20 adjustments based on the input of all key  
21 stakeholders, including Taconic. The result is an  
22 extraordinarily carefully crafted plan that has  
23 all the elements to create a thriving community.  
24 This plan is designed to ensure that the  
25 surrounding neighborhood directly benefits from

1  
2 the economic rebirth. This land has lain fallow  
3 and woefully underutilized for more than four  
4 decades. If we don't act now, it will lie fallow  
5 for another four decades. What a shame that would  
6 be to squander an opportunity like this. This  
7 plan is about the people of Coney Island. They  
8 have waited a long time to see their community  
9 improve and we urge the Council to seize the  
10 moment and support this plan. Thank you.

11 MARJORIE PERLMEITER: Good  
12 afternoon, Chair Avella and Council Members. My  
13 name is Marjorie Perlmeiter. I am land use  
14 counsel to the Russo family, the owners of  
15 Gargiulo's Restaurant and Catering. The Russo  
16 family owns the majority of the property on this  
17 block and also the majority of the property on  
18 this block. Gargiulo's Restaurant, which isn't  
19 shown because this is an ideal future, Gargiulo's  
20 Restaurant occupies most of the block here. There  
21 is parking in this location and parking lots  
22 basically there. Gargiulo's is a 100-year-old  
23 Coney Island institution and a business that has  
24 contributed enormously to the life and health of  
25 Coney Island's neighborhood. The Russo's

1  
2 restaurant and accessory parking lots are, as I've  
3 described, located between Stillwell and West 16th  
4 Street and compromise two city blocks within the  
5 proposed Coney North and Mermaid Avenue sub-  
6 districts. I am, as are my clients, delighted to  
7 appear before you today to testify in enthusiastic  
8 support of the proposed Coney Island rezoning.

9 From the start, the Russos insisted that the  
10 rezoning had to allow not only for Gargiulo's to  
11 remain in Coney Island but to be able to enlarge  
12 to meet demand. Currently, Gargiulo's turns  
13 business away because the building's size cannot  
14 accommodate customers' requests. Furthermore, the  
15 rezoning had to stimulate neighborhood growth,  
16 bring in new businesses, new visitors and street  
17 life. Over the course of more than two years, the  
18 Russos, their architects and development  
19 consultants studied the impact that the proposed  
20 rezoning would have on Gargiulo's future and on  
21 its continued survival and growth in the new Coney  
22 Island. The Russo team presented its plans and  
23 ideas to, met with, negotiated and debated with  
24 the Department of City Planning, Council Member  
25 Recchia and the City Council Land Use division,



1  
2 Borough President Markowitz, the EDC, CIDC and  
3 Community Board 13. After months of studies by  
4 the Russo team, the careful consideration of our  
5 studies by the many city agencies and officials  
6 involved in the rezoning effort, and the ongoing  
7 tweaking of the Coney Island rezoning text, the  
8 Russo team is elated to report that the rezoning  
9 will enable the construction of a new, improved  
10 and larger Gargiulo's on Surf Avenue with as much  
11 indoor parking as its clients will need. The  
12 Russos look forward to embarking very soon on  
13 their new venture and are hopeful that the new  
14 Gargiulo's will thrive and grow right along with  
15 the new Coney Island. I would like to express my  
16 deepest appreciation to all of those who spent  
17 endless, tireless hours working on this rezoning  
18 and for their care, attention, understanding,  
19 patience and real devotion to ensure Gargiulo's  
20 and Coney Island's future. Michael Russo will get  
21 into more detail on the list, but I personally  
22 want to send my heartfelt appreciation to Council  
23 Member Recchia and also to the City Planning  
24 Department who worked so hard on this zoning.

25 MICHAEL RUSSO: Good afternoon

1  
2 Chairman Avella and Council Members. My name is  
3 Michael Russo. For more than 45 years, my family  
4 has owned and operated Gargiulo's Restaurant and  
5 Catering on West 15th in Coney North. Since the  
6 1960s, during the best and worst times of Coney  
7 Island, my family has invested and expanded  
8 Gargiulo's to the 400-seat establishment it is  
9 today. On average we serve between 60-80,000  
10 customers a year. In 2007, Gargiulo's celebrated  
11 its 100-year anniversary in Coney Island. On  
12 behalf of the entire family, I would say how  
13 absolutely thrilled we are about new Coney  
14 Island's rezoning. The rezoning will bring much  
15 needed business and housing to Coney Island and  
16 will bring jobs to the neighborhood and make the  
17 streets safer, encourage people to live there and  
18 more visitors to play there. For Gargiulo's, the  
19 rezoning will make it possible for us to build a  
20 brand new, much large restaurant and catering on  
21 Surf with indoor parking to meet the needs for  
22 more. Thanks to the rezoning for all the business  
23 it will bring to Coney Island, Gargiulo's expect  
24 the next 100 years will be even more successful  
25 than the first. I'd like to express the Russo

1  
2 family's huge appreciation and thanks for the care  
3 and hard work that went into the Coney Island  
4 rezoning. Deputy Mayor Robert Lieber and staff,  
5 the City Commissioner Chair Amanda Burden, New  
6 York Planning Borough Office Purnima Kapur and  
7 staff, EDC's Vice President Madelyn Wils, CIDC's  
8 President Lynn Kelly, Borough President Marty  
9 Markowitz, Speaker Quinn, the City Council Land  
10 Use Director Gail Benjamin, and most of all our  
11 greatest thanks and underlying devotion to the  
12 future of Council Member Domenic Recchia and his  
13 staff. Thank you very much.

14 DENNIS VOURDERIS: Good afternoon  
15 ladies and gentlemen and thank you Chairman Avella  
16 for allowing us the opportunity to testify here  
17 today. As we all sit here today in the City  
18 Council, our family business--

19 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [interposing]  
20 First of all, you have to state your name.

21 DENNIS VOURDERIS: Sorry about  
22 that. I apologize. I'm Dennis Vourderis, co-  
23 owner of Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park and  
24 this is my brother Steve. As we all sit here  
25 today in the City Council, our family business,

1  
2 Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park is open and  
3 operating. The only existing park attracting and  
4 entertaining hundreds of thousands of people each  
5 year. The current rezoning plan has a chance to  
6 be a giant leap forward for Coney Island as long  
7 as it does not take two giant steps backwards. We  
8 appreciate all the hard work and effort that has  
9 been put into this plan by so many people,  
10 including this committee. We want to support the  
11 plan but also need to protect our life's work and  
12 investment. This is the 89th anniversary of the  
13 Wonder Wheel being open and a privately held  
14 business. That's a responsibility and privilege  
15 my family takes very seriously. This amusement  
16 park business is the one our parent's built, which  
17 my brother and I, along with our seven sons  
18 continue to maintain today. If the plan hurts our  
19 park, it hurts Coney Island. There are two  
20 serious problems that make sure the plan does not  
21 take Coney Island and we ask the Council to  
22 address these two points and only then to approve  
23 the plan. Each of these issues has the potential  
24 to damage our business and hurt Coney Island.  
25 Number one is the designation of our property into

1  
2 parkland, and number two, the construction of a  
3 one-way vehicular street right through the middle  
4 of our amusement park. The designation of  
5 parkland would mean that our privately held land  
6 on which the Wonder Wheel stands and turns to ride  
7 people would not be under our control to manage as  
8 we see fit. In an incredible contradiction, the  
9 current plan speaks about the need for the City to  
10 acquire our property by purchase or condemnation  
11 for the preservation of amusements. Well let us  
12 all be very clear here, we already do that and we  
13 have been doing exactly that for the last 26  
14 years. We've rebuilt the Wonder Wheel, restoring  
15 the entire 200-ton structure to its original  
16 condition and built an amusement park around it.  
17 Many of you have visited and we want to keep being  
18 there for you. It was our family in 1989 who  
19 asked the City to declare the Wonder Wheel a New  
20 York City landmark. Twenty years later, we are  
21 still today passionate about our amusement park  
22 and do not want the government to have the chance  
23 to take it away. We ask that the Council and the  
24 City remove the Wonder Wheel property from the  
25 parkland designation. Secondly, the plan calls

1  
2 for construction of a street called Wonder Wheel  
3 Way which would cut right through the center of  
4 our park. This means we would lose at least two  
5 of our major rides and two of our game  
6 concessions. That would stop us from operating a  
7 complete amusement park and that's completely  
8 contradictory to the spirit of the plan. We have  
9 had very positive conversations with City Planning  
10 on an alternative that would provide access  
11 through the creation of a pedestrian walk in  
12 exchange for the Wonder Wheel Way. This concept  
13 would preserve our property and allow us to  
14 maintain a viable amusement area. We are hopeful  
15 the Council will join these discussions and  
16 support this change. Thank you again for working  
17 on the future of Coney Island. And please  
18 remember to visit us this summer as Coney Island  
19 is really fun and really open. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Gail Benjamin  
21 from the Council Land Use staff has been pointing  
22 out where you are, but if you could just point out  
23 on the map where your property is.

24 DENNIS VOURDERIS: Sure. I didn't  
25 bring any fancy maps with me today. We are right

1 here. The Wonder Wheel is right here in the  
2 borderline of the parkland designation area which  
3 is separated by Wonder Wheel Way. It's to a nice  
4 name to it actually. Our property runs parallel  
5 with West 12th Street and Jones Walk from the  
6 Bowery, which is here to the Boardwalk which is  
7 here. Our property currently goes along here.  
8 What that street will do is sever it, separating  
9 our Boardwalk location which houses a 17-ride  
10 kiddie park along with a food concession, a sweet  
11 shop and a couple of game concessions and  
12 Boardwalk access. So the street will sever that  
13 continuity that we have enjoyed for the past 26  
14 years, connecting the kiddie park area with the  
15 Wonder Wheel and the adult area that's in front of  
16 the Wonder Wheel. We originally had asked City  
17 Planning to take Wonder Wheel Way because the  
18 concept originally was good. It was a good  
19 concept to connect all the landmarks and bring  
20 traffic left and right. But unbeknownst to us, it  
21 was turning into a vehicular street which we had  
22 not known. Once we found out it was a vehicular  
23 street we didn't really care for it that much but  
24 we had asked them to draw it around the park. The  
25

1  
2 alternative would have been a pedestrian walkway,  
3 which would have only impacted one of our rides.  
4 That would be the bumper cars, which children that  
5 come from various day camps and so on, love to go  
6 on the "bumpy" cars as they call them. It's right  
7 in this area in front of the Wonder Wheel and it's  
8 a bumper car ride that will have to be relocated  
9 or dismantled and sold. Any other questions, I'd  
10 be happy to answer them.

11 DICK ZIGUN: I'm Dick Zigun from  
12 Coney Island USA. Thanks to wonderful funding  
13 from Domenic Recchia, Marty Markowitz and New York  
14 City, not on the Department of Cultural Affairs,  
15 but CIDC and EDC, we are the owners of this piece  
16 of property right here which we operate as a not-  
17 for-profit arts organization. We did at one time  
18 have funding, also thanks to Domenic and Marty and  
19 the City, to purchase this building here from Thor  
20 Equities to operate a Coney Island museum, but  
21 that funding was flushed down the toilet because  
22 Thor Equities would not close with us. So I am no  
23 fan, no stooge of Thor Equities. As somebody who  
24 has worked for 30 years in Coney Island and been  
25 the spokesman for the amusements for 25 years, I'm



1  
2 extremely frustrated, as you all seem to be, with  
3 the City. The experts on amusements in Coney  
4 Island are the people, the families who have put  
5 in decades during the hard times. It is not a  
6 consultant from Thinkwell and it is not a team  
7 that's put together and parrot what somebody wants  
8 for three days. The people who are the experts on  
9 amusements at Coney Island are Dennis Vourderis,  
10 who you just heard from, Carol Albert of Astroland  
11 and myself, to name three. None of us are happy  
12 with the plan, yet we do want rezoning to happen.  
13 We are in favor of good jobs. We are in favor of  
14 housing. But we feel that we are not being  
15 listened to. Dennis has made it clear his  
16 objections. Carol will tell you how much we  
17 object to the current placements of the hotels.  
18 Instead of rallying on the City I'm finding that  
19 I'm spending all my time on an action trying to  
20 save Nathan's Famous and reactivate the Shore  
21 Hotel. You people have spoken about arrogance on  
22 behalf of the city. If you read the fine print of  
23 this plan, it leads to the demolition of Nathan's  
24 restaurant. That's not arrogance, that's  
25 insanity. But despite my frustration, I do not

1  
2 give up hope because Domenic Recchia is willing to  
3 upset the apple cart a little bit. And I have  
4 seen Domenic in action. Domenic has fought hard  
5 for my organization, Coney Island USA. Domenic  
6 has fought hard for parks in Coney Island. The  
7 guy is a Brooklyn bulldog, but ladies and  
8 gentleman; he has a soft feminine side. He's also  
9 the major advocate for the arts and culture in New  
10 York City. Instead of it being a burden, I think  
11 it's an opportunity. I look to Domenic Recchia  
12 for leadership. I think it's a good idea to upset  
13 the apple cart. To reiterate, the amusement  
14 advocates, if I'm speaking for them, could care  
15 less about Wonder Wheel Way. We think Dennis and  
16 the Wonder Wheel should get what they want. We  
17 think Gargiulo's should get what they want. We do  
18 think there's more room for rides; the idea of  
19 rethinking Steeplechase Plaza and putting in rides  
20 rather than skateboarding. Domenic, shake them  
21 up. If there's anything I can do for you, any  
22 meeting I can attend, I am at your service. If  
23 you need me to sleep on the couch in your office  
24 and help you work this through, I'm there for you.  
25 Thank you.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Excuse me,  
3 Dick; we're going to have questions so you can  
4 come on back up.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: This is the  
6 last property owner and then we will take some  
7 questions, so everybody should hang around.

8 MATT WEINBERG: I'm Matt Weinberg.  
9 Chairman Avella, Council Members, as a property in  
10 the current Coney Island amusement district, I  
11 urge the New York City Council to approve the  
12 proposed zoning initiative.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Can you point  
14 to the property first so we can understand?

15 MATT WEINBERG: Sure. This block  
16 here and about half of this block right here,  
17 between Bowery and the Surf going midway. The  
18 proposed plan will revitalize Coney Island,  
19 bringing much needed redevelopment to an area with  
20 a proud history, but a less than impressive  
21 present. With the increased density of the  
22 proposed plan, Coney Island can become a year  
23 round destination. All New Yorkers shall benefit  
24 by having increased tax revenue, job creation and  
25 a Coney Island we can all be proud of. The plan

1  
2 may not be all things to all people, but there is  
3 no perfect plan. This one is both comprehensive  
4 and doable. If one were to poll most New Yorkers,  
5 I believe we would find an overwhelmingly majority  
6 would embrace and endorse this plan. Let's not  
7 let a tiny but vocal minority stand in the way of  
8 progress, thus silencing the majority. Prior  
9 administrations as well as developers have  
10 attempted to redevelop Coney Island, only to see  
11 those plans and initiatives fall flat. We all  
12 dream of a better Coney Island. The time is now  
13 to make it happen. When one thinks of a Coney  
14 Island Nathan's hot dog, some picture it with  
15 mustard, others ketchup, still others sauerkraut.  
16 The common vision we can all agree upon is the hot  
17 dog itself. While everyone has their own unique  
18 vision of what Coney Island should be, we can all  
19 agree it requires change and change for the  
20 better. Let's not go hungry arguing about what to  
21 put on the hot dog. Thank you for your time.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: First, and  
23 again, I would try and ask everybody to limit  
24 themselves to two questions. First, we'll have  
25 Domenic Recchia, then Council Member Jackson and

1  
2 Council Member Felder, in that order. Council  
3 Member Recchia?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: First of  
5 all, I'd like to thank everyone for their kind  
6 remarks. But to Dick, Coney Island USA, could you  
7 explain if we were to take Wonder Wheel Way out,  
8 what benefit it would be to the amusement area?  
9 It would increase the amusement area?

10 DICK ZIGUN: We are all talking and  
11 desiring, all of us in this room about a world  
12 class amusement destination. And to fill the  
13 rooms in those hotels you need a certain amount of  
14 attractions. That is going to be the major  
15 attraction. It's terrific if there were bowling  
16 alleys. It is terrific if there were movie  
17 theaters and restaurants. But that is not going  
18 to draw the tourists. You need a certain minimum  
19 of major attractions. If you're familiar with the  
20 industry, there is an issue of ride capacity. The  
21 current that the city is talking about designating  
22 for outdoor rides, including the Cyclone and the  
23 Parachute Jump, I think is 12 or 12.5 acres. But  
24 when you deduct out of that the souvenir shops and  
25 restaurant buildings along the Boardwalk that are

1  
2 there or will be replaced with other buildings,  
3 you actually have a very narrow strip with not  
4 enough opportunity to build the necessary rides  
5 that will attract people. If you remove Wonder  
6 Wheel Way, which from my point of view brings  
7 traffic, noise pollution, air pollution close to  
8 the Boardwalk and also you have people literally  
9 standing on lines for rides with sound systems  
10 literally dancing in the streets not watching  
11 their backs. You're going to have accidents.  
12 You're going to have people waiting to go on rides  
13 getting run over by cars. For 130 years we have  
14 had a street that moves people through the midway,  
15 through the ride section and it's called the  
16 Bowery. It functions well. If you can increase  
17 the acreage removing a street out of the acreage  
18 allows for more rides. It's a win/win situation.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: You're  
20 looking to increase the amusement and decrease the  
21 number of hotels?

22 DICK ZIGUN: Right. And if you  
23 remove one hotel, then that's more opportunity for  
24 rides and attractions, indoor or outdoors. If you  
25 remove a street, it's more acreage. So within the

1  
2 exact same area on the map, it is possible to  
3 increase the acreage and ride capacity just by  
4 eliminating a street or moving a hotel.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Thank you  
6 very much. To Taconic, I have your three key  
7 issues. Your second issue is the street mapping  
8 of the raised grade of the streets; why it was not  
9 included in this ULURP and there's an issue of  
10 that, the raising of the grade. If you have to go  
11 through another ULURP to correct that grade, are  
12 you going to have to pay for that? Is that going  
13 to be your ULURP?

14 ARI SHALAM: Unfortunately at the  
15 moment, that's the city's position.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: How much  
17 is that going to cost Taconic?

18 ARI SHALAM: It will probably be  
19 between \$200,000 and \$500,000, depending on when  
20 it happens.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: And you  
22 will not be able to start construction until that  
23 is done, correct?

24 ARI SHALAM: In that area we can't  
25 start construction until the subsurface

1  
2 infrastructure and the streets are done anyway.  
3 So the time to correct it is before any street  
4 work is done.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: But with  
6 that extra cost to you, will you have enough? If  
7 this ULURP was passed, do you have enough funding  
8 in place to start construction immediately?

9 ARI SHALAM: In conjunction with  
10 the construction of the infrastructure, our  
11 partners are inclined to move forward as the  
12 market evolves.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: What is  
14 your position with the building trades, with the  
15 unions?

16 ARI SHALAM: Both the building  
17 trades and the service unions, 32BJ, as well as  
18 Taconic have all been in active discussions. Our  
19 goal is to have a program in place with them  
20 simultaneously.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I know  
22 about 32BJ, I believe that's moving forward, but  
23 the building trades feel differently. They feel  
24 that the negotiations have come to a halt. With  
25 this down to 28 days left, we need to get moving.



1  
2 We've been getting notices by all the building  
3 trades. We've been getting letters. We've been  
4 getting telephone calls, communications that it  
5 came to a halt.

6           ARI SHALAM: The conversations with  
7 the service union are a lot easier to have because  
8 it's a direct correlation to cost of living in the  
9 buildings and that's an easy formula to study.  
10 With respect to construction, you have more than a  
11 dozen unions all coordinating through the Labor  
12 Council and we have to correspond that to cost. A  
13 lot of those costs derive from what we can or  
14 cannot build, which we are developing through this  
15 process. So we are sharing information and we  
16 have shared preliminary cost and construction  
17 numbers with them. We are about to share a  
18 greater scope of numbers with them over the next  
19 couple of days or week and hopefully advance that  
20 discussion. It's just a harder process.

21           COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: We would  
22 ask that you really get moving on this because  
23 we're down to 28 days after today. We're going to  
24 have to resolve that issue. To Thor Equities, to  
25 Mr. Masyr, the city keeps on saying that to zone

1  
2 this parkland is the only way to keep the  
3 amusements there. Is there another mechanism and  
4 that it will always guarantee?

5 JESSE MASYSR: In our opinion, yes,  
6 I think there is clearly another mechanism. I  
7 think the creation of a special zoning district,  
8 similar to what is happening in the rest of Coney  
9 East, can be crafted down into the area that is  
10 designated as parkland and can achieve everything  
11 that the city claims it wishes to achieve, plus  
12 have the added attraction of having controls that  
13 are subject to public review. I think if you  
14 wanted to create an amusement-only area in that  
15 area which is now parkland, it certainly can be  
16 done pursuant to a special zoning district.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: If we were  
18 to go this route instead of zone it parkland and  
19 create a special district because you were saying  
20 is why should we give away our power to the state.  
21 The City Council loses their power, their control,  
22 their say and the community won't have a say. If  
23 the community wants to say something they have to  
24 go up to Albany. Is it possible that the wording  
25 could be that there could be no zoning changes

1 unless it's approved by the future City Council?

2 JESSE MASYSR: I'm not sure I  
3 understand the question.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: The  
5 question is that the city keeps on saying that if  
6 you don't make it parkland and you make it a  
7 special amusement, a developer could come here in  
8 the future and try to change it. What I'm trying  
9 to get at is if we do a special amusement  
10 district, are there things that we could put in  
11 place to prevent future developers thinking that  
12 they could come in here and try to take away the  
13 amusements?  
14

15 JESSE MASYSR: I imagine what you  
16 could do is at this point deal with current  
17 ownership and see what form of covenants can be  
18 placed on the land that would ensure that it would  
19 not be changed in the future.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Thank you.  
21 At this time I don't have any further questions.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you,  
23 Mr. Chair. Let me ask this question of the  
24 landowners, the same question that I asked for the  
25 city administration with respect to if in fact the

2 land was rezoned as they wish, would the value of  
3 the land be the same, diminish or increase in  
4 value? You can respond separately and try to be  
5 as short as possible because I have another  
6 question. Just say who you are and who you're  
7 representing.

8 JESSE MASYSR: I'm representing Thor  
9 Equities' property in Coney East. I think it  
10 would significantly de-value the property. It  
11 would be a cloud hanging over the property. Any  
12 perspective purchaser would know that the burden  
13 of condemnation is hanging over the property.  
14 There is no question it will reduce its underlying  
15 value.

16 ARI SHALAM: We at Taconic do not  
17 have any land that is going to be in the area to  
18 be designated for parks, so it's not applicable to  
19 us.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So it's  
21 not applicable. Next, just identify yourself and  
22 who you're representing.

23 MATT WEINBERG: Matt Weinberg and I  
24 represent myself and my partner Jeff Perceley  
25 [phonetic] who's sitting over there and the

2 properties that I indicated earlier.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: What's the  
4 name of your properties? Is it like Deno's or  
5 something like that?

6 MATT WEINBERG: No, we have tenants  
7 there. It is 1205 Bowery and 1207 Bowery and 3019  
8 West 12th Street.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Go ahead.

10 MATT WEINBERG: Not doing anything  
11 I think is a far greater risk. I think the way  
12 the plan is put forth and proposed right now  
13 increases the density and subsequently it's going  
14 to increase the value of the properties. For the  
15 past several years, as operators as well as  
16 landlords there, we've had trouble collecting  
17 rent. We've had to give rent reductions and even  
18 then rent is not tendered in a timely fashion and  
19 sometimes it's not tendered at all.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I don't  
21 mean to cut you off, but I have a series of  
22 questions. In your opinion it will increase the  
23 value of your land?

24 MATT WEINBERG: Yes.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Any other

owners there? Speak up, sir, I can't hear you.

DICK ZIGUN: Dick Zigun from the art center. I've referred to the parkland designation as a lofty idea, even a mitzvah. I think having a dedicated large park there would probably enhance the value of our programs. On the other hand, the price--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:  
[interposing] Programs or land? There's a difference. I'm asking about land.

DICK ZIGUN: We own our building but we cannot sell it for 30 years. So we are interested in enhancing the neighborhood.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Because you can't sell your property for 30 years?

DICK ZIGUN: Right. The parkland would help us, but the price to pay, the things like building 30-story hotels casting us in shadows or demolishing Nathan's for a hotel would take away from the value of our programs and our property.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I'm not interested in programs, I'm interested in property.

2 ARI SHALAM: If I could interject  
3 as Taconic, while it's not applicable to us as  
4 parkland--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:  
6 [interposing] Speak up sir.

7 ARI SHALAM: While parkland  
8 designation is not applicable to us, any  
9 improvement from where we are now in Coney Island,  
10 whether by way of creation of parkland, or  
11 anything else will vastly improve the overall  
12 neighborhood.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: But you  
14 know they said they can't really change it to  
15 parkland unless the owners sold them the land and  
16 they have to get state permission to do so in  
17 order to do that and they don't have that. It's  
18 all an assumption that things will happen.

19 ARI SHALAM: That's the process  
20 that was outlined earlier. But my comment was--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:  
22 [interposing] But I do know--

23 ARI SHALAM: I'm sorry, go ahead.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I'm sorry,  
25 but I do know based on the historical perspective

1  
2 there has been several redevelopment plans and  
3 none of them have brought anything around in the  
4 past 30 or 40 years.

5 ARI SHALAM: Right now we're on the  
6 first floor. If we jump out the window, we're not  
7 going to get hurt. We are so low right now in  
8 terms of the uses of these lands, any improvement  
9 will be better than where we are now.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Listen, I  
11 know that people have fallen out of the first  
12 floor and died. And I'm very serious about that.

13 ARI SHALAM: What I mean is we can  
14 only go up here because of what's being planned.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: You know  
16 what I mean? You could fall from five feet and  
17 die.

18 ARI SHALAM: It was an analogy.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay, a  
20 poor one I must say.

21 ARI SHALAM: Okay, I'll accept  
22 that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Just stand  
24 up sir, so I can see you.

25 DENNIS VOURDERIS: My name is



2 Dennis Vourderis. I'm from Deno's Wonder Wheel.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Go ahead.

4 DENNIS VOURDERIS: I just wanted to  
5 point out to you that--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:

7 [interposing] I'm sorry, answer my question as far  
8 as increasing or decreasing your value.

9 DENNIS VOURDERIS: As far as the  
10 parkland increasing or decreasing the value of our  
11 property, sir, we are not landlords; we are  
12 operators of an amusement park.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Who owns  
14 your land? So go ahead.

15 DENNIS VOURDERIS: Will it increase  
16 the value of our land?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Or  
18 decrease the value of your land?

19 DENNIS VOURDERIS: Let me be very  
20 clear here.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Just take  
22 one minute to be very clear.

23 DENNIS VOURDERIS: The Wonder Wheel  
24 is on privately owned land. If it becomes  
25 designated into parkland, it's going to decrease

1  
2 the value of our business in terms of not having  
3 the ability to control it the way we have been  
4 controlling it and operating it for 26 years.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: You talked  
6 about it would cut it in half basically, is that  
7 correct? That's what you had explained earlier,  
8 is that correct?

9 DENNIS VOURDERIS: Correct.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Was that  
11 the northern part from the southern part?

12 DENNIS VOURDERIS: That's correct.  
13 The portion that lies in the parkland designation  
14 is the portion that houses the property of the  
15 Wonder Wheel. So it's not a piece of vacant land  
16 and it's not a temporary amusement device such as  
17 a carnival ride. It's a permanently attached  
18 fixture, an icon of New York City that's been  
19 there for 89 years operating in our family for 26.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I'm just  
21 trying to get the answers and I need to move on,  
22 because my Chairman is going to cut me off. So  
23 please pass the mike to somebody else.

