



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

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New York City Council Committee on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment

Oversight Hearing

The Effect of Residential Construction Projects on the Lower Manhattan Neighborhood

Testimony by

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250 Broadway, 16th Floor Committee Room, NY, 10:00 AM

Good morning, Chairperson Margaret Chin and members of the Committee on Lower Manhattan Redevelopment. I am Catherine McVay Hughes, Chair of Manhattan Community Board One (CB1). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Since September 11, 2001, CB1 has witnessed extraordinary residential growth, most dramatically in the Financial District, where our studies show that the number of residents will have increased by 240% in 2013 over the number recorded in the 2000 Census. The release of the 2010 U.S. Census confirmed our in-house projections that the population of Lower Manhattan grew by over 77% from 34,420 to over 61,000 in ten years between the 2000 and 2010 Census; this growth is atypical and dramatic compared to the city-wide average of 3.8%. CB1 is the fastest growing community district in the city and based on current trends in demographics and residential construction, our district will continue to grow through the present decade.

In March, 2013, CB1 performed an analysis using U.S. Census data of the demographic changes by neighborhood, for children ages 0 - 19 in our district between 2000 and 2010. Our findings confirmed that there has been astonishing growth within this population, most notably within the 0-4 and 5-9 age groups. The most dramatic increases were in the Financial District and Battery Park City where the child population respectively increased 246% and 125%. This demographic trend has major implications, pointing to the need for additional community infrastructure and amenities in our district to serve children. As noted by the Lower Manhattan Construction Command Center (LMCCC) at the October, 2013 Executive Committee meeting of CB1, 83% of the total number of units going online are located in the Financial District, yet there is still no public school there.

This growth was accelerated by programs that encouraged people to move to Lower Manhattan following September 11th, including the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) Residential Grant Program and Liberty Bonds. It is clear from residential growth currently underway throughout our district and numerous residential towers under construction that population in CB1 will continue to grow rapidly in future years. According to LMCCC's presentation at a CB1 Executive Committee meeting on October 16, there are 87 unfinished

major public and private projects currently underway in Lower Manhattan, including 25 residential buildings, the largest category.

The unprecedented construction and development in Lower Manhattan shows no sign of diminishing. Large construction projects that were delayed because of the economic climate, such as 50 West Street and 67 Leonard Street, are once again in or expected to go back into construction. Other sites, however, have not resumed work, and continue to adversely impact quality of life in CB1 by remaining idle.

In addition, other major public and commercial projects are expected to begin construction in coming months and years, including the WTC Performing Arts Center and WTC 3, which would join projects underway on major arteries such as Broadway, Chambers and Fulton Streets, and planned projects such as the NYPD's World Trade Center Campus Security Plan. In addition, Con Edison began in recent months a four year, \$80 million storm hardening project that will involve extensive underground work that although necessary will create significant disruptions.

With all this construction activity comes the need to address and mitigate adverse impacts to quality of life from construction such as noise, dust, and congestion from street closures. We unanimously passed a resolution at our board meeting on October 22 reiterating our strong support for continued funding of the LMCCC for a minimum of three years with an option to renew in order to minimize impacts from the large volume of construction projects still in progress and to maintain safety and quality of life, with construction management to ensure that emergency vehicles can navigate streets in a timely manner.

In light of recent extreme weather events such as Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy, it is more important than ever that new residential construction or major building retrofitting be conducted in a way that protects the building and its residents from potential future storms. As evidenced by census data, CB1 is home to a growing population of both children and seniors. We need to ensure that our residential buildings are being constructed in a responsible way that protects our most vulnerable populations.

In addition to our growing residential population, Lower Manhattan remains a major business hub and tourist attraction. The Downtown Alliance estimated in September 2012 that there are 39,380 visitors to the area each day and more than 309,500 weekday workers. We have to make sure that the many tour buses and sightseeing buses follow the no idling and parking rules to minimize impact on the surrounding community. Pedestrian and vehicular management is more important than ever. These large and growing numbers in an area of roughly one square mile urgently require enhanced infrastructure and services. For this reason, in the Fiscal Year 2015 Capital and Expense Budget Priorities that we adopted last week at our meeting on October 22, CB1 advocated for schools, ballfields, community centers, parks and other important facilities needed by our growing population. These are especially needed in the Financial District where there is currently no school or ballfield or community center. We also called for additional sanitation, police and other services to ensure that quality of life remains acceptable.

The residential construction and addition of residential units in our district has played a large role in our rapidly growing residential population. As previously mentioned, our increasingly mixed-use district is now home to more children, seniors and families than ever before. Though our

district remains a major business hub and tourist attraction, it is now home to many families and must be viewed as such. We are greatly concerned that a dated perception of our district as a strictly commercial and business center has resulted in the introduction of inappropriate uses to residential neighborhoods. For example, the relocation of the two 346 Broadway Criminal Courts: New York State Unified Court System Summons Arraignment Part to 71 Thomas Street and the New York City Department of Probation to 66 John Street. Relocations of this nature from the Civic Center, still part of CB1 to other parts of CB1, must be conducted with greater consideration, and transparency, for the local residential population and the potential negative effects associated with such uses. CB1 unanimously passed a resolution (10/22/2013) urgently requesting that DCAS refrain from signing a lease for 71 Thomas Street and that every effort is made to find a more suitable location for the Summons Arraignment Part. In addition, the Financial District Committee will be discussing the 66 John Street location at its upcoming November 6th meeting.

It is impossible to speak of residential construction without mentioning the severe overcrowding issues our district faces. We have secured construction of an expanded Peck Slip School, but local schools still face tremendous overcrowding. Our schools had over 100 children on the waitlist last spring and Principals were forced to take extra classes to accommodate demand; for instance, PS 89, equipped for three kindergarten classes, enrolled 5 for this school year. CB1 needs at least one additional school in order to support the growing population of young children in Lower Manhattan as more families decide to raise their children here and want to send their children to a nearby public school. We were encouraged by the acknowledgment by the Department of Education (DOE) in June 2013 that our school district needs an additional 1,000 school seats and we are working to find appropriate site for these seats.

For years, our residents have endured the severe, negative effects of a massive effort to rebuild and revitalize Lower Manhattan. We believe it is time that the City provides us with the resources and community facilities needed to support downtown's growing population. We need the LMCCC to continue to coordinate construction during the remaining peak years of the redevelopment of our community, and we need to plan immediately to ensure that schools, ballfields, open space and other infrastructure are in place to serve our increased population. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.