Appendix A

Comments Received on the DEIS

- *Oral Comments Received during the CPC Hearing on May 24, 2023*
- *Written Comments Received during the Commenting Period*

New York City Department of City Planning

City Planning Commission

Public Meeting

May 24, 2023

Remote via Zoom

1.

Host 1 – Daniel Garodnick: Great, thank you very much, so, on calendar 12, we have a sizeable applicant team and I am going to tell you whose here. It includes Jason Diaz, Vivian Liao, Stephen Fabian, Eric Palatnik, Paul Carr, and Leah Archibald. So welcome to all of you and um, and we have you for 10 minutes, remotely. We can see you, when we can hear you, you can go ahead and get started, and we look forward to it, thank you.

2.

Presenter 1 - Leah Archibald: Alright Tucker and Vivian, you are both on mute.

3.

Presenter 2 - Vivian Liao: We are here, we are ready.

4.

Presenter 1 - Leah Archibald: Sure, my name is Leah Archibald. I am the Executive Director of Evergreen which is a local development corporation that works with businesses here in Industrial Brooklyn and we are delighted to be part of the presentation team for the 1160 Flushing Avenue project. I am joined by my colleagues at Totem, Vivian and Tucker please introduce yourselves.

5.

Presenter 2 - Vivian Liao: Hi I am Vivian Liao, part of the development team at Totem. We are a Brooklyn based developer that specializes in community driven development. Our Development focuses on a few key principles around affordability, economic mobility, innovative partnership, and sustainable design. And Tucker Reed, my partner is here, and you will be hearing from him in a moment. You can move on to the next slide. Actually, the next slide and then Leah will take it away.

6.

Presenter 1 - Leah Archibald: So this is a snapshot of Community District 4. Um, demographic information but actually lets go to the next slides. Ill tell you a little about why our organization is

involved. We work, um, to help the local manufacturing businesses grow so we can keep high quality jobs here in our community. One of the reasons we are involved in this project it will help us accomplish some of these goals. When you look at the unemployment rate of 7.2% being higher than Brooklyn at a whole and the educational attainment rate of 26% then being lower than Brooklyn as a whole, we see this as a ripe opportunity for growing high quality working class jobs, such as those offered in Manufacturing which has lower barriers to entry in the work place. You don't need high levels of educational attainment or be able to speak English well or even at all. We do our work at 1160 Flushing, largely because we think it's a great opportunity to grow high-quality working-class jobs especially for folks with barriers to entry in the workplace. Next slide please. Not only is this something our organization is really interested in but there are a variety of folks who agree with this. I will start off with pointing out that City Planning's own North Brooklyn Industry and Innovation plan has identified exactly this area to encourage high density commercial and industrial growth. Largely because it is at a transit point, and of course in our North Brooklyn Brownfield Opportunity Area Plan um we have identified this as a site for growth but for us most importantly, it aligns with the Bushwick Community Plan that was assembled over a couple years by community members. And you know specifically they wanted to, the community wants to support manufacturing business growth. They want to keep Flushing Avenue as an industrial corridor. And they want to see ways to incentivize mixed industrial/commercial development and the 1160 Flushing Project does exactly this. May have the next slide, thank you. So um, just a couple works about our organization's Brownfield Opportunity Area planning Study. This 1160 Flushing Project is exactly the sort of use that we've identified that can allow for additional commercial development i.e. office space in the industrial neighborhood, but still keep at least 1 FAR of space for manufacturing uses. So, we believe that there is a model to cross subsidize higher rent commercial spaces and allow slightly lower rent industrial spaces to thrive, thereby keeping the industrial character of the neighborhood and again creating a home for high-quality working-class jobs.

7.

