



The City of New York

# **Manhattan Community Board 1**

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

## **Manhattan Community Board 5**

### **Public Hearing on the City's Proposed East Midtown Rezoning Plan**

**Testimony by Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson  
Manhattan Community Board 1**

**Wednesday, May 13, 2013**

**Lighthouse International, 111 E 59th St, New York, NY  
6:00 PM**

Good evening. I am Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson of Manhattan Community Board One (CB1). Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this application for the City's proposed East Midtown Rezoning plan.

The rebuilding of Lower Manhattan is a long-term process and is vital to the restoration and revitalization of our neighborhood. Currently, the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site is on track. CB1 wants to make sure that the positive momentum continues.

As a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, 14 million square feet of commercial office space in Lower Manhattan was destroyed or damaged, 65,000 jobs were lost or relocated, and more than 20,000 residents were displaced. Now, almost twelve years after the attacks of 9/11, Lower Manhattan is in the middle of a renaissance as more residents and businesses have come to the area than were lost during the attacks.

By 2012, Lower Manhattan had 8,484 companies, 186 more than were here on the day of the attacks. Employment is also on an upward trend with a current total of 309,500 employees<sup>1</sup>, a trend that is expected to continue to grow as office space comes on line at the World Trade Center site. The 4, 5 and 6 train lines are currently at 116% capacity<sup>2</sup>. It is currently utilized by many residents, workers and students, and is expected to draw even more riders after the build-out of the World Trade Center site.

CB1 strongly urges the City Planning Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of how the proposed East Midtown Rezoning would affect Lower Manhattan, with a particular emphasis on the extent to which an up-zoning of office and commercial space in Midtown would adversely impact the ongoing redevelopment of Lower Manhattan.

Furthermore, we believe that the City of New York and the MTA must resolve subway capacity issues in advance in order to accommodate the expected increase in ridership as a result of the East Midtown zoning change.

While CB1 supports the concept that zoning changes may be necessary to permit the commercial office space in the East Midtown area to be upgraded and maintained as 21st Century Class A

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<sup>1</sup> Downtown Alliance: Lower Manhattan Fact Sheet, Q3 2012

<sup>2</sup> Straphangers Campaign: Letter to Mayor Bloomberg & Chairman Ferrer of the Metropolitan Transit Authority, 2013  
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commercial space, CB1 believes that a 4.4 million square foot net increase in commercial office space in the East Midtown area would place an unsustainable and unmitigatable burden on the transportation infrastructure that serves not only East Midtown, but Lower Manhattan as well. Accordingly, CB1 strongly urges the City Planning Commission to adjust the proposed zoning changes such that development in accordance with the new zoning would not result in a net increase of commercial office space in the East Midtown area.

Finally, CB1 strongly urges that the sunrise provision of the proposed East Midtown Rezoning be extended to a later date on which certain meaningful World Trade Center site development milestones could be accomplished, such as completion of a fixed number of buildings and square feet of space completed and leased, before the proposed rezoning is adopted.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.