



The City of New York

# **Manhattan Community Board 1**

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

**New York City Department of City Planning**

**East Midtown Rezoning  
Public Scoping Meeting**

**Testimony by Catherine McVay Hughes  
Chairperson**

**Thursday, September 27, 2012**

**Manhattan Municipal Building, 1 Centre Street, New York, NY  
2:00 PM**

Good afternoon. I am Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson of Manhattan Community Board One (CB1). We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the scoping of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed East Midtown Rezoning for 78 blocks around Grand Central.

We understand that if the East Midtown Rezoning is approved, it would increase the maximum allowable Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR)<sup>1</sup> for developers, which would immediately create incentives for new office development in East Midtown. CB1 strongly believes the EIS should include a comprehensive review of how the proposed East Midtown Rezoning would affect Lower Manhattan, with a particular emphasis on the extent to which an up-zoning of office and commercial space in Midtown would adversely impact the ongoing redevelopment of Lower Manhattan.

As a result of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, 14 million square feet of commercial office space in Lower Manhattan was destroyed or damaged, 65,000 jobs were lost or relocated, and more than 20,000 residents were displaced.<sup>2</sup> Now, eleven years after the attacks of 9/11, Lower Manhattan is in the middle of a renaissance. More residents and businesses have returned to the area than were lost during the attacks. By 2011, Lower Manhattan had 8,428 companies, 130 more than were here on the day of the attacks, and a total of 309,500 employees. This figure is 4% lower than it was on September 11, 2001, but employment is on an upward trend and is expected to continue to grow as almost 9 million square feet of office space is completed at the World Trade Center site. CB1 is also the fastest growing residential neighborhood in New York City. Population increased by 77% between 2000 and 2010 with the next highest increase being 18% in CB4.

Remarkable and steady progress has been made at the 16-acre World Trade Center site as construction continues on 8.8 million square feet of world-class office space, including 500,000 square feet of retail space. The 105-story 2.6 million square foot 1 World Trade Center tower is

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<sup>1</sup> Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is the principal bulk regulation controlling the size of buildings. FAR is the ratio of total building floor area to the area of its zoning lot.

<sup>2</sup> "The State of Lower Manhattan," *Downtown Alliance*, 2011.

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approximately 55 percent leased and is expected to open in late 2013. The 72-story 2.3 million-square-foot 4 World Trade Center tower is 50 percent leased and will open in the fall of 2013.

The rebuilding of Lower Manhattan is a long-term process and is vital to the restoration and revitalization of our neighborhood. Redevelopment of the WTC site is on track. CB1 wants to make sure that the positive momentum continues.

Therefore, CB1 strongly urges that the EIS study potential impacts at the varying FAR increments of 23, 21, 18 and 15 in order to better understand how an increase in commercial office space resulting from the proposed East Midtown Rezoning will affect the ongoing reconstruction of Lower Manhattan.