

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—November 18, 2004

**Ratner “Community Benefits Agreement” (CBA) is DOA
And Brooklyn Community Board Chairs Helped Kill It
*DDDB and Community Board Members Slam
“New Low” in Community Participation, and CB Conflict of Interest***

BROOKLYN—Would-be Nets Arena Developer Bruce Ratner’s co-called “Community Benefits Agreement” (CBA) is a sham and a fraud that reaches new lows in killing community participation, according to experts who spoke at a noontime press conference today at City Hall.

Several members of Community Boards (CBs) 2, 6 and 8 spoke out about how their Boards’ Chairs have repeatedly ignored the concerns of their own members, buried motions and input from their own Committees, and refused to hold public meetings in which alternatives to Bruce Ratner’s proposed Nets Arena complex, or even community concerns about it, can be discussed.

“It’s a travesty when Community Board Chairs suppress and stifle public participation so that a wealthy developer can do whatever he wants,” said DDDB spokesperson Daniel Goldstein. “It seems abundantly clear that the developer is driving this process.”

“Lots of people wonder why the Chairs are behaving this way,” Goldstein continued, “and we intend to ask the New York Conflicts of Interest Board to look into the fact that Jerry Armer [Chair of CB 6] is the full-time, paid Director of Services for the MetroTech BID, to which Bruce Ratner is a major contributor. We also want the Conflicts of Interest Board to comment on the fact that, in the past year, Forest City Ratner has spent substantial sums of money lobbying the three Boards about the Atlantic Yards Proposal. You can imagine the questions this raises, especially when the principle of equal time is not granted to opposing views, while Forest City gets hours on end to present their year-old song-and-dance routine. We wonder: who is the leadership of these Board’s listening to?”

Councilmember Letitia James stated, “I don’t want to be discussing CBAs yet. We cannot discuss CBAs until we have the facts about this proposal: the public financing, the environmental and traffic impact, the impact on the character of the neighborhood, displacement issues, and the height, scale and bulk of the project. Only then should a CBA follow.”

The press conference, called by City Council Member Letitia James and Develop Don’t Destroy Brooklyn (DDDB), featured commentary from Bettina Damiani, Project Director of the economic development watchdog group Good Jobs New York. She described what a true Community Benefits Agreement looks like, and why this is not one. She went on to say, “Good Jobs New York is greatly concerned that numerous public officials are willing to short circuit the City’s public review process and throw their support behind such a large project, particularly without revealing the cost to the taxpayer. In order for the community to be sure that it is getting the best CBA possible, public officials must divulge the project’s cost to the taxpayer.”

For more information on viable Community Benefits Agreements, go to:
www.goodjobsny.org/cba.htm

For more on Develop Don’t Destroy, visit: www.developdontdestroy.org

***DEVELOP DON’T DESTROY BROOKLYN leads a broad-based community coalition
fighting for development that will unite our communities instead of dividing and destroying them.***