LISC
New York City
Helping neighbors build communities

Testimony of LISC NYC at the Public Scoping Meeting of the NYC Planning Commission on the Redevelopment of the Former Domino Sugar Plant
July 31, 2007

Good afternoon. My name is Sarah Hovde and I am Research and Policy Analyst at the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, NYC Program. I'm testifying on behalf of Denise Scott, LISC NYC's Managing Director.

Founded in 1979, LISC NYC's mission is to help resident-focused, community-based development organizations transform distressed communities and neighborhoods into healthy ones—good places to live, do business, work, and raise families. LISC mobilizes corporate, government and philanthropic support to provide community organizations with: loans, grants and equity investments; technical, management and organizational development assistance; and local, statewide and national policy support.

For over 25 years, LISC NYC has been a critical link between non-profit community developers, the government and the private sector, providing over $160 million in grants and loans and over $1.5 billion in equity to more than 75 community development corporations (CDCs). These groups have used those funds to develop close to 28,000 units of affordable housing in Harlem, the South Bronx, and Brooklyn. CDCs have also raised an additional $3.3 billion for neighborhood redevelopment and are responsible for at least 60,000 units of renovated and/or new homes and apartments and over 1.4 million square feet of commercial space.

The downside of the extraordinary revitalization process that we've witnessed in many NYC neighborhoods is soaring rents and property values that threaten the ability of long-time residents to remain in their communities and share in the benefits. The resurgence of the real estate market is creating a growing affordability gap that is most severe for the poorest households, but that increasingly affects moderate- and middle-income families as well.

LISC NYC is addressing this problem by continuing our core focus on affordable housing – with an intensified emphasis on the preservation of affordability in existing housing, as well as on new production. We are developing new tools and initiatives to support CDCs' capacity to preserve and develop affordable housing in an increasingly challenging development environment. Additionally, in recognition that a comprehensive community development approach must include not only affordable housing, but also better access to jobs, goods and services, quality education, and

healthy environments, LISC NYC also invests in commercial and community facilities development -- from retail properties to schools, to recreational and childcare facilities.

We support the proposed plan for the redevelopment of the Domino Sugar Factory because in important ways it aligns with LISC's vision for creating sustainable, balanced communities.

Most importantly, through a commitment of affordability for 30% of the units, it will result in the creation of approximately 660 units of affordable housing. An opportunity to provide such a large number of affordable housing units at one site is a rare and valuable opportunity. These units will be affordable to a mix of income levels, including some at 30% of area median income, or approximately 21,000 for a family of four. This is a lower income level than that required by the Greenpoint Williamsburg rezoning rules. The proposal also includes units for senior housing, for which there is a growing and unmet demand. Finally, it will also provide opportunities for moderate-income homeownership. LISC NYC supports the development of mixed-income housing within a single site, such as that proposed in the Domino plan.

The project is also innovative in its adaptive re-use of a historic but out-moded industrial facility. It includes the development of retail, commercial and community cultural facility space, as well as four acres of landscaped public park, which will open up access to riverfront recreation amenities to use by the broader community. We believe the project will be an asset to the immediate neighborhood, and to the city.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this project today.