



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD 3
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Gigi Li, Board Chair

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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

July 11, 2012

Re: Seward Park Mixed Use Development

Good afternoon. I am Gigi Li, chair of Manhattan's Community Board 3, and I am here to testify in support of the Seward Park Mixed Use Development. I want to begin by thanking the City Planning Commission for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify.

Background

On May 22nd, after 3 ½ years of debate, discussions, and public input, members of community board 3 voted unanimously to support the Seward Park Mixed Use Project with conditions. The board believes that the plan before you represents the kind of responsible and balanced development that the communities surrounding the Seward Park sites would like to see come to fruition.

We are all aware that there is a lot more work ahead of us, our resolution details the outstanding concerns that the board would like to see addressed. These concerns include adhering to the design guidelines as approved by the Community Board, construction related issues (stages of development/multiple developers/partnering with local developers), local hiring, accommodations for former site tenants, the future of Essex Street market, efforts to curb big box stores, and the development of a new school on the site.

However, after over 40 years of vacant lots, this community has finally been able to come to a consensus on the major components of a development plan, and Community Board 3 is fully in support of the plan moving forward.

To that end, I would like to highlight several points:

- **Diversity of stakeholders:** Community Board 3's Land Use, Housing, Zoning, Public and Private Housing Committee, which consists of 22 members represents a wide array of stakeholders, including residents of Chinatown, Lower East Side, and East Village, locally based housing groups, social service non-profits, business owners, and former Seward Park site tenants. We were intentionally appointed committee members who represent the diversity of viewpoints that reflect our community.
- **Collective effort with City agencies:** At the board's request EDC and HPD have attended Community Board 3's Land Use Committee meetings for the past year to continuously engage board members as well as the public in key issues. HDP and EDC's coordination efforts and willingness to work together have been extremely helpful. Together, with the

support of Councilmembers Chin and Mendez, we were able to secure permanent affordability for the subsidized housing units to be built on the sites, which represent 50% of the 900 units.

- **Community Board 3's continued involvement:** a taskforce consisting of a majority of Community Board members, as well as representatives from local not-for-profits and Councilmembers Chin, Mendez, and Borough President Stringer's officers will be convened to participate with the City in the RFP selection process. This ensures that the community's voice will continue to be heard.

For too long, the development of Seward Park has been a hurdle that this community has not been able to overcome. The proposal before you represents a unified vision for the future of our community.