24 MARJORIE PERLMEITER: Marjorie  
25 Perlmeiter on behalf of the Russo family,

1  
2 Gargiulo's Restaurant. We're not in the area that  
3 would be affected by the parkland area.

4 Obviously, the rezoning would enormously increase  
5 the value of our property because we could not  
6 develop anything like would be possible from the  
7 rezoning presently today.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Anybody  
9 else? I've heard some of you agree with the  
10 rezoning and some of you disagree. Do you  
11 realistically think that we can come to an  
12 agreement by July 29th, which is our drop dead  
13 date when there are so many variables and loops  
14 that have not been closed, including the whole  
15 parkland issue and the remapping? My colleague  
16 Domenic Recchia has said that Diane Savino has  
17 said to him and to the city people that until they  
18 have all of the property purchased from the owners  
19 that the state legislature is not going to act.  
20 That's different clearly from what I heard from  
21 the New York City Economic Develop Corp that they  
22 need to get a signal. A signal and ownership are  
23 two different things. I'm asking you your  
24 opinions on whether or not an agreement can be  
25 reached with the parties, and all of you are

1  
2 parties to it. So with respect to that, what  
3 zoning would you want to see if in fact you  
4 disagree with the zoning that's currently being  
5 proposed? Start with you sir. You're speaking  
6 for your client. What zoning? Is it C, D, R, R-  
7 7, R-6?

8 JESSE MASYSR: That's a large  
9 question. Optimism is not something that I'm  
10 overflowing with, with regard to your timing.  
11 Ultimately what solution I think would best suit  
12 the property on Coney Island would be a special  
13 zoning district that created in the park area a  
14 framework for creation of amusement rides and  
15 mixed use would be the best solution. We think  
16 parkland is not the best solution. And as to  
17 whether or not in the next 28 days we can reach an  
18 agreement with the city, as I said, I am not  
19 overflowing with optimism.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Is the  
21 zoning okay with you or would you like to see a  
22 different zoning with your property or who you  
23 represent?

24 ARI SHALAM: We are happy with the  
25 zoning as it is. We had some tweaks that we

2 pointed out but generally we're happy.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay,  
4 next, if you don't mind.

5 DICK ZIGUN: I think Domenic  
6 Recchia has the ability to straighten it out. And  
7 if so, he's on his way to congress or the next  
8 borough president.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Wow,  
10 Domenic. Congressman Recchia. I'm sorry, sir, go  
11 ahead.

12 MATT WEINBERG: If I had my  
13 druthers, perhaps I would fine tune it to allow a  
14 slightly greater density or broader uses. But  
15 overall we endorse the plan as it stands.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Next sir,  
17 and that's Deno's, right?

18 DENNIS VOURDERIS: Yes. We hope  
19 that an agreement can be reached obviously. We  
20 want the upzoning but the parkland we disagree  
21 with. We hope that things could be worked out.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Would you  
23 want to see it as what Mr. Masyr has said, like  
24 mixed use and stuff like that? You would want to  
25 take out that street, Wonder Wheel Way.

2 DENNIS VOURDERIS: We would like to  
3 see amusements be built up to their highest  
4 capacity in Coney Island obviously.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And  
6 besides amusement?

7 DENNIS VOURDERIS: We would want  
8 the upzoning to take place, but again, the  
9 parkland issue will hurt our ability to operate  
10 our park.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Anyone  
12 else?

13 MARJORIE PERLMEITER: We're in  
14 favor of the proposed new zoning.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Who's we?

16 MARJORIE PERLMEITER: This is  
17 Gargiulo's Restaurant. The Russo family is in  
18 favor of the proposal.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: The Russo  
20 family, yes.

21 MARJORIE PERLMEITER: However,  
22 imagining that they would come to some conclusion  
23 about all of the open issues.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: But you  
25 land is not in the parkland area, is that correct?

2 MARJORIE PERLMEITER: Right. But  
3 what we might recommend then is considering Coney  
4 North and Mermaid subdistrict separately and  
5 carrying that through while they still work out  
6 the details for the other portions.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Anyone  
8 else? Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: I have  
10 questions for the restaurant property owner. It's  
11 one restaurant, right? And I have a question for  
12 Deno's Wonder Wheel. I'll ask Deno's. Can you  
13 pass the mike or if you want to come up. Mr.  
14 Russo, do you want to sit down. I just wanted to  
15 know, you spoke about the Wonder Wheel and the  
16 other rides, which we really love. I did take  
17 exception to your excluding adults from enjoying  
18 your bumper rides. I just wanted you to know, but  
19 I forgive you. Do you want to apologize?

20 DENNIS VOURDERIS: I apologize for  
21 excluding adults.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: It's  
23 accepted. Now, what's with the haunted house?  
24 The haunted house, which is really right on the  
25 side of the Wonder Wheel, with this Wonder Wheel

1

Way, what would happen with the haunted house?

2

3

DENNIS VOURDERIS: A portion of it would be lost. We don't know where the street would actually come through the property exactly because it hasn't been staked out or surveyed to an exact inch. But the way it looks on the map, it would probably impact the spook-o-rama as well, unless it was narrowed or diverted to another direction.

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COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: Am I right that at this time, for all those that enjoy your rides, we really have a number of different ways to get there sort of. If you go from the Boardwalk you enter the area and you're able to go through the younger children rides and you descend down. You get to the Wonder Wheel.

12

13

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DENNIS VOURDERIS: You know our place well.

19

20

COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: I love your place.

21

22

DENNIS VOURDERIS: Thank you.

23

COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: I can't accept free tickets.

24

25

DENNIS VOURDERIS: I didn't offer



any.

COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: I was hinting. I was hinting. You obviously didn't get it. Or, if you come up from Surf Avenue sort of the side streets, there are a variety of ways without entering traffic that you can enjoy the rides, is that true?

DENNIS VOURDERIS: It's true.

COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: The Wonder Way really not only separates things but it also in terms of the safety for children to be able to just go. That song sort of seems to have been the flow since I was a kid. That no matter where you go, once you enter safely from the Boardwalk or Surf Avenue, you're there. You can literally go across without experiencing any traffic. This is a terrible thing. Forget about anything else. Besides hurting your business, it really disrupts the safety or the sense of enjoyment and calm that exists for someone trying to enjoy it. Is that fair to say?

DENNIS VOURDERIS: Yes, it is fair, and I hear it all the time. Parents are very comfortable in our amusement park because it is

2 somewhat enclosed and away from cars and vehicles.  
3 That was one of our concerns in addressing this  
4 plan with city planning. But they have been  
5 responsive in terms of narrowing it and making it  
6 a pedestrian walkway in our discussions.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: But even  
8 with a pedestrian walkway, I'm not asking you to  
9 criticize anyone. All I'm saying is in your  
10 perfect vision of what should be there, obviously  
11 getting rid of this Wonder Wheel Way would  
12 maintain that calm, enjoyable flavor--

13 DENNIS VOURDERIS: [interposing]  
14 Continuity.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: The  
16 continuity. You don't have that when you go to a  
17 very, very big ride park, but certain at least  
18 somewhat of that.

19 DENNIS VOURDERIS: Yes.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: Then, Mr.  
21 Russo, in terms of your restaurant, there were  
22 issues raised about the parking problems. Are you  
23 satisfied with the discussions they had? In the  
24 plan that exists, how will you get parking for  
25 your restaurant?

2 MARJORIE PERLMEITER: I should  
3 answer that.

4 MICHAEL RUSSO: I'll start and then  
5 I'll pass it to you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: Don't let  
7 her push you around.

8 MICHAEL RUSSO: I pay her a lot of  
9 money.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: That's what  
11 I'm saying. I don't understand it.

12 MICHAEL RUSSO: We had a lot of  
13 issues as far as the original plan. It's been  
14 tweaked a lot as Domenic has shown before with the  
15 original maps. All our issues were addressed. We  
16 basically got what we can get. They added a lot  
17 more to our property. In answer to the  
18 gentleman's question before, our property will go  
19 up a lot if they rezone it as we today. Of  
20 course, we would like more, but beggars can't be  
21 choosy and pigs get slaughtered.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: I  
23 understand. But in other words, as the plan  
24 stands today, you wouldn't have a problem with the  
25 parking, right?

2 MICHAEL RUSSO: No, they were  
3 fixed.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: If I'm not  
5 mistaken you partially have valet parking now as  
6 well. Is that true?

7 MICHAEL RUSSO: Yes, we do.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: You have  
9 valet parking. The valet parking is across the  
10 street. What do they do? They pick up the cars?

11 MICHAEL RUSSO: They take the cars  
12 from where the entrance is now and they run the  
13 cars across the street.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: Across the  
15 street?

16 MICHAEL RUSSO: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: You own  
18 that property across the street?

19 MICHAEL RUSSO: Yes, we do.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: And you  
21 would continue to be able to keep parking across  
22 the street?

23 MICHAEL RUSSO: Our plan is to move  
24 the hall across the street, make a bigger hall and  
25 a bigger restaurant and the parking would be

1 inclusive with the hall and the restaurant.

2  
3 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: Would you  
4 care to comment, I hope, about the proposed plans  
5 about additional restaurants and the problems that  
6 they would have? There was some discussion about  
7 parking somewhere far away. Now you're in the  
8 restaurant business, right?

9 MICHAEL RUSSO: Yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: I don't  
11 want to talk to her. I want to talk to you.  
12 You're in the restaurant business.

13 MICHAEL RUSSO: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: Is it fair  
15 to say that if some people had to go three blocks  
16 away--

17 MICHAEL RUSSO: [interposing] My  
18 business relies on my parking lot. If we did not  
19 have our parking lot, we would not have our  
20 business as it is today.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: I know, and  
22 you have a beautiful place.

23 MICHAEL RUSSO: Thank you very  
24 much.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: I was there

1  
2 recently. I couldn't eat, but I was there  
3 recently.

4 MICHAEL RUSSO: We had some kosher  
5 food.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: We'll talk  
7 about it another time. But the other issue is  
8 that it's not only that you have valet parking,  
9 it's that it's nearby. I noticed that people  
10 drove up, somebody picked up the car and moments  
11 later it was parked and vice versa. If you have  
12 an event, let's say with 200 couples or something  
13 like that and you have a bunch of people working,  
14 you're able to bring those cars out quickly. But  
15 if you had to go three blocks away, that would  
16 clearly not be the same, right?

17 MICHAEL RUSSO: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: If you  
19 owned a restaurant and you're trying to attract  
20 business, having parking three blocks away would  
21 not do the trick. Is that fair to say?

22 MICHAEL RUSSO: I would say yes.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: Excellent.  
24 Those were all the answers. The other thing I  
25 want to know is do you think Councilman Recchia is

1  
2 soft and feminine?

3 MICHAEL RUSSO: Soft? No.

4 Feminine? Definitely not.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SIMCHA: That's what  
6 I thought.

7 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I'm not even  
8 going to comment on that. Am I correct that, in  
9 terms of the disputed parkland, there are  
10 basically two property owners, Thor and you? Am I  
11 correct?

12 DENNIS VOURDERIS: There are four.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Who are the  
14 four?

15 DENNIS VOURDERIS: Harris Boulard  
16 [phonetic], ourselves, Tom Murray--

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [interposing]  
18 You've got to speak into the mike.

19 DENNIS VOURDERIS: I'm sorry. I  
20 know all four of them. It's Joe Sitt, Harris  
21 Boulard, Tom Murray and myself and my brother.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Are the other  
23 two here? I just see two.

24 DENNIS VOURDERIS: I don't know. I  
25 don't think so.

2 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: This then goes  
3 for both of you. If you had your druthers, if you  
4 had some real say in what was going on, what would  
5 be your opinion of the parkland acquisition?  
6 Would you just like it to be the way it is and you  
7 either continue to operate your business or you  
8 continue to go ahead with your plans, whatever  
9 they are and you probably should tell us what they  
10 were?

11 DENNIS VOORDERIS: If the parkland  
12 goes away, we get to continue to operate our  
13 amusement park as it is. That's not the worst  
14 thing in the world. It's protected by C-7 zoning  
15 right now. It has been for 100 and some odd  
16 years. And the Wonder Wheel itself is a New York  
17 City landmark, so if anything is going to ever be  
18 done on it or around it, it has to go through the  
19 Landmarks Commission anyway, so it is protected.

20 JESSE MASYSR: As I stated before,  
21 our preference would be not to be mapped parkland  
22 and to sit down and work with the city for the  
23 preservation of the amusement area and  
24 redevelopment of the site in a mixed use  
25 development.



2 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

3 I'm going to ask counsel to call what in effect is  
4 the first panel. We're going to do a panel in  
5 favor and then a panel in opposition, et cetera,  
6 et cetera, until we go through everybody who has  
7 signed up to speak. I now will start putting  
8 people on the clock. You'll have two minutes. I  
9 don't usually cut somebody off if they go beyond  
10 that, but I think two minutes is plenty of time to  
11 indicate one way or the other whether you're in  
12 favor or opposition. If you hear somebody say the  
13 same thing that you did beforehand, try and not  
14 repeat. Try and say something different, whether  
15 you're in favor of the project or you're against  
16 and the reasons why. We're going to try and move  
17 through this so that we get to hear from everybody  
18 who has signed up.

19 COUNSEL: Jim Seay, Jonathan  
20 Gordon, Joe Montalto, and Jack Rouse.

21 JOE MONTALTO: Good afternoon and  
22 thank you for giving us this opportunity today.  
23 My name is Joe Montalto. I'm the president of  
24 High Mountain Enterprises. We're a consulting  
25 firm within the amusement park industry. I'm also

1  
2 someone who has grown up in Brooklyn. Many of you  
3 may remember Raven Hall. That's where my family  
4 had its locker. So I know Coney Island very well.  
5 I'm a former New York State senator who  
6 represented Brooklyn. So I want to focus my  
7 remarks this morning on the issues of Coney  
8 Island's amusements and planning for what we hope  
9 will be a world class amusement district. I'd  
10 like to start out by asking you to consider  
11 something. You're a municipality. You're tasked  
12 with transforming a piece of prime oceanfront  
13 property into a premier amusement park that is  
14 well planned, affordable to the working people of  
15 your city and protected in perpetuity from the  
16 threat of encroaching residential development.  
17 Coney Island is in 2009, but try Rye Playland in  
18 1927. I know a little bit about that topic as I  
19 am proud to say that I was the director of  
20 Playland for eight years. I can tell you that Rye  
21 Playland provides a fascinating parallel for some  
22 of the challenges currently facing the City of New  
23 York in its quest to redevelop legendary Coney  
24 Island. Once the city's premier family  
25 entertainment area with legendary amusement parks

1  
2 that complimented one another, over time Coney  
3 Island has become a location that has no  
4 coordinated planning, no thoughtful focused  
5 investment and now has suffered the unthinkable as  
6 Astroland and other active rides have closed down  
7 as a result of real estate speculation. These are  
8 the same kind of issues that were facing  
9 Westchester, but with sound planning Rye Playland  
10 became the result. The good news for amusement  
11 fans today is that the city has in its  
12 comprehensive rezoning proposal for Coney Island  
13 made an incredibly bold gambit and has proposed  
14 the proactive creation and protection of a new  
15 amusement district that can also be a success.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: If you can  
17 start to sum up.

18 JOE MONTALTO: I can sum up. I'm  
19 here to support the plan as put forward. I'm here  
20 to specifically tell you that designating it as  
21 parkland is the best way to protect the amusement  
22 area from future development, from property  
23 values. We don't have Palisades Amusement Park  
24 here anymore today because of real estate values.  
25 We wouldn't have Rye Playland also if it had not

1  
2 been designated parkland because of its property  
3 values. I understand we're short on time so I'll  
4 just wait for questions. Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you. I  
6 would ask the people that are moving around please  
7 to be quiet. If you have to have a conversation,  
8 please take it outside.

9 JIM SEAY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman  
10 and thank you committee members. My name is Jim  
11 Seay. I'm the owner of Premier Rides, a ride  
12 manufacturing company that is based here in the  
13 United States. I grew up locally and have enjoyed  
14 Coney Island since I was a young kid. So I'm  
15 actually enjoying all the passion that I'm seeing  
16 today because there's a lot of passion in me for  
17 the place. I would like to reiterate what was  
18 said before that Coney Island is the roots of the  
19 amusement industry. I would not have my present  
20 day job if it wasn't for Coney Island and neither  
21 would I think everyone sitting at this panel here.  
22 So it's a very important place from that  
23 standpoint. I volunteer for the industry in a  
24 number of ways. One of the things I do is help  
25 run a trade show for our industry which has 30,000

1  
2 people come each year. I was very impressed a few  
3 years ago when the Coney Island Development Corp  
4 came to our trade show as an exhibiter. Many  
5 people in the industry went up to them and said,  
6 why are you here? The answer was, "we want to  
7 hear from the industry what can help Coney Island  
8 come back to the greatness it was." I asked how  
9 to help. I was asked to help lead a panel of  
10 amusement industry people that could give some  
11 input. I was given a list of the people that  
12 would be great to get input from, a wide array of  
13 people from the industry. Water parks, park  
14 operators, manufacturers, designers, a very wide  
15 array of 13 people who had hundreds and hundreds  
16 of years of experience. We're talking mom and pop  
17 organizations like Morey's Piers, the Steel Pier,  
18 all the way up to the CEOs of Paramount Parks, the  
19 CEO of Ripley's, the CEOs of Six Flags, so a lot  
20 of experience. Those people all volunteered their  
21 time pro bono, came from all over the country and  
22 other countries and spent several days here. I  
23 absolutely agree with the opinion that was given  
24 before that the opinion of the local people is  
25 very important and I believe they deserve to be

1  
2 heard. I'm glad they were heard today. There's a  
3 series of recommendations that came up. I'm going  
4 to let Jack Rouse go over those recommendations.  
5 I'd just like to say one thing that Morey's Piers  
6 is a good example. Jack Morey who owns the park  
7 said he would not exist today if it wasn't for the  
8 efforts of their City Council and such to protect  
9 the pier, otherwise it would just be a bunch of  
10 condos. Thank you very much for your time.

11 JACK ROUSE: My name is Jack Rouse  
12 of Jack Rouse Associates. I've been in this for  
13 40 years. Design and master planning all the  
14 majors, you know Disney, Warner and a lot of  
15 community-based theme parks too. Speaking with  
16 Jim, we enthusiastically support this plan for the  
17 rezoning. Our feeling, very frankly, is that you  
18 must approach this as an entity that honors the  
19 past and the history and the heritage that is  
20 there. Don't listen to anyone who says young  
21 people don't care about that. That couldn't be  
22 farther from the truth. It has to be a  
23 combination of that sort of gritty air in the face  
24 thrills and a little bit of sophistication. And  
25 it has to combine indoor and outdoor. That is all

1  
2 eminently possible with the land that you have and  
3 with the plan that has been put forth. It is not  
4 a theme park, it is not Disney, it is not  
5 Universal, this does not need a plastic overlay  
6 and \$21 million simulator rides. It needs to  
7 honor the design language that has made Coney  
8 Island what it is. And whether that's the Wonder  
9 Wheel or any of the other attractions, that's  
10 where you should take your cue going forward. As  
11 I say, overlaying the theme and calling this a  
12 theme park is going to totally violate the Coney  
13 Island brand and that is a one-way trip to  
14 absolute failure in the opinion of everybody that  
15 was on this panel. I would also caution you very,  
16 very carefully, retail and mixed use and  
17 amusements are not necessarily compatible. I have  
18 a difficult time finding any place where they're  
19 worked and there are several places where they  
20 haven't. Coney Island is a special brand with a  
21 special legacy and that's what you most honor. To  
22 pick on what Jim said, the interest in the  
23 industry is extremely high, not just because we  
24 all were born in Coney Island sort of, but because  
25 frankly many of us give a damn about creating

1  
2 community-based attractions that in fact attract  
3 an awful lot of locals and also have great appeal  
4 for the industry. You must get in place a private  
5 developer who has experience in this industry.  
6 It's proven time and time again that if you  
7 haven't been down this road, don't let them go  
8 down that road on your nickel.

9 JONATHAN GORDON: Honorable members  
10 of the New York City Council, thank you for the  
11 opportunity to speak. My name is Jonathan Gordon.  
12 I'm a former resident of New York City, a member  
13 of the amusement industry. My new amusement ride  
14 company, Gordon Rides, just launched this year. I  
15 urge you to approve the city's proposed Coney  
16 Island rezoning and redevelopment plan. As there  
17 are competing visions for the future of Coney  
18 Island, I feel responsibility to point out certain  
19 major shortcomings, in particular of Thor Equities  
20 and its supporters and support the city's plan  
21 directly. Luckily for me, I do not have to do  
22 very much to explain why Thor is the wrong  
23 developer for Coney Island. Just take a look at  
24 what Coney Island looks like now. The nice bright  
25 posters that Thor has placed in the subways



1  
2 contrast spectacularly with the reality of the  
3 situation. Please take the time to review Thor's  
4 website. When you do, it will be readily apparent  
5 that Thor Equities is not, has never been in the  
6 amusement industry or business. Thor is in the  
7 business of flipping real estate. Therefore, not  
8 only do they lack the credibility required to  
9 properly develop and operate an amusement  
10 district, but their motives also come into  
11 question. Why would a non-amusement developer  
12 want to buy up the land that is dedicated to park  
13 in Coney Island? I can assure that it doesn't  
14 have to do with helping Coney's residents. The  
15 amusement industry was born in Coney Island, which  
16 is why it's an issue that's so near and dear to my  
17 heart. In an age where we have lost so many New  
18 York landmarks for the wrong reasons, one need  
19 only look at original pictures from Penn Station;  
20 it would be a terrible shame to lose another due  
21 to a developer's agenda. So with all due respect  
22 to Mr. Sitt, Coney Island is the "People's  
23 Playground", not his playground. I urge you to  
24 make the redevelopment of Coney Island a reality  
25 and not another broken promise. Please support

2 the city's plan. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

4 The next panel will be a panel in opposition.

5 COUNSEL: Steven Byrdsell, Laverne  
6 Penn, Carmen Gonzalez, Catherine Jenkins, Albert  
7 Johnson.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Let me remind  
9 people. Let me remind you, and that includes the  
10 person who keeps shouting out the word jobs, that  
11 you cannot yell out. This is the people's house.  
12 I will not allow anybody to try and intimidate  
13 anybody else. Now, if you want to continue doing  
14 that, I will ask the sergeant-at-arms to remove  
15 those individuals and in effect you will have just  
16 taken yourself out of the process. If you want to  
17 have something to say, all you have to do is sign  
18 up to speak and then you get your two minutes to  
19 speak, which is more than what you're going to get  
20 if you keep yelling out. Are any of the people  
21 here that were called?

22 STEVEN BYRDSSELL: Hello. My name  
23 is Steven Byrdsell. I'm a resident of Coney  
24 Island for over 40 years. I'm also here with  
25 ACORN. A lot has been talked about as far as

1  
2 great opportunities. But I think the most  
3 important thing is the people there now and the  
4 people prior. We're talking about all of these  
5 good things but we're overlooking the people. My  
6 situation is I live in Coney Island District 1124.  
7 The main problem is all these projects come in and  
8 we the people that are there, we never get the  
9 benefits. I'm not trying to be despairing but  
10 even when Ringling Brothers came, which was good,  
11 but the people did not get the jobs. People from  
12 surrounding areas got the jobs. That's why I'm  
13 here today is to say that the people of 112, which  
14 I'm a resident of, are not getting their fair  
15 share. I keep making the point of at least 50%  
16 affordable houses with income-tier based upon the  
17 person's salary. I think if any one of us should  
18 be able to benefit from the long history of Coney  
19 Island it should be the residents. I've been  
20 there a while. I remember when the hot dogs were  
21 a foot long. I've been there a long time. I'm  
22 saying that we too would like to have a piece of  
23 the American dream to have a nice secure home for  
24 our children and family. I don't have too much to  
25 say other than don't forget the residents. We're

1  
2 talking about a good thing here. We're talking  
3 about opportunity and business ownerships. Those  
4 things are great. But be honest, if there were no  
5 people, everybody that got up here that owns the  
6 businesses would not benefit. I'm just saying  
7 please 50% affordable housing. I loved when Mr.  
8 Recchia was talking to HUD and he asked them about  
9 making programs for those who didn't qualify. I  
10 want to thank the Council and thank everyone for  
11 being here. Most of all I thank ACORN for helping  
12 us. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Excuse me,  
14 could you please remain seated.

15 LAVERNE PENN: Good afternoon. My  
16 name is Laverne Penn. I'm a Coney Island ACORN  
17 member. I have lived in Coney Island for 16 1/2  
18 years. Right now I'm raising my young kids but  
19 I'm just barely making it. I have been working  
20 since I was 13 years old, getting odd jobs trying  
21 to survive. I have been on public assistance at  
22 various times. I have worked construction off and  
23 on for 9 1/2 years, which I've been laid off  
24 because of a lack of work. I'm currently living  
25 in public housing. Most of them need to be fixed

1  
2 right about now. Now they're talking about new  
3 development. First of all they need to try to fix  
4 the streets and the sewer systems before they  
5 continue building these new places. Some of the  
6 tenants, we have to wait for months before we get  
7 anything to be fixed there. There is some  
8 affordable housing in Coney Island but much of it  
9 is slowly disappearing. I'm really worried mostly  
10 about the elderly who have a fixed income. When  
11 this happens where will they go? They have  
12 nowhere to go. We talk a lot about the violence  
13 in Coney Island. If they could give more jobs for  
14 these teenagers, young adults and even adults, I  
15 think they would have more to occupy their time  
16 with the jobs. We need schools. We need a place  
17 for our kids to be at instead of on the streets.  
18 The cost of \$2,000 is not affordable housing. We  
19 can't afford \$2,000. Right now we need 50%  
20 affordable housing, 20% is not enough. Thank you.

21 CATHERINE JENKINS: My name is  
22 Catherine Jenkins. I'm a Coney Island resident  
23 for 36 years. I'm a member of ACORN. We need  
24 more affordable housing in Coney Island because we  
25 cannot afford to rent here because the rent is

1  
2 going up so fast.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I'm sorry. We  
4 can't hear you. You have to understand that  
5 everything you say is being recorded so it's part  
6 of the record. If we can't hear you then your  
7 testimony is not going to be recorded. This is  
8 for everybody's information. Hold the mike closer  
9 and speak a little bit louder.

10 CATHERINE JENKINS. Rent is going  
11 up so fast. My neighbors have had to leave and I  
12 am concerned about the survival of our  
13 communities. We need jobs because our youth need  
14 better jobs. They need union jobs that pay well  
15 and have a future. Coney Island is a low income  
16 area with a lot of unemployment and a lot of  
17 people who want to work hard if given a chance.  
18 That is why I am asking you to make sure that this  
19 plan includes 50% affordable housing and that  
20 there are permanent jobs as well as construction  
21 jobs are good family-sustaining jobs. Thanks for  
22 listening and let them know that you are counting  
23 on them to fight for the people of Coney Island.  
24 Coney Island for all platform. Thank you.

25 CARMEN GONZALEZ: Good afternoon.

1  
2 My name is Carmen Gonzalez. I'm a resident of  
3 Coney Island for 37 years. I was a child there  
4 also but I moved away. When I got married I came  
5 back, brought up my children and they're all  
6 career children. We need 50% affordable housing.  
7 We need 50% jobs. We need infrastructure. Before  
8 I start my testimony, I would like to say  
9 something to Councilman Recchia. This is the  
10 first time in all the years that I've known you  
11 personally and in the public eye that I see a  
12 sincere reaction towards the people of Coney  
13 Island community. I thank you. I would like to  
14 point out that I have seen this group before and  
15 I'm tired of them always saying the same thing,  
16 never giving the answers or information we really  
17 need. What we need is affordable housing and  
18 jobs. They always say we'll check on it and we'll  
19 let you know. They're never with the right  
20 answers when they come to meet the committee board  
21 members and also the people that show up. This is  
22 my testimony. First, the redevelopment of Coney  
23 Island could be a great opportunity to address  
24 issues in our community. First, as residents of  
25 Coney Island, we need more places for low and

1  
2 moderate income families to live. That is the  
3 most important priority from our point of view.  
4 This is why Coney Island residents and ACORN want  
5 50% of the new housing units in the development  
6 area to be affordable for low, moderate and middle  
7 income residents, people like me and my neighbors.  
8 Without a significant amount of affordable housing  
9 hard working New Yorkers with few housing choices  
10 will be left out in the cold and current residents  
11 will be at risk of losing their own homes. The  
12 20% affordable housing is not enough for the Coney  
13 Island residents. Right now we are being pushed  
14 out of Coney Island.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: If you can  
16 come to a close.