Presenter 2 - Vivian Liao: Thanks Leah, so if you move on to the next slide, I will walk you quickly through the actual project details. Next slide. This slide will orient you to the location of the project at the intersection of Flushing and Wycoff Avenues just off the Jefferson Street L Stop. The next slide shows the current zoning which is M1-1 and our proposal to increase the floor area and zoning to M1-5 in line with the goals of the community planning effort that Leah has just walked you through. Next slide shows a closer aerial view and the

proposed rezoning area starts mid block and extends to Wycoff. The next slide shows the narrow focus even further to our specific development site. You can see the two tax lots that comprise of our development. The next few slides we can flip through quickly. These are the various views of the existing conditions from all 4 corners of the development site and some additional views around it. Next slide turning now to the building program, what really excites us about this project is the potential to forge an industrial development and preservation model, developed in partnership with Evergreen that can serve as a precedent for future projects in North Brooklyn and beyond, specifically in this case you can see here that we will be preserving industrial uses on site providing growth opportunities for new businesses and creating space for community based retail. The space breakdown is here and we have projections showing the potential to generate hundreds of new jobs including approximately 40 of them industrial. Next slide, here are some industrial, excuse me, illustrative layouts along with some comparable precedents, our plans call for ground floor retail space with the mixed of industrial and office on the upper floors. The next slide ill ask Leah to jump in and talk about Evergreen's role in curating the tenant mix.

8.

Presenter 1 - Leah Archibald: Yeah, so another, one of the many services our organization offers is that we are actually a small-scale industrial developer ourselves, and we have 5 buildings that we lease out at below market rate so we have a pretty good handle on what small manufacturers need in terms of real estate, so we are advising on the needs of um Brooklyn's manufacturers. We have been conducting outreach with our colleagues, our friends, and our neighbors within the community. And finally, we hope to be here for the long term, to ensure that the industrial space is tenanted by industrial tenants and um help identify you know many, we hope to identify tenants from among our local businesses that are moving and growing to locate in the building.

9.

Presenter 3 - Tucker Reed: Great Leah, thank you, we can go to the next slide. Good morning, commissioners, thanks for having us. Just to provide some, a lot of thoughts went in the last few years for the contextual planning of this site and the rich fabric of Bushwick. And ill just round our presentation on all that, next slide, just to walk you through generally the building program quickly. Here you really see the mix of uses between retail, light industrial, and office kind of working together, hopefully symbolically in one building. We

actually are reintroducing an old rail fair that connects Stewart Avenue to Jefferson Street to create a pedestrian alley that will allow for really unique retail experience. We are going to be able to carve these spaces into small footprints for local small businesses. We also see the really unique ability to kind of blend the retail and industrial uses as we move up into the building. So you can think of A, industrial tenant like a furniture making or a brewery or something a good could be made in the building but also a showroom within the building context. And if you go to the next slide, you start to see in plan how that alley through fare connects to the dedicated entrance or the rest of the building. The loading dock on Flushing Avenue that we were really encouraged by the Community and the folks at Evergreen to locate it on Flushing where is the major Truck thoroughfare is. And the next slide, you start to see as you move up in the building how the uses blend together from the retail to the industrial and further, next slide, up into the other commercial aspects of the building. What is great about the geometry of this site we can really craft the spaces within the building, if a tenant wants to talk the entire floor we will be able to do that. We want to the factor in the smaller spaces, 2000 to 5000 square feet which is very much in line with the tenant mix of many of the neighborhoods in Brooklyn, we have the ability to do that. And then if we quickly cycle through the last couple slides because I am down to my last 30 seconds. You see some of the illustrative views of the Alleyway. Some comps and some precedents from around the county, the existing conditions of that rail thoroughfare that were excited to reimage, that we will actually put 1 retail store building at this space, and then move the pedestrian connection to the west and open up the site and then finally all of our development, we really work hard to integrate sustainability and green technology, so we are excited that same consciousness to this project. Thank you for your time, we have a pretty ample project team to answer your questions.

10.

Host 1 – Daniel Garodnick: Great, thank you very much and before I kick it off with the Vice Chairmen, let me just note and good to see you all and thank you for this. I understand the strategy for Evergreen. You and Ms. Archibald will be working to tenant the industrial space. Let’s talk a little about the office space. It is 114,000 square feet, can you tell us more about the tenanting strategy for the office space?

