THE HOPE PROGRAM

A Way to Work. A Way to Grow.

Testimony to: New York City Department of City Planning
Re: Domino Sugar Refinery, Brooklyn, New York
Provided by: Barbara Edwards Delsman
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The HOPE Program is a nonprofit organization that provides a wide array of services to marginalized populations, thereby helping them to become economically self-sufficient by finding jobs that pay a living wage. We also have a research component: studying effective strategies in workforce development. Located in downtown Brooklyn, we have worked with New York's poorest residents for almost a quarter of a century. Many of our clients reside in Williamsburg Brooklyn.

The *new Domino* Project

The potential for the *new DOMINO* project to improve the quality of life for the residents of Williamsburg is unprecedented. The best possible scenario would include affordable housing, park space, and significant employment opportunities for those who live in this diverse community.

However, as I review the *new DOMINO* Fact Sheet, I must express two concerns with the project as it is currently described.

Concern #1: Eligibility for Affordable Housing

As described in the Fact Sheet, the goal is for 30% of all units to be affordable, with the Area Median Income (AMI) used to determine eligibility. If the intention of this proposal is to provide housing to the working poor, then I suggest that a more realistic statistic be used. Our research indicates that the average starting salary for a HOPE graduate is $21,705 per year. A criterion closer to this figure would make housing affordable to those most in need.

Concern #2: Lack of Support for Economic Development

A billion dollar project has both an ethical and economical obligation to look first at the local community as the source of its workforce. The development of the Domino Sugar site should include a commitment from the developers to work with local businesses and train and hire local residents. If new workers need pre-employment training, they should contract with local nonprofits to provide work readiness training. A commitment to economic development would provide stability in our communities and should be written into the plan as it moves forward.