17 CARMEN GONZALEZ: I wanted to also  
18 let you know that we are being pushed out. We're  
19 getting evicted. There was an eviction in my  
20 building. There were three in the affiliated  
21 projects. I was also going to get evicted on  
22 Monday because I paid half my rent and I didn't  
23 pay the balance. I only owed 15 days. So a lot  
24 of us are being pushed and harassed. I wanted  
25 you, Councilman Recchia to please check on that.



Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: If you'll stay there, Councilman Recchia has a question.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: First of all, Carmen, we'll take your phone number and we'll get all the information and we'll look into that and speak to your landlord. I want to thank you all for coming out here and testifying. It means a lot to me. It means a lot to the community that your voices are heard. I'd like to say something about the jobs for the circus. Coney Island Development under the leadership of Lynn Kelly, EDC under Seth Pinsky and the administration, myself, Assembly Member Alex, state senator Diane Savino and the Congressman Jerry Nadler, we made sure that a majority of those jobs went to Coney Island residents. So for someone to come here today and say those jobs didn't go to Coney Island residents, I have to correct you, that is not true. A majority of them went to Coney Island residents. I'm talking about a lot of them.

CARMEN GONZALEZ: I myself got one of the jobs.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: You got a  
3 job. So I would say a majority of them went to  
4 Coney Island residents. Even the outside  
5 companies they hired were from Coney Island. So  
6 we are moving in the right direction. We are  
7 making sure that people in Coney Island are  
8 getting the jobs. As far as the senior homes,  
9 senior living, right now as we speak, going up,  
10 one of the first projects to be started in Coney  
11 Island is a senior home, senior living for low-  
12 income seniors who make \$26,000 or less. It's  
13 being constructed right now as we speak. Yes,  
14 Carmen?

15 CARMEN GONZALEZ: It's being built  
16 across the street from my house. I tried to get  
17 an application. I do not qualify. I only get  
18 \$9,000 a year. My friend, she retired--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA:  
20 [interposing] Who told you that you didn't  
21 qualify? We will work it out because right now  
22 they're just putting names on the list, they did  
23 not give out any applications. We will definitely  
24 get back to you. I will talk to you. I will  
25 definitely speak to them.

1  
2 CARMEN GONZALEZ: The lady that  
3 belongs in ACORN. She's a retiree senior and she  
4 also didn't qualify they said because of the fact  
5 that she gets too much retirement.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: If you get  
7 \$26,900 or less you qualify. We will work with  
8 you.

9 CARMEN GONZALEZ: Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Rob from  
11 my office, stand up Rob so they see you. Right  
12 after you finish testimony he'll get your name and  
13 address. We are addressing the issues. If you  
14 have any other issues or problems especially in  
15 NYCHA housing, call my office. I have someone  
16 who's experienced in housing that works on  
17 housing. Also, we work very closely with Astella  
18 Development, Judi Orlando. Stand up, Judi.  
19 Astella Development and her staff who is here.  
20 They work on housing issues in Coney Island. We  
21 work with them. So we are here to help you in  
22 Coney Island. Thank you very much for coming out.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: If I can just  
24 make one comment before you go. I also want to  
25 thank you for coming down. And for all the other

1  
2 people who are going to share similar comments, my  
3 personal feeling has been for a long, long time  
4 that when we do projects like this, the people in  
5 the community where the project is going up should  
6 benefit by it. We hope it doesn't happen here,  
7 but in many communities these developments go up  
8 and all they do is push out the people who need  
9 the housing the most. So that's our attempt to  
10 make sure that that doesn't happen here. Thank  
11 you.

12 CARMEN GONZALEZ: Excuse me, could  
13 I leave my testimony? I did not finish it.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Sure. You can  
15 give it to the sergeant-at-arms.

16 CARMEN GONZALEZ: Thank you.

17 COUNSEL: A panel in favor, Scott  
18 Kravitsky [phonetic], Nicole Etien [phonetic],  
19 Barbara Morrison, Darnell Canada, Regina Mitchell  
20 and Ken Jones.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I'll ask  
22 everybody to please be quiet while the witnesses  
23 testify. Go ahead, sir.

24 DARNELL CANADA: My name is Darnell  
25 Canada. I'm a representative of an organization

1  
2 called ReBuild. ReBuild is an organization that  
3 helps people with training in the construction  
4 industry to get jobs. A number of the members of  
5 ReBuild from Coney Island are here, as well as  
6 from other parts of Brooklyn. We have about 150  
7 people that came here today. We came here because  
8 this development project is important to us. We  
9 don't want anything to be held back or slowed up.  
10 We need jobs.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I know  
12 that you may be happy that the chair stepped out  
13 but the rules haven't changed. Our sergeant-at-  
14 arms here and who else is here? I'm going to ask  
15 you to please remove anyone that is doing anything  
16 to violate the rules that the chair set. You have  
17 signs. The signs are fine. If you want to show  
18 any emotion, you can waive your hands, but you  
19 cannot make any noise. You can put the signs up  
20 if you want. You can hold them up. I don't think  
21 you want to block the vision of the person behind  
22 you, but no outbreak whatsoever. Go ahead.

23 DARNELL CANADA: I believe the  
24 needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.  
25 In this process, for a little amount of people to

1  
2 be hindered and the state that we're in right now  
3 economically, I don't think that's a big  
4 hindrance. Especially it might be somebody who  
5 plans on benefiting greatly from this process.  
6 Right now there is a need to do something about  
7 the people who basically don't have anything.  
8 People are striving. We talked about wanting  
9 housing and there is no housing if you don't have  
10 a job. You can't pay for it. You can't feed  
11 yourself if you don't have a job. To have this  
12 process held up after all these years going  
13 through this and going through this and going  
14 through this and we're out here struggling for  
15 jobs. There are people dying every day because  
16 they feel desperate. They feel desperation  
17 because there is no means to take care of  
18 themselves and they go out and do something  
19 stupid. Here we have a chance to put people to  
20 work, to put people in a process where they can do  
21 for themselves without doing anything stupid.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Can you  
23 sum up please?

24 DARNELL CANADA: I'm going to sum  
25 up real good.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Thank you.

3 DARNELL CANADA: We sit before the  
4 City Council, who have the ability to do something  
5 about it. I have to say this, right now we've  
6 been organizing all over the city. The truth is  
7 that we can't stand for people to hold us back  
8 anymore and we're holding everybody who begins to  
9 hold us back accountable. I don't have to be in  
10 your district. I don't have to be in your  
11 district, but if this process is not going through  
12 and you all hinder it back, all the people that I  
13 have all over Brooklyn will come into your  
14 district and begin to do something about getting  
15 you out.

16 MALE VOICE: [Off mic]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: All right  
18 everybody, let's calm down. Everybody quiet so we  
19 can move on with this. Go on.

20 NICOLE ETIEN: Good afternoon. My  
21 name is Nicole Etien. I'm reading testimony on  
22 behalf of David Anderson who is the director of  
23 development for the Jewish Community Council of  
24 Greater Coney Island. He sends his heartfelt  
25 apologies. He had a medical emergency and is

1  
2 unable to be with us today. Good afternoon, my  
3 name is David Anderson. I have been a resident of  
4 Coney Island for 35 years. I am writing to voice  
5 my support for the city's proposed Coney Island  
6 rezoning and redevelopment plan. As a New York  
7 City Department of Education teacher and a youth  
8 program developer since 1990 and having served as  
9 a director of college preparation and vocational  
10 readiness programs of at-risk students for the  
11 past 12 years, I have witnessed firsthand the  
12 challenges so many of our children and their  
13 families confront in their efforts to access  
14 opportunities and resources that will lead them  
15 toward achieving academic, social and economic  
16 independence.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA:

18 [interposing] Hold on a minute. Please show  
19 respect for the witness.

20 NICOLE ETIEN: In fact, it was  
21 while growing up in Coney Island, yearning to be  
22 something more than my most far-fetched dreams  
23 could even muster with a lack of direct access and  
24 proximity to specialized executive level  
25 instruction, professional mentors and future



1  
2 focused service learning opportunities forced me  
3 to leave my much loved peninsula. I exited Coney  
4 Island on a mission to acquire the necessary  
5 qualifications and skill sets needed to come back  
6 home and ensure that the children who follow me  
7 would have the support systems in place in their  
8 own neighborhood to help them develop their  
9 creative intelligence, talents, skills and  
10 capacities. I determined that unlike me, the  
11 young people in Coney Island would have access to  
12 in a neighborhood that helps raise them a  
13 diversity-driven, globally relevant world view  
14 curriculum. They would be able to acquire the  
15 academic and leadership essentials to help design  
16 their dreams of becoming whatever they want to be  
17 in the comfort, convenience and familiarity of  
18 their own backyard. For me and so many of my  
19 esteemed nonprofit colleagues in Coney Island,  
20 this is a powerful youth development and more  
21 importantly, future-focused community development  
22 program that our children and families so richly  
23 deserve. May I continue for the one paragraph?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: If you can  
25 just sum up, I would appreciate it.

2 NICOLE ETIEN: Will do. He's  
3 saying that he's had the pleasure of working  
4 closely with the Coney Island Develop Corporation  
5 on several complex broad based projects which  
6 focus sharply on the improvement of the quality of  
7 the lives of his fellow Coney Island residents.  
8 He's confident that the city's urban develop plan  
9 for Coney Island will pave the way for, intersect  
10 with and ultimately complement the promising youth  
11 and community-driven projects that are currently  
12 in place. He believes the proposed rezoning will  
13 create thousands of jobs and career paths for the  
14 young and young at heart in Coney Island, which is  
15 so critically and urgently needed.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you very  
17 much. The next witness, please?

18 SCOTT KRAVITSKY: Should I stand?

19 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: You can sit  
20 down unless there is something you need to show us  
21 on the map. This is not the distribution. If  
22 there is something that you want to give out, can  
23 we have one of the sergeant-at-arms. You can sit  
24 down and relax and make yourself at home. Go  
25 ahead.

1  
2 SCOTT KRAVITSKY: I'm a teacher in  
3 Coney Island. My name is Scott Kravitsky. I want  
4 to know if you can just give out the Legos to the  
5 different people. Just give it to people in the  
6 audience, maybe some people here. Simcha Felder,  
7 I remember you when I worked with the marketer.  
8 Domenic, I love you. You're the best thing that  
9 every happened to Coney Island. I was a little  
10 angry before because when I saw Seth Pinsky up  
11 here and he's working so hard to get things done,  
12 everyone gave him a very, very difficult time.  
13 Without Coney Island Economic Develop and without  
14 Domenic Recchia, there is no Coney Island. Nicole  
15 Robinson and Lynn Kelly have worked tremendously  
16 to get things done in Coney Island. We have the  
17 circus. We have job formation. The future of  
18 Coney Island is with the kids. I know the owners  
19 of the property are very, very nice, but they do  
20 nothing for the schools in the area. The only  
21 people that do things for schools in the area are  
22 Domenic, and hopefully we're going to get the gym.  
23 I didn't say that. And also CIDC does things for  
24 the schools.

25 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Excuse me.

2 But the whole idea of public testimony is to give  
3 testimony before the City Council. You're not  
4 preaching to the audience. Are you here to give  
5 testimony? Please do so.

6 SCOTT KRAVITSKY: I apologize. You  
7 have to move in terms of the program that CIDC  
8 wants to move forward with. It's not the time to  
9 stop it from happening. Because what's going to  
10 happen is if I take the air out of this ball, it's  
11 going to deflate. We don't want Coney Island to  
12 deflate. We want it to move up and we need your  
13 support. I'm sure CIDC will make any arrangements  
14 they can in terms of working things out with  
15 Deno's Wonder Way, but there has to be  
16 flexibility. We're asking you to work with CIDC.  
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.  
19 That's the whole panel?

20 COUNSEL: The next panel is a panel  
21 in opposition. Paul Fernandez, Rochelle Kelly,  
22 Marvin Abram, Catherine Stutts, Angel Navarro,  
23 Camille Rivera.

24 PAUL FERNANDEZ: Good afternoon,  
25 Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My

1 name is Paul Fernandez. I'm the chief of staff  
2 for the Building and Construction Trades Council  
3 of Greater New York, an organization that consists  
4 of local affiliates of 15 national and  
5 international unions representing 100,000 working  
6 men and women in the five boroughs. We thank you  
7 for the opportunity to testify on the Coney Island  
8 comprehensive rezoning plan. Exactly three months  
9 ago we testified on this issue before a joint  
10 oversight hearing of the Committee on Economic  
11 Develop and the Committee on Land Use.

12 Unfortunately, not one issue we raised in our  
13 testimony has been addressed since that time. In  
14 fact, none of these issues has even been attempted  
15 to be addressed since that time. We therefore  
16 reiterate, regrettably, that we must oppose this  
17 plan due to the fact that there is no binding  
18 citywide policy or commitment specific to the  
19 proposed special Coney Island district that the  
20 processes by which properties will be made  
21 available for development by the Economic Develop  
22 Corporation, the Department of Housing,  
23 Preservation and Development and any other public  
24 agencies will in fact assure that the resulting  
25

1  
2 opportunities are shared by those for whom  
3 economic development efforts are supposed to be  
4 pursued, the working men and women and taxpayers  
5 of Coney Island and New York City. We must  
6 furthermore state that there are not at this time  
7 any agreements between the Building and  
8 Construction Trades Council of Greater New York  
9 and either Taconic Investment Partners or Thor  
10 Equities or any entities that they may utilize to  
11 perform construction in the proposed district. As  
12 we sit here today in July 2009, the building and  
13 construction industry in New York City has lost  
14 nearly 10,000 jobs in the last 12 months. It is  
15 expected that we could lose as many as 20-30,000  
16 more jobs in the next 12 months. Now more than  
17 ever we believe it is imperative that economic  
18 development be pursued with a focus on saving and  
19 creating not just jobs but jobs that allow middle  
20 class families to make ends meet and support the  
21 declining tax base of our city and state. The  
22 Building Trades would very much like to support  
23 the development of Coney Island if it is pursued  
24 responsibly and in a manner that reflects the  
25 values and interests of working men and women. If

1  
2 the development of Coney Island is pursued  
3 responsibly it will have our support,  
4 unfortunately that is not now the case. It is  
5 worth noting that in the federal stimulus package,  
6 prevailing wages were required to be paid on every  
7 penny that was allocated for construction. We  
8 would just like to see the same standards that  
9 were brought to the stimulus package that the  
10 president and the Congress supported brought to  
11 the Coney Island redevelopment process so that all  
12 the residents of Coney Island and New York City  
13 can enjoy the same standard of living that the  
14 people who are developing the properties do.

15 Thank you.

16 ROCHELLE KELLY: Good afternoon,  
17 everyone. My name is Rochelle Kelly and I'm a  
18 member of the New York Hotel Trade Council, the  
19 union that represents 30,000 of my fellow hotel  
20 workers. I've lived in Coney Island for quite  
21 some time now. My commute to work from Coney  
22 Island to the Roosevelt Hotel in midtown is well  
23 over an hour each way. Despite long commutes, I'm  
24 happy to have a good job, a union job with  
25 benefits and want my friends and neighbors to have

1  
2 that same opportunity in Coney Island. Mayor  
3 Bloomberg's plan for Coney Island goes a long way  
4 toward the creation of jobs and housing, but it  
5 doesn't go enough to guarantee the creation of the  
6 types of good jobs and affordable housing  
7 opportunities that the residents of Coney Island  
8 need and deserve. The people of Coney Island need  
9 the guarantees that affordable housing will be  
10 built. We need guarantees that the jobs created  
11 by new develop in Coney Island including hotel  
12 jobs will be good jobs that pay living wages,  
13 therefore union jobs. We need guarantees that  
14 workers on these jobs will be given a strong voice  
15 and will be treated with dignity and respect in  
16 the workplace. If we don't get these guarantees,  
17 we shouldn't support the mayor's plan. I support  
18 the Coney Island for all platform because it  
19 offers real solutions that will guarantee good  
20 jobs and affordable housing in Coney Island.

21 Thank you.

22 [Pause]

23 MARVIN ABRAM: Thank you members of  
24 City Council for taking the time to review the  
25 city's plan for the redevelopment in Coney Island.



1  
2 My name is Marvin Abram. I am the pastor at New  
3 Freedom Baptist Church in Coney Island. I am also  
4 a member of 32BJ. For the past year, I've been  
5 spending a lot of time in Coney Island and I can  
6 tell you that the neighborhood is hurting. The  
7 plan to invest in Coney Island is critical to  
8 bettering the community, but unless the city takes  
9 steps to ensure the families in Coney Island will  
10 be the beneficiaries of these changes, the  
11 neighborhood will remain disenfranchised and  
12 disempowered. We know that unemployment and  
13 poverty are at some of the highest rates in the  
14 city and you can really feel that when you walk  
15 through the neighborhood. Too many of the  
16 families don't even have the money to take their  
17 kids to the amusement park. There are few jobs to  
18 be had, and many jobs that don't pay enough. The  
19 main thing people are talking about are jobs. But  
20 when people say jobs, they don't mean just work,  
21 they mean steady positions that pay enough for  
22 them to buy groceries and pay rent; jobs that will  
23 provide wages that will help keep up with the cost  
24 of living. Having a steady reliable union job  
25 with representation has made a huge difference in

1  
2 my life. I've been working for 21 years as a  
3 window cleaner. My family has been able to depend  
4 on regular paychecks to cover bills. We never  
5 thought twice about taking our son to the doctor  
6 because of the health coverage I receive through  
7 the job. My son is now 20 and is studying  
8 political science at Essex Community College. He  
9 wants to be a part of making a better city for all  
10 New Yorkers. He wants to help those who have been  
11 disenfranchised. He has hope beyond all else. A  
12 good steady job creates a stable home where  
13 families can hope and dream. To really revitalize  
14 the neighborhood and to bring that hope back, the  
15 city needs to guarantee that new jobs will be  
16 created that will bring that stability and belief  
17 in a better future to the Coney Island families.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I was just  
19 going to ask you to sum up, but thank you.

20 CATHERINE STUTTS: Good afternoon.  
21 My name is Catherine Stutts and I represent the  
22 Pratt Center for Community Development. The Pratt  
23 Center works for a more just, equitable and  
24 sustainable city for all New Yorkers by helping  
25 communities to plan for and realize their future.

1  
2 As the City of New York proposed to redevelop  
3 Coney Island, it must ensure that Coney remains a  
4 place that creates opportunity for working New  
5 Yorkers. The Pratt Center for Community Develop  
6 is therefore working with a range of stakeholders  
7 to ensure that any redevelopment plan for Coney  
8 Island guarantees good jobs, affordable housing, a  
9 strong amusement area, and that the community  
10 needs are met. Other groups in our coalition will  
11 give testimony in more detail about some of the  
12 areas, but I'll speak on two. The first is  
13 creating opportunities for vendors and other small  
14 businesses. In order to preserve and promote  
15 small businesses we are calling for the following  
16 three modifications to the plan. Number one,  
17 remove movie theaters and bowling alleys from the  
18 list of allowed uses within Coney East. Both  
19 typically require large ground floor lobbies that  
20 would detract from the amusement park streetscape.  
21 Two, mandate that a mix of small retail spaces,  
22 ranging from 300 to 1,500-square feet be achieved  
23 by each new development within Coney East. We  
24 believe the currently proposed 2,500-square feet  
25 size cap is too large to preserve and promote the

1  
2 kinds of small amusement retail businesses that  
3 have enlivened Coney. Three, adopt a formal  
4 business restriction policy within Coney East to  
5 prevent national retailers and fast food  
6 restaurants from locating there. Municipalities  
7 all over the nation have adopted zoning laws that  
8 restrict or prohibit chain stores and in all but a  
9 handful of cases have survived the legal  
10 challenges. Secondly, I would like to comment on  
11 Coney West and the KeySpan parking lot. In the  
12 city's initial plan for Coney Island, the KeySpan  
13 parking lot was going to be swapped for the land  
14 Thor Equities owns in the amusement area. Thor  
15 would have been given the right to do residential  
16 and hotel development on the site in exchange for  
17 the city's ability to control the amusement area.  
18 The public purpose of market rate development on  
19 city-owned property would thus have been the  
20 preserved and strengthened amusement area. Under  
21 the current plan, however, it is unclear what the  
22 public benefit of the market rate development on  
23 the city-owned land would be. We therefore  
24 believe that the plan for Coney West needs to be  
25 revised to include compelling public benefits.

1  
2 Ether significant affordable housing should be  
3 included in the city-owned sites, or the proposed  
4 new amusement area should be expanded westward to  
5 encompass parts of Coney West. We strongly urge  
6 the city to incorporate these important goals.  
7 Thank you for your time.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Mr.  
9 Chairman, I just want to make one comment. Mr.  
10 Hernandez, I don't know if you were here earlier  
11 when I spoke to Taconic.

12 PAUL FERNANDEZ: I was.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I was very  
14 clear to them that it was unacceptable what they  
15 were doing in negotiating with the building  
16 trades. By Tuesday of next week, if you haven't  
17 heard from them, could you please contact me  
18 immediately? Because I will then do what I have  
19 to do to see to it that we get these talks going  
20 because the clock is ticking. If there's any  
21 progress to be made, now is the time. We're no  
22 longer going to wait back for them to make a  
23 decision when they want to get moving. On  
24 Tuesday, if you do not hear from them, please call  
25 me the first thing Tuesday morning and we will

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move forward.

PAUL FERNANDEZ: I will. Thank you.

COUNSEL: Next is a panel in favor. Sael Mernitto [phonetic], Steve Cohen, John Dohlin, George Seay, Judith Orlando, Johanna Gargiulo-Sherman, Madeline Castillo, Georganna Deas, Ronald Stewart, Michael Grecko [phonetic], Bay Yanintwono [phonetic].

JOHN DOHLIN: Good afternoon. My name is John Dohlin. I'm the director of the New York Aquarium. Chairman Avella, Councilman Recchia, and honorable members of the committee, the New York Aquarium has been a proud presence in Coney Island for more than 50 years and we have been a true anchor of the area. We have the highest annual attendance of any venue in the Borough of Brooklyn. We're open year round, 365 days a year. We have provided stability, jobs, tourism and education to the area. We are a powerful economic engine in an underserved area. We believe in the future of Coney Island and we are building for that future. We're currently in construction on our main hall and next year we

1  
2 will reopen with three exciting and innovative new  
3 habitats. We are working with the help of all of  
4 our partners in the city to bring a truly  
5 spectacular new shark exhibit to the aquarium.  
6 The shark exhibit will be a critical first step in  
7 our master plan that over the next ten years will  
8 utterly transform the aquarium into the world  
9 class venue that Brooklyn and all of New York  
10 deserves. We're making major investments in the  
11 aquarium's infrastructure that will allow us to  
12 realize this growth. We are also working to bring  
13 to the aquarium private money and motivated donors  
14 that will work with us to make this master plan a  
15 reality. Now is the time to move Coney Island  
16 into the future. This plan is the way to do it.  
17 Too many years of too many broken dreams have  
18 taken their toll and we need to act now if we want  
19 to save Coney Island, if we want there to be a  
20 Coney Island left to save. If we do not act, New  
21 York will have lost one of its true icons, one of  
22 its most distinctive neighborhoods and an  
23 irreplaceable part of its identity and we will  
24 have squandered a brand that is recognized not  
25 just in New York, not just in the United States,

1  
2 but is truly global in its scope. In summation,  
3 you have shown great leadership and vision in your  
4 support for the new shark exhibit at the aquarium.  
5 An exhibit that will be a critical first step for  
6 real change at the aquarium and at Coney Island  
7 and we're truly grateful for that leadership and  
8 support, but the aquarium cannot succeed alone.  
9 We urge you to join us in supporting this plan and  
10 securing a positive future for Coney Island.

11 RONALD STEWART: Good afternoon,  
12 Mr. Chairman, Domenic Recchia, and the Council  
13 Members that are still here. My name is Ronald  
14 Stewart. I've been a resident of Coney Island for  
15 nearly 50 years. I lived in a bungalow with my  
16 family on the site where Trump Village is at. My  
17 family was displaced, as many others were, when  
18 Fred Trump came in and kind of evicted us. We  
19 were homeless for many, many years until we found  
20 a place on the western end of Coney Island. I  
21 represent a coalition of members of residents of  
22 Coney Island. I still live there. I love Coney  
23 Island. This is my home. My children are there  
24 and my grandchildren. My mother fought for public  
25 housing during the 60s under the Lindsay



1  
2 administration. Overall, I support the  
3 development that has been presented by CIDC. I'm  
4 not a developer; I'm not an engineer. Mr. Domenic  
5 Recchia presented some issues that I'm concerned  
6 about in terms of the park and I hope that can be  
7 worked out with Economic Development and Mr.  
8 Recchia so it can be in the best interest of all  
9 of us in Coney Island. Many families in Coney  
10 Island are two, three and four generations living  
11 in one apartment. I think we need affordable  
12 housing. I think the percentage needs to be more  
13 than 20%. It needs to be at least 35%. And of  
14 course, jobs are very much needed. The  
15 infrastructure in Coney Island is terrible. I  
16 have floods on my block. I own a home on 31st  
17 Street. We have blackouts. I think that should  
18 be a priority and I think the City Council should  
19 make sure that's done where we don't experience  
20 that. I think that should be put first before we  
21 build any part of Coney Island. I love Coney  
22 Island but I think a plan has to be put in place  
23 that affects all of us in Coney Island and not  
24 just a few. Thank you.

25 MADELINE CASTILLO: Good afternoon,

1  
2 everybody. My name is Madeline Castillo. I am  
3 employed by the Astella Development Corporation as  
4 a housing specialist. I am also a resident of  
5 Coney Island. I would like to say here that I am  
6 in favor of the zoning plan, but have a few  
7 reservations. In my capacity as housing  
8 specialist, I have had the honor of serving Coney  
9 Island residents with their housing needs.

10 Affordable housing means different things to  
11 different people. Many of my clients are people  
12 on fixed incomes of under \$10,000 a year. These  
13 are people whose only income is from Social  
14 Security retirement, disability or SSI. It is  
15 wrongly assumed that people on low incomes are not  
16 desirable tenants. In my experience I have met  
17 many people who have worked very hard throughout  
18 their lives but unfortunately did not have the  
19 high paying jobs or have had some misfortune. I  
20 would like to see some new housing that will  
21 accommodate the individuals in this economic  
22 group. Also, there are many young people who are  
23 unable to leave the nest and go out on their own  
24 because they are just staring out in the workforce  
25 and their incomes are not yet sufficient for rents

1  
2 of today's demand. In order for human beings to  
3 thrive and succeed, they must have housing that is  
4 financial suitable for them. I have personally  
5 seen the major difference in a person's life and  
6 attitude when they have been given the opportunity  
7 to live in decent housing. Although Inclusionary  
8 Zoning will allow the new affordable housing to be  
9 built, it is my concern that indirect displacement  
10 will occur in the existing rent stabilized  
11 buildings on Mermaid Avenue. I would like the  
12 plan to address this issue, so that in the event  
13 existing rent stabilized buildings in Coney Island  
14 are demolished, there are safeguards in place for  
15 the existing tenants and future to continue to  
16 have affordable housing. Last but not least, I  
17 would like to mention that I haven't heard  
18 anything to address schools. Nothing has been  
19 mentioned about new schools in the area to  
20 accommodate the influx of new families. Thank  
21 you.