11.

Presenter 3 – Tucker Reed: Thank you Chair. The tenant mix of Bushwick is really interesting. There is a lot of creative design, Netflix has

a major presence in the area now, a lot of post-production work. We are hoping thematically to have a unified principal around a cluster of creative design tenant such as music productions, recording studios, podcast studios, architectural studio, digitally agencies along with some serious manufacturing tenants. You can imagine a set designer with both front office and back of office production here. We also think there is interesting uses along with retail and entertainment, recreational type of uses. This is a main use in Bushwick, a lot of great restaurants, nightlife, and destination retail here. We are hoping to bring back to life a building here. We were able to interview a family who owned the building back in the 1920s who used it for sweater manufacturing, we are hoping to bring this dormant part of Bushwick back to life.

12.

Host 2 – Kenneth Knuckles: Thank you for your presentation. I want to ask and tone in on tenant mix. I was wondering how you come your decision about space allocation. We are in an IBZ where your industrial allocation is only at 20% as opposed to office space which comes out to 60%. I think spec office space in these times is very optimistic and I think its good. But I am nonetheless interested on how you came to this space allocation you proposed here?

13.

Presenter 3– Tucker Reed: This is a Ground up development and to make the economics of this building to pencil out, we really need some rents that are above the market rate or even the subsidized rate of the neighborhood. We would not be able to construct a building of these without tenants from the retail for the office space that is market rate for commercial uses which you see a really focus on the different pockets of the creative economy in Brooklyn today. We went early to Leah and team and figure out a way to cross subsidize the industrial use to bring it back to life but in a way that is sustainable that allows for the rest of the building to function. We are trying to crack our own cross subsidies for the building without using government subsidization where we can use the slightly higher paying tenants on the office and commercial side to help allow to create new industrial space on this site.

14.

Presenter 1– Leah Archibald: Our goal as an organization is no net loss of manufacturing and this is also the community goals as well. If we are keeping approximately 1 FAR for specifically manufacturing uses that aligns with our goals, the community goals and DCP.

15.

Presenter 3– Tucker Reed: We look at this as a floor not a ceiling. If we find a tenant who may coexist well with other tenants of the buildings, we are open to that, this is a floor not a ceiling.

16.

Host 3 - Juan Osorio: Thank you for the presentation and Ms. Archibald for your work for industrial retention with Evergreen and before that. I have a question to build on Vice Chair Knuckles question. I also want to know why 37.8 square feet of light industrial and not more. I wanted to understand the rational, and you have partially explained your thinking, I wanted to know if marketed the property for light industrial and what are the results for that right now? I share the concern or maybe the ceiling that the amount of office space that is being allocated sounds optimistic considering the levels of vacancies in the city but also the fact that last week VICE filed for bankruptcy who is one of the major tenants for the type of office space/creative uses that you used to illustrate the potential economic development that you are taking about in other MX areas. For this economic climate why not more light manufacturing? I was wondering if you could share more of your research whether you have marketed the development with potential tenants and help us illustrate how you landed there.

17.

Presenter 3 – Tucker Reed: There's a couple questions I will try to unpack. First off, we are in the early stages of this development, and we have not marketed to potential tenants yet. This building still needs to get through ULURP, and then another year or two of design and development and another year off construction. We will not be able to offer tenants spaces on site for 3 to 4 years. Based on our experiences, most tenants are also not thinking that far out. I will reiterate that the industrial target is a floor not a ceiling. To the extent that the market shows that there is a large demand for more industrial we are open to this. I hear you on the VICE and that there are other parts such as Midtown that there a vacancy challenge. I would argue that in many pockets of pedestrian, walkable part of Brooklyn we are seeing leasing velocity increase quite well. The Two Trees Development at DUMBO recently brought online about 150,000 square feet of office space and successfully leased up the building to smaller scale tenants. We all read with dismay the problems VICE has been having but they also were having trouble prior to covid. VICE is a more of a unicorn then a representation of the market in Brooklyn.

