

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC COMMENT LETTERS ON DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (DEIS)



**New York City Planning Commission Public ULURP Hearing
on The Fordham Road Rezoning Proposal Wednesday
24 July 2013**

Testimony

I am Joe Muriana and I serve as Associate Vice-President for Government Relations and Urban Affairs at Fordham University. This morning I am pleased to testify in support of the ULURP Application Proposal to amend the existing zoning along Fordham Road in the Bronx from Bathgate Avenue to Southern Boulevard. I speak today on behalf of Fordham University and The Four Bronx Institutions Alliance (FBIA), known colloquially as “The Quad” by City Hall, and comprised of the Wildlife Conservation Society/Bronx Zoo, the New York Botanical Garden, and Montefiore Medical Center. We collectively welcome this proposal to Rezone that section of Fordham Road between Bathgate Avenue and Fordham Road as a moderate density, mixed-use combination of commercial retail, office, community facility and residential.

This endeavor has long been overdue, and we commend the leadership demonstrated by local Bronx Community Board #6, the Bronx Borough President’s Office, as well as the leadership and extremely hard work of the planning and environmental review staffs at the Department of City Planning -- particularly its Bronx Office -- for embarking on this important undertaking, and bringing it toward a decisive moment of planning culmination. We trust that this step will not only result in a comprehensive and more contextual rezoning of the eastern portion of Fordham Road area, but that it will lead to a more vibrant, commercially viable corridor, distinctively different from the current ailing and flailing commercial strip, with its depressing remnant of automotive uses that is the present state of affairs today. The extant C-8 Zone along the Fordham block-front is an artifact and relic from a bygone era of a once vigorous but no longer predominant, automotive related local retail industry that was comprised of auto dealerships, automotive parts stores, and tire retailers. We, along with our sister partner institutions that make up the FBIA/ Quad have supported such a necessary re-look of Fordham Road area since the time we initially presented our ideas for “Re-Visioning of the Cultural District of the Bronx” a number of years ago. This present step is an important and interrelated follow-up to the Webster Avenue and Third Avenue Rezoning Plans, the ancillary Fordham Plaza redesign and

reconstruction project, and the two-phase Fordham Metro-North Station renovation and expansion.

It will create a new C4-5D zoning district that will permit mixed-use residential, commercial retail/office and community facility use, in depth along the Fordham Road block-front, while placing a C2-4 commercial overlay along the three blocks on Arthur Avenue from 187th Street to Fordham Road that will encourage more retail expansion, business start-ups and growth. The new zone along this section of Fordham Road will have a 100 foot height limit imposed on it to ensure that it remains a medium density mixed-use district. In addition a ground floor transparency requirement will help to promote a set of more active and interactive uses, thus hopefully ensuring a greater vibrancy and energy on the currently dull-paced and uninteresting street life. An inclusionary housing bonus will help to encourage, but not guarantee, a real mix of affordable housing that hopefully will include moderate to middle income residential opportunities. The down-zoning of the 191st Street residential block was done with a measure of sensitivity to future development opportunities.

We at Fordham and our Quad partners do have one major concern which is shared by several affordable housing groups, community boards and other institutions. There has been a slow over-saturation of one specific but limited type of affordable housing in the neighborhoods of Community District #6 and the adjacent Community District #7 area -- one targeted primarily as supportive housing for single adults with major substance abuse disorders and related socio-behavioral syndromes. We had envisioned both this and the Webster Avenue corridor as places that could begin to attract a more diverse mix of incomes in order to strengthen the retail buying power of the community in a way that would attract a yet more diverse set of local retail and real estate entrepreneurs. In another words, we looked for a better mix of affordable, moderate and middle income residential opportunities. This community has been overly generous in welcoming a significant amount of supportive housing for a very wide assortment and types of supportive housing needs. Fordham itself has sponsored two very low income housing HUD section 202 projects in the area, representing about 180 units of housing for Senior Citizens and handicapped individuals and families. University Neighborhood Housing Program has provided, loans, tech assistance and guarantees to another 100 + affordable housing projects in CD's 5,6 & 7. And we still look to do more in a manner sensitive to the community. But we also need more of a mix which can be provided by other types of housing including the 80/20 program and New Market tax credits, or we stand to threaten the very basis and hope for a vibrant community. We must insist that such a better economic

diversity be considered as a matter of City housing policy, or we will undermine the very object we hope to achieve.