22 BAY YANINTWONO: My name is Bay  
23 Yanintwono. I'm not speaking for an organization,  
24 just as a citizen. Coney Island is one of New  
25 York's most iconic and beloved places. It is a

1  
2 "People's Playground" for New Yorkers of all  
3 backgrounds. It is also a world famous amusement  
4 area with the potential to become a major tourist  
5 attraction and an economic engine for the entire  
6 city. Unfortunately, the city's rezoning plan  
7 threatens Coney Island's future. It would shrink  
8 Coney Island's famed amusement area, leaving fewer  
9 than 12 paltry acres for outdoor rides and  
10 amusements. It would plop four high rise towers  
11 of up to 27 stories into the heart of the  
12 amusement area. It would encourage developers to  
13 tear down many of Coney Island's most historic  
14 buildings. The city's plan is broken as it is and  
15 it needs to be fixed. The New York Times warned  
16 in an editorial, "The hotels could too easily  
17 become a wall, blocking public access to the  
18 sideshows and the rides, the Boardwalk and the  
19 ocean. The hotels also squeeze the outdoor rides  
20 into a narrow strip of about 12 acres, an area  
21 that is simply too small to attract enough rides  
22 and attractions to bring back the big crowds."  
23 The Municipal Art Society warns, "We are concerned  
24 that the proposed area set aside for open air  
25 amusements is of insufficient size and that as a

1  
2 result, this revitalization effort will not be  
3 successful." The Bloomberg administration has  
4 refused to listen to these warnings. The plan it  
5 has put forward is not the product of all those  
6 public meetings that they talk about. That  
7 original plan had no Wonder Wheel Way, it had more  
8 open air amusements and it had no high rises in  
9 the middle of the amusement area. The plan put  
10 forward by the administration is its own  
11 unilateral arrogant revision. Since the  
12 administration won't, we need you to listen.  
13 Expand the acreage for open air amusements, move  
14 the high rises north of Surf Avenue and protect  
15 Coney Island's historic buildings. This is an  
16 important moment; one of New York's greatest  
17 treasures is in danger and we need you to step up  
18 and fix the rezoning plan. If we lose Coney  
19 Island, history will judge us harshly.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I'm just a  
21 little bit confused since you signed up to speak  
22 in favor. You sound like you're more in  
23 opposition.

24 [Laughing]

25 BAY YANINTWONO: I am in favor of

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the plan if--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]

Modified.

BAY YANINTWONO: --certain

revisions are made--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]

Okay.

BAY YANINTWONO: --yes.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: That's fair.

Thank you.

[Pause]

COMMITTEE CLERK: Matt Ryan, Sandra

Dillon, Reverend Connice Mobley, Albert Johnson,

Jeanette Rodriguez.

[Pause]

MR. MATT RYAN: My name is Matt

Ryan with New York Jobs with Justice. The City is

prepared to make a massive taxpayer fueled

investment in Coney Island that will truly reshape

Southern Brooklyn. The Coney for All Coalition

formed around the belief that we need to ensure

that the City's plan to benefit the entire

community brings opportunity to the residents in

need. Our coalition includes ACORN, SCIU 32BJ,

1  
2 Hotel Trade Council, Pratt Center for Community  
3 Development, Retail Workers Union and the United  
4 Food and Commercial Workers Union. We represent  
5 over a quarter of a million working New Yorkers.

6 Since the Planning Commission's  
7 vote to approve the City's redevelopment plan more  
8 and more residents are stepping forward and  
9 speaking out about their concerns. Just in the  
10 last week we received over 1,000 postcards from  
11 residents who believe that the City's plan  
12 currently does not meet their needs. These cards  
13 this morning were delivered alongside Councilman  
14 Recchia to the Mayor's Office.

15 The City's plan does not provide  
16 guarantees for good jobs, family supporting jobs  
17 that will be available to all residents, nor does  
18 it guarantee adequate amounts of affordable  
19 housing. The City also needs to do more to  
20 preserve outdoor amusement and spaces for local  
21 small businesses and vendors, and to include much  
22 needed amenities like a school, supermarket and  
23 improved public transportation for the  
24 neighborhood.

25 The City has the power to

1  
2 incorporate our recommendations in every step of  
3 the redevelopment process into its current  
4 redevelopment plan, into RFPs with the developers,  
5 Environmental Impact Statements and applications  
6 for public financing, in the strong precedent for  
7 many of our recommendations in past City  
8 redevelopment plans. The plan currently before  
9 City Council should be changed to include our  
10 recommendations which represent an important first  
11 step and a big leap forward in the City's  
12 commitment to ensure that development works for  
13 New Yorkers.

14                   Thus far in the ULURP process  
15 Community Board 13 has recommended guarantees for  
16 good jobs. And Borough President Marty Markowitz  
17 has also recommended an increase in affordable  
18 housing. However the City's plan does not  
19 incorporate this and does not go far enough to  
20 make sure that this development preserves the  
21 peoples' playground for all New Yorkers and  
22 benefits the entire community.

23                   Whether development is completed in  
24 five years, ten years or more, the future of Coney  
25 Island will be decided in the next month. We urge



1  
2 City Council members to adopt the Coney for All  
3 Platform and ensure a bright future for Coney  
4 Island.

5 MS. SANDRA DILLON: Hi. I'm Sandra  
6 Dillon. I'm a resident of Brooklyn and have been  
7 a mermaid in the Mermaid Parade for the past ten  
8 years on Coney Island. Coney Island's historic  
9 amusement park is the birthplace of the amusement  
10 industry. We're all aware of Coney Island's  
11 influence in New York's culture for the past 150  
12 or more years.

13 The fact that Coney Island is in  
14 desperate need of revitalization and preservation  
15 is not in debate. We fully acknowledge its dire  
16 need. The problem lays in the plan to destroy the  
17 existing historic district. The City's plans at  
18 it stands will permanently diminish and destroy  
19 Coney Island's unique historic amusement park.  
20 The area devoted to open air amusements must be  
21 larger.

22 How can the City defend diminishing  
23 the land from 60 acres to 12 acres? The high rise  
24 housing and hotels must be moved from the south  
25 side of Surf Avenue. The proposed plan of

1  
2 building these high rises will cut off the ocean's  
3 access, skyline and open air from the neighborhood  
4 thus permanently changing the face of the historic  
5 site of Coney Island.

6 To recap, fix the plan or kill the  
7 plan, please. Enlarge the area devoted to open  
8 air amusements, high rises must be removed from  
9 the south side of Surf Avenue, do not build the  
10 Wonder Wheel Way or whatever it's called, and give  
11 back the lease to Astroland and Lola Star that no  
12 one's discussed how they've been evicted. And the  
13 plan is flawed so it must be revised or killed.  
14 Thank you very much.

15 REVEREND CONNICE MOBLEY: Mr.  
16 Chairman and Council, my name is Connice Mobley,  
17 Pastor of the United Community Baptist Church in  
18 Coney Island. And I've come in support of the  
19 plan with modifications. I was very proud of  
20 y'all's stands this morning since being here at it  
21 pertains to the City's plan. And I really want to  
22 say that on behalf of the community at large and  
23 also organizations that partnered with the  
24 community such as Coney Island CLEAR which stands  
25 for Community and Labor Empowerment Alliance for

1  
2 Redevelopment, also ACORN is here and other groups  
3 are here to express their needs and concerns for  
4 our community.

5                   And I really want to say that we  
6 really need to remind ourselves, I was so  
7 encouraged by what it says up here in the ceiling,  
8 that it says a government of the people, by the  
9 people, for the people. And sure enough I hope  
10 and pray that you will take it into great  
11 consideration as to the affect and the effect that  
12 this plan will have for the residents first of  
13 Coney Island.

14                   See once development is done,  
15 they're gone. But we still have to live there.  
16 We still have to be there. And so therefore I  
17 really want to encourage you, I'm grateful for the  
18 accomplishments of our Councilman Dominic Recchia.  
19 And I trust and pray that you will continue to  
20 support him in his efforts to try to advance the  
21 work of Coney Island as a whole, not to make it  
22 two but one. That's been our problem and that we  
23 need an element of trust, we need to trust  
24 somebody to tell the truth and to be honest with  
25 us in the community of Coney Island not just for

1  
2 your own personal gain or self-interest but really  
3 are concerned about revitalizing the whole of  
4 Coney Island. Thank you so very much.

5 MR. AL JOHNSON: Good morning, good  
6 afternoon, Mr. Chairman. My name is Al, Al  
7 Johnson. And I noticed that I'm still looking for  
8 a job for Coney Island so you all can help me out.  
9 I'm getting some of that information here. I live  
10 in Coney Island. And I'm an affiliate of ACORN.  
11 Now. I noticed that the goal, the goals said,  
12 seem to be immediate needs kind of versus long  
13 term goals.

14 So you got some long term goals and  
15 the community have immediate needs that it has to  
16 hopefully you can get some - - on helping us. Now  
17 I'm in agreeable with the effort to bring more  
18 financial opportunity into Coney Island, okay?  
19 Like I'm still looking for that type of  
20 employment. Two, the circus that came into Coney  
21 Island I think it's Barnum brought 150 short term  
22 low wage jobs into Coney Island so that's not  
23 enough if, you know, we need some more input on  
24 that plan.

25 Three, the plan we're hoping that

1  
2 you're agreeable with it should create and  
3 preserve affordable housing and we ask that 50% of  
4 all new units be given to residents of Coney  
5 Island, that includes the Baby Boomers as well as  
6 the senior citizens because the senior population  
7 is also growing.

8 So the preservation of Coney  
9 Island's history and contribution to New York, the  
10 United States and Brooklyn, we hope to preserve  
11 that, okay? So thank you for listening and we are  
12 counting on you to fight for the improvement of  
13 people and property.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Now I just  
15 want to thank the panel for coming here today. I  
16 want to thank Pastor Mobley for all the work you  
17 have done in our community and for always being  
18 out there and being a voice for the people and  
19 being a great leader. Your work is very important  
20 to us and keep it up, thank you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER [?]: I just  
22 wanted to ask the panel because it seems to, you  
23 know, with the signups about the favor or not in  
24 favor or whatever else, I would just like to ask  
25 this panel as an example, it sounds to me that

2 unless the revisions that you're suggesting, some  
3 of you are suggesting are made, for example you  
4 said that you wanted to kill it. So in theory  
5 you're not in favor unless they make the  
6 revisions, is that true?

7 MS. DILLON: That's correct.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: So if--  
9 hypothetically, even though we never want to talk  
10 about hypotheticals, I just want you, if you could  
11 each answer, if I said to you today that those  
12 revisions that you're looking for will not be made  
13 in time, do you support it, yes or no. Can you  
14 just?

15 MR. RYAN: The Coney for All  
16 Coalition is not in favor until we see the needed  
17 improvements made.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Next.

19 MS. DILLON: I'm also not in favor  
20 unless there are revisions.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Next.

22 REVEREND MOBLEY: Unless there's  
23 responsibility and accountability, no.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: So does  
25 that mean yes or no.

REVEREND MOBLEY: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay next.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, well right now I'm affiliated with ACORN and whatever ACORN decides which direction they want to take--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER:

[Interposing] Okay--

MR. JOHNSON: --I'm in agreement with that.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --fair, fair, fair. So I just want for the record for the Chair to acknowledge that it seems, you know, we're having panels come up and aren't--are--these are wonderful panels that are actually attesting to how they feel deeply in their hearts and they're very passionate about it and are clearly not in favor unless the revisions are made. Thank you for coming.

MS. DILLON: Thank you.

REVEREND MOBLEY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: And if I may make one comment, I think Reverend--Pastor, you referred to the, you know, Abraham Lincoln's comments up on the wall, I hate to tell you how

1  
2 many times we don't do that. And it really is a  
3 disgrace but hopefully we can do it in this  
4 situation.

5 REVEREND MOBLEY: Appreciate that,  
6 thank you Sir.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK: Next panel,  
8 Sheila Boyd, Amy Pang, Juan Rivero, Elayna Mocknin  
9 [phonetic], Edwin Cosmee [phonetic], Steven  
10 Zeitland [phonetic].

11 [Pause]

12 [Witnesses getting settled in]

13 MS. SHEILA BOYD: To Councilman  
14 Tony Avella, Councilman Recchia, my name is Sheila  
15 Boyd, as President of my Tenants Association; I am  
16 writing this letter on behalf of the tenants who  
17 reside in Ocean Towers which is now called Coney  
18 Island Towers. We were so pleased with the  
19 Boomerang [phonetic] Circus failed and Coney  
20 Island Development Corporation partnered together  
21 to open up employment opportunities for residents  
22 to work at the circus.

23 As President of my tenants  
24 association, I was given the opportunity to help  
25 my neighbors fill out circus employment



1  
2 applications. Even though the whole community was  
3 given this opportunity I am pleased to say that  
4 seven people in my development were chosen to  
5 work. Also the job fair for the circus was not  
6 only excellent, it offered our residents hope of  
7 future employment in Coney Island. It is to my  
8 understanding that almost 80% of the community is  
9 working at the circus now. And as a grand finale  
10 the whole community received free tickets to  
11 attend the circus.

12 The community is also pleased that  
13 the circus was put in Coney West making our  
14 residents feel that good things are coming to  
15 Coney West if the rezoning takes place. However  
16 there is one drawback that has the tenants of  
17 Coney Island Towers concerned. Our development is  
18 no longer in Mitchell Lama and we are surviving as  
19 affordable housing because of the Section 8 sticky  
20 vouchers. We feel that once the construction for  
21 High Lawn View Park begins in Coney West our  
22 landlords will abandon the Section 8 program and  
23 our rents will become market rate. That will  
24 force over 95% of the building to move and we will  
25 not ever enjoy the fruits of all the rezoning.

2 In closing we ask that the rezoning  
3 committee strongly take into consideration the  
4 residents in our building who are facing market  
5 rents. We ask that Mayor Bloomberg along with  
6 Councilman Recchia and DH Sierra [phonetic], HPD,  
7 see to it that all residents of Ocean Towers  
8 remain in their affordable homes and not to be  
9 forced to be moved because of rezoning. We trust  
10 that you will not let us down. And thank you  
11 Councilman Recchia, you have been a tremendous  
12 asset to the Coney Island community. And thank  
13 you Lynn Kelly and Nicole Robinson, you have also  
14 been a valuable asset to our community. And I'd  
15 like to take this opportunity to thank CLEAR an  
16 organization that has been in the Coney Island  
17 community helping the people deal with the  
18 rezoning, trying to get you jobs and deal with  
19 affordable housing, an organization called CLEAR.  
20 Thank you so very much.

21 MS. AMY PARK: Good afternoon  
22 Chairman and Councilmen. I'm a resident of Coney  
23 Island for 19 and a half years now. I'm speaking  
24 here today to show the support of the City's  
25 proposed at Coney Island rezoning and

1  
2 redevelopment plan. Coney Island has come a long  
3 way to have the reason, lively circus shows right  
4 by the ocean. People are experiencing the  
5 nature's gift of Coney Island, the fresh air and  
6 the openness of the ocean.

7           Nevertheless Coney Island residents  
8 are still facing the helpless side of Coney  
9 Island. Like other underdeveloped areas Coney  
10 Island has its problems too. To name a few, crime  
11 and the sound of gunshots the problematic, so it's  
12 problem [skip in tape] systems, the sewage water  
13 from the sewage channel carry it by the tide water  
14 flows to the beach and contaminates the beach.  
15 People are watching their steps to avoid dirty  
16 water everywhere on the Main Avenue during the  
17 raining days. Only the rezoning and the  
18 development of Coney Island can meet the need of  
19 its increasing population with adequate  
20 infrastructures. Thank you.

21           CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: The only think  
22 you didn't do is mention your name for the record.

23           MS. PARK: Oh my name's Amy Park.

24           CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

25           MS. PARK: Sorry.

1  
2 MR. ED COSMEE: Good afternoon  
3 Council Members, my name is Ed Cosmee; I'm a  
4 member of Coney Island's Sports Chairperson and  
5 founder of the Coney Island Torch Foundation. I  
6 own two businesses on Mermaid Avenue and West 17<sup>th</sup>  
7 Street and I also own two residential buildings on  
8 Mermaid Avenue and West 17<sup>th</sup> Street. I approve of  
9 the rezoning plan in Coney Island which specific  
10 provisions that Dennis Vourderis from Deno's  
11 Wonder Wheel, that his property would not be  
12 affected by the rezoning plan.

13 In addition to that I had the  
14 opportunity to meet with one of the developers  
15 from Taconic [phonetic] and they were very cordial  
16 and very receptive in explaining to me about what  
17 their plans were in Coney Island. I'm just hoping  
18 that the community residents are not blindsided by  
19 some of the developers that they come in and sort  
20 of--with their own steamrollers and have their own  
21 plans. And I just don't want to be blindsided to  
22 that degree and that the Council that we all have  
23 a clear understanding on what the plans are for  
24 the future of Coney Island.

25 In addition to that I'd like to say

1  
2 that more needs to be done for the youth of Coney  
3 Island. We need vocational training. Maybe if we  
4 can find the land use to build and construct and  
5 to educate these youth because this plan calls for  
6 a 10 or 15 years of development in Coney Island.  
7 And in that time if we can educate these youths,  
8 we can have less crime in Coney Island. Thank  
9 you.

10 MR. JUAN RIVERO: Juan Rivero, Save  
11 Coney Island. So this plan's supposed to be about  
12 creating a world class amusement destination so  
13 let's see where the plan is right now. Right now,  
14 well we know that Coney Island is synonymous  
15 without the world with open air amusements, so  
16 this plan calls for the reduction of 60 acres are  
17 currently zoned for amusement to a narrow strip of  
18 12 acres turning a place that was once called the  
19 playground of the world and turning it into  
20 something the size of a children's playground.

21 Secondly Coney Island, one of its  
22 biggest assets is its seaside location. Everyone  
23 knows that. The plan right now puts most of the  
24 amusement area indoors and builds it up I suppose  
25 to protect people from the sun or from the sea

1  
2 breeze or something. They say that this is about  
3 making Coney Island year-round, that's a bit like  
4 saying let's put Central Park indoors to boost  
5 winter attendance, it doesn't make sense.

6 Then there's the matter of the  
7 entrance to Coney Island. We want to people to  
8 approach Coney Island and be dazzled by amusements  
9 and encounter what is unique about Coney Island,  
10 some of the few remaining historic buildings like  
11 Nathan's Famous. The plan would destroy all that  
12 building for high rise hotels along that corridor.

13 The City has been a little bit coy  
14 about showing us what that would look like so here  
15 let me show you. In this one you see the Wonder  
16 Wheel. In this one you don't. And there would be  
17 three more like that.

18 So to summarize what the City's  
19 proposing to do is build a narrow 12 acre  
20 amusement park, purchasing that land with public  
21 monies and purchasing it with a massive up-zoning  
22 that would obliterate most of what is worthwhile  
23 about the amusement area. And in return the  
24 public is going to get nothing. They would get a  
25 12 acre park zoned for amusements on land that is

1  
2 already zones for amusements.

3           Fortunately the plan can be fixed  
4 and if it's fixed then I support it. Expand the  
5 area devoted to other amusements so that it goes  
6 from the Boardwalk to the Bowery like the City  
7 itself proposed after countless public meetings.  
8 Remove those high rise hotels from the south side  
9 of Surf and put them elsewhere. They don't belong  
10 in the middle of an amusement district. If you  
11 cannot fix the plan however they you owe it to New  
12 York and its future generations to kill the plan  
13 and reject this false choice between now or never.  
14 Because if now means covering the whole place up,  
15 Coney Island, once it's covered up is not coming  
16 back and people are going to be looking back and  
17 saying what the hell were they thinking. Thank  
18 you.

19           CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: That diagram  
20 you just showed us, the blocking the Wonder Wheel.

21           MR. RIVERO: Yes.

22           CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay. Is that  
23 taken from 12<sup>th</sup> Street or from Stillwell?

24           MR. RIVERO: That is Stillwell--  
25 that is taken from--well the perspective is from

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the north side of--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]

Because the hotel recommended for 12<sup>th</sup> Street and  
for Stillwell.

MR. RIVERO: So this would be where  
the Henderson Building right now is. So this is  
the southeast corner of Stillwell and Surf.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay.

MR. RIVERO: Okay? Would you like?

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Do you have it  
in your--

MR. RIVERO: [Interposing] Yeah.

But this--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: --handout?

MR. RIVERO: --this one's bigger,  
it looks nicer.

[Laughter]

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: If you want to  
give it to me, I'll have it.

MR. RIVERO: Well actually it was  
kind of expensive--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]  
I know.

MR. RIVERO: --but we'll get you



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one.

[Laughter]

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: No, no, no,  
no, no, no, no. No, no. I just--

[Audience reacting]

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: No, no, I was  
just--I was just... let me ask you this question.  
If there was an opportunity to relocate some of  
the hotels that are recommended is there any one  
specific that you would recommend to delete or get  
out of the plan?

MR. RIVERO: Well the furthest east  
they are the worse they are because they would be  
forming a barrier between the core of the  
amusement area. So the further east you go the  
worse you get. Then it becomes a question of  
which buildings you're sacrificing. Frankly even  
the ones--if you take the one that is on top of  
Nathan's, there is no reason why you cannot fix  
that so it would not--the building high rise there  
wouldn't entail the destruction of Nathan's there  
if you do it with the setback. But the further  
east, the worse they are.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I just want

1  
2 you to know, Nathan's, the owners--no, the  
3 corporation for Nathan's has never contacted me  
4 about knocking it down, demolishing it or wanting  
5 to build up. I just want to set the record  
6 straight. All right. I know nothing about it and  
7 they never contacted me. I never met with them.

8 MR. RIVERO: So maybe they don't  
9 want a hotel there.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Chuckling]

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Yeah or  
12 maybe they don't care. I want to thank this panel  
13 but I would make a comment. And this goes to the  
14 last panel. You signed up in favor--

15 MR. RIVERO: [Interposing] Um-hum.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: You're  
17 clearly in opposition based upon the way the plan  
18 is so constituted.

19 MR. RIVERO: I'm in favor with  
20 modifications. I mean it's--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA:

22 [Interposing] All right. Well--

23 MR. RIVERO: --the world is not  
24 black or white.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: The reason

1  
2 I say this and I think this is for everybody's  
3 benefit and maybe in the future we have to change  
4 the sign-in slip. But the way the record is  
5 recorded is how you fill out that slip. So you're  
6 going to be recorded as in favor because that's  
7 how you indicated. So I think, you know, people  
8 have got to be very careful when they fill this  
9 out. And I was just talking to Land Use staff; we  
10 may have to change the form.

11 MR. RIVERO: Um-hum.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Because if  
13 you say you're in favor with modifications, that's  
14 a big difference than in favor in general or in  
15 opposition. But I wanted to make that clear for  
16 the record if anybody looks through the record.

17 MR. RIVERO: Thank you. Yeah that  
18 wasn't clear from--I'm sorry.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Anthony  
20 Williamson, Lowell Barton, Michael Halpin, Charles  
21 Denson, Shawn Phillips.

22 [Pause]

23 [Witnesses getting settled]

24 MR. ANTHONY WILLIAMSON: Good  
25 afternoon Mr. Chairman, members, good afternoon

1  
2 Mr. Chairman, members of City Council and members  
3 of the public. My name is Anthony Williamson and  
4 I'm a member of the Local 79 Construction and  
5 General Building Laborers. I'm a member of the  
6 Mason Tenders District Council of New York City  
7 and the Co-chair of Coney Island CLEAR. Today we  
8 are here to present to this Committee our proposal  
9 as regards to the redevelopment of Coney Island.  
10 And what I will do in this short time is read what  
11 our recommendations are to Councilman Recchia.

12 Councilman Dominic Recchia, Jr. We  
13 write with regards to the proposed redevelopment  
14 and rezoning plan for Coney Island. As you know  
15 Coney Island CLEAR is a Community and Labor  
16 Empowerment Alliance for Redevelopment. It is a  
17 watchdog group monitoring the redevelopment of  
18 Coney Island to ensure that it benefits all  
19 residents of Coney Island. CI CLEAR is comprised  
20 of community residents, Coney Island clergy and  
21 representatives from organized labor.

22 We believe that a comprehensive  
23 plan to revitalize Coney Island is long overdue  
24 and are thrilled at the prospect that this  
25 historical iconic neighborhood will be fully

1  
2 restored to its full potential. We have a few  
3 concerns, however in terms of the details of the  
4 plan we therefore submit the following  
5 recommendations for your considerations.

6           Housing, compute average median  
7 income using the average income of Coney Island  
8 residents rather than New York City residents.  
9 Increase the number of affordable housing units.  
10 There are other agreements throughout the City of  
11 New York, example the Willets Point that show that  
12 this number can be significantly higher than what  
13 it presently is.

14           We also spoke about infrastructure  
15 and I will conclude with jobs. We believe that  
16 6,000 permanent jobs and the 20,000 construction  
17 jobs will result from the redevelopment must be  
18 union jobs with benefits and wage standards. I  
19 have an attachment to this letter in full detail  
20 to the Councilman. And we are in process of  
21 training and other things to benefits the  
22 residents of Coney Island. Thank you very much.

23           MR. LOWELL BARTON: Hi, I'm Lowell  
24 Barton with the New York State Laborers. I guess  
25 what we need to do is we need to fix it with clear

1  
2 language, with clear goals for residents and  
3 workers. We don't need development that exploits  
4 immigrant workers. We need a project labor  
5 agreement. We also need language that is  
6 grandfathered into the rezoning property. Why?  
7 Because we've seen developer after developer come  
8 before us and promise us the world and then flip  
9 the property for a quick profit. This happens all  
10 over.

11 This does nothing for the community  
12 and does nothing for the people that work in New  
13 York City and live here. We do not need a shell  
14 game in Coney Island. Let's take a look--now I'd  
15 like to take a suggestion that you made a perfect  
16 point. Has anybody walked down there?

17 Well when it comes to rezoning why  
18 don't we take a look at the properties that we  
19 have rezoned in New York City that do not have  
20 project labor agreements that do not have clear  
21 language, working language, take a walk inside  
22 there. Take a look at the people that are working  
23 there. And ask yourself, hey boss, let me see the  
24 payroll. Are you paying taxes? Are these  
25 immigrant workers being exploited? Yes that's

1  
2 happening. It's happening all over the City.

3 They're not paying taxes. They're  
4 not paying unemployment benefits. They're not  
5 paying Worker's Compensation. It's happening all  
6 over the City. Let's take a walk, take a look at  
7 the properties we rezoned here and see what's  
8 happening. It's happening all over the City.

9 We need to protect the people who  
10 live here, the communities that these places are  
11 being built in with strong language. And it has  
12 to be grandfathered into the language of the  
13 rezoning itself. Don't let them rezone if they're  
14 just going to sell it to their friend, flip it and  
15 make a ton of money. We need to protect the  
16 workers out here. We need to protect the people.  
17 We need to protect the City. Thank you.

18 MR. MICHAEL HALPIN: Michael  
19 Halpin, a member of Coney Island CLEAR as well as  
20 an organizer for the International Union of  
21 Elevator Constructors Local Number 1. As far as  
22 Coney Island CLEAR is concerned I mean we've been  
23 involved in the community for well over two years  
24 now. And we haven't just been visitors to the  
25 community. And I appreciate what the two Council

1  
2 Members asked earlier as, you know, how do you  
3 stand on the project because when I came in and  
4 filled out the card I asked can I leave it blank.  
5 You know, I said I'd like to leave it blank and--  
6 because I have concerns. And so I appreciate your  
7 having asked that question.

