

**TESTIMONY OF JERILYN PERINE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CITIZENS HOUSING & PLANNING COUNCIL
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LAND USE COMMITTEE
MONDAY NOVEMBER 17, 2008**

Item 1: **Special Permit (C 080400 ZSM) pursuant to ss 74-312(d)** of the Zoning Resolution to allow modifications of the front height and setback regulations on the periphery of the LSRD *and*

Item 2: **Special Permit (C 080401 ZSM) pursuant to ZR ss 74-681 (a)(1)** to allow the portion of the railroad or transit right-of-way which will be completely covered by a permanent platform to be included in the lot area in connection with the development of two residential buildings.

My name is Jerilyn Perine and I am the Executive Director of the Citizens Housing & Planning Council. Prior to coming to CHPC I served in NYC government for 26 years, including four years as the Commissioner of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of this important and innovative affordable housing project.

No city in America has maintained a commitment to the development and preservation of affordable housing, which even approaches the size and scope of NYC's. Born out of the depths of the City's housing abandonment and neighborhood collapse of the 1970's and 80's, its success was due largely to an unprecedented collaboration between government, financial institutions, for profit and not for profit organizations and finally the communities themselves. Community Board 4 was an early leader and partner in these efforts. Through four mayors and a variety of economic cycles working with Community Board 4, the City's affordable housing programs were put to work to preserve the *in rem* stock, create low income cooperatives, build new affordable housing, and supportive housing for our most fragile citizens. Through this collaborative approach they reshaped the Clinton Urban Renewal Plan and the City's Zoning Resolution to make it happen.

Few Community Boards have worked as hard or as professionally to protect their diverse neighborhood character while making room for our neediest residents.

With that in mind I hope that you will approve the items before you so that this project may move forward, knowing that its final shape may not perfectly meet the expectations of the community for this site.

At the core the land use items before you are really not in dispute. Rather the distribution of affordability of the housing that will be constructed has been the subject of discussion.

The latest analysis indicates that 60% of the units that will be created in these two buildings will be affordable to a range of incomes from low to moderate to middle, with 40% set aside for market rate development. This is an extraordinary commitment which may not reflect what was originally sought, but surely represents a significant and important contribution to affordable housing.

In addition the revenue that NYCHA will receive from even their below market sale of the site, will help them to preserve their existing inventory which is being severely threatened by federal cuts.

One cannot underestimate the severe financial downturn that is impacting affordable housing development. Banks are in turmoil, government resources are under tremendous pressure, and construction lending for residential development, risky even in the best of times with few players in the marketplace, is now severely threatened.

Here is an opportunity that should not be missed. No project can meet every need. However, this one comes awfully close. It is in effect a creative use of NYCHA property, government subsidies, and private investment that creates the outcome of the federal HOPE VI Program – creating mixed income areas with housing opportunities for NYCHA residents. But unlike HOPE VI, which is predicated on the demolition of public housing; here is it preserved and additional affordable housing is created.

I am sure that HPD and NYCHA will continue to work to provide the resources needed to ensure that the maximum amount of affordable units will be provided here. By approving these land use items you will provide an opportunity to continue that work and ensure that the project is built.

In the balance are critical jobs, much needed revenue for NYCHA, new affordable housing resources for low income families and seniors, and working moderate and middle income families, including NYCHA residents who will have an opportunity to move into the new project as well.

I'm confident that you will approve these items and ensure that this innovative and important project will move forward and be adapted for other NYCHA sites across the City.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of this important project.