REMARKS AT THE SCOPING HEARING FOR THE DOMINO DEVELOPMENT
By Luis Garden Acosta, Founder and President of El Puente

For 25 years, El Puente, as a community youth development organization, just five blocks up from the former Domino Sugar Plant, has worked hard, in partnership with others, to reforest the Southside, to create new or renovate old parks to launch new public schools, to immunize our children, stop epidemics, stop the development of a City Council, legislated, 55 story incinerator and so many other initiatives to create the kind of community that, frankly, makes it possible for many to want to live in Williamsburg, today.

That was not the case 25 years ago, when the Southside, the most concentrated Latino neighborhood was, also, the poorest Latino neighborhood in New York State. It is, still, an overwhelming Latino and poor, working class community. It is, also, ground zero for the most toxicity in a neighborhood in our city. El Puente's, peer reviewed, published, scientific research attest to an asthma rate, nearly three times the national average and air that is 90 times more polluted than an average square mile in America.

Of course, Radiac, the city's only chemical and nuclear, hazardous storage facility is, virtually, across the street from the northern end of the proposed Domino development.

We trust that every effort will be made to mitigate these challenges to the health and safety of our community in the finalization of plans and actual building of the Domino initiative. Specifically, we need to secure that nothing is done that might impact negatively on the overall environment, including the disposition of underground heating oil tanks as well as the design, actual building and operation of the new development. Green materials should be used in a design that is compliant with the highest, accepted national standards for green buildings.

A concerted effort must be made to employ community members before, during and after the development of the entire site. El Puente does not believe in limiting possibilities, so, we will not require a specific percentage of jobs, but, clearly, the Southside is an overwhelming Latino community in much need of the promise of Domino. In that regard, we, of course, support a minimum of 30% of all units to be

designated as affordable to the poor and working community surrounding Domino.

As El Puente led the Latino Community of Williamsburg in the development of the 197A plan we, particularly, require that the community, finally, be able to reclaim its waterfront. Our 197A plan called for complete, open access that would offset, somewhat, the dire circumstance of being at the bottom of per capita open space in the city. Related to that, we are concerned that placing the parking garage on South 4th Street will be a major invitation for cars coming off the Williamsburg Bridge to use South 4th as a thruway to the garage. In order to keep the garage on South 4th Street, everything should be done that will move traffic to use the Broadway exit off the bridge and Kent Avenue as the entry point to the South 4th Street Garage.

We just have too many schools in the area, including El Puente itself, to justify any further risk, to the safety of young people posed by additional South 4th Street traffic.

Finally, in the world that El Puente seeks, the basic needs of food, health, safety education and shelter would be motivated by the common good not profit. Sadly, in a city ever more

squeezed for affordable housing, that kind of vision is not the reality of our policy makers.

In this present reality, then, we would be hard put to find a better ally in our struggle than the Community Preservation Corporation. They have reached out to us like no developer has ever engaged us in the past 25 years. They've listened to us, have, conceptually, agreed with us and have offered a plan driven by their desire to be faithful to their name and their primary mission. Simply put, the Domino Development Plan is the last, best hope for affordable housing for our community.