8 Coney Island CLEAR we've been  
9 active in the community and I take a little,  
10 what's the word I'm looking for, I'm not catching  
11 the word. But the gentleman earlier spoke about  
12 who's involved in the schools out there. Coney  
13 Island CLEAR was asked to go into Lincoln High  
14 School and to deliver a message to a class which  
15 was a program of the JCC which was mentioned  
16 earlier, David Anderson and Margaret Gorelick  
17 [phonetic]. And we went it, we explained to the  
18 kids how to access apprenticeship programs and how  
19 once you graduate high school if college is not  
20 for you there are other, you know, things  
21 available to you.

22 And we need high road development  
23 though, we need to produce family sustaining wages  
24 and good careers. In fact when we went to the  
25 first public information session last year given



1  
2 by the CIDC at that first public information  
3 session Coney Island CLEAR introduced the  
4 language. We started talking about careers. And  
5 the conversation started changing 'cause before  
6 that it was jobs. And the conversation started  
7 changing to careers and we need to keep that ball  
8 rolling and create careers. If we do this  
9 development on Coney Island without lifting some  
10 people out of poverty we will have failed. We  
11 will have failed.

12 And we've been there. We've  
13 brought job training programs in. We've partnered  
14 with organizations such as Construction Skills  
15 2000, Helmets to Hardhats. We've brought our  
16 apprenticeship programs in there. And we've said  
17 to the community, you know, when we get  
18 development here we want to partner with you on  
19 this and offer opportunity. So we're not here to  
20 take from the community. We're here to work with  
21 the community. We appreciate all of Dominic  
22 Recchia's efforts. And we appreciate having  
23 worked with you over this time and thank you.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Before the  
25 next speaker starts, let me just make an

1  
2 announcement that we will hear everybody who's in  
3 the room and who has signed up to speak but as of  
4 4:00 o'clock we will not be accepting any new  
5 slips.

6 MR. CHARLES DENSON: My name is  
7 Charles Denson and I'm the author of the book,  
8 Coney Island Lost and Found and Director of the  
9 Coney Island History Project. When I wrote the  
10 book, Coney Island Lost and Found I described in  
11 detail development mistakes of the past in the  
12 hope that they would not be repeated in the  
13 future. That has not happened.

14 I grew up in Coney Island, lived  
15 there for 22 years and witnessed first hand how  
16 flawed urban planning can destroy a neighborhood.  
17 I watched the neighborhood decline and burn for  
18 two decades, the result of a massive urban renewal  
19 plan gone awry.

20 Now you're being asked to approve  
21 another flawed plan. This new rezoning plan is  
22 well-intentioned, it has promise but it needs to  
23 be fixed before it's approved. Everyone agrees  
24 that Coney Island needs improvement. Everybody  
25 wants affordable housing and jobs. There's no

1  
2 argument there. But master plans have never  
3 worked in Coney Island and this plan is no  
4 exception.

5 In 2003 City planners and the EDC  
6 announced a rezoning plan that allowed retail and  
7 residential development in the C-7 Amusement Zone  
8 and then acted surprised when predatory developer  
9 Thor Equities began buying up most of Coney  
10 Island, Coney Island's amusement property in an  
11 orgy of speculation. City officials that naively  
12 invited them in because the City prefers to work  
13 with big developers instead of local land owners,  
14 whether by accident or design, this was a serious  
15 miscalculation.

16 Thor's outlandish plan was not what  
17 the City wanted. Despite numerous concessions  
18 made to Thor Equities, concessions that aroused  
19 suspicion and cause the City's plan to lose  
20 support across a wide spectrum, the developers  
21 only become more obstinate and greedy and is now  
22 holding Coney Island hostage, trying to squeeze  
23 taxpayer dollars out of the City's attempts to buy  
24 back the land.

25 Thor is known for this tactic and

2 did the same thing with the Alby Mall Project in  
3 Brooklyn after planning an entertainment project  
4 but instead flipping the property for \$100 million  
5 profit. Among the politically motivating  
6 concessions recently made to Thor Equities is  
7 severely reduced outdoor amusement zone that is so  
8 small that if implemented will end Coney's chances  
9 to retain its status as a world class tourist  
10 destination.

11 The plan also places four  
12 unnecessary high rise towers along the south side  
13 of Surf Avenue. These enormous buildings are  
14 described as hotels but if history is a guide we  
15 know that they'll become luxury residential units.  
16 And residential development cannot coexist with  
17 amusements.

18 Also included in the plan is a  
19 proposed street called Wonder Wheel Way that will  
20 divide and destroy the heart of the amusement  
21 zone. There's no reason for this street to exist.

22 Before this plan is approved--

23 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]

24 Can you sum up? Can you sum up please?

25 MR. DENSON: Oh yeah, the outdoor

1  
2 amusement zone must be expanded, the towers must  
3 be moved and this new street should be scrapped.  
4 And the 25 stipulations made by the Community  
5 Board should be implemented. Other issues, the  
6 improved infrastructure, new schools, danger of  
7 building 4,500 new units of housing in a flood  
8 zone have not been adequately addressed.

9 We all want a better Coney Island  
10 and if these fixes are made the plan is off to a  
11 good start but these issues must be addressed  
12 before approval.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: First of  
14 all I want to thank you's all for coming but I  
15 just want to, you know, so many times we're  
16 hearing well Willets Point they did this, Willets  
17 Point they did that. In Coney Island, all right,  
18 our hands are so tied because number one we can't  
19 go down into the ground so they lose space.  
20 Number two it's the flood zone so they have to  
21 build above, you know, five feet before they can  
22 start building. And number three, there's a cap  
23 on the height. You can't go higher than the  
24 parachute jump. So these are three strikes  
25 against us, all right. So this is why we are

1  
2 trying to address all of the issues that people  
3 are saying and so we just have to keep that in  
4 mind. In a lot of these other places, yeah, they  
5 got more affordability but they went 35 stories or  
6 they went higher. Over here I would love to do  
7 that but we can't. We're restricted. So we're  
8 trying to work with what we have and believe me  
9 we're going to try to do what we could with the  
10 affordability issue.

11 MR. DENSON: Thank you.

12 MR. HALPIN: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: And  
14 building trades.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I'm just  
16 going to do this one more time, with your  
17 permission, again, I want to ask each one of you,  
18 if the plan remains as is, for example you raised  
19 the Wonder Wheel Way and you raised some other  
20 issues, if it remains the way it is, whether it's  
21 the City, whether it's developers, irrespective of  
22 that, do you want--are you in favor of us voting  
23 for it are you against?

24 MR. BARTON: As is, against.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Can you

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25

just-

MR. BARTON: --as it, against.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --say your name. Yeah, say your name because you--

MR. BARTON: Lowell Barton.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Again, are you for or against?

MR. BARTON: Against.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay.

Next.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Okay. I'm Anthony Williamson, now my position is not to be against as CLEAR. Once the redevelopment takes place and it meets the required labor standards and the proposals we put forward--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER:

[Interposing] Yeah but that wasn't the question.

MR. WILLIAMSON: --we have no problem.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: You're a very talented man. But I'm not so bad either. We're dealing with a very short timeframe here. And what we want to know is we may not have the opportunity to go through this again by the time

2 the vote comes up. We want to know, the Chair, my  
3 colleagues want to know, if we cannot resolve some  
4 of the issues that we said, do we approve it? You  
5 know, some people have said before, get what you  
6 can and let's move on. Some people have said no  
7 that would be a terrible thing, you know, if we  
8 can't get it done right we should wait a little  
9 bit. I want to know, as is, if it doesn't get  
10 resolved, are you for it or against?

11 MR. WILLIAMSON: We are for the  
12 project.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay next.  
14 And next.

15 MR. HALPIN: Mike Halpin, we only  
16 have one shot at building a future for Coney  
17 Island, let's make it a bright future and if we  
18 can't assure a bright future let's say no for now  
19 and--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER:  
21 [Interposing] Okay.

22 MR. HALPIN: --we'll work forward.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Next.

24 MR. DENSON: As is, against.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you



2 all very much.

3 [Off mic, laughter]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Now with  
5 respects to CLEAR, you said CLEAR is an  
6 organization that's based in Brooklyn, Coney  
7 Island with community residents, clergy and labor  
8 all working together. Now if in fact there were  
9 revisions to this proposed rezoning that dealt  
10 with hotels and other things like that would CLEAR  
11 be in favor of that or CLEAR would be against  
12 that?

13 MR. HALPIN: Revisions as far as  
14 what with regard to the hotels?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Because  
16 that area that we're talking about over there is  
17 amusement area only right now.

18 MR. HALPIN: We would have to see  
19 it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I'm sorry,  
21 what?

22 MR. HALPIN: We would have to see  
23 the revisions and then we can make a decision. If  
24 we saw--if we knew--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:

[Interposing] As far as CLEAR's concerned.

MR. HALPIN: If we saw the  
revisions we--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:

[Interposing] And what about, what about the  
Laborers Union as separate from CLEAR with  
respects to I assume that the Laborers Union is  
more interested in labor jobs. And so in any  
redevelopment there it's going to be a massive  
redevelopment. Is labor's position the same as  
CLEAR's position 'cause CLEAR is a coalition of  
labor, community based organizations, and so forth  
and so on. And I guess that's what my real  
question is. Because even if it was--I had asked  
Jessie Masyr who is the, I guess the Thor  
representative, they would rather see an amusement  
with mixed use in order to build--there's hotels  
and stuff like that I guess. That means jobs.  
And unless you have--and if you had a project  
labor agreement, so I'm trying to distinguish  
laborer's position versus CLEAR's position.

MR. WILLIAMSON: Okay, oh our  
position as the laborers, we are for the  
redevelopment. Okay? But as it stands here it

1  
2 doesn't have the stipulations in place. Once the  
3 stipulations are met we are for, fully in support  
4 of the redevelopment. Okay--?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:

6 [Interposing] But some of those--

7 MR. WILLIAMSON: And as CLEAR we  
8 even look at it through a broader perspective. We  
9 are for the redevelopment once it benefits the  
10 mostly the residents of Coney Island.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Right.

12 MR. WILLIAMSON: The residents of  
13 Coney Island must inherit most of the benefits.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Now my  
15 understanding that the Community Board approved  
16 this with 20 recommendations.

17 MR. WILLIAMSON: Yes.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And I  
19 assume many or some of those recommendations are  
20 the same recommendations that CLEAR has put forth--  
21 -

22 MR. WILLIAMSON: [Interposing] Very  
23 well, yes Sir.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.  
25 Very good. Thank you.

2 MR. WILLIAMSON: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: All right.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Andrew Holloweck  
5 [phonetic], Maryann Imperatori [phonetic], Don  
6 Weston, Steven J. Paluso, Emma Beddard, Lefty  
7 Lucy, Charles Reichenthal [phonetic], Paul  
8 Brigandi [phonetic].

9 [Off mic]

10 [Witnesses getting settled in]

11 MR. ANDREW HOLLICK: Good afternoon  
12 Chairman and members of the Committee. My name's  
13 Andrew Hollick [phonetic] Vice President for  
14 Policy and Programs at the New York Building  
15 Congress. Your job.

16 [Laughter]

17 MR. ANDREW HOLLICK: The New York  
18 Building Congress, New York City's largest and  
19 most diverse coalition serving the design,  
20 construction and real estate industry appreciates  
21 this opportunity to express our strong support for  
22 the Bloomberg Administration's efforts to develop  
23 a comprehensive strategy for the redevelopment of  
24 Coney Island. We've been impressed with the  
25 serious work undertaken by the staff of the City's

1  
2 Department of City Planning in cooperation with  
3 many other community and government organizations.  
4 This work has produced a workable blueprint for  
5 this signature New York City neighborhood.

6 With its proximity to mass transit,  
7 major arterial highways and airports, Coney Island  
8 is well situated for planned revitalization. The  
9 proposed plan will unlock its latent potential and  
10 create over 25,000 construction jobs and more than  
11 6,000 permanent jobs over the next 30 years. It's  
12 quite meaningful given today's climate.

13 The Bloomberg Administration  
14 projects more than \$14 billion in economic, \$14  
15 billion in economic activity, 4,000 to 5,000 new  
16 units of housing, many of which will be  
17 affordable. The enormous value of proceeding with  
18 the Coney Island Comprehensive Plan is clear. We  
19 are mindful that the plan has challenges but more  
20 important is the enormous potential that it  
21 represents for revitalization of one of New York  
22 City's most historic areas.

23 We agree that Coney Island should  
24 be a year-round entertainment center with major  
25 amusements and seaside attractions and at the same

1  
2 time become a more vibrant neighborhood for  
3 Southern Brooklyn. The Building Congress also  
4 acknowledges there are concerns that the plan is  
5 not financially viable. However we would argue  
6 that it is essential to lay the groundwork today  
7 for long term investment in the area's public and  
8 private infrastructure.

9 This rezoning coupled with the  
10 City's ongoing capital investments accomplishes  
11 that goal. This plan will not be achieved  
12 overnight but just as past neighborhood  
13 revitalization such as Battery Park City or Queens  
14 West took years to achieve, the rezoning is a  
15 necessary first step to generate jobs,  
16 infrastructure, etcetera.

17 Nonetheless we remain concerned  
18 about the issues that remain unresolved  
19 particularly the lack of an agreement with the  
20 developer Thor Equities. We're hopeful that the  
21 City will be able to resolve these questions or  
22 otherwise reach an accommodation with the affected  
23 parties.

24 In summary we're hopeful that the  
25 plan can move forward without costly and time-

1  
2 consuming litigation. Now is the time and the  
3 City's economy and residents need this project the  
4 most. Thank you.

5 MS. MARYANN IMPERITOR: good  
6 afternoon Chairman, City Council Members. My name  
7 is Maryann Imperitor [phonetic] and I'm Policy  
8 Director at the American Institute of Architects,  
9 New York Chapter. Thank you for the opportunity  
10 to testify today on behalf of the AIA New York, a  
11 professional organization with over 4,300 members.

12 We join our colleagues at the  
13 Brooklyn Chapter of the AIA in support of the  
14 Coney Island rezoning plan and comment the City  
15 Council for taking this important action to  
16 revitalize one of the City's and Nation's most  
17 distinctive and evocative places. Famed for its  
18 constellation of amusements and attractions, its  
19 legendary Broadway and Honkey Tonk retail, Coney  
20 Island has entertained Americans for generations  
21 and is now poised to do so again.

22 We appreciate the economic  
23 challenges of getting a project as complex as this  
24 underway. We feel it is important nonetheless to  
25 reinforce two guiding principles that are critical

1  
2 to establishing an authentic sense of place and  
3 that will ultimately ensure the success and  
4 vitality of the redevelopment.

5           They are: where possible preserve  
6 and adaptively reuse historic structures such as  
7 Nathan's. These are the vestiges of Coney  
8 Island's past and it is important to retain them  
9 for a sense of history and texture that is  
10 uniquely Coney Island.

11           Second, create innovative and  
12 whimsical architecture for Coney Island. We agree  
13 with the Brooklyn Borough President and the  
14 Municipal Art Society's call for interesting and  
15 sustainable architecture. Just as signage is the  
16 hallmark of Time Square, so too can cutting edge  
17 architecture and engineering be a defining  
18 characteristic of Coney Island.

19           This is an opportunity to showcase  
20 the City's design and engineering talent and to  
21 create a district where exciting design is one of  
22 the premier attractions. Thank you for this  
23 opportunity to testify and we look forward to the  
24 City Council making this dynamic vision of the  
25 Coney Island rezoning plan into a reality for all



New Yorkers and visitors from around the world.

Thank you.

MR. PAUL BERGANDI: Hi. Thank you Council for meeting today. Hi, my name is Paul Bergandi [phonetic] and I'm a Coney Island historian. I also own a private museum with the largest and finest collection of over 4,00 artifacts from Coney Island that I've gathered through over 44 years of collecting.

As I was going through Coney Island the other day I noticed the circus with its tent. It reminded me of Hoover Ville. It didn't feel like Coney Island anymore. I said to myself, how did we get to this. How could we even let a developer hold Coney Island hostage? We have taken the greatest name in amusement history and turned it into a lackluster non-electrifying place.

As I grew up in Steeple Chase, Coney Island felt like the seventh game of the World Series every day. The most exciting place in all of America. Today it's lost its purpose. Coney Island isn't just the biggest history in New York State or New York City, it's the biggest

2 history in America. We didn't have Rome. We  
3 didn't have Greece. We didn't have Egypt. We had  
4 Coney Island.

5 I believe that the new plan will  
6 improve Coney Island tremendously provided we will  
7 be--that provided that the will and desire by both  
8 the City and the developers to create a unique,  
9 outstanding amusement area, not just to bring back  
10 the people once for curiosity, but to keep them  
11 coming back again and again.

12 Millions of people throughout the  
13 United States have their family roots trace back  
14 to New York City and Ellis Island. Coney Island  
15 is equally as important since it is the number one  
16 destination for immigrants as well as Americans  
17 all throughout America. Although Coney Island  
18 looks the way it does today, there is still hope.  
19 Remember Ellis Island was abandoned for years and  
20 now was restored and became one of New York's  
21 number one attractions.

22 Coney Island's only hope is to pass  
23 the zoning. If the zoning isn't approved, you're  
24 not just letting down a community or a city,  
25 you're letting down the nation. Unfortunately for

2 Coney Islanders, the Verrazano Bridge that took  
3 Coney Island's life, and unless this zoning is  
4 approved people will continue to go over the  
5 bridge and spend their New York dollars elsewhere.  
6 And just closing, this is more geared to some of  
7 the developers there, remember bears and bulls  
8 make money but pigs do not. Thank you.

9 MR. STEVE PALUSO: Hi. First off  
10 I'd just like to clarify that I am in favor of the  
11 plan but with modification. So I'm with--my name  
12 is Steve Paluso, I'm speaking on behalf of myself  
13 as a concerned New York City resident and on  
14 behalf of Save Coney Island USA, the same  
15 organization which Dick Zygon [phonetic] and Juan  
16 and several other speakers are a part of.

17 Our goals are simple and they've  
18 been stated. We want the maximum acreage possible  
19 allotted for outdoor rides and amusements only.  
20 May I gesture to the map for a second? At a  
21 minimum this zoning should--

22 [off mic]

23 MR. PALUSO: Oh yes. At a minimum-

24 -

25 [Off mic]

1  
2 MR. PALUSO: At a minimum this area  
3 should include this here. This is not enough.  
4 This is what's being permitted under the current  
5 plan and this should be the bare minimum of what  
6 is--would allow for a functioning world class  
7 amusement destination. Anything less than that  
8 will not and cannot survive. We are opposed to  
9 the building of hotels along here. We are not  
10 opposed to development or the building of hotels  
11 or housing in the area generally, we understand is  
12 in need of redevelopment, is in need of jobs but  
13 we are urging the City to place that development  
14 outside of the existing amusement district.

15 I repeat, this is an existing  
16 amusement district. It is comprised of many small  
17 businesses and amusements which are thriving and  
18 have been there for many years. And there is no  
19 need to develop to that extent in it. We are  
20 opposed to Wonder Wheel Way. There is no need to  
21 put a street there. We are concerned that these  
22 so-called hotels will be condos, masked by a  
23 timeshare loophole. We are concerned that any  
24 rezoning will result in the displacement of rides  
25 and small amusement related business such as Cha

2 Cha's, Ruby's, Lola's Roller Rink, Dino's Wonder  
3 Wheel Park, the Original Nathan's, the Coney  
4 Island USA Sideshow and other beloved landmarks  
5 which give Coney Island its unique character.

6 We do not want to see these unique  
7 institutions replaced by generic big box corporate  
8 development and retail. We are urging the City to  
9 allow for a smaller, minimum acreage for plot size  
10 so that small businesses can compete in this area.  
11 And we are not comforted by the designation of  
12 parkland as parkland does not guarantee  
13 amusements. Parkland is simply land controlled by  
14 the City. Now whether the land is controlled by  
15 the City or not controlled by the City, that's  
16 not--

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]

18 Can you sum up?

19 MR. PALUSO: --really the issue.  
20 Sorry I didn't really get to speak much because  
21 the mic was not working. Would it be all right if  
22 I have another--

23 [Laughter]

24 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I made  
25 allowances for that.

2 MR. PALUSO: Thank you. I can  
3 speak very quickly and I will, I promise. On much  
4 of the land that is currently parkland is empty  
5 lots. It cannot be trusted that future  
6 administrations will use this parkland as  
7 amusements. The surest way to preserve Coney  
8 Island's amusement destination and to expand it is  
9 to keep it zoned as an amusement only destination.  
10 It is not likely that it will survive as an  
11 amusement destination in mixed use zoning because  
12 it is more likely that these amusements will be  
13 replaced by condominiums and big box development.  
14 And just if I could have one more moment, just to  
15 demonstrate the importance--

16 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]  
17 No. No.

18 MR. PALUSO: No? Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: You're done.

20 MR. PALUSO: All right, well thank  
21 you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay. If I  
23 didn't cut you off it wouldn't be fair to the  
24 others.

25 MR. PALUSO: No, no, I...

2 MR. CHUCK REICHENTHAL: Hello, is  
3 this working?

4 MR. PALUSO: It should. No it's  
5 on, I put it on.

6 MR. REICHENTHAL: I'm Chuck  
7 Reichenthal [phonetic]. I am also District  
8 Manager of Community Board 13 which includes Coney  
9 Island. Some years ago I was appointed to the  
10 Coney Island Development Corporation. And I must  
11 say I was honored and it has been several years of  
12 work, hundreds of meetings, morning meetings,  
13 afternoon meetings, night meetings. Huge amount  
14 of meetings within the community, in civil groups,  
15 in churches, in our office, and we haven't always  
16 agreed on everything and we have worked together  
17 and there have been many disputes, many fights.

18 I also as District Manger of the  
19 area get phone calls every day about problems  
20 within Coney Island. And the plan that has come  
21 across, opens the door to solving many of them.  
22 And I mean jobs. And I mean the correction of an  
23 intolerable infrastructure that once was number  
24 one priority on the boards, lists of things to be  
25 done in Coney Island and sort of vanished.

2 It also means the revitalization of  
3 one of the greatest and most alive areas in the  
4 entire world. I am entirely in support of the  
5 proposal. There are some problems. I bring in a  
6 point of logic. Wonder Wheel Way is not needed  
7 because logically it's not needed as a connection  
8 between all of the elements in the amusement area.  
9 We have The Bowery and that's what it's for and  
10 it's always been for.

11 I must say it has been a pleasure  
12 all these years working with everyone at CIDC,  
13 everyone in the Administration and especially with  
14 my good friend Councilman Dominic Recchia. And I  
15 thank you for this opportunity.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Sir, my  
17 understanding that you're the District Manager of  
18 Community Board 13 is that correct?

19 MR. REICHENTHAL: 17 years worth.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So my  
21 question to you is this. Are you here  
22 representing the Board or are you here  
23 representing yourself--

24 MR. REICHENTHAL: [Interposing] No  
25 I made the statement on behalf of the Coney Island



2 Development Corporation.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And what's  
4 your position with the--

5 MR. REICHENTHAL: [Interposing] But  
6 I can--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: What's  
8 your position with the Coney Island Development  
9 Corporation?

10 Mr. REICHENTHAL: I'm a member.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: You're a  
12 member so you're--

13 MR. REICHENTHAL: [Interposing]  
14 Yes.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So you're  
16 here as a member of the Coney Island--

17 MR. REICHENTHAL: [Interposing]  
18 Yes.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --  
20 Redevelopment Corp. and--

21 MR. REICHENTHAL: [Interposing]  
22 Right.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --not as a  
24 District Manager is that correct--?

25 MR. REICHENTHAL: [Interposing]

Exactly.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay thank  
you--

MR. REICHTHAL: [Interposing] I  
just gave that because I just wanted to clarify as  
to who I am.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.  
Next panel?

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Mr.  
Chairman I just wanted to set the record straight,  
that the Community Board voted in favor of the  
plan with 20 recommendations.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: And I just  
wanted to say that.

[Off mic]

COMMITTEE CLERK: Carolyn McCrory,  
Ronald Roth, Harold Kramer, Michael Deedee Wright.

[Off mic]

FEMALE VOICE 1: - - feedback?  
Hello?

[Off mic]

[Witnesses getting settled in]

COMMITTEE CLERK: Christabel Gough

[phonetic].

[Pause]

FEMALE VOICE 1: Okay, hi everyone.

I'm going to use the map a little and hopefully I'll be exactly two minutes. First thing I wanted to talk about, thank you so much, I really appreciate I feel like is great integrity up here. I also feel like the CIDC has integrity. And hopefully in the future we'll see that more and more. What I wanted to show you on the map is this parcel of land that it is blocks 70-71, lot 142 which was originally kind of a forgotten community garden which has now--is being revitalized. Lots of people gardening there, all different kinds of people, it's really amazing fresh food. I could go on and on and on about community gardens. And I will to anyone who wants to listen to them. Their potential is unbelievable the way they can turn around a neighborhood.

And actually sometimes end up displacing residents because they make such an incredible difference having a garden on the block. So anyway I just wanted to show that,

1  
2 that's on 22<sup>nd</sup>. And right on the Boardwalk, we're  
3 getting crowds now of people standing on the  
4 Boardwalk watching people hoe. It's pretty  
5 interesting. And there's peppers being grown  
6 there, tomatoes, collards, just a lot of great  
7 things are happening so I wanted to put that on  
8 the record.

9 I know it's hard to listen after  
10 five hours but I only have two minutes to please,  
11 Councilmen, please listen to me. I only have 17  
12 seconds left. There needs to be a police officer  
13 right here on Jones Walk all the time. All the  
14 time because of what's going on there. And,  
15 that's all I can say or I could be killed.  
16 Elephants, please check that the elephants aren't  
17 being hooked before the shows. Also, I love the  
18 Boardwalk in January. It's the best time.  
19 Everyone should go there. Walk along the  
20 Boardwalk; see the sky and the light and the  
21 quiet. And, I think that that's everything.  
22 Thank you.

23 RONALD ROTH: My name is Ronald  
24 Roth. It's very interesting, skateboard parks,  
25 yes; but, parachute jump, no. I think that tells

1  
2 you a lot about the Plan. I'm the author of the  
3 forthcoming book *Maze if Mirrors, House of Cards:*  
4 *America's Classic Amusement Parks*, the most  
5 extensive treatment of traditional amusement parks  
6 to date.

7           And, this plan doesn't fit the  
8 formula for a successful park. It doesn't have  
9 the critical mass of outdoor amusements that would  
10 predict success. I agree with several of the  
11 speakers who have said that the acreage for  
12 outdoor amusements should be greatly expanded.  
13 The City's so-called Strategic Plan has enough  
14 buzzwords to be developed by the National Hardware  
15 Association, because it would dull the blade of a  
16 buzz saw, like revival, iconic.

17           The agencies putting together the  
18 plan have admitted that they're not experts in the  
19 field, but yet, they only called in the experts  
20 after the Strategic Plan was developed; not  
21 during, not before. Compounding the problem, the  
22 current advisory team of professionals is headed  
23 by Kieran Burke, who singlehandedly ran Six Flags  
24 into the ground. And, it's recently filed for  
25 bankruptcy. The Municipal Art Society, in its

2 initial study supported an increased acreage for  
3 outdoor amusements. [pause] And, they interviewed  
4 me about my book. And then, they studied it in  
5 depth and supported that.

6 The 27-story hotels that are  
7 planned are a total disaster. When I was in  
8 architecture school, they would take their grease  
9 pencils out and remove them from my design if I  
10 had designed that. And, I think that's what  
11 should be done with the hotels in the Plan.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Can you sum  
13 up, please?

