

March 6, 2005

Dear [Mr. Ferrer], [Ms. Fields], [Mr. Miller], [Mr. Weiner]:

We in Brooklyn have read, watched and listened intently as you have clearly stated your opposition to Mayor Bloomberg's deeply flawed West Side Stadium plan. We admire and appreciate the principled stand you have taken on behalf of the West Side community and taxpayers around the state to stop this wasteful, anti-democratic project from being forced down our throats.

Today we are calling on you and the other Democratic candidates for Mayor to take the same strong, public stand against a very similar boondoggle that Mr. Bloomberg, along with Governor Pataki, are trying to ram through without any real public input or accountability – Forest City Ratner's (FCR) Nets Arena and 17 High-rise Complex proposal in Prospect Heights.

Our organization represents dozens of organizations and speaks for thousands of Brooklynites that are outraged by this ill-conceived sweetheart deal, which was just formalized last week with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the City, the State and the developer. It will use hundreds of millions of public funds to subsidize the wholesale destruction of our community, the illegal seizure of our property, and the construction of a development that won't meet our needs.

As we understand it, the opposition to the West Side Stadium that you and the other mayoral candidates have expressed rests on five key issues:

1. Getting the highest value for the MTA through an open, fair and truly competitive bidding process on the Hudson Yards.
2. The financing mechanism for the stadium is unfair to taxpayers, and represents the Bloomberg Administration's misplaced budgetary priorities and disconnection with the true needs of the people of New York City
3. The City reached its deal with the Jets and is advancing the project through a closed, secretive process.
4. Prime real estate, like Hudson Yards, does not need to be subsidized in order to attract developer interest.
5. A stadium is not the best use for such prime real estate, nor is it the best location for such a facility.

In our case, the sport of choice is different. FCR has proposed a 24-acre, 7.6 million square foot development plan, comprised of a 20,000-seat basketball arena and 17 high-rise towers, right at the nexus of five historic brownstone communities, in an area with excellent public transportation. Half of the proposed site is private property and city streets, while the other half is MTA-owned, active rail yards (Atlantic Rail Yards).

But otherwise, the problems with the Nets Arena project are strikingly similar to the West Side project – starting with the questionable tactics being used to win public approval. With the Mayor's assent, the FCR development would bypass the City's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP), abuse the use of eminent domain to acquire hundreds of private properties and in turn displace hundreds of residents and workers; demap city streets; threaten local businesses and gift-wrap a below-market sale of public property much like the Jets would receive.

What's more, it would unnecessarily throw away an enormous sum of taxpayer funds that could be used to improve our schools, build desperately-needed affordable housing, and provide affordable

health insurance – while creating few permanent high-paying jobs. Indeed, the only independent economic analysis of the FCR proposal concludes that the project would use up to \$1 billion in city and state taxpayer subsidies. The current proposed city budget already includes \$100 million towards the project, before its approval process has even begun, and before any public political debate has occurred.

That same independent analysis found that the FCR project would have a subsidy per job created of nearly \$50,000, conservatively, which is far above the federal government limit on cost per job created for projects receiving economic development funds (the report shows that this figure could easily surge into six figures). The report also concludes that the FCR project could see a loss for the city and state of nearly \$500 million. That independent report can be found here: <http://www.dddb.net/public/KimPeebles.pdf>

Then there is the pivotal role of the MTA. Atlantic Yards is nearly as large as Hudson Yards, and arguably even more valuable real estate than Hudson Yards—it is home to five subway lines and an LIRR terminal, and is surrounded by family friendly neighborhoods, the world class Brooklyn Academy of Music and cultural district, nearby parks and the Brooklyn Museum. It sits in one of the hottest real estate markets in the entire city. Yet at this point the MTA has given no assurances yet that it will get the best return it can on this highly-valuable piece of public property for New York straphangers by putting it out for competitive bid through a fair bidding process. Just like on the West Side with the Jets, FCR has been given favored developer status in being granted re-zoning, while other potential bidders have no such zoning guarantees. That is a fixed process that needs to be corrected and truly opened up by creating a level playing field for all potential bidders.

Last but not least is the question of alternatives sites. Much like the West Side stadium, Mayor Bloomberg and Forest City Ratner have refused to even consider other, more appropriate and practical locations for building a new arena for the Nets. We have been advocating for the UNITY Community Development Plan, which proposes mixed-income housing and retail development only above the rail yards. The UNITY plan connects neighborhoods instead of destroying them, and would enable smaller developers, and minority owned businesses to share a piece of the pie. The UNITY Plan, which has developer interest, can be found here: www.dddb.net/public/UNITY.pdf. This plan has the backing of the community and allows for a public discussion about the appropriate location of an arena at a more suitable location. The current proposed location is inappropriate and unacceptable.

The bottom line: the Nets Arena project is every bit as wrong for New York City and State taxpayers as the West Side Stadium deal. And Mayor Bloomberg is every bit as wrong for putting the self-interest of a private developer over the public interest and the needs of our communities.

Now that we know which team the current Mayor is playing for, it's time for you to choose sides. Are you going to stand with an autocratic, deceptive developer who could care less about what's good for our community? Or are you going to stand with the people of Brooklyn and the taxpayers of New York?

The voters of this great city deserve to know the answer to that question. Like them, we eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,

Daniel Goldstein
Spokesperson, Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn

DEVELOP DON'T DESTROY BROOKLYN leads a broad-based community coalition fighting for development that will unite our communities instead of dividing and destroying them.