



## **TESTIMONY OF THE REAL ESTATE BOARD OF NY IN SUPPORT OF THE WILLETS POINT DEVELOPMENT**

March 2, 2011

The Real Estate Board of New York, Inc. (REBNY) is a broadly based trade association of over 12,000 owners, developers, brokers and real estate professionals active throughout New York City. REBNY supports the redevelopment of Willets Point. As part of a land use strategy for all of the Flushing area, this plan envisions high quality mixed use development, improved connections with adjacent regional destinations and enhancements to public open space, streetscapes and transportation. We commend the City for taking a comprehensive look at Downtown Flushing, the waterfront area and Willets Point. Willets Point is transit-accessible via the Long Island Railroad and the #7 subway line and therefore is a good place from a planning perspective to put new development. We understand that 29 developers expressed interest in developing this project. That is good news and we look forward to continued progress on the redevelopment.

The borough of Queens has been growing in population and is projected to continue that growth in the coming years. Between 2000 and 2030, the Queens population is expected to increase by 15%. Given the lack of available land, we need to look for new places to build the substantial number of new units that we need to offer housing options for everyone. Thousands of new units can be created on this site.

The Willets Point Development Plan will address a number of environmental factors and will lead to an improvement in those factors. Through redevelopment, longstanding environmental problems such as contamination on the land, lack of sewer connections and poor stormwater management can be addressed. Furthermore the new development will have the opportunity to incorporate the most up-to-date sustainable design practices.

We note that the transformation of this area includes acquisition at fair market value of some land and will involve relocation. The City will be providing relocation assistance including certain expenses associated with the physical moving of a business and essential marketing costs. In addition, a no-fee broker will work with tenants looking for new space. The project is being approached in phases so that everyone will know the timeline for relocation.

The new development would have tremendous economic impact by creating construction jobs, new permanent jobs and additional tax revenue for the City. The project is estimated to create the equivalent of more than 25,000 person-years of construction employment, about 5,000 permanent jobs in a diverse array of sectors including retail, office, entertainment, restaurant, education and hospitality, among others, as well as nearly 1,000 indirect jobs associated with the convention center. The total 30-year fiscal impact of the Willets Point redevelopment is estimated to



exceed \$4.2 billion. We support the redevelopment of Willets Point because its overall impact will be positive for the City.