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73RD District

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**Testimony of State Assemblymember Dan Quart
On the Proposed Rezoning of East Midtown
Before the New York City Department of City Planning
Tuesday, October 9, 2012**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the Draft Scope of Work for an Environmental Impact Statement for the East Midtown rezoning proposal. The entirety of the proposed rezoning lies within the 73rd Assembly district, so I appreciate the chance to convey the views of my constituents as well as my own personal perspective on how this rezoning can be better targeted and more beneficial to the local community.

Manhattan's East Midtown area ("East Midtown") has been essential to the City's success as a destination for commercial development. The Department of City Planning ("City Planning") presciently recognized that East Midtown's vitality is in danger due to aging, undesirable building stock. This rezoning proposal is well-positioned to correct this problem and secure East Midtown's position as the premiere business district in the country. However, I believe there are ways this proposal can better serve the residents and businesses of East Midtown, as well as the City at large.

Evaluate the Demand in East Midtown

The Department of City Planning cited the Cushman and Wakefield study as demonstrating a need for 70 million additional square feet of office space in Midtown over the next 30 years. However, the study does not show that the demand exists specifically in East Midtown or that the demand is for Class A space. Recent reports detailed high vacancy rates in the Plaza District, which includes all of the East Midtown Subdistrict. Before proceeding with the planned rezoning, a more detailed study should be conducted to determine the level of demand for Class A office space in East Midtown.

Begin Transportation and Infrastructure Improvements Now

The current transportation infrastructure is inadequate to handle the number of people that travel to and walk through the East Midtown business district surrounded by Grand Central Terminal. I applaud City Planning for recognizing this fact and creating a mechanism to improve these public services. However, my constituents and people who travel to the East Midtown business district would benefit from public improvements that are constructed before the first permits are issued in 2017. The District Improvement Fund (DIF) should include a provision that will allow the funds to be used to repay the City for beginning work on these improvements.

Benefit to the Local Community

My constituents living in close proximity to the proposed East Midtown expansion have expressed concerns about the rezoning permitting larger buildings to be constructed east of Third Avenue. I

appreciate that, following the preliminary study, City Planning removed most of the area east of 3rd Avenue from the rezoning proposal. However, proximity to these new, larger buildings should be a factor considered in allotting DIF funds. City Planning should allow DIF funds contributed by developers of buildings east of Third Avenue to be used on infrastructure improvements and open space additions in close proximity to the East Midtown district, between 43rd and 53rd Streets and between Third Avenue and the East River.

Guarantee the Sustainability of New Development

This project is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the City of New York to have a direct effect on the way development will proceed over the next decades. The City has smartly used the tremendous amount of leverage it has over potential developers to ensure that these buildings contribute to the local area in a number of ways. City Planning's regulations for the new East Midtown Subdistrict require developers to make financial contributions to improve local transportation and infrastructure and for design by limiting special permits to buildings of truly iconic design. City Planning must ensure that sustainability is given the same weight as design or infrastructure improvements by codifying regulations within the rezoning plan that ensures that new Class A development within the East Midtown Subdistrict improves the environment by generating all of their own energy from renewable sources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.