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Bloomberg Administration Unveils Development Plan for Downtown Brooklyn (4/13/2003)

Plan Promotes Alternative, Affordable Office Space in Vibrant Downtown District

Brooklyn, New York, April 14, 2003 -- Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding Daniel L. Doctoroff was joined today by Amanda M. Burden, Director of City Planning, and Joshua J. Sirefman, Chief Operating Officer of the NYC Economic Development Corporation, to unveil the Bloomberg Administration's Plan for Downtown Brooklyn. The Plan is part of the Bloomberg Administration's comprehensive strategy to stimulate growth in New York City's varied business districts, and retain and increase jobs throughout the City. Already New York City's third-largest business district, Downtown Brooklyn offers companies seeking to diversify their operations affordable office space, outstanding mass transportation access, and burgeoning residential, academic and cultural opportunities.

"No one can predict when the market will turn around, but it is vitally important that as the City's economy recovers we are prepared to offer companies viable and affordable locations to meet their expansion needs," Deputy Mayor Doctoroff said. "We can ill-afford to lose jobs to New Jersey or Westchester. We must move ahead now with plans to build on momentum that has already begun in Downtown Brooklyn and enhance the area's array of assets—a tremendous mass transit network, strong corporate presence, dynamic academic and cultural institutions and vibrant residential neighborhoods nearby."

"I am proud to partner with Mayor Bloomberg and Deputy Mayor Doctoroff on the Downtown Brooklyn Redevelopment Plan which recognizes that Brooklyn must play a key role in the economic resurgence of New York City," said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. "The Plan firmly solidifies Downtown Brooklyn as the third major business hub in the New York metropolitan region, while also realizing that Downtown Brooklyn must be a livable community with its own unique identity. Downtown Brooklyn has been and will always be the finest downtown in America."

New York City Economic Development Corporation and Department of City Planning are spearheading the planning effort on behalf of the Administration in conjunction with the Downtown Brooklyn Council, a not-for-profit economic development advocacy group representing a number of Downtown Brooklyn's corporate, academic and cultural institutions.

Deputy Mayor Doctoroff, Director Burden and COO Sirefman presented the Plan in separate meetings to elected officials at City Hall and local community organizations. In a third meeting held at the MetroTech Center in Downtown Brooklyn, Deputy Mayor Doctoroff led the presentation of the Plan to representatives of various Citywide civic groups, including NYC Partnership, Real Estate Board of New York, Central Labor Council, and architectural and housing groups, among others.

In the presentations, Deputy Mayor Doctoroff called for expansion of the area's commercial core and the creation of opportunities for new residential, academic and cultural development. The sweeping proposal calls for the City to increase zoning allowances, assist in the assembly of key commercial and residential sites and undertake a series of infrastructure improvements to help facilitate the creation of as much as 5.4 million square feet of new commercial space and about 1,000 units of housing.

The Plan for Downtown Brooklyn also calls for the transformation of Flatbush Avenue Extension into a thriving, pedestrian-friendly gateway to the borough serving the area's workers and residents. The thoroughfare is now largely viewed as a vehicular route linking the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges to other areas of the borough.

"Not only will this Plan build on Downtown Brooklyn's momentum as one of the City's primary Central Business Districts, it will also bolster the area's identity as a strong cultural district and academic center," said NYCEDC President Andrew M. Alper. "Fostering new office and residential development, creating new and varied retail opportunities, and improving the mass transit system will all help Downtown Brooklyn capture future economic growth and create new jobs."

"Our vision for Downtown Brooklyn capitalizes on its existing strengths: its transit networks, strong neighborhoods, cultural resources and diverse retail market," said DCP Director Burden. "Through the expansion of commercial and residential opportunities as well as significant investment in public open space and streetscape improvements, we hope to transform Downtown Brooklyn into one of the greatest office districts in the City of New York."

In developing the Plan, the City worked closely with representatives from the local community and surrounding areas to address quality of life improvements, including traffic management and parking facilities. Participating community organizations included groups from Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill and Boerum Hill.

The Plan envisions the creation of:

- Three new office towers, with as much as three million square feet of space, to be built abutting a newly created 1.5-acre park on Willoughby Street just west of Flatbush Avenue Extension.
- Another office development anchoring the west end of downtown at Boerum Place with a total development potential of nearly 850,000 square feet.
- New residential and office opportunities on the eastern side of Flatbush Avenue Extension, from Tillary to Willoughby Streets and along the south side of Myrtle Avenue, east of Flatbush Avenue Extension.
- Additional residential opportunities along Livingston Street between Smith Street and Flatbush Avenue.
- An expanded intellectual community spurred by the seven existing academic institutions, including Polytechnic University, Brooklyn Law School and St. Joseph's College, that enroll more than 32,000 students and occupy over 900,000-square-feet of campus area.
- A mixed-use cultural district with a new library, theaters, galleries, rehearsal spaces, and other cultural venues, as well as mixed income housing in the area surrounding the Brooklyn Academy of Music.
- Approximately 2,000 parking spots.

Robert Catell, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of KeySpan Corporation, and Chairman of the Downtown Brooklyn Council, said, "In the 1980s Brooklyn Union Gas, now KeySpan, was a pioneer, deciding to build a world headquarters in Downtown Brooklyn before being here was in vogue. Now, the corporate community includes venerable Wall Street institutions, insurance companies, banks and others. Simply stated, Downtown Brooklyn is a great place to do business. The Bloomberg Administration's vision for Downtown Brooklyn builds upon that fact and presents a very exciting Plan for creating a truly outstanding downtown."

"This Plan and collaboration that went into its development underscore the Mayor's commitment that residents should decide the future of their communities," said Deputy Mayor Doctoroff. "Downtown Brooklyn has enormous potential for further quality development and the Administration is determined to ensure that we continue to build consensus going forward so that we meet the needs and interests of everyone involved."

About City Planning

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