Los Sures "David Santiago" Senior Center
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August 9, 2007

Robert Dobruskin
Director Environmental Assessment and Review Division
NYC Department of City Planning
22 Reade Street, Rm. 4E
New York, NY 10007

RE: Domino Sugar Site Testimony

Dear Mr. Dobruskin:

I am writing this testimony on behalf of the Los Sures "David Santiago" Senior Center and the approximately 100 senior members that we serve. Unfortunately, we were unable to attend the hearing, but wanted to give City Planning our input on the proposed Domino Sugar Rezoning.

Our Senior Center, which has been serving the predominantly low-income Latino seniors in the Southside community for more close to two decades, is approximately five blocks away from the Domino site. Given such proximity, it is certain our members will be affected by the proposed project.

Currently, we observe an inordinate amount of seniors struggling with gentrification and the ensuing displacement it is causing. The majority of our seniors are in receipt of SSI benefits, which means their income is approximately $670/mo. Many of our seniors are paying almost their entire check towards rent, while others have to live doubled up with family members sleeping on couches because they cannot afford an apartment in the neighborhood.

The Domino Sugar site definitely presents an important opportunity to the community, but their needs to be modifications to the proposed plan in order to better meet the needs of the low-income seniors in the Southside of Williamsburg. We are pleased that there is a plan for affordable housing units, however, we believe that 40% of the units should be set aside as affordable rather than the proposed 30%. Additionally, the proposed site has to better meet the needs of the very low-income in the community. We understand that generally these affordable units can go for 80% of Area Median Income. This doesn't really help our seniors or their family members as many of them earn significantly less. Other projects that were developed by Los Sures have generally had income guidelines of 50-60% of the AMI. We hope their will be a good portion of units set aside specifically for seniors of the our community, which will take into account the SSI level incomes.

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The very existence of our community depends on the number of affordable units and the income ranges of said "affordability." Many of our seniors have lived and raised their families in the Southside community and wish to remain here in their "golden years." The proposed modifications to the plan could make that possible for them. Thank you for considering the input of our Center and the senior members when deciding on the Domino Sugar site. Please feel free to contact me at the above number if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Laura Hernandez
Director

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