



Pratt Center

for Community Development

Crotona Park East/West Farms Rezoning and Text Amendment **Testimony to the Sub-Committee on Zoning and Franchises** **Elena Conte, Organizer for Public Policy Campaigns, October 3, 2011**

Chair Weprin, Council Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify. I offer these comments on behalf of the Pratt Center for Community Development in support of efforts by our community-based partners.

The Crotona Park East and West Farms neighborhoods have undergone tremendous change in recent decades, in large part due to the activism of local people organizing and working in partnership with government agencies to create a diverse and healthy community that supports long-time residents and welcomes new ones. The developments that will be made possible by the proposed rezoning are the direct beneficiaries of the increase in land value and desirability of the neighborhood born from these community efforts.

Yet the development that the proposed rezoning will make possible comes with many questions and certain clear negative impacts on the surrounding community that the review process thus far has failed to adequately address.

The draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed rezoning reveals that the existing amount and quality of open space in the area is grossly insufficient for the current population which is majority people of color and majority working class; the ratio of open space access is a paltry .74 acres per 1,000 people; the proposed action would make an already deficient condition substantially worse, a significant adverse impact that requires mitigation.

The actions currently proposed as mitigation fail to address the despicable pattern whereby people in lower income neighborhoods are systematically and repeatedly denied access to quality open space – they lack sufficient quality open space to begin with; they are not protected from actions that further diminish their already limited access to open space; and their open spaces do not receive a fraction of the maintenance and programming support as those in wealthier neighborhoods. It's a problem of citywide policy and it's one that each time the City Council considers the exercise of its powers, it can opt to address, in instances like this where there is a clear nexus between the rezoning, the proposed projects, their impact and the nature and quality of open space.

The City Council also has the opportunity to do more to ensure that the public investment in affordable housing slated to be developed in the proposed rezoning area lasts into perpetuity, which is smart policy given both the overall affordability expiration crisis the city faces and the expressed needs of the community. As in other rezonings – notably Hudson Yards – the Council could work with the applicant to outline and define terms under which it would agree to make all income-restricted units permanently affordable. This would provide greater assurances to the surrounding community and to the eventual residents of the proposed development that they will not be displaced.

In sum, the proposal on the table falls short of what the South Bronx deserves and of the standards of equitable planning and policy. We urge the subcommittee not to vote on this matter today to allow for the Council to use the full amount of time that the ULURP clock offers so that a plan that meaningfully addresses these issues can be incorporated into the restrictive declaration and other appropriate documents that accompany the action. Thank you.

NOTE: This testimony was prepared by the Pratt Center for Community Development. It does not necessarily reflect the official position of Pratt Institute.

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**Crotona Park East/West Farms Rezoning Text Amendment
Bronx River Alliance Testimony to:
Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises
Kellie Terry- Sepulveda, Board Chair**

October 3, 2011

Good morning and Thank you Chair Weprin and council members for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of The Bronx River Alliance. The Bronx River Alliance serves as a coordinated voice for the river and works in harmonious partnership to protect, improve and restore the Bronx River corridor and greenway so that they can be a healthy ecological, recreational, educational and economic resources for the communities through which the river flows. We work along side public and private partners alike invest in both the parks and the people. We welcome the interest in private developers like Signature Properties to responsibly invest in the neighborhoods within the river corridor, especially those that enjoy the support of our community boards. We applaud the changes Signature has made in response to concerns from community residents and elected officials including the provision of a school in the proposal, as well as the addition of a small playground, capital renovations to existing parks and several mid-block crossings with court yards. With that said, I am here this morning to share some tough unresolved questions and concerns in regard specifically to the open space aspects of the action. We hope that the subcommittee will utilize the fullest time allowable under the ULURP process to address these concerns and the additional concerns expressed by our colleagues here today before voting on this action.

The Bronx River Alliance is concerned about the adverse impact that this rezoning will have on the Bronx River Greenway just as many new parks along it—including Concrete Plant Park and Starlight Park—are opening to the public. Thanks to the tireless work of so many in our community – from residents and community based organizations to many of you and other elected officials, The Bronx River Alliance recently celebrated a decade of investment into the sustainable development of the neighborhoods that the river flows through, with over 140 million dollars of public funds and much more in human capital being poured into all elements that make a successful open space a true resource for families. From our work and the work of our colleagues, (like pulling 15,000 tires out of the water and countless canoe trips) we have discovered that it takes both a strong combination of capital, program and maintenance to ensure to a thriving open space. We look forward to parks that are actively used by the many new residents who will live in this area, including many families with teen-aged children and young adults. However, we expect that the additional demand for park and recreational services will be substantial and we are concerned that the current mitigation does not adequately nor equitably meet the need of the West Farms and Crotona communities, some of which still have some of the lowest per capita park space per resident in our city. As stated in the DEIS, the Proposed Rezoning Action would result in a net increase of 7,958 residents and 142 employees over future no-action conditions. The 24 census tracts within a half-mile open space study area have an estimated current population of 92,179 residents and 12,622 workers, for a total combined population of 104,801 persons.¹ As compared to the Bronx and New York City, the study area has a higher ratio of young people to adults. For example, approximately 20 percent of the study area population is under 10 years old, whereas approximately 17 percent of the Bronx population falls into this category, and only approximately 14 percent of the New York City population.

¹ We note that these figures may be under-counts, however, as they are based on 2000 Census data, as opposed to the 2010 figures which are available and now show substantial increases in population in the study area over the past decade. The Bronx Borough President's Office estimates that an additional 2722 households were added to the area since 2000, an increase of 7500-8000 people.

In a time when our communities are battling disproportionately high health impacts such as asthma, diabetes and obesity, we ask that the ratio of active to non active recreational space be considered because it is not just about “open space” but the “type” of open space that we think is critically needed and underserved here. While we highly commend Signature Development for committing to invest in existing capital needs of area parks as an example that should be followed by all in the future, the only active space provided by the current rezoning is a small playground for young children. The passive open spaces provided—interior courtyards and mid-block open spaces—would be in deep shade throughout most of the day, and except in hot summer weather, may be uninviting to sit in. And if they are not enlivened by positive uses, there is some risk that they will actually attract negative activity. Most new residents will therefore seek sunnier, larger parks with a greater diversity of recreational facilities. The new parks along the Bronx River Greenway will be their destination for sports fields, biking, walking and running paths, boating and contact with nature and the river – and we are truly excited by this. What we are asking today is to please consider how we can ensure y/our investment of public good and dollars is leveraged over the long term and in place to adequately serve the families that this and any future development will add to our neighborhoods. Good development requires such