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NEW YORK  
BUILDING  
CONGRESS

**VIA OVERNIGHT MAIL**

August 19, 2008

Ms. Amanda Burden, Chair  
New York City Planning Commission  
Calendar Information Office  
22 Reade Street, Room 2E  
New York, NY 10007-1216

**Re: Willets Point Rezoning and Redevelopment**

Dear Chair Burden and Commissioners:

On behalf of the New York Building Congress, the City's largest and most diverse coalition serving the common interests of the design, construction and real estate industry and involving 1,500 members from 400 constituent organizations, please accept this letter in lieu of testimony at the August 13 City Planning Commission public hearing on the Willets Point Redevelopment Plan.

Over the past seven years, the Building Congress has applauded the Bloomberg Administration for its extensive master planning and rezoning efforts, including its commitment to transit-oriented development and collaboration with communities and New York City agencies to revitalize neighborhoods and stimulate economic activity in each of the five boroughs. The Building Congress has supported this strategic plan by endorsing comprehensive - sometimes controversial - rezoning initiatives undertaken by the City, including those for Jamaica, Queens, Greenpoint-Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and the 125<sup>th</sup> Street corridor in Manhattan, all of which have secured City Council approval.

Though it has its share of challenges, the Willets Point Redevelopment Plan likewise presents a holistic approach to improving economic conditions and the quality of life for New Yorkers. As the Building Congress stated in a May 2, 2007 letter to the New York City Economic Development Corporation on the proposed scope of work for the Willets Point Development Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement, conceptually, the plan holds significant promise for advancing the Bloomberg Administration's PlaNYC 2030 initiative to address New York's projected growth rate and long-term future. For example, among the strategies for accommodating New York's extensive housing needs, PlaNYC acknowledges the City's fixed land supply and stresses the importance of using space more efficiently. The Willets Point Redevelopment Plan would heed that call by making efficient use of space through the remediation of a 60-acre brownfield and the transformation of a largely underutilized area into a vibrant, mixed-use community that includes up to 5,500 units of housing, a substantial portion of which will be affordable. This transformation will be especially dramatic given the designation of Willets Point as a LEED-ND pilot project by the

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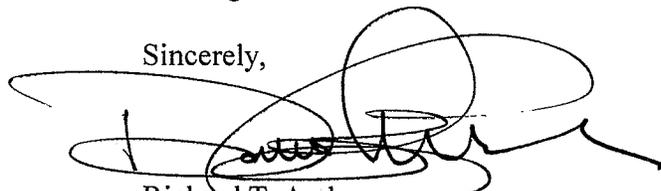
United States Green Building Council, based on the City's commitment to create an environmentally-friendly neighborhood and protect the surrounding waterways.

With its proximity to mass transit, major arterial highways and airports, the Willets Point District is well-situated for supporting residential, retail, commercial and cultural development, and its potential for economic growth is further enhanced by nearby attractions like the new Mets ballpark, the USTA Tennis Center and Downtown Flushing. The plan will unlock that potential, creating more than 5,300 permanent jobs and 18,000 construction jobs and generating \$25 billion in economic activity and \$1.3 billion in benefits to the City over 30 years. The enormous value of proceeding with the Willets Point Redevelopment Plan is clear.

However, our May 2 letter also expressed concern about approximately 250 businesses that would be displaced by the proposed project. We raised particular concern about the construction and other viable companies that would be forced to relocate or close their businesses and the effect these scenarios would have on the local economy and construction costs in New York City, which are already rising by one percent a month. Those concerns remain largely undiminished, though we are mindful that some progress has been made by the City in its negotiations with a few of the affected businesses over the past year.

The Building Congress urges the City to continue to work collaboratively with the community and other interested parties in developing commercially reasonable solutions to care for those businesses that would be impacted by the project. We are hopeful that this plan can move forward without costly and time-consuming litigation that could prevent this exciting vision for Willets Point from being realized.

Sincerely,



Richard T. Anderson  
President

cc (By U.S. Mail):     The Honorable Melinda Katz, Chair, Land Use Committee,  
                                  New York City Council  
                                  Mr. Robert C. Lieber, Deputy Mayor, Economic Development  
                                  The Honorable Helen Marshall, Queens Borough President  
                                  The Honorable Hiram Monserrate, New York City Council  
                                  The Honorable Christine C. Quinn, Speaker, New York City Council  
                                  Members of the New York City Council Land Use Committee