14 RONALD ROTH: The hotels would form  
15 a wall between the rest of Brooklyn and the rides  
16 and would not be-- there's not sufficient acreage  
17 of outdoor amusements to support the hotels.  
18 Amusement industry experts have told me no one  
19 would come to the hotels. The Plan has serious  
20 flaws. And, if it's extended--

21 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]  
22 I'm going to have to--

23 RONALD ROTH: -- in its acreage,  
24 that would be a big step in the right direction.

25 MICHAEL WHITE: Michael White,

1  
2 Noticing New York, Attorney, Urban Planner, former  
3 Government Development official. Nobody wants to  
4 be blamed for the destruction of Coney Island.  
5 Yet, the City plan, if the Council approves it,  
6 will accomplish exactly that. There are far too  
7 many questions without satisfactory answers for  
8 the plan to be approved.

9           Why do City officials tell us that  
10 it must be only this plan; only this  
11 Administration and only now? Why do City  
12 officials tell us they want the public to testify,  
13 but there is just one option to testify in favor  
14 of the City's plan? This sounds like the melding  
15 of two famous offers, Luca Brasi's as Godfather  
16 offer incorporated in the words President Reagan  
17 found terrifying, 'We are from the government and  
18 we are here to help with an offer you can't  
19 refuse.'

20           It's counterintuitive that Coney's  
21 amusement area would be saved by shrinking it  
22 virtually out of existence. Shrinking the  
23 amusement areas has never work for Coney in the  
24 past, why now? If saving Coney is urgent, why  
25 isn't the LPC saving it's landmarks now? Why plan

1  
2 to cause icons like Famous Nathan's to be  
3 destroyed? Why are we told that Coney Island's  
4 resurrection can't be accomplished without natural  
5 gradual piecemeal and in an organic way,  
6 especially if real estate professionals are  
7 telling us that Coney's redevelopment will  
8 actually take generations? Must the Bloomberg  
9 Administration always be fatally attracted to  
10 mega-development that leaves holes in the grounds.  
11 Why did an Administration say it wants to save  
12 Coney carelessly spark and let perniciously  
13 persist the speculative wave of destruction  
14 premised on Coney's being zoned out of existence?

15 This Administration hasn't made  
16 mapping amusement areas as parkland work and  
17 hasn't enforced zoning that requires amusement  
18 use. Why would such measures work now? If the  
19 City sincerely believes that it has designed  
20 enough acreage for an amusement area, why did  
21 public officials confuse the dialogue, writing in  
22 misleading press releases that the City was  
23 apparently providing the 27 acres of an open-air  
24 amusement that the Municipal Art Society said are  
25 the bare minimum needed.



1  
2 And, I have a lot more in the  
3 written material that I submitted, which will also  
4 be on the web.

5 HAROLD KRAMER: Hi. Good  
6 afternoon. My name is Harold Kramer from Save  
7 Coney Island, as well. I was born and raised in  
8 Brooklyn. I graduated from the same high school  
9 as Councilman Recchia, John Dewey High School.

10 And, my family used to own a ride  
11 out in Coney Island called the Thunderbolt. For  
12 nearly 60 years, my Aunt Molly, Uncle George and  
13 Cousin Fred owned, ran and lived under the ride.  
14 They raised the family there and had two sons;  
15 Fred, who ran the ride after his dad passed away  
16 in 1965, his dad George Moran [phonetic]; and  
17 Harold David, for who I am named after. Harold  
18 died a hero as a pilot in World War II.

19 The story of the Morans and the  
20 Thunderbolt are the stuff of legends; Coney Island  
21 legends. It's what makes the history of Coney  
22 Island so wonderful and alive. In 2000, however,  
23 the Thunderbolt suffered from bad City policy and  
24 was demolished; no regard for the history or  
25 significance of the ride. And, the demolition was

done against the law.

Now, New York City has a chance to recapture and expand the glory of Coney Island or it can give in to the big money and create something with little regard to what New Yorkers and the world really want. We want Coney Island back. We want an amusement area that is bigger and better than ever; that is the envy of the world. One that will actually draw people from all over the world.

The current rezoning plan envisions only 12 acres of open air amusement, an area the New York Times and the Municipal Art Society called simply too small to attract enough rides and attractions to bring back the big crowds. It is essential to set aside at least 25 acres of open-air amusements to ensure Coney has enough space to accommodate the potential attendance of 3.5 million visitors per year and create a truly world-class amusement area.

The City Council must fix the City's plan by making the following amendments; expand the acreage for outdoor rides and amusements, prevent high-rise towers from invading

1  
2 the heart of the amusement district, promote small  
3 businesses and local entrepreneurs and prevent  
4 their displacement, protect Coney Island's  
5 historic buildings and create jobs for New Yorkers  
6 in the amusement industry by preserving amusement  
7 zoning. I just want to say I'm opposed to the  
8 City's Plan unless these amendments are put  
9 forward in that Plan.

10 CHRISTABEL GOUGH: I'm Christabel  
11 Gough. I'm speaking for the Society for the  
12 Architecture of the City. This morning, we heard  
13 Mr. Pinsky characterize Coney Island as an  
14 invaluable brand. And yet, the historic amusement  
15 area is not preserved by the City's plan. The  
16 amusement area has been cut beyond the critical  
17 mass that defined Coney Island in the past.

18 I'm trying to avoid repetitive  
19 testimony. But, I would just like to say one more  
20 thing. It is proposed that there will be some  
21 compensatory provision of parkland by the City.  
22 However, the Administration has not achieved a  
23 good record in such transactions, for instance,  
24 the Yankee Stadium, McCombs Dam Park deal, as  
25 reported in the New York Times May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

2 There seems to be no way to enforce City promises  
3 that are not kept or to stop the tide of parkland  
4 privatization from Brooklyn Bridge to Union  
5 Square. Thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Mr. Kramer,  
7 just a general question. Okay.

8 HAROLD KRAMER: Yes.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: There were  
10 three roller coasters. There was the Cyclone, the  
11 Thunderbolt and what was the other one?

12 HAROLD KRAMER: It was the Tornado.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: That's it.

14 HAROLD KRAMER: And, there was also  
15 something called the Bobsled and there was  
16 something called the Virginia Rio.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Nah. But  
18 the three, one of them was the fastest, the  
19 steepest and the longest.

20 HAROLD KRAMER: Maybe the Tornado.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: We'll talk  
22 about it after the hearing.

23 HAROLD KRAMER: Okay.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you  
25 very much.

MALE VOICE: Next panel, Queenie Huling, Joan Corney [phonetic], Lanelle Taylor [phonetic], Sarah Kennedy, Rabbi Moshe Weiner, Aaron Jack [phonetic], Vin Cippola, Nicolas Ronderos.

JOAN CORNEY: I'm ready.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Then, why don't you start.

JOAN CORNEY: Good afternoon. My name is Joan Corney. I'm representing the Coney Island Homeowners' Association this afternoon. Good afternoon, Council Members. [pause]

People in Coney Island are living in fear. I'll repeat it, living in fear. I have a statistic report from the 60<sup>th</sup> Precinct of Coney Island. In the last two weeks of March and the month of April, there were six murders in six weeks, as opposed to the whole year of 2008; there were three murders. [Pause] MASlo [phonetic] psychologists says people live in fear. What people need is physical [pause], breathing, water, food, clothing, shelter. And, once these physical needs are satisfied, then there's a need for safety. [pause] and that's what the people in

1  
2 Coney Island need. They need to feel safe.

3 My request is for you to work with  
4 the Community Board, the police to end the  
5 violence in Coney Island. There's a great need  
6 for it. And, it would be a giant step toward  
7 unification of Coney Island, east, west, it's all  
8 Coney Island. And, this is western end of Coney  
9 Island. So, it needs, the violence, the criminal  
10 violence, needs to be addressed. Thank you.

11 QUEENIE HULING: Good afternoon.  
12 My name is Queenie Huling. I've lived in Coney  
13 Island for over 30 years. And, I am the President  
14 of Coney Island Homeowners' and Resident  
15 Association. We support the revitalization of  
16 Coney Island. However, the current Plan does not  
17 address the immediate needs of our community.

18 Therefore, we're requesting you to  
19 vote against the rezoning plan unless the  
20 following recommendations are made; address the  
21 issue of crime and violence on our streets and fix  
22 our infrastructure prior to this plan unfolding.  
23 Our current sewage systems backs up into the  
24 streets and people's homes. Our streets are  
25 flooded with water from the ocean every time there

1  
2 are heavy rainstorms. There are enormous traffic  
3 jams and delays when motorists are entering or  
4 exiting by way of Surf, Neptune, or Cropsy  
5 [phonetic] Avenue.

6 We suffer from a severe shortage of  
7 parking space, especially during the summer when  
8 14,000 to 16-- I mean, 14 to 16 million beachgoers  
9 come to Coney Island. Due to the lack of parking,  
10 local residents are forced to drive around for  
11 hours looking for available parking space.

12 Furthermore, there are no elevators available at  
13 Stillwell [phonetic] Avenue subway station to  
14 accommodate our senior citizens and disabled.

15 Special provisions should be made  
16 to ensure that the medium income household for the  
17 western portion of Coney Island is used when  
18 determining affordable housing, not the medium  
19 income household for New York City. By doing so,  
20 we'll ensure that resident who sustain Coney  
21 Island benefits from these new developments.

22 Developers must commit to job  
23 training with accountability. Local residents  
24 that are unemployed or underemployed must get  
25 first preference at all jobs.

2 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Can you start  
3 to sum up, please?

4 QUEENIE HULING: Yes. Preserve the  
5 amusement area, make it larger with more rides and  
6 attraction where families from all economic  
7 backgrounds can come and enjoy themselves. We do  
8 not want to be priced out of our neighborhoods or  
9 replaced by development plans.

10 YUNONA LIPHINCHUCK: Hi. My name  
11 is Yunona Liphinchuck [phonetic]. And, I am  
12 speaking on behalf of Rabbi Moshe Wiener. My name  
13 is Rabbi Moshe Wiener. And, I serve the Executive  
14 Director of the Jewish Community Council of  
15 Greater Coney Island, a social service agency  
16 which provides a wide spectrum of senior citizen,  
17 youth, vocational, immigrant and educational  
18 services to the frail elderly, educationally at-  
19 risk youth, newly arrived refugees and  
20 vocationally disadvantaged poor of the communities  
21 of our borough and, in some cases, Citywide.

22 In addition, we provide technical  
23 assistant services to enhance the management  
24 capacity of nonprofit organizations throughout New  
25 York. Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney



1  
2 Island is a community-based organization with a  
3 Citywide scope.

4           Despite our operations throughout  
5 the five boroughs, we have maintained our  
6 separable affinity for Coney Island, our home  
7 since 1973 through our very name. Hence, the  
8 development of the Coney Island area is an issue  
9 of intrinsic significance to our organization. We  
10 are, thus, most pleased to express our excitement  
11 and to urge City Council support at this critical  
12 juncture in the lengthy and complex process for  
13 making the dreams of so many for a revitalized  
14 Coney Island a reality.

15           I'm confident that I speak on  
16 behalf of all concerned with the future of Coney  
17 Island in articulating profound gratitude for the  
18 vision, focus and multifarious concern efforts to  
19 achieve an actualized economic resuscitation of  
20 Coney Island by the Mayor and his Administration,  
21 represented by the Deputy Mayor, Economic  
22 Development Corporation and Coney Island  
23 Development Corporation. The dedicated leadership  
24 of our elected officials, the developers who  
25 invested so much of their resources and expertise

2 and the lay leaders who have given so much of  
3 their time and guidance.

4 There have been numerous concerns  
5 articulating regarding the revitalization of Coney  
6 Island. It included the emphasis of redevelopment  
7 amusement area at the expense and  
8 disenfranchisement of the residential sections in  
9 the neighborhood, which represent the majority of  
10 Coney Island's geography. After observing the  
11 consistent efforts of the public and private  
12 sector--

13 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: [Interposing]  
14 If you can sum up, please.

15 YUNONA LIPHINCHUCK: Sure. We have  
16 no doubt that continuing to support these efforts  
17 and passing the legislation necessary to move this  
18 process forward will assure that the ultimate  
19 economic redevelopment of Coney Island will result  
20 in new revitalization, not only the commercial  
21 area, but also of the quality of life of all Coney  
22 Island's residents.

23 LISA KERSAVAGE: Good evening. My  
24 name is Lisa Kersavage. I'm the Director of  
25 Advocacy and Policy at the Municipal Art Society.

1  
2 And, I'm here representing Vin Cippola, the new  
3 President of MAS, who had hoped he could be here.

4 I'm here today to urge the Council  
5 to adopt the City's Plan for Coney Island. The  
6 City's plan is the greatest hope for revitalizing  
7 Coney Island, which cannot be lost to private  
8 development interests. Coney Island is the last  
9 great oceanfront parkland opportunity in the  
10 region and Coney's demise would be a tragic loss  
11 to the citizens of New York, to the country and to  
12 the world. MAS strongly believes that the public  
13 must own enough land at Coney Island to ensure a  
14 vital amusements district. We believe that it is  
15 critical to revitalize Coney Island in a way that  
16 maintains its creative, innovative spirit so it  
17 can once again become a top waterfront amusement  
18 and entertainment destination.

19 In particular, MAS fully supports  
20 the City's effort to acquire private property in  
21 the amusement area. MAS commissioned a report  
22 from the Real Estate Advisors RCL Code to study  
23 the economic viability of an amusement park in  
24 Coney Island. They found that the economics do  
25 not currently allow for the creation of an

1  
2 amusement park on privately owned land and that  
3 the public investment in Coney Island could have  
4 enormous potential public benefit, as it did in  
5 places like Times Square and Millennium Park in  
6 Chicago.

7           While we hope the City Council  
8 approves the plan, we also expect that the City  
9 will continue its diligent efforts to consider the  
10 following recommendations of the MAS study. And,  
11 our recommendations include, number one, keep the  
12 south side of Surf Avenue low to open views of the  
13 amusement and the ocean. We recommend that hotels  
14 be moved to the north side of Surf Avenue. Number  
15 two, expand the acreage dedicated to open-air  
16 amusements to ensure it can accommodate the  
17 potential number of visitors. Number three,  
18 protect historic buildings. We believe that the  
19 historic Shore Theater, which holds 2,400 people,  
20 is a type of performance many of the Coney Island  
21 so desperately needs.

22           And, I have submitted, for the  
23 record, a packet of recommendations. They go into  
24 greater detail about our rezoning recommendations,  
25 but also actions that can be taken in the future

1  
2 in terms of transportation and addressing the  
3 larger planning needs of the whole Coney Island  
4 peninsula. Thank you.

5                   NICOLAS RONDEROS: Good afternoon,  
6 Chair Avella, Councilman Recchia, members of the  
7 Committee. My name is Nicolas Ronderos. And, I'm  
8 Director of Urban Development Programs for  
9 Regional Plan Association, a private nonprofit  
10 research and planning organization serving the  
11 greater New York Metropolitan region. RPA wants  
12 to comment on the Coney Island Comprehensive  
13 Rezoning Plan and express our strong support for  
14 the action and the review to rejuvenate Coney  
15 Island as a regional entertainment center and  
16 source of new jobs, housing and open space.

17                   Over the past generation, nearly  
18 all of New York's iconic places, including Central  
19 and Prospect Parks, Times Square, Grand Central  
20 Terminal, have all been reclaimed, reinvented and  
21 given new life in our 21<sup>st</sup> century metropolis. One  
22 of the last of these as-of-yet-to-be reclaimed  
23 iconic places is Coney Island. The vestiges of  
24 its glorious past, such as the Parachute Jump and  
25 the Cyclone roller coaster ride and events like

1  
2 the Mermaid Parade remain. But, the reality of  
3 the place is that it is now composed largely of  
4 vacant lots and a small number of entertainment  
5 uses.

6 To continue to succeed, the project  
7 will need to preserve the authenticity and  
8 diversity of Coney Island's amusement and its  
9 visitor and residents. RPA wants to ensure that  
10 the proposed project is successful and truly  
11 accommodates the needs of its amusements and  
12 entertainment destination. The proposed plan is a  
13 well designed proposal. It builds on Coney  
14 Island's unique history, character and culture by  
15 preserving its remaining iconic features. It  
16 ensures the future of the amusement area by  
17 formalizing this public asset as parkland. And,  
18 it develops a vibrant urban amusement and  
19 entertainment destination that would be open to  
20 the public and, most importantly, provide  
21 entertainments at a range of price levels in all  
22 seasons. This will foster economic activity that  
23 create job opportunities for residents by creating  
24 year-around activity and bringing new housing to  
25 the neighborhood.

1  
2 We believe the Plan under review  
3 calls for an ambitious and implementable vision of  
4 both outdoor and indoor amusement, supporting  
5 commercial activity and new housing. RPA hopes  
6 that the Council will support this plan. Thank  
7 you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you.  
9 Thank you very much. I didn't hear your name, I'm  
10 sorry.

11 YUNONA LIPHINCHUCK: Yunona.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah,  
13 what's your first name?

14 YUNONA LIPHINCHUCK: Yunona,  
15 Yunona.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay.  
17 Representing Rabbi Wiener, right--

18 YUNONA LIPHINCHUCK: Yeah.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --from the  
20 non-for-profit JCC in--

21 YUNONA LIPHINCHUCK: Yes.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- Coney  
23 Island. Can you please tell me whether anyone  
24 solicited a letter of support from your  
25 organization?

2 YUNONA LIPHINCHUCK: I don't know.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay. If  
4 you can find out, and you don't have to let me  
5 know, you can let the Chair know, I want to know--  
6 I'd like to know whether anyone asked for a letter  
7 of support. And, if someone did, who that would  
8 be.

9 YUNONA LIPHINCHUCK: Okay.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you  
11 very much.

12 YUNONA LIPHINCHUCK: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Good  
14 afternoon. This is for the Homeowners. Now, I  
15 heard you express about cars and all of that  
16 stuff. And, I ask whether or not, both of you,  
17 were you in favor or opposed to the rezoning?

18 QUEENIE HULING: We're in--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Go ahead.

20 QUEENIE HULING: We are in favor of  
21 the rezoning, with meeting certain provision  
22 that's addressed.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: But, to go  
24 back to my colleague, Simcha Felder, assuming that  
25 there were no revisions, are you still in favor?



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Or, are you against?

QUEENIE HULING: No, I'm not.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Oh--

QUEENIE HULING: Against.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: -- and that's important. Yeah, because now, listening to both of your testimony, clearly you are objecting to things. And, that's why I had asked whether or not you were in favor or against. And, as you said, you clarified it, you're in favor of it with certain things being done. But, if not, you're not. Okay. Thank you.

QUEENIE HULING: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: All right.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I just want to thank you all for coming. And, Queenie, as far as the sewage backup, that's a major problem, 'cause when those houses were built, that's one thing they didn't do correct. And, DEP's well aware of that. And, I brought it to their attention. And, we're trying to see what could be done immediately to see somehow to rectify or just get something temporarily until we can repair it fully. Okay.

2 QUEENIE HULING: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: All right.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I'm glad that  
5 Council Member Jackson asked that question because  
6 I didn't get that impression from you. It's  
7 Miss Hurling, right?

8 QUEENIE HULING: Huling.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Huling. That  
10 you would be against it if there were no  
11 substantive changes. So, I'm glad that he asked  
12 that question. I just had a comment. You  
13 mentioned about, you know, the need for affordable  
14 housing and that it should be based upon the  
15 neighborhood median income, rather than the median  
16 income for New York City. This is a big issue for  
17 me.

18 And, you should know that the  
19 affordable housing component that the City does is  
20 not just based upon the New York City income, it's  
21 based upon the Metropolitan area median income,  
22 which includes the wealthier neighborhoods of  
23 Nassau and Westchester. So, it actually raises up  
24 the New York City income level. I've actually  
25 been working on legislation to change that so it's

based upon the neighborhood AMI.

QUEENIE HULING: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: The neighborhood, you know, income, so that when we do a project like this, the people in that neighborhood could actually benefit. But, I just wanted to let you know about that.

QUEENIE HULING: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

Next panel.

MALE VOICE: Michael McDermott [phonetic], Zachary Bernstein [phonetic].

CHAIRMAN AVELLA: No Zachary.

MALE VOICE: Rick Bell--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Is there a Rick in the house? No?

MALE VOICE: Ron Dare [phonetic].

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Nope.

MALE VOICE: Martin Allen [phonetic].

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Keep going.

MALE VOICE: Kariff [phonetic].

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Nope.

MALE VOICE: Troy Fletcher? Ahiem

2 Brohead [phonetic], Ali King, Brandy Dupree, Noel  
3 Rodriguez, Bobby Williams, Anhel Ramos [phonetic],  
4 Sandra Siberd [phonetic], Timothy Glover, William  
5 Walker, Ashiem Ali, Ala [phonetic], John Hogwash  
6 [phonetic], Julius Dow [phonetic], Carol Hill  
7 Albert [phonetic], Marion Kennedy, Trisha Veta  
8 [phonetic], Cheryl Robertson [phonetic], John  
9 Clark.

10 DARREL KALICH BLEE: My name is  
11 Darrel Kalich Blee [phonetic]. And, I represent  
12 Fort Greene Empowerment. I'm in favor of the  
13 City's proposal for one reason and one reason  
14 only. It's going to provide jobs to, not only to  
15 residents that are in Coney Island, right, but  
16 it's going to revitalize the City itself, you  
17 know, 'cause the whole City's affected by it, you  
18 know.

19 I see that there's only a few of  
20 you all here now, but there were many of you here  
21 earlier, right. But, all your neighborhoods will  
22 be affected by the revitalization of Coney Island,  
23 because when Coney Island is built, right, the  
24 jobs that are created creates revenue. The  
25 revenue that's created, again, it creates more

1  
2 jobs for police, firemen and Councilmen, such as  
3 yourselves, right. All this comes into effect by  
4 the revitalizations of Coney Island itself.

5 You know, we have the saying about  
6 problems in the infrastructure, right. Well, now  
7 we got the City coming together, putting billions  
8 of dollars, right, coming together to help fight  
9 and build this infrastructure. You know, we got  
10 problems with crime. We got problems with drugs.  
11 We got problems with a lot of things going on in  
12 Coney Island, right. And, the City is the only  
13 one that's putting up this here money, you  
14 understand what I'm saying, so that these here  
15 problems can be properly addressed.

16 And yet, and still, we got a few  
17 people who have their own selfish needs and saying  
18 well, listen here, well I'm a landowner here and  
19 I've been for this particular period of time and  
20 I'm going to stand in the way of this because my  
21 one little thing is not getting done, when  
22 millions are being affected, thousands of people  
23 are being affected, not - - thousands of people  
24 are being affected directly and millions  
25 indirectly, right, by the stopping and the slowing

of this program.

We need this here, right. All of your districts are being affected. Matter of fact, this whole state is being affected by it, right. So, when this here money, and I'm going to making sure, I'm going to cut it to a close here, right. But, what I'm saying is this here, is that the City's proposal is an attempt by the City to correct the wrongs, right, that's being done by Coney Island. People are talking about only small parcels of land are being done for amusement. Well, how many parcels of land are being used now by amusement? Huh? There's your answer. Here you go.

CAROL HILL ALBERT: I need to speak to-- my name is Carol Hill Albert. And, I need to speak to Councilman Recchia, but he's not here. Could I go next?

MALE VOICE: Here he comes.

CAROL HILL ALBERT: Oh, okay. My name is Carol Hill Albert. And, I'm the former owner of Astroland Park in Coney Island. And, I currently operate the Cyclone roller coaster for the City of New York. And, the reason I wanted

1  
2 Councilman Recchia to be here, specifically, is I  
3 wanted to clear up an earlier reference he made to  
4 the fact that Astroland was not forced out and we  
5 got \$30 million. Well, the fact is both things  
6 are true. We did get \$30 million for our  
7 property. But, I think it's important to note  
8 that that \$30 million was paid after we turned  
9 down \$30 million two years earlier because I made  
10 a decision that I wanted to develop the property  
11 myself.

12 I hired architects who had worked  
13 for the Museum of Modern Art. I had drawings  
14 made. I went all over the City of New York. Many  
15 people in this room or representatives of the  
16 institutions in this room saw those drawings.  
17 After a period of two years when there was no  
18 support whatsoever for what was a fully developed  
19 amusement park, a hotel, a partially covered water  
20 park, it became clear to me that, at that time,  
21 there was not going to be an opportunity for us to  
22 develop our property.

23 Since, by all signs, the property  
24 was going to be developed by somebody, because  
25 there were talk of development, and it wasn't

1  
2 going to be me, the second time Joe Sid [phonetic]  
3 came with an offer, it seemed to me it made sense  
4 to take it. And, that's what we did.

5 Councilman Recchia, himself, was an  
6 enormous help, as was Lynn Kelly, in attempting to  
7 get us a lease for another year. And, Thor  
8 Equities decided, for whatever reasons, I mean,  
9 they own the land, it's their decision to make,  
10 not to offer a lease. But, it did mean 350 Coney  
11 Island jobs were not going to be available and  
12 Astroland was closed.

13 As far as my testimony here today,  
14 for which I have about six seconds left, I am in  
15 support of the City's Plan with an important  
16 modification. I think, as having operated  
17 amusements in Coney Island for so many years, I  
18 can tell you people need to see them. You cannot  
19 have a wall of high-rise hotels blocking an  
20 amusement park any more than you could put up a  
21 fortress around the Statute of Liberty. You can  
22 still see it from the water, but people are going  
23 to start to view it as a historical issue and not  
24 a present one. So, that's my testimony.

25 MARION KENNEDY: Thank you. My



1  
2 name is Marion Kennedy. To save some time, I have  
3 been a resident in the community for 64 years.

4 Prior to this meeting, I've been in a number of  
5 other meetings with a number other projects in the  
6 Coney Island area. On this front, four or five  
7 years ago, we talked to our Councilmen. We spoke  
8 to Domenic Recchia. We spoke to Lynn Kelly. We  
9 spoke to a number of people. We also spoke to the  
10 Honorable Rabbi Wiener in the Coney Island area  
11 about doing training for this particular project  
12 if it was to come about.

13 To make it short, because it had  
14 been said before a number of other times, there's  
15 a great need in Coney Island. There's a need for  
16 senior citizen facility, which is being built, as  
17 the Councilman indicated there were two programs  
18 up on Surf and 35<sup>th</sup> Street. There's a need for  
19 affordable housing, which is yet to come with your  
20 YMCA facility for youngsters. There is a need for  
21 training and employment, which hopefully would  
22 come about.

23 But, as the brother here says, and  
24 no disrespect, we have zero on the board now. We  
25 have a dream. Dr. King had a dream and no

1  
2 disrespecting his name at this time. But, we need  
3 to bring it into reality. The differences that  
4 were mentioned here today from east to west and  
5 north, those are minor things. What we're talking  
6 about are human beings who need to get some  
7 employment. What we're talking about are human  
8 beings who need some quote, unquote, whatever word  
9 means, affordable units in that community. And,  
10 as you just indicated, Mr. Chairman, we need to  
11 know the difference.

12 And, I say this in all due respect,  
13 our community resident needs to get a little more  
14 educated in terms of what the area income media  
15 stand for and where it's derived from. We also  
16 should be more sophisticated in terms of how to  
17 sit down and address these issues as a whole, not  
18 as individual. Now, it all breaks down, I'll shut  
19 up after this, it all breaks down to a very simple  
20 thing, the narrow shekkie [phonetic] gilt, you  
21 name it. That's what it all comes down to. And,  
22 we need it just as bad as anybody else needs it in  
23 this City, in this country for gainful  
24 recognition. I support the Plan that is before  
25 this Council today. Thank you very much. And, I

also represent Youth and Community Awareness.

Thank you.

TRISHA VETA: Well, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Trisha Veta. I'm a New York City resident, who grew up working in the amusement industry with my family. My grandfather started in the business 100 years ago. And, currently, I work in Coney Island. I work at the Coney Island History Project under the Cyclone roller coaster on Saturdays.

But, I took on another job this year. I had the opportunity to work a game on Jones Walk, the midway of midways. And, sadly, many of the operators I work with feel that this will be the last year. They say Coney Island is all over because, you know, business is down because of the rain and because of Thor's degradation and decimation of the amusement zone.