We are seeing across Brooklyn a real demand for small office space within walkable neighborhoods where they don't need to commute to Manhattan.

18.

Presenter 1 - Ms. Archibald: One of the reasons were involved is we have agreed to be leasing this to manufacturers at a rate a manufacturer can afford. We have seen out in the world where manufacturing building are asking for, they very high rents where they are then not able to find manufacturing tenants that can play. As a small time, developer, one of the early lessons we learned is that the numbers got to work. We understand that in order to get manufacturing spaces at a affordable rate, it needs to be cross subsidized with something else that is paying a little more.

19.

Host 3 – Juan Osorio: I have another quick follow up question which is can you share your position in response to the Borough President's recommendation to remove lots 29 and 40. In my mind this doesn't affect the overall purpose of what you want to accomplish. I want to understand why you feel we need to rezone the entire block. I also want to understand why not the IBIA special permit here? What is your rationale to follow this route of action?

20.

Presenter 4 - Eric Palatnik: The reason why we haven't followed the IBIA route because of what we have been talking about so far which is the uncertainty of the marketplace. We believe we have a custom-tailored development that we can find occupancies and tendencies for. We have been discussing at this length with stakeholders, and with potential tenancies, and with Leah from Evergreen and we believe we have come up with something in this challenging market that can work, and we are highly committed to it. In respect to your question on the rezoning area, the two properties that are not included are the two at the end of block at Wycoff and Flushing. Wycoff is the main commercial corridor where all the action is going on with the Jefferson train stop near. The two buildings you are talking about, 1 was just redeveloped, it a 1 story taxpayer building that has a H&M tenant in it. The second building is an owner-occupied Steele manufacturer that is at the corner of Jefferson and Wycoff. We believe it is important to include them because it will open the door to expansion for both of those building to create a more comprehensive and rationale land use

plan that incorporates the Wycoff corridor that extends it to our properties as well that opens the door for future development in a very transit rich location.

21.

Host 3 - Juan Osorio: Thank you for your response to both questions. Given the reputation of Evergreen and the plan that you laid out to monitor and enforce the presence for light manufacturing in the main project area makes sense, but I still don't see who is going to enforce that light manufacturing remains in lots 29 and 40, especially in the lot still being used for light industrial once we change the underlying zoning. Is there a plan to enforce that there? Seems as though Evergreen is going to be focused on the remaining part of the block, which is again why this suggestion to remove 29 and 40 still makes sense for what you want to accomplish.

22.

Presenter 4 - Eric Palatnik: I understand your question now even further, you took it to another level, Ill offer this as a rationale. The rezoning if it includes this entire block will allow for A. the existing manufacturing uses to expand if they need to. We have spoken to them, their excited about the rezoning, they don't need to the space right now, but you never know. It will not make anything worse on the flushing Avenue property because its current tenants are retail. We believe this will only create opportunity and we hope people will see the success that Leah will bring as a partner on our property and as time goes may spread down the block and a similar business model can happen there.

23.

Presenter 3 – Tucker Reed: On the sites that we control, we will be entering into a restrictive declaration with Evergreen for the enforcement of every promise we have made here. It is a common practice for all our promises, and we use CBAs as a way for a community to hold our feet to the fire for the promises we are making.

24.

Host 4- Orzulo: Thank you for this presentation. I am interested in understanding; Tucker you used the term you use was Alleyway. Can you clarify the alleyway? Just to be clear is this pedestrian only? It is not a shared street with traffic? One of the photos, I don't remember

which one, it looked like it might be loading docs or was that just garage doors? I just want to understand the physical nature of the alleyway. I find it very interesting and obviously in terms of opportunity for public space and how that can relate to retail in the area. Is in vision that there will there be plaza use style or passive outdoor space that would be created and beautified to make it into something engaging which I believe would have an impact of the retail there?

