

Neighborhood Retail Alliance

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Press Release

The Neighborhood Retail Alliance Questions the Planned July 11th Certification of the Gateway Project

The Department of City Planning (DCP) is set to certify on Monday, July 11th the application of the Related Companies (TRC) to redevelop the Bronx Terminal Market. The Neighborhood Retail Alliance strongly questions DCP's rash decision and believes there are a number of compelling reasons why certification should be delayed on this proposed 1,000,000 sq. ft Gateway project.

First and foremost is the fact that the developers have not even begun to enter into a dialogue with the impacted communities. In our discussions with members of Community Board #4 as well as leaders of local community-based organizations, it is clear that TRC has not disclosed the full nature of the project, have not even bothered to address community concerns that are already being clearly expressed and, unlike with the Atlantic Yards project in Brooklyn, has not felt at all compelled to begin negotiations for a community benefits agreement (CBA).

A true CBA cannot be negotiated in good faith after the Related Companies has received its approvals. The entire point of such an agreement is to sculpt the nature of a project to fit the desires of various community stakeholders. However, once the land use clock starts it becomes difficult if not impossible to change the specifics of a project. Why is there a rush to begin a ULURP process that will make concrete negotiations unfeasible?

Secondly, the eviction and relocation of Market merchants is still up in the air. City Council testimony by EDC head Andrew Alper clearly indicated that the city has had absolutely

no interest in negotiating with the merchants in good faith to preserve the integrity of this vital minority distribution center. Before giving Related a green light it is imperative that the city takes care of current Bronx Terminal market tenants who have, until this point, been an afterthought.

In addition, the court challenge to the eviction of the merchants has yet to be resolved, along with the legality of the city's transfer of the lease from the Buntzman family to TRC. Discussions with community and business leaders in the Southwest Bronx indicate a strong sentiment to slow down the process and resolve these issues before entering into a contentious land use review.

This rush clearly indicates that TRC is looking to try to fast track approval for Gateway without the fullest community review. Local community board #4 is out of session during the summer and, as a result, will not have significant time to review the project when it reconvenes in September. In fact, the board will only have about 1 week to review the numerous claims and copious amounts of technical data that will be submitted in support of the development. This hasty evaluation is certainly not in the public's interest.

We are calling upon the Related Companies to withdraw their application until the preservation of the market is guaranteed and the affected communities are brought to the table. It is crucial that transparency and community benefits accompany the Gateway development especially considering the millions of dollars of public subsidies earmarked for the project. The entire Bronx community deserves nothing less.