So, what I want to say is I am in favor of the rezoning plan and revitalization of Coney Island, but with important amendments, as others have spoken. I agree that the hotels and high-rises should be moved to the north side of Surf. We can't do business on Jones Walk in the

1 shadow of huge high-rises. I also feel the  
2 outdoor amusement area needs to be enlarged, as  
3 been pointed out. It's 61 acres, right now, and  
4 it should be expanded.  
5

6 But, I really want to talk about  
7 Thor's degradation of the amusement zone. For the  
8 past two years, I have been documenting this on my  
9 Flicker set and I have started a blog, called  
10 Amusing the Zillion, because news media are still  
11 reporting Thor's PR ploy that Joe Sid is planning  
12 a billion dollar glam makeover of Coney. If  
13 anyone believes that, there's also a bridge in  
14 Brooklyn that is for sale.

15 In April, Thor's PR firm,  
16 Knickerbocker, promised dozens of rides and  
17 upwards of 25 rides. They lied to the media that  
18 half of the rides were there. I pointed out, on  
19 my blog, that it was a broken promise. And, there  
20 are currently only 10 rides operating on the  
21 former Astroland site. They promised 25, because  
22 that's what Astroland had. Veteran operators at  
23 Coney Island have a total of 42 rides. I invite  
24 you to come. I want to give you my personal,  
25 behind-the-scenes tour of Coney Island. Please, I

1  
2 want to show you what's going on. It's terrible  
3 what Thor Equities has done. Thank you.

4                   CHERYL ROBERTSON: My name is  
5 Cheryl Robertson. And, I urge you, in the New  
6 York City Council, to approve the proposed Coney  
7 Island rezoning every development plan.

8                   I have lived in the community for  
9 over 45 years and provide afterschool and summer  
10 learning services for middle school and high  
11 school youth. One of the most pressing issues to  
12 affect our community is the lack of sustainable  
13 economic development; jobs and job training. We  
14 are pleased that the Coney Island Development  
15 Corporation had developed a holistic strategic  
16 plan to meet the needs of our community.

17                   As a youth service provider, I  
18 firmly believe that the economic development will  
19 give our youth the opportunity to pursue a diverse  
20 array of employment and career opportunities.  
21 Some which can be in solar power amusements, in  
22 the areas of hospitality, tourism and  
23 construction.

24                   In these dire economic times, the  
25 residents of Coney Island, the City of New York

1  
2 and visitors have continued to visit Coney Island  
3 because Coney Island, as a brand, continues to  
4 provide residents, visitors and tourists with  
5 affordability. Yet, we are still beleaguered by a  
6 lack of modernization and diverse retail uses.

7 The City's Plan is the only  
8 comprehensive and immediate means by which to  
9 address all of the redevelopment needs of our  
10 community; build on the Coney Island brand and  
11 ensure in perpetuity that Coney Island remains a  
12 historic, fun and affordable destination. We are  
13 at a critical crossroads. And, we can ill-afford  
14 to postpone or delay the economic development of  
15 our community. How do we say to future  
16 generations that we missed out on a severe and  
17 critical time and deprived them and future  
18 generations of the opportunity to develop? The  
19 time to develop is now. And, if we do not seize  
20 this moment in time, generations will be affected  
21 forever.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I have a  
23 question. Is the name Albert or Alpert?

24 CAROL HILL ALBERT: It's Albert.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: With a B?

2 CAROL HILL ALBERT: Yeah.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah. You  
4 mentioned something very interesting earlier  
5 because Mr. Pinsky sort of painted a picture of  
6 three years or maybe more that no one wanted to do  
7 anything with the property and the City has  
8 finally come along with an interest in developing  
9 the property. During your testimony, I believe  
10 that I heard that you were very interested in  
11 developing the property and developing the  
12 amusement portion of it, but you did not get any  
13 support from the City. Is that correct? Or  
14 something like that. I don't want to put words in  
15 your mouth.

16 CAROL HILL ALBERT: Yeah. I don't  
17 want to embarrass anybody, so I'll embarrass  
18 everybody. There was no support or interest from  
19 any portion of City government in this plan. And,  
20 I got the impression, and it's only my impression,  
21 that it was sort of wait, come back later, we  
22 don't know. But, in other words, after two years  
23 of that--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah.

25 CAROL HILL ALBERT: --it sends a

1  
2 signal.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, all I'm  
4 trying to point out, and I'm using you to do so,  
5 is that some of the testimony that was repeated  
6 over and over and over again about no one wanting  
7 to do anything about developing the amusement  
8 portion for years and years and years is actually  
9 not so. It sounds like you were interested and no  
10 one was interested in you. Is that accurate?

11 CAROL HILL ALBERT: That's  
12 accurate.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay.  
14 Thank you very much.

15 DARREL KALICH BLEE: May I say  
16 something to that?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I don't,  
18 unless the Chair wants to ask you a question.

19 DARREL KALICH BLEE: What I'd like  
20 to address is this here is that it may be a fact  
21 that she may have wanted to redevelop into the  
22 program, right. But, yet, and still, look where  
23 we are now.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Sir.

25 DARREL KALICH BLEE: And, look



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where--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Sir.

DARREL KALICH BLEE: -- we'll be in  
the future.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: The question--

DARREL KALICH BLEE: -- if we do  
not go with the program.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: The question  
was not asked of you, with all due respect.

Miss Albert, I did want to compliment you because  
for years, you were involved in the Community  
Mayors--

CAROL HILL ALBERT: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- you know.  
And, I think really you did a tremendous job. For  
anybody who doesn't know, the Community Mayors is  
an organization that helps physically and mentally  
handicapped children involve in recreation. And,  
one day a year, you allowed thousands of kids to  
come to Astroland. So, you should be complimented  
for that. It's a shame--

CAROL HILL ALBERT: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- you're not  
there.

2 CAROL HILL ALBERT: It was started  
3 by my husband and my late father-in-law, Dewey  
4 Albert. And, I'm proud to tell you that one of  
5 the great things about Astroland Park is, as crazy  
6 as these employees would make me, I feel a real  
7 obligation to honor them. It was the highlight of  
8 their year when all these, you know, crippled  
9 children came and had such joy on their faces. My  
10 employees lived for that day. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Well, I wanted  
12 to thank you for you and your family doing that  
13 all those years. Thank you. Next panel.

14 MALE VOICE: Some of these names  
15 may have been repeated. Minister Eddie Brumfield  
16 [phonetic], Sean Clark [phonetic], Georgia  
17 Petgroeve [phonetic], Roy Brown, Margaret Gorlick  
18 [phonetic], William Walker, Joseph Packer, Barry  
19 Flynn [phonetic], Mike Sorrel [phonetic], Mya  
20 Hadad [phonetic], John Embrilei [phonetic], Steven  
21 Pong [phonetic].

22 BARRY FLYNN: My name is Barry  
23 Flynn. And, I work as a business manager for one  
24 of the restaurants on the Boardwalk. I'm in  
25 support of the program, the redesign of the Coney

1  
2 Island.

3           The pictures here are gloomy and  
4 dark. But, in reality, most of the summer, Coney  
5 Island is bright and sunny. And, as a matter of  
6 fact, this weekend, we're hoping that there will  
7 be hundreds of thousands of people at Coney Island  
8 to support our business.

9           However, that said, the last two or  
10 three years have been exhausting. We have gone  
11 through Thor Equities' changes, not only for our  
12 own business, our rent has jumped and skyrocketed  
13 almost to the point where it's not worth being in  
14 business in Coney Island. We service thousands  
15 and thousands of people and hot dogs and hot dogs  
16 and hot dogs. And, to see what's happening is  
17 very difficult to watch the amusement park that  
18 was just mentioned be put out of business and the  
19 tradeoff to amusement park that's not worth  
20 anything to watch the gateway to the ocean along  
21 Stillwell become a flea market, and an expensive  
22 one, is hard to believe.

23           And, what surprises me is that no  
24 one really figures it out. In fact, all of the  
25 Councilmen should be really worried about this

1  
2 because, as I stand and serve hot dogs on  
3 weekends, what I've noted is they come from all  
4 over New York City and, in fact, Coney Island is  
5 the host to one of the greatest parties in New  
6 York City every single week.

7           And, it behooves the Council and  
8 the State of New York to think hard about the  
9 proposal and it will be modified, even after it's  
10 approved. This is a course of life. It's a  
11 course of business. But, to say that we can't  
12 approve it because there are changes that need to  
13 be made is ludicrous. And, I know for a fact,  
14 I've seen this for 20 years. I'm sorry, I'm done.  
15 You really need this Council to think about what's  
16 happening and make action and not let an excuse  
17 that we can't change this or do this. This is New  
18 York. We can do anything you put your mind to.  
19 Isn't that right? And, you love Coney Island. I  
20 can tell.

21           MARGARET GORLICK: Good afternoon.  
22 Members of New York City Council and thank you to  
23 - - have this opportunity to speak with you. My  
24 name is Margaret Gorlick and I'm proud resident of  
25 Seagate. Along with being President of the

1  
2 Community, I also work as a workforce development  
3 and a job placement in Coney Island for Jewish  
4 Community Council, is also name Great of Coney  
5 Island - - . So, as you can see, when it comes to  
6 issue of Coney Island future, I have more than  
7 passing interest in what happens.

8 I'm here to let you know that I'm  
9 strongly support the City Redevelopment Plan and I  
10 hope the City Council will vote yes for our  
11 community's future. There are several reason why  
12 I think yes vote is very important. First, the  
13 City Redevelopment Plan is bring investment in  
14 jobs to our community, like you haven't seen  
15 generation. Every day, I work with residents,  
16 many of them immigrant, like myself, who want  
17 nothing more than opportunity to work with their  
18 neighborhood. I - - first time, when Coney Island  
19 Development Corporation did the job fair, which  
20 have a huge success and which so many people from  
21 Coney Island come and they really was happy to  
22 apply for different job. People don't want a  
23 guarantee jobs, they just want to have opportunity  
24 to prove what they can do. But, sadly, based of  
25 all Coney Island history, we can pretty certain

1  
2 that without the City plan, all this opportunity  
3 simplify it's not going to become.

4           Secondly, I'm someone who have a  
5 family, raising up in Coney Island and I have a  
6 daughter who is currently in the high school and  
7 they really want to - - to stay in our community  
8 and build your life and the future in Coney  
9 Island. With that, I said before, all opportunity  
10 for job, for housing, for better life and for our  
11 family, I really want all of you to say yes for  
12 the new plan. I'm sorry.

13           - - be late, but like, again,  
14 whatever I say, maybe people who stay here in this  
15 room, they work with our community and we work  
16 very well, is a collaboration for Coney Island and  
17 all of us - - don't have a new plan coming  
18 through.

19           JOSEPH PACKER: Good afternoon. My  
20 name is Joseph Packer. And, I'm a community  
21 organizer and activist. I would like to thank  
22 City Council for the opportunity to provide  
23 testimony on such a historic and groundbreaking  
24 event.

25           As a resident of Coney Island for

1  
2 the 50 years and a community activist for over 30  
3 years, it has always been evident to me that Coney  
4 Island was and always will be a precious worldwide  
5 jewel. I am passionate about the residents and  
6 their lives. Throughout these years, I have  
7 traveled throughout our great City advocating and  
8 lobbying for sheer respectability for Coney  
9 Island. Coney Island's unique place is a growing  
10 residential community that is fortunate enough and  
11 attached to alignment with the City's one and only  
12 amusement retreat. Coney Island is a natural  
13 tourist attraction. If you were fortunate to  
14 visit New York City, your visit is not complete  
15 until you go to Coney Island's amusement park.

16 When I was a teenager, I worked  
17 several summers in amusement park. The park was  
18 always packed with crowds and tickets was always  
19 affordable. There should always be a natural  
20 marriage between a community and their amusement  
21 park. It should be noted that, as a longtime  
22 community organizer and community activist, I  
23 would be remiss if I did not note that I have  
24 witnessed and experienced the false promises of  
25 the past by the City, elected officials and

1  
2 prospective developers.

3                   Hopefully, the past is behind us.  
4 That there is a new day for Coney Island, the  
5 residents and their amusement area. The residents  
6 of Coney Island are hopeful and optimistic.  
7 There's a wealth of educated and skilled workforce  
8 throughout the neighborhood that are waiting the  
9 overall development of Coney Island. The  
10 community and the amusement district realize that  
11 there are difficult times. The economy's  
12 everyone's priority, especially our Mayor. There  
13 is a lack of job training and employment  
14 opportunities, affordable housing, social and  
15 recreation venues. A true comprehensive plan for  
16 our community would be an ideal opportunity for  
17 addressing these needs.

18                   I, personally, believe that the  
19 City's plan is a good plan, even without all the  
20 stipulations. I believe that combined efforts of  
21 elected officials, Community Board members,  
22 private investors, primary stakeholders and  
23 concerned local residents, working together to  
24 develop a Coney Island amusement area will  
25 continue the amusement area to be the best



1 waterfront luxury housing possible.

2  
3 I just want to state that I really  
4 think the best thing is, as a community activist,  
5 is for the community to have some insights and a  
6 working relationship with the City on the ongoing  
7 development of the project. I think Coney Island  
8 Development Corporation have done a great job and  
9 Lynn Kelly, who I think having the relationship  
10 between community and them and the City, as  
11 overseers, will be probably the best way to  
12 continue the progress we've made so far.

13 GEORGIA BETGRAVE: Good afternoon.  
14 My name is Georgia Betgrave [phonetic]. I am an  
15 educator with the New York City Board of  
16 Education. I work with pre-K children. I lived  
17 in Coney Island literally all of my life. My mom  
18 sent us every weekend to the amusement park. We  
19 were able to just go down there and just slide on  
20 the slides. Back then it was \$0.05, \$0.10 or  
21 whatever it was. But, it was wonderful. And, it  
22 can be wonderful again.

23 I do support the revitalization of  
24 the amusement park, you know. It's a part of  
25 Coney Island, and one of the bigger parts of Coney

1  
2 Island. I wouldn't throw away my bedroom set if  
3 it's still good, you know. Coney Island is still  
4 good. There are a lot of children who go down to  
5 Coney Island. They go to the Boardwalk. They go  
6 on the beach. It's still not working? They go on  
7 the beach.

8 I ride my bike down the beach and I  
9 look and I'd see some of the things. They've done  
10 to Boardwalk over. It looks really nice. They  
11 have beautiful benches. I sit down. I could look  
12 out at the water. I don't see, for my personal  
13 self, I don't see any reason why it should not be  
14 revitalized. I really don't. And, that's my  
15 stand.

16 STEVEN PONG: Hi. Well, this is a  
17 relatively entertaining afternoon. Last evening,  
18 I was here--yeah. Hi, do you hear this? My name  
19 is Steven Pong. And, I'm a lifelong resident of  
20 Coney Island. I live on West 35<sup>th</sup> Street. I went  
21 to pre-K at P.S. 329 and went to P.S. 188 and so  
22 on.

23 So, I'm here to speak really for  
24 myself, but I hope my feelings mirror those of  
25 others in the community. I look favorably upon

1  
2 the plan, with obvious amendments. Particularly,  
3 a few things, you know, the fact that there needs  
4 to be year-around entertainments. There needs to  
5 be an effort to preserve the history. But, there  
6 seems to be a sort of confusion as to what sort of  
7 history is to be preserved because there is a  
8 post-War history of Coney Island, which isn't as  
9 glamorous. And, there's a pre-War history, which  
10 current residents hardly identify with. It's very  
11 different.

12 Also, affordable housing is very,  
13 very important to me. I'm a beneficiary of that.  
14 My father is a mailman at Seagate. And, if it  
15 weren't for Estella [phonetic] and affordable  
16 housing, I wouldn't be here.

17 So, I take issue with the fact that  
18 there is an all or nothing attitude amongst some  
19 of the residents. Fundamentally, the plan is  
20 good. Obviously, there have to be changes. But,  
21 even if all the amendments haven't been  
22 incorporated into the documents, you know, by  
23 July 29<sup>th</sup>, I still think that the plan should be  
24 voted on and the vote should be yes.

25 There are some other observations I

2 have about procedural matters. But, I don't think  
3 I have enough time. But, it seems to me the issue  
4 here has to do a lot with the impasse that Thor  
5 Equities has sort of provoked and also, the  
6 opacity that the NY EDC has sort of provided,  
7 because I'm not so sure what amendments have been  
8 incorporated into the plan and what hasn't.  
9 That's only because I've only looked into the  
10 issue for the past 12 hours. So, thanks.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Is it  
12 Mr. Pong?

13 STEVEN PONG: Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: How do you  
15 spell your last name? I just want to make sure to  
16 pronounce it correctly.

17 STEVEN PONG: Oh, it's P-O-N-G.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Oh,  
19 Mr. Pong, you just said that you've only had 12  
20 hours to look into the details of this issue. Is  
21 that right?

22 STEVEN PONG: Well, I've been, you  
23 know, sort of observing.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I  
25 understand.

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STEVEN PONG: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: But, based on the 12 hours--

STEVEN PONG: Uh, huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- you feel that we should go ahead with the property development. Is that true?

STEVEN PONG: Yeah, I mean, what do I know. [crosstalk]--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, no, I'm not--

STEVEN PONG: --in 12 hours, right?

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: First of all, we are honored to have anybody and everybody from the City come and talk about it. And, whether you spent five minutes or 25 days, it's irrelevant. I just want to recap what you said.

STEVEN PONG: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Right.

Now, there's a young man, excuse me, sir, there's only one young man sitting to the right. Can you come up, please? Yeah, you, the one that just turned your head around. Can you come over here and sit down for a moment, please? Do you know

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this man?

STEVEN PONG: I do.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: 'Cause he's been getting me nervous all day. He's been running around--

STEVEN PONG: Right. So--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- the place.

STEVEN PONG: Yeah, this man called me--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Who is this man?

STEVEN PONG: This man I think works for the CIDC.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, and what--

STEVEN PONG: To my knowledge--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- did he do? What did you say he--

STEVEN PONG: [Interposing] He called me last evening and asked me if I knew about this hearing.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: And, what did he say?

2 STEVEN PONG: And, I said no.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Uh, huh.

4 STEVEN PONG: I said no. And, he  
5 told me a little bit about the process. And, I  
6 looked into it.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah.

8 STEVEN PONG: So, I spent all night  
9 yesterday, you know, looking into things.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Right.

11 STEVEN PONG: Reading up on it,  
12 sort of, you know, getting a feel for the issues  
13 and the various--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Very good.

15 STEVEN PONG: -- constituencies and  
16 interest groups involved in the process. And, I  
17 decided to come here to really learn more about  
18 it. And, I wasn't planning to speak. But, I  
19 decided after, you know, spending the entire day  
20 here, I had to at least two minutes of comments.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Well,  
22 that's wonderful. So, he called you last night?

23 STEVEN PONG: Right. I signed up  
24 for a mailing list on the CIDC website.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Very good.

2 STEVEN PONG: And, was contacted,  
3 yes.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Do you know  
5 his name?

6 STEVEN PONG: His name is Daniel  
7 Mulette [phonetic].

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Do you know  
9 if he called anyone else? Or, you're not  
10 familiar?

11 STEVEN PONG: I'm not familiar with  
12 that. But, he did, or his organization did--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER:  
14 [Interposing] By the way, let me make something  
15 clear. There's nothing, absolutely nothing, wrong  
16 with him calling up 20,000 people to come and  
17 testify, either in favor or opposed to the  
18 project.

19 STEVEN PONG: Yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I just want  
21 to know--

22 STEVEN PONG: Uh, huh.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- what's  
24 going on--

25 STEVEN PONG: Yeah.



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SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES393

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- because-

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STEVEN PONG: [Interposing] So, he-

-

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- he's been running around here all day. He deserves, I don't know, whatever. He's been running around all day. And, I want to know what his role in this is. That's all.

STEVEN PONG: I guess he deserves a shout out. I--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: He's the shadow?

STEVEN PONG: A shout out. So, he told me--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: [Interposing] No, you answered the question.

STEVEN PONG: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you very much.

STEVEN PONG: He told me there was the shuttle bus and I showed up at West 19<sup>th</sup> this morning.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: There was a

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shuttle bus?

STEVEN PONG: A sort of, a school bus to take us--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: A school bus?

STEVEN PONG: -- here.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Where was the school bus coming from?

STEVEN PONG: West 19<sup>th</sup>, right next to the library.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: To make it easier for people to--

STEVEN PONG: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- come to testify. Wonderful.

STEVEN PONG: And, yeah, it seemed to be--

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER:  
[Interposing] Thank you very much.

STEVEN PONG: --a big deal.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you.

STEVEN PONG: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Do you know who paid for the bus?

2 STEVEN PONG: No.

3 DANIEL MULETTE: The City.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Do you know  
5 who paid for the bus? Can you take the mic and  
6 identify yourself.

7 LYNN KELLY: If I may, I'm the  
8 President of the CIDC. [crosstalk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, sure.  
10 Are you going to be testifying?

11 LYNN KELLY: I am. And, I  
12 [crosstalk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Oh, so,  
14 I'll ask you when you come.

15 LYNN KELLY: Very good.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Mr. Flynn, do  
18 I remember correctly that when you started your  
19 testimony you mentioned you're a manager for the  
20 restaurants?

21 BARRY FLYNN: Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: You know, you  
23 were probably here for some of the discussion we  
24 had before and I think it was Simcha that brought  
25 it up about the parking issue for the restaurants.

1  
2 So, based upon your experience, what's your, you  
3 know, feeling about the fact--

4 BARRY FLYNN: [Interposing] I park-

5 -

6 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- that some  
7 properties are not--

8 BARRY FLYNN: [Interposing] I park  
9 my car--

10 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- going to  
11 have parking?

12 BARRY FLYNN: -- on the other side  
13 of the Bell Parkway.

14 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: What? I  
15 didn't hear that.

16 BARRY FLYNN: I park my car on the  
17 other side of the Bell Parkway and walk about  
18 eight blocks. Parking is an issue in Coney  
19 Island. And, thankfully, the City built an  
20 amazing subway terminal. And, I think that we  
21 don't depend on people being able to park. They  
22 come. They find their places to park and then,  
23 they amuse themselves. And, you know, it's not  
24 like in the City or, let's say, Brooklyn's a  
25 better example, where on Third Avenue, they'd want

2 to find parking. They come and they're willing to  
3 walk to places.

4 So, it's not the same issue I  
5 believe, having had a business on Third Avenue and  
6 Bayridge parking, it's way different than Coney  
7 Island because Coney Island, they're coming there  
8 for a lot of different reasons.

9 For instance, just as a matter of  
10 fact, when the people come to the Cyclone, most of  
11 them don't come to be able to park. They come by  
12 mass transit. And, they do walk many blocks to  
13 get there. So, I don't think that that issue of  
14 parking, you know, there's so many things that  
15 this day raised in my head, personally, about the  
16 revival of Coney Island. But, I don't think  
17 that's a huge issue. I think for some  
18 aristocratic people, it might be. Or, they might  
19 be afraid of Coney Island. And, I've seen people  
20 like that. But, I don't think it's a big issue,  
21 honestly.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay. Thank  
23 you. Next panel.

24 MALE VOICE: Gloria Watkins, Ron  
25 Stewart, Kumali Zuree [phonetic], George Shay

1  
2 [phonetic], George Shay, Astrudge McLean, Nate  
3 Bliss and Lynn Kelly.

4           ASTRUDGE McLEAN: Good evening. It  
5 was good morning before. My name is Astrudge  
6 McLean. And, I'm here to express my strong  
7 support of the City proposed rezoning and  
8 redevelopment for Coney Island and to urge the  
9 City Council to approve this important project.

10           While I am testifying as a decade,  
11 and I mean quarter of a century, resident of Coney  
12 Island and a local business owner, I'm not  
13 testifying as my capacity either as President of  
14 Coney Island Board of Trade or as a CIDC Board  
15 member. I think it's fair to say that my  
16 experiences and background in each of these roles  
17 has helped me to inform my position on this  
18 proposed rezoning. Simply put, this proposal  
19 makes sense for the future of Coney Island.

20           As someone who has advocated for  
21 the interests of Coney Island small businesses  
22 over the years, I am especially excited about the  
23 huge economic development potential that this plan  
24 represents and the influx of energy investments  
25 and people it will bring to our community. While

1  
2 it is always a challenge to get the local  
3 businesses to speak with one voice, and while  
4 there's always will be disagreement over certain  
5 specific aspect of the plan, which we heard today,  
6 I think it's safe to say that a general sense in  
7 the neighborhood is that this plan and this  
8 investment will have an overall positive impact on  
9 the economic climate of Coney Island, providing,  
10 of course, it's done right, in a timely fashion  
11 and with the idea that a joint effort between both  
12 community and government.

13 I'm confident that the City plan  
14 will spur a huge amount of private investment,  
15 will develop a year-around amusement destination  
16 that will bring historic numbers of tourists to  
17 our streets again and will create the kind of  
18 community amenities and our resident needs and  
19 deserve. The people of Coney Island want a  
20 redeveloped community. Yes, we would heartily  
21 welcome a world-class investment attraction  
22 amusement district that would also benefit  
23 Brooklyn, as well as New York City, as a whole.  
24 However, more importantly, we need the jobs  
25 required to bill it and the affordable housing

1  
2 that will be needed as a result of it. We want  
3 all the things any thriving community deserves.

4 Well, basically, to sum it up, is  
5 that we're no better than any other community. We  
6 want to have the jobs, the schools, everything  
7 else all the people wants. But, at the same time,  
8 you know, my fear is that listening today that  
9 even though there are-- it can be improved, we  
10 don't want to stop the momentum. We don't want to  
11 stop it where all of a sudden now, you know, I  
12 don't know how long you guys will be in office.  
13 So, I don't want to turn around all of a sudden,  
14 you're not here any more.

15 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Can you--

16 ASTRUDGE McLEAN: And, this thing--

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- sum up?

18 ASTRUDGE McLEAN: -- is done. Huh?

19 I'm done.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: You're done?

21 Okay.

22 ASTRUDGE McLEAN: I'm done.

23 LYNN KELLY: Good evening, Council  
24 Members. My name is Lynn Kelly. And, I serve as  
25 President of the Coney Island Development



1  
2 Corporation. Professionally, I've worked in Coney  
3 Island for eight and a half years. And, I've been  
4 involved with the CIDC since 2003. Since 2001,  
5 I've had the pleasure of working with Council  
6 Member Recchia on a number of different issues  
7 regarding the redevelopment of Coney Island.

8 In lieu of reading testimony, I'm  
9 going to do what I do best and that's speak from  
10 the heart about this issue. I want to put out  
11 that the CIDC was formed, both by the Council  
12 Member, the Borough President and the Mayor in  
13 order to foster economic development in the area.  
14 Since 2003, we've completed a strategic planning  
15 process. We've held over 300 different meetings,  
16 many of which I was present at myself. And,  
17 worked with thousands of peoples in the community.  
18 We've established a workforce development program,  
19 which you've heard about today in great detail.  
20 We've given over \$1 million in marketing to Coney  
21 Island amusement area and worked tirelessly on  
22 this plan and the redevelopment of the area.

23 It is personally and professionally  
24 disheartening for me, frankly, to hear that a plan  
25 that is borne out of a community process, those

1  
2 packets in front of you contain over 4,000  
3 signatures in support of this plan. And, it is  
4 very disheartening to hear that this is  
5 potentially at risk at this point in the process,  
6 after both the Community Board, the Borough  
7 President and the City Planning Commission has  
8 approved the plan.

9 I fear that the amusement area, if  
10 left to a "mixed use" development, as some of the  
11 landowners have put, will end up a shopping mall  
12 and a giant luxury condominium. I fear that if  
13 this plan is not passed, the 25,000 construction  
14 jobs and 6,000 permanent jobs will be lost. And,  
15 I fear that we will be in a far worse situation in  
16 Coney Island than currently exists today. I urge,  
17 with all due respect, that the Council really  
18 thinks hard about passing this plan and acting on  
19 this now. Thank you.

