



BROOKLYN HEIGHTS ASSOCIATION, INC.

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December 22, 2005

Honorable Marty Markowitz
Brooklyn Borough President
209 Joralemon Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Re: Atlantic Yards/Arena Project

Dear Mr. Markowitz:

During the past year, the BHA's Committee on Atlantic Yards has covered several public information meetings, and heard presentations by Forest City's Jim Stackey. BHA Governor Irene Janner keeps us apprised as a CB#2 Executive Board member, and Judy Stanton represents us on the CB#2 Land Use Committee. We've also listened to concerns voiced by Heights residents and neighbors in Boerum Hill and Fort Greene.

Please know that many BHA Governors and Association members welcome the return of a professional sports team to Brooklyn and we look forward to attending games in a first class, architecturally superior arena. However, this enthusiasm is tempered by our grave concerns regarding the enormity of the Atlantic Yards Project and its anticipated impact on the Brooklyn Heights community.

To date, the civic discussions about the project's perceived negative impacts have been tainted by Forest City's tendency to buy support from community groups and stonewall others who are critical. We are heartened that our elected officials understand that a project of this magnitude merits the formation of the Atlantic Yards Task Force exclusively devoted to the study and control of the project's impact on the greater Brooklyn community.

Based on our understanding of the project as currently configured, the BHA agrees with our friends in the Boerum Hill and Ft. Greene Associations that the arena development as proposed, with about 17 apartment towers ranging from 200-600 feet, is truly a "City within a City". It will overwhelm the bordering rowhouse neighborhoods. Forest City should be required to follow proscribed urban design and planning principles. With this in mind, we echo the concerns that have already been expressed by others as follows:

(1) Scope and Scale

The scope of this massive commercial/residential development is unprecedented in Brooklyn. The scale of the project is dramatically out of proportion to the predominantly low-rise historically significant brownstone neighborhoods it will abut. These neighborhoods enjoy protection by the Landmarks Preservation Commission but no limits are being placed on Forest City's planned superblocks of multiple high-rise towers that will surely create unwelcoming, fortress-like compounds.

Projects covering a land area as large as contemplated here ought to be carefully and creatively designed to fit within existing street patterns, without street closures, and must focus on enhancing vital connections between communities, rather than severing them. We would like to see this project dramatically reworked to integrate more sensibly and sensitively with the existing, thriving neighborhoods it will abut.

(2) Design Excellence

Sensitive, design excellence will be essential to the success of this project and must be its guiding principle. The project's colossal size is contrary to the important urban design lessons we have learned from the mistakes of the 1960's. The Gehry plan defies the fabric of the historic neighborhoods that surround the project site. The proposed high-rise mega-structure plan is an assault on the communities of Fort Greene, Boerum Hill, Prospect Heights and Park Slope. We urge the Task Force to seek a redesign of the project, and - at the very least - scale it down, guided by sound urban planning principles and design excellence.

(3) Traffic, Transit and Parking

The Atlantic Avenue/Flatbush Avenue corridor is perhaps the most congested traffic/transit hub in Brooklyn. Increasing this congestion will exacerbate existing problems in neighborhoods located miles from the epicenter of the project. The traffic implications of this mammoth project on the surrounding Downtown Brooklyn streets will be staggering. It is this area that is of greatest interest to the Brooklyn Heights community and the BHA is worried that the south Heights will be hit with arena bound traffic, clogging Atlantic Avenue, Court Street, and Henry Street and using State Street for shortcuts. We fear that the traffic congestion will radiate well beyond the immediate project area unless meaningful improvements are made. The proposed parking for the project is ridiculously inadequate. Because Brooklyn is still very much a vehicle-oriented borough, the parking facilities for this project need to be dramatically increased. We hope the DEIS will include a detailed traffic/transit study

of the project's impact on the area as well as the surrounding communities to include Brooklyn Heights,

(4) Mass Transit, Infrastructure, Essential Services, Open Space, Environmental Impact

This project will make new demands on the systems for mass transit, water, sewer, gas and electric and the cost of expanding these systems must be calculated and disclosed. The massive population increase will certainly overwhelm existing schools, hospitals and parks as well as the police, fire, emergency medical and sanitation personnel presently serving the area. We hope you will obtain real commitments from the developer, the City and the MTA to expand and improve these essential services.

Accessible open space ought to be a vital part of this project. Raised courtyards, surrounded by high-rise structures, set apart from the community, are not public recreational space. A perfect example of a public park that most people think is private is the raised City Park next to the River Café because it is not on grade with the sidewalk.

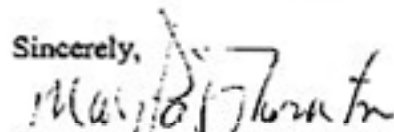
Please give careful consideration to the increased air pollution that the project will inevitably create and its impact on existing asthma hot spots. Because rats and other vermin already pose serious health concerns and Brooklyn Heights residents are now struggling with rodent problems at home, we are worried about increased infestations when construction commences.

(5) Height of Towers

For generations, the Williamsburg Savings Bank building has stood as the architectural gateway to Downtown Brooklyn. This historic building's premier place in the Brooklyn skyline must be protected and preserved.

We urge you to carefully consider the concerns. The control and supervision you exert over the development of this project will be your legacy to generations of Brooklynites. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Mary Pat Thornton, President

Cc: Members of the Atlantic Yards Task Force