

TESTIMONY OF RICHARD T. ANDERSON, PRESIDENT, NEW YORK BUILDING CONGRESS  
AT A HEARING OF THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
REGARDING MADISON SQUARE GARDEN'S SPECIAL USE PERMIT  
JUNE 19, 2013



The New York Building Congress strongly supports Madison Square Garden's application for a renewed special operating permit. Efforts to amend the permit resolution and restrict the Garden's ability to operate represent a failure of government, a failure to plan for the future of the Penn Station area, a failure to develop public-private partnerships, and a failure to bring the City together with the State on a long range development agenda.

Madison Square Garden has operated in New York City for more than a century and a quarter, and is now completing a nearly \$1 billion renovation of its current home. The Garden provides thousands of quality jobs at all skill levels, with an economic impact of more than a half billion dollars.

The Building Congress would like to see a revitalized and expanded Penn Station, a station worthy of this City and capable of serving the hundreds of thousands of people who use it every day.

We should not hold a private owner responsible for thousands of jobs and who must make rational long term business decisions to be forced to operate under a cloud of permanent uncertainty with its primary asset. That's not just bad for Madison Square Garden, it's bad for the City.

Mysteriously, the ULURP process has been used to threaten MSG and its ownership with termination of its right to operate. Yet Madison Square Garden has absolutely no control over convening multiple public agencies, coordinating what will be a long-term planning process, assembling a massive financing plan and, finally, executing one of the most complex infrastructure projects in the City's history.

This job is the sole responsibility of government. We must have forceful, coordinated leadership from the City, State and federal governments, if we are to realize the dream of a new Penn Station. The burden must be on *government* and advocates for an improved Penn Station to advance the vision of a new transportation core at this site.

Therefore, instead of using the special permit process, we must challenge *government*, not Madison Square Garden, to make meaningful progress and meet milestones. If government cannot coordinate effectively, then Madison Square Garden must be allowed to continue to operate without artificial restrictions. The special permit process has become costly and demanding, and it should not be used in this way.

We urge the Council to approve a special permit with no time limit. The Council must then direct its energies to bringing other leaders with real responsibility for planning and executing a plan for a new Penn Station to get to work.

City and State government should set real milestones, advance planning, and create an inclusive process with the participation of New York, New Jersey, the City and Amtrak to develop a workable, affordable plan, not direct its fire solely on Madison Square Garden.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.