20 NATHAN BLISS: Hello. I'm Nathan  
21 Bliss with the Coney Island Development  
22 Corporation, as well. There were several folks,  
23 several of our Board members who were here earlier  
24 and were not able to remain to submit their  
25 testimony, including Josh Sirefman, President of

2 the Coney-- Chairperson of the Coney Island  
3 Development Corporation and Carl Hum, who is  
4 another Board member and also President and CEO of  
5 the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. In lieu of  
6 reading their testimony on their behalf, I have it  
7 for you and I will submit it for the written  
8 record, along with the positive documents that  
9 Lynn just mentioned are in the packets before you.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Just for the  
11 record, we generally do not allow multiple  
12 representatives of one organization. So, if the  
13 Board members had all been here, I probably would  
14 not have allowed five or six people to represent  
15 the same organization. That would not have been  
16 fair to other organizations that just have one  
17 representative. And, especially an organization  
18 that is connected directly to the City, or  
19 indirectly, however you want to look at it.  
20 Council Member Felder and then, Council Member  
21 Jackson. Okay. Council Member Jackson.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you.  
23 Now, I'm just curious, I mean, there was a  
24 question earlier about a bus being provided to  
25 bring people down to testify, I assume, in favor

1  
2 of the plan. And, my question is, you know, who  
3 arranged all of this? Who paid for all of this?  
4 And, questions like that. Did you help people  
5 prepare testimony? And, those are the questions  
6 that I have. So, if somebody can answer that.  
7 And, first of all--

8 LYNN KELLY: I'd be happy to answer  
9 that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I'm sorry.  
11 Before you respond, you work for the Coney Island  
12 Development Corp, is that correct?

13 LYNN KELLY: That's correct.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I think  
15 you're the Executive Director or President or  
16 something?

17 LYNN KELLY: President, correct.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So, you're  
19 an employee. Is that correct?

20 LYNN KELLY: I am an employee of  
21 the City of the Economic Development Corporation  
22 and appointed as President of the Coney Island  
23 Development Corporation.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

25 LYNN KELLY: My paycheck, however,

is from the Coney Island Development Corporation.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. So, are you here testifying as a President? Or, are you here testifying as an individual?

LYNN KELLY: I am here testifying as the President of the Coney Island Development Corporation.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. And, is your Board aware of that and approved that? Or, you do work independent of the Board?

LYNN KELLY: Many of my Board members are here. Astrudge, would you like to answer that?

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: No, no, I, no, I'm asking you. Please don't ask--

LYNN KELLY: Oh, they do.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: -- somebody else to answer the question I'm asking you.

LYNN KELLY: They absolutely approve of me being here--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

LYNN KELLY: -- and supporting this.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. And  
3 now, and as far as, you're a Board member also,  
4 ma'am?

5 ASTRUDGE McLEAN: Yes, I am.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.  
7 And, are you a Board member, too, sir?

8 NATHAN BLISS: No, I'm not a Board  
9 member.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: You're an  
11 employee? Okay. And, what capacity are you here  
12 representing? You here representing your Board  
13 members?

14 NATHAN BLISS: I was here simply to  
15 push this paper over. I did not submit testimony.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.  
17 Now, you said that you were here and that you had  
18 testimony of other Board members that were here.

19 NATHAN BLISS: That's correct.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. So,  
21 you're doing your job, in essence.

22 NATHAN BLISS: Yes. I'm submitting  
23 their testimony. They would have liked to.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Right.  
25 But, I mean--

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NATHAN BLISS: They had to--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: -- but, you're here because you-- who do you report to?

NATHAN BLISS: I--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: You report to the President. Is that correct?

NATHAN BLISS: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: The employee.

NATHAN BLISS: That's correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. So, you're doing your job? I'm asking you a question. You're doing your job? I mean--

NATHAN BLISS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: -- she told--

NATHAN BLISS: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: -- you you're assigned here. You're assigned here, right?

NATHAN BLISS: Yes. It's--

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

NATHAN BLISS: -- the work day, yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I'm sorry,  
3 what?

4 NATHAN BLISS: Yeah, we're in the  
5 work day, that's correct.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.  
7 That's what I assumed. I'm not trying to be  
8 funny. But, I'm just trying to be very, very  
9 clear.

10 NATHAN BLISS: Okay.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And so, go  
12 back to my question, ma'am, if you don't mind,  
13 Miss Kelly, as far as how many buses? Who paid  
14 for them? And, did you help, or your staff help,  
15 people prepare testimony, so forth and so on?

16 LYNN KELLY: The CIDC works as an  
17 advocacy organization for the neighborhood and for  
18 economic redevelopment. Within that capacity, I  
19 did not want anyone in the neighborhood, who had  
20 voiced to me concerns about transportation, about  
21 having their voices heard or about being a part of  
22 the legislative public process, to have any  
23 barriers to entry. And, in that regard, the CIDC  
24 thought it was appropriate to be able to provide  
25 transportation; be able to answer questions in



1  
2 advance, questions about the plan, questions about  
3 the redevelopment process. And, in our capacity  
4 as advocates for economic development for the  
5 area, followed through on that by making sure that  
6 residents of the neighborhood could attend today,  
7 yes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. I  
9 appreciate that. And, how many buses were  
10 provided? And, how much did it cost?

11 LYNN KELLY: I believe it was three  
12 buses. I don't know exactly where we ended up. I  
13 know we had requested three. I don't know if we  
14 had three in the end. And, the cost, I would have  
15 to get back to you because I'm not sure if it was-  
16 -

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:  
18 [Interposing] Give or take.

19 LYNN KELLY: I think it was around  
20 \$400.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Per bus?

22 LYNN KELLY: They were school  
23 buses.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Per bus?  
25 Or, total?

2 LYNN KELLY: I don't know. I would  
3 have to check. I really don't know.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.  
5 And, were any of these people that testified, were  
6 they paid or going to be paid a stipend or--

7 LYNN KELLY: No.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: -- lunch  
9 money or anything like that? I'm, you know--

10 LYNN KELLY: No. No, none of--  
11 people that came today came voluntarily.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

13 LYNN KELLY: They were not paid.  
14 They came because they needed transportation and,  
15 as an advocacy organization for the neighborhood,  
16 we provided it.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And, they  
18 took the buses back, I assume.

19 LYNN KELLY: I'm not sure. Many of  
20 them waited a long time today and weren't heard.  
21 So, they might have gone home on their own.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. And  
23 so, and, you said you're employed by the City of  
24 New York Economic Development Corp, but you--

25 LYNN KELLY: [Interposing] I'm

employed by EDC.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: EDC.

LYNN KELLY: Right. EDC has a funding agreement with the Coney Island Development Corporation, like it does with other LDCs.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Right.

LYNN KELLY: And then, the LDCs, then, employ staff.

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

Okay. Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I'd actually-- you have a question?

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I do.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I'd like to sort of follow up on this myself.

LYNN KELLY: Um, hm.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Because this issue has actually come up in other situations where the Administration is putting forth a plan. It concerns me a little bit that what I would normally consider a local development corporation being made up of local merchants and local community people.

2 LYNN KELLY: Um, hm.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: This is the  
4 first time I've heard that the President of a  
5 local, you know, development corporation is  
6 actually employed by EDC and appointed. I have an  
7 issue with that that you're testifying, because  
8 you're another City representative. You shouldn't  
9 be testifying independently, because you're  
10 representing the City. That was the City's  
11 opportunity at the very beginning to present the  
12 application. I think the Administration has to be  
13 a little clearer in the future as to how they do  
14 this. I really have an issue with this.

15 Now, you mentioned that, in  
16 reference to Council Member Jackson's questions,  
17 that you wanted to make sure the people had a  
18 voice in the process. So, you provided the buses.  
19 Did that go so far as to find out who in the  
20 community wanted to come here to oppose the  
21 application? Did you reach out to anybody saying,  
22 listen, we're having a bus, even though you oppose  
23 the application, can you come on the bus?

24 LYNN KELLY: I've been very public  
25 that anyone who wanted an opportunity to be a part

1  
2 of the public process has an opportunity through  
3 the CIDC. That has been my position from day one.  
4 I have advocated that ULURP is deliberately a  
5 public process. And, that the ULURP process and  
6 the rezoning is, nine times out of ten, better  
7 shaped because of public input.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I'm sure you  
9 did. But, that's not my question. Did you give  
10 them the opportunity to go on the bus?

11 LYNN KELLY: If they wanted the  
12 opportunity, it was absolutely there.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: But, you  
14 didn't necessarily make the opportunity available?

15 LYNN KELLY: I reached out to those  
16 who had reached out to the CIDC and said we would  
17 like transportation.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: That includes  
19 both sides?

20 LYNN KELLY: If they decided-- I  
21 mean, it was interesting. People that came up  
22 today, if you noticed, on the panels in favor,  
23 many of them came on the bus. And, they had in  
24 favor with reservations. So, how do you define  
25 someone that may be in favor, yes, were they on

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the bus? Do they have reservations, yes.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: No, but--

LYNN KELLY: So, it's a very difficult question to answer. My position is to be able--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I don't think-

-

LYNN KELLY: --to advocate--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- it's difficult.

LYNN KELLY: -- for the area.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I don't think it's difficult at all. I don't think you did it, to be perfectly honest. I think you reached out to people who had indicated that they were going to support the position and you provided a bus for them. I have a real issue with, in effect, City taxpayer dollars being paid just to provide one source of the community to come down here. I mean, that's my issue. You did it because that's your job. That's what you're being paid to do. But, you know something, I think the Administration should take a real issue with this. I mean, it really isn't fair. It really isn't.

Council Member Felder.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah. With the permission of the Chair, can the young man that started answering the questions earlier be asked to come to the witness table, because I have some questions.

MALE VOICE: [Off mic]

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Well, that's up to you.

LYNN KELLY: Not sure who you're referring to.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: This young man--

LYNN KELLY: Oh, Danny.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, 'cause you came up and said you would answer and you didn't really answer some of the questions.

LYNN KELLY: Well, if you ask me the question, I'm happy to answer it.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I'll ask you and I'll ask-- here, you can sit by the table. We like you. Sit down. What's your name, sir?

DANIEL MULETTE: My name is Daniel Mulette.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Now, the  
3 young man, Mr. Pong, said that you called him and  
4 asked him if he knows about what's going on and  
5 then, asked him if he's interested in coming on  
6 the bus today. Is that true?

7 DANIEL MULETTE: That is true. I  
8 called Steven because he has had contact with the  
9 CIDC--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: That's  
11 fine.

12 DANIEL MULETTE: -- before--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No--

14 DANIEL MULETTE: -- and an interest  
15 in the redevelopment.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No problem.  
17 Did you call anybody else and ask them whether  
18 they have an interest in coming today?

19 DANIEL MULETTE: I actually went  
20 through our entire database and looked for people  
21 who had provided-- who had suggested that they  
22 were interested in the redevelopment in their  
23 comments to our online website.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excellent.  
25 So, you called people who are interested in the



1  
2 redevelopment and had made contact with you. Did  
3 you call anyone that had made contact with you  
4 that said that they were not interested in the  
5 redevelopment at all?

6 DANIEL MULETTE: Let me clarify  
7 here. I called people who expressed interest in  
8 the rezoning plan, generally. And, I did call  
9 people who were not particularly in favor of it,  
10 as well.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: You called  
12 everybody.

13 DANIEL MULETTE: I called-- I did.  
14 I called people who had expressed interest on our--  
15 -

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I don't--

17 LYNN KELLY: Council Member--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, no.

19 LYNN KELLY: -- I--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excuse me,  
21 ma'am. Excuse me. With all due respect, I--

22 LYNN KELLY: This is not due  
23 respect. Mr. Mulette has not signed up. He's not  
24 on a panel. I represent the CIDC. I should be  
25 the one providing the answers to these questions.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: So, are you  
3 saying to me that you don't-- you do not want  
4 this--

5 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Simcha, let me  
6 just--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Whatever  
8 you say.

9 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- interject a  
10 point.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay.

12 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Let me just  
13 interject a point here.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay.  
15 Okay. Okay, next.

16 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: And, I tried  
17 to say this at the beginning, when you called him  
18 up. He's not under any obligation to testify.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: He has not  
21 signed up to speak.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: All right.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: If he chooses--  
24 -

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No problem.

2 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- if he  
3 chooses to speak, that's his prerogative.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: That's  
5 fine.

6 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: And, I'm going  
7 to leave it up to him, if he wants to speak.  
8 Otherwise, correctly, we have the President--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- of the  
11 organization--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No problem.

13 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- here.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: If he  
15 doesn't want to speak, that's fine. So, I will  
16 speak to-- so, I assume--

17 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: No, the  
18 question is--

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: No, no.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- I'm going--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah, I'm  
22 sorry.

23 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Do you wish to  
24 speak or not?

25 DANIEL MULETTE: I did not sign up

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to provide any--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay.

DANIEL MULETTE: -- testimony. I don't think this is--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Then, I would suggest--

DANIEL MULETTE: --relevant--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- you leave dais.

DANIEL MULETTE: -- to the land use position.

COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: And, I just want to apologize to you publicly. I, and what I said earlier, is that I'm not intimating, yet, that there's anything wrong with what you did. And, I'm sorry if you thought you had to speak. So, I apologize to you.

So, Miss Kelly, let me just say that it seems to me that the issues that are raised by the Chair and by Councilman Jackson are very, very, very important. You get paid by the Economic Development Corporation. Is that true or not?

LYNN KELLY: No.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Who do you  
3 get paid by?

4 LYNN KELLY: I get paid through a  
5 funding agreement to the Coney Island Development  
6 Corporation.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Who funds  
8 the Coney Island Development Corporation?

9 LYNN KELLY: It's tax levy funding.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Who funds  
11 it? How do they get--

12 LYNN KELLY: [Interposing]  
13 Taxpayers, you and I.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Are you a  
15 subsidiary of Economic Development--

16 LYNN KELLY: [Interposing] No,  
17 we're--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: --  
19 Corporation?

20 LYNN KELLY: -- a separate LDC  
21 nonprofit.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: But,  
23 taxpayer dollars pays your salary and your-- the  
24 young man who's been helping us with the maps, I  
25 think, all day. Is that right?

2 LYNN KELLY: Taxpayer dollars pay  
3 my salary. And, taxpayer dollars also pay  
4 Mr. Bliss' salary.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Okay. So,  
6 I'm just saying that I think that the issues  
7 regarding your testimony, not at the same time as  
8 the City, as well as the issues regarding the bus  
9 and some of the issues regarding who was called  
10 and who was not called and how people were  
11 informed as to whether they can get on the bus and  
12 come here, are very, very questionable. Now, you  
13 also raised, you mentioned a point about  
14 petitions.

15 LYNN KELLY: Um, hm.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I looked  
17 through it. It says on the front of your  
18 testimony that you had a thousand signatures from  
19 Coney Island residents here or above and several -  
20 - and then, more than 2,500 Coney Island residents  
21 and visitors. And, I was just leafing through it  
22 and it's certainly visitors. I see like, for  
23 example, somebody, Ian Solomon [phonetic], from  
24 East Northport, New York signed your petition.

25 LYNN KELLY: Um, hm.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Who  
3 collected these petitions?

4 LYNN KELLY: The CIDC, we did. We  
5 collected--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: You did.

7 LYNN KELLY: -- them at different  
8 community events. We collected them at everything  
9 from, you know, games to events to community--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: They're  
11 excellent.

12 LYNN KELLY: -- meetings.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Now, when  
14 you collected petitions, what did your-- you had  
15 either volunteers or employees. They obviously  
16 didn't read this whole thing, this whole speech,  
17 because there was no way in the world that anyone  
18 would spend the time. They do it like they, you  
19 know, we collect signatures for candidates.  
20 They're sometimes more of a speech and you say  
21 would you like to sign your name in favor of  
22 somebody getting on the ballot. What did your  
23 volunteers or employees say to people when they  
24 asked them for their signatures?

25 LYNN KELLY: Exactly what it says

1  
2 in front of you.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: They read  
4 this whole thing?

5 LYNN KELLY: They advocated for the  
6 City's plan for the redevelopment of Coney Island-  
7 -

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: You're,  
9 you're--

10 LYNN KELLY: -- for affordable  
11 housing--

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excuse me.  
13 Excuse me, your answering--

14 LYNN KELLY: -- for 25,000 jobs.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- too  
16 deeply. You're answering a little too deeply.  
17 It's a very simple question. You're collecting,  
18 trying to collect hundreds and thousands of  
19 signatures. You did not spend five minutes each  
20 time reading this thing. I would assume somebody  
21 went to somebody signing and said are you in favor  
22 of Coney Island development and jobs, or something  
23 like that. I don't want to create it. Right? I  
24 mean, I don't think somebody--

25 LYNN KELLY: No.



2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- spent  
3 five minutes getting a signature.

4 LYNN KELLY: You're right.  
5 Somebody didn't spend five minutes. In some  
6 cases, we spent hours with people talking through  
7 the redevelopment plan. So, in some cases,  
8 Council Member--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yes.

10 LYNN KELLY: -- it was as simple  
11 as, you know, do you support redevelopment of  
12 Coney Island. Do you support new jobs and  
13 housing? And, the answer was yes. And--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Right.

15 LYNN KELLY: -- in some cases, we  
16 had to really to fight and advocate for the  
17 redevelopment of the area.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excellent.  
19 So, you answered my question. The overwhelming  
20 majority of your signatures, you got, probably, by  
21 saying something like, not this, do you like apple  
22 pie and do you like having apple pie with milk.  
23 You're--

24 LYNN KELLY: [Interposing] I think,  
25 you're--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Excuse me--

3 LYNN KELLY: -- you're reducing--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- excuse  
5 me, I'm talking--

6 LYNN KELLY: -- this--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- now.

8 And then, you can say whatever you want. I'm not  
9 telling you that there's anything necessarily  
10 wrong with the petitions. All I'm saying to you  
11 is in order to generate so many signatures, I am  
12 sure that you had people spending a lot of time.  
13 But, most of these signatures, you asked something  
14 generic, like are you in favor of jobs in New York  
15 City. Are you in favor of developing Coney  
16 Island? Nothing more than that.

17 And, if I took a random sampling  
18 and called these people, they're going to say  
19 something like, I don't know. I was passing by  
20 and somebody said do you want to sign for jobs in  
21 New York and for development of Coney Island.  
22 They don't know any detail as to what this is all  
23 about. Is that fair to say? That most of the  
24 signatures don't, unfortunately, know the details  
25 of what this plan is all about?

1  
2 LYNN KELLY: I think it's fair to  
3 say that a lot of people that came up and  
4 expressed opinions for or against the plan didn't  
5 understand a lot of the details. And, frankly,  
6 it's 'cause it's a very complicated, intricate and  
7 comprehensive zoning plan. But, I rest assured,  
8 as you and I would not sign something that we  
9 didn't either understand or read or know in great  
10 detail, the people that signed those petitions are  
11 in support of the redevelopment of Coney Island.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Finally, I  
13 know everyone wants to go home. I just want to  
14 say that some of the letters of support don't have  
15 anything to do with the redevelopment, like the  
16 Village Voice talks about the Village Voice  
17 Festival and we hope things are going to be  
18 wonderful and that everything's going to be great.  
19 It has nothing to do with the redevelopment.

20 LYNN KELLY: That's actually a very  
21 poignant letter, Councilman--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yes.

23 LYNN KELLY: -- because the Village  
24 Voice every year hosts the Siren Festival, which  
25 you might be familiar with--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: Yeah.

3 LYNN KELLY: -- in Coney Island.

4 Siren Festival brings tens of thousands of people  
5 every year for free concerts. The Siren Festival  
6 would no longer exist in Coney Island if not for  
7 the Coney Island Development Corporation  
8 supporting and signing its permit in terms of  
9 being the nonprofit agency to allow the concerts  
10 to go forward and to apply to SAPPO. So, the  
11 Village Voice wrote with enthusiasm for working  
12 with all the good that the Coney Island  
13 Development Corporation does day-in and day-out.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I thank  
15 you. I just want to conclude, Mr. Chair, that I  
16 have never, ever questioned whether the Coney  
17 Island Development Corporation does good things.  
18 The question is whether the Village Voice was  
19 attesting or supporting the redevelopment. And,  
20 that's clearly not the case--

21 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Right.

22 LYNN KELLY: I disagree.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: -- either  
24 way.

25 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Council

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2 Member--

3 LYNN KELLY: I disagree.

4 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- you know,  
5 despite the fact that, in my opinion, you didn't  
6 get an answer, your point has been made. I mean,  
7 I think clearly most of the people, and I agree  
8 with you, probably signed that petition saying  
9 they agree with apple pie and baseball, etcetera,  
10 and, without knowing what the specifics of the  
11 plan are. And, I don't think you can say, I don't  
12 think the Administration can say, that everybody  
13 who signed that petition means that they agree  
14 with every part of the plan. I think your point  
15 was made.

16 I want to thank the panel. I think  
17 that the last series of question--

18 PAM HARRIS: [Off mic]

19 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: We called  
20 every single name on the list.

21 PAM HARRIS: [Off mic] didn't call  
22 mine, sir. I've been here the [pause]

23 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: We called  
24 every--

25 MALE VOICE: And, I haven't heard

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[crosstalk]

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: --single name  
on the list.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Tony,  
could I make an application to please let Pam  
Harrison speak.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: We called  
every single slip we had in our possession.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Did you fill  
out a slip?

PAM HARRIS: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: All right.

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Could I  
please ask that she be allowed--

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: No, no, no.  
We'll do it. But--

COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I  
appreciate it.

CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: -- I'm not  
going to take a complaint from the audience who  
says that we didn't call every name. We called  
every single slip here.

PAM HARRIS: [Off mic]

2 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: That's all  
3 right. Come on up. You'll have to fill out a  
4 slip, though. We don't have a slip for you.

5 PAM HARRIS: [Off mic]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Okay.  
7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. Thank  
8 you.

9 PAM HARRIS: I think you saved the  
10 best for last.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: Now,  
12 that's for sure, Pam. The best for last.

13 PAM HARRIS: For sure. My name is  
14 Pam Harris. I'm 49 years old. My name is Pam  
15 Harris. I'm 49 years old. And, I'm a 49-year  
16 resident of Coney Island. I'm a retired New York  
17 City Correction Officer and a proud Executive  
18 Director of an organization in Coney Island,  
19 called Coney Island Generation Gap.

20 I began my wonderful life in Coney  
21 Island living in a bungalow. Then, on to housing  
22 projects to owning my own two-family home in Coney  
23 Island. I have a little story. I buried my 4-  
24 year-old daughter and just recently six youth in  
25 the neighborhood, six weeks, in six weeks. And, I

1  
2 stood steadfast. I survived breast cancer and I  
3 stood steadfast. I survived a brutal attack while  
4 working as an officer and I stood steadfast. I  
5 never ran from any adversity in my neighborhood.  
6 I stand steadfast. I never ran from any  
7 prejudice. I stand steadfast.

8 And, I'll never run from the change  
9 we are about to embark on. I will stand  
10 steadfast. I have attended every hearing. I have  
11 voiced a strong opinion on the redevelopment of my  
12 neighborhood. And, I repeat, my neighborhood.  
13 I've earned that. Myself, along with my  
14 community, are well aware of the plans for the  
15 east and west end of Coney Island. And, we want  
16 the redevelopment. Also, the City's plan, the way  
17 that it is, is a good plan. Don't kill it. Take  
18 a look at it. Please, don't kill it.

19 My only concern is to make sure  
20 that you not divide us and make two Coney Islands.  
21 Make sure that the west end of Coney Island has  
22 its park, that one of our schools gets a  
23 gymnasium, that the 55,000 residents have a place  
24 to play, our kids are able to work. Most  
25 importantly, I have to mention that my youth



1  
2 organization, yes, and I will wrap it up and thank  
3 you, my youth organization works diligently in  
4 Coney Island. We do every single event. We are  
5 at every single funeral. We march down Coney  
6 Island, not the Mermaid Parade, with those  
7 caskets.

8 And, I'm not clear on what clear  
9 actually does and a lot of the naysayers that are  
10 out here talking about killing this plan  
11 completely. That is not the way to go. Please,  
12 don't kill this plan, 'cause if you kill this  
13 plan, you're going to kill six more kids and not  
14 within six weeks, within a day. Each day, we're  
15 going to lose a kid to idle hands and idle time.  
16 And, respectfully, thank you very much for  
17 allowing me to speak.

18 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Thank you.

19 PAM HARRIS: Thank you, Councilman.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: If we could  
21 just have that slip for the record, we'd  
22 appreciate it.

23 PAM HARRIS: Absolutely.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I'd just  
25 like to thank Pam Harrison for all you've done for

2 Coney Island and for coming down here today. You  
3 are right. The best is for last.

4 PAM HARRIS: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RECCHIA: I thank  
6 everyone else for coming out today for this  
7 hearing.

8 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Just for the  
9 record, we get a list from the Administration,  
10 ma'am, if you could just--Miss Harris, just for  
11 the record, I was just advised, we get a list of  
12 panels from the Administration, who, you know,  
13 told us who would go and speak at a certain time.  
14 We were just told that you weren't speaking. And,  
15 that's why your name was taken out by the  
16 Administration. [pause] We were told by the  
17 Administration that you weren't going to be  
18 speaking or that you had left. That's why--

19 PAM HARRIS: No.

20 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Well, I'm just  
21 telling you what we were told.

22 PAM HARRIS: [Off mic] went to the  
23 potty, but I didn't leave.

24 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: I can only  
25 tell you what we were told.

2 PAM HARRIS: Okay.

3 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: Okay. Council  
4 Member Felder.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FELDER: I just want  
6 to mention, for the record, that when Council  
7 Members have been told repeatedly that we cannot  
8 use taxpayer dollars to send constituents, we're  
9 talking about having a bus available to go up to  
10 Albany to advocate for reduced rent, for senior  
11 programs. I'm talking about really apple pie.  
12 We're not permitted to do that because of whatever  
13 it is. And, in this case, irrespective of my  
14 questions as to whether who was called, whether  
15 they were in favor or not, irrespective of that, I  
16 think there's real questions as to whether the  
17 propriety-- whether it's proper to use taxpayer  
18 dollars to suddenly provide buses. Do you we  
19 provide buses every time there's a hearing for  
20 other issues? I think it's something that we have  
21 to look into.

22 CHAIRPERSON AVELLA: You know, and  
23 I agree with you Council Member. And, I think the  
24 whole issue of having local development  
25 corporations testify, you know, as a sham

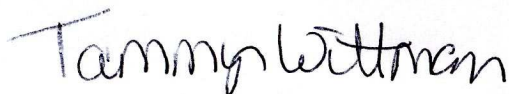
1  
2 representing the Administration, I think is a real  
3 issue, and, especially if somebody's been  
4 appointed by the Economic Development Corporation.

5 And, I think we've had a couple of  
6 conversations just while this testimony was going  
7 on. We may have to, you know, initiate  
8 legislation. This is not proper. It is certainly  
9 unethical at best. And, your point about the  
10 buses, I didn't even realize that, that we can't  
11 do that. Why should the Administration be allowed  
12 to use taxpayer dollars in an effort to promote  
13 their own agenda.

14 I want to thank everybody who came  
15 here or everybody who sat around for hours waiting  
16 to testify. And, obviously, this is the end of  
17 the public hearing. But, the discussions will go  
18 on. And, hopefully, we can all come to an  
19 agreement where the issues that were brought to  
20 our attention today will be addressed. And, that  
21 closes this meeting of the Subcommittee on Zoning  
22 and Franchises and closes the public hearing on  
23 the Coney Island proposal.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tammy Wittman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date July 17, 2009\_\_\_\_\_