

Testimony of Bettina Damiani
Project Director, Good Jobs New York
Before The Bronx Borough Board Regarding the
Development of Kingsbridge Armory

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July 27, 2009

Good evening, my name is Bettina Damiani and I direct Good Jobs New York. Since 1999, we've tracked the use of economic development subsidies in New York City and since 2005 devoted substantial research and advocacy efforts to residents and park advocacy groups fighting the development of the new Yankee Stadium.¹

The proposal for "Shops at the Armory" had been the diamond in the rough for proposed developments during the Bloomberg Administration because for the first time the Economic Development Corporation engaged community members in the planning of the development of the Kingsbridge Armory.

Unfortunately, today the proposal to provide the Related Companies with subsidies and tax breaks estimated at nearly \$18 million² to develop the armory reverts back to a process that is unaccountable and relies on undemocratic planning principles by ignoring residents' most basic employment concerns.

We urge Borough President Diaz, Jr. not to simply accept City Hall's imposition of this development proposal on the community. Instead, the Borough President should help develop a project that will ensure broad community benefits for those living and working near the Armory.

Past taxpayer subsidized mega-projects in the borough like Gateway Mall and the new Yankee Stadium were covertly pushed through the state legislature (especially for the stadium), excluded residents during the land use process and failed to include any

¹ More details on our efforts and a break down of subsidies at <http://www.goodjobsny.org/StadiumSubsidies.htm>

² In March of this year, the New York City Industrial Development Agency (IDA) preliminarily approved about \$17.8 million in city and state tax breaks for the Related Companies for the Armory redevelopment. While two of the IDA's Board members requested that the vote be postponed until community concerns regarding job standards at the Armory's shops and appropriate community space were addressed, they were overruled by the rest of the Board. The IDA tax breaks are in addition to tens of millions more in historic tax credits and a steeply discounted sale of the Armory from the city to the Related Companies for only \$5 million.

accountability or clawback measures to residents or taxpayers for creating good, new, permanent jobs. Despite this, both projects sailed through the land use process after agreements were signed without broad community buy-in: The Yankee Stadium “mitigation agreement” had no community signatories and the Gateway Mall agreement had only three community signatories after several groups stepped away when it was clear their input was not being taken seriously.

This is a unique chance to set a new standard of development The Bronx can be proud of. Members of the Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance have spent years learning about the labyrinth of land use and subsidy policy associated with the Armory, and have crafted reasonable demands that must be codified in a genuine Community Benefit Agreement:

- Leverage public subsidies for good jobs for local residents, rather than jobs that pay The Bronx’s average retail wages;
- develop adequate community space;
- address key issues affecting long time, small businesses;
- mitigate the environmental impacts of the project especially the traffic implications.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our comments to you.