25.

Presenter 3 – Tucker Reed: There is a rendering that speaks to the question on slide 29 and speaks to envision of public space and all our experience together. It's thought of it will be Restricted to pedestrian uses only, there will be no vehicular use in the alleyway. It is about 20 feet wide. We have spent a lot of time at the Brooklyn office for design iterations and finding the right geometry to make it work. It's not too wide for a plaza but imagine a lot of greenery and street furniture to support the retail. We will also be reinstating the old Metropolitan Sweater sign on top of the retail building and there will be a pedestrian bridge that connects the larger building to the smaller scale retail. We imagine it as a rooftop accessible to patrons of the business so you can imagine outdoor furniture and amenities useful for those in the building but also locals. Hopefully it a very nice amenity for those in the neighborhood.

26.

Host 4 – Orzulo: Absolutely, I think that rendering is a nice one. I used the term plaza, but you described it better and this is what I was thinking myself. The follow up to that, if there is street furniture which I would hope there is an opportunity for even if there are bistro chairs for people to sit on and there is beautification through water culture, one of the other slides you presented it talked about big bellies and rain gardens and green roofs, who will maintain these sorts of assets we will call them and these amenities? What is envisioned there since the long-term ongoing benefit is only as good as the long term commitment to sort of maintaining and how is that envisioned, is there only one 1 entity, is it the Landlord, is there going to be some sort of merchant group that will have that responsibility? What is envisioned regarding that?

27.

Presenter 3 – Tucker Reed: Great question and you understand maintenance better than anymore. All the things were talking about from a green infrastructure point of view, big belly trash cans, neighborhood facing amenities will all be maintained by us as the property owner. We have no intention to pass those services to an outside organization. It is important as the property owner to make sure the property is functional as possible so we will be taking on all those responsibilities.

28.

Host 5 - Commodi: Good morning, thank you for this presentation. I am very familiar with the Bushwick Community Plan, and I know of the objective is to ensure job growth for Bushwick residents. You mentioned in the beginning of the presentation but if you can expand on the tenant selection both commercial and manufacturing that would offer or require a pipeline to job opportunities or training opportunities for Bushwick Residents.

29.

Presenter 1 – Leah Archibald: Speaking on the manufacturing side, one of the services we offer to small businesses is help recruiting. We have a qualified workforce, we have several workforce developments partners, including the Saint Nicholas Alliance, and SBS small business centers, particularly those in South Brooklyn at Southwest Brooklyn industrial development corporation, we also have community board relationships such as those with CB4. As we are harvesting job orders, we share them local organizations to make sure local folks and folks in our networks have opportunity to apply for those jobs. Regarding trainings, the Saint Nicks development team has a robust training development series including construction, we have a decades long relationship to help find qualified folk for local job opportunity.

30.

Presenter 3 – Tucker Reed: Both Vivian and I got into private development because we were unhappy with the relationship between private and public sectors. Really from inception, and the restrictive declaration, we set pretty high standards for local hiring starting with the construction period. We make sure from the beginning construction jobs are in local hands through to the tenanting of the building shown through our past work with Saint Nick. We plan to be in this community for quite a long time, as job opportunity come up, we

enjoy letting the local community board know and as we are out tenanting the building, hopefully today you heard the philosophy we have for this building which will be certainly carried forward in conversations with future tenants as well.

31.

Host 1 – Daniel Garodnick: Thank you, Commissioner. Ok thank you very much, and to the applicant team, we appreciate your time and attention to this. We look forward to speaking to you further on lots of other matters as well. And um, with that, I do not see other members of the public who are wishing to testify, so we will close the hearing on Calendar number 12, and we will move on to the next and last item of the agenda. And before, I close, I do want to the note, that the records will remain open here through Monday June 5th at 5 pm. To receive written comments on the DEIS, now its closed, thank you, lets move on to the next one.