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THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CHAIR

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Testimony before the New York City Department of City Planning Regarding the Domino Sugar Refinery, Brooklyn
July 31, 2007

Good afternoon, I am NYC Council Member Diana Reyna, representing the 34th District of Williamsburg and Bushwick, Brooklyn and Ridgewood, Queens. I would like to thank Chair Amanda Burden and the members of the City Planning Commission for holding this important hearing on the proposed development at the Domino Sugar Refinery site. As you are aware, the proposed development and potential land-marking of this site has been very controversial.

I have always thought of the proposed development of the Domino Sugar site as the companion piece to the 2005 Greenpoint/Williamsburg waterfront rezoning and believe it should be approached with the same spirit and intent. Balancing the needs of a community with the developers desire to make a profit is always tremendously challenging. I believe we achieved a fair balance in the rezoning in 2005. We recognized that the area wide redevelopment in Greenpoint and Williamsburg could potentially displace sections of the lower-income communities in the Williamsburg section of my district (which is currently experiencing displacement at an all time high). We created safety nets to offset this shift by demanding and receiving a 33% affordable rate of the 10,000 new proposed units, many of which are to be on-site. The Domino Sugar Refinery redevelopment offers the same, if not greater potential for affordable housing for residents of Community Board 1.

Let me start with my first concern, which is the number of affordable housing units proposed on the site. The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC) has proposed that 30% or 720 of the overall 2,400 units be affordable. The 720 units that have been proposed do not meet the needs of the community; this is simply not enough. Therefore, I am requesting the number of affordable units be increased to a minimum of 1,000 units. I am willing to support the proposed height only if these minimum requirements are met on affordability, and if the developers are to receive additional density bonuses, more affordable units must be considered. I support the following development: the distribution of 2400 units, of which 1000 must be affordable units set aside for low income families. There should also be consideration for affordable home-ownership. I would like to see the remaining 1400 units to be divided between moderate to market rate income families with a minimum of 500 units set aside for moderate income.

We have hundreds of businesses in the North Brooklyn and Greenpoint Industrial Business Zones and the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Many are registered MWBE's that developers must consider first when contracting with companies to acquire materials for construction. We have thousands of residents ready and able to work, and for those who are seeking employment opportunities but have no experience, the developers are to establish a construction job training program. We must guarantee that our businesses and residents will be not be neglected and that all opportunities be taken full advantage of.

Developers in NYC cannot build in a vacuum; the city must provide municipal services for the newly developed areas. New modes of transportation are required to move the new residents and existing local residents safely and efficiently around the borough and city. Responsible planning for new schools, fire houses, and police and sanitation services must be in the development plan. Open space, open to all, is a priority. I would like to see the developers working with local community groups to develop plans for the best use of open space.

On a final note, please understand that to receive full community support and my support, the City Planning Commission, the administration and the developers must be willing to listen to our needs and come to an equitable compromise benefiting all parties involved. I cannot emphasize enough that responsible and visionary planning starts with a dialogue here with us in North Brooklyn. We have the community to remind us of our moral obligations and our experiences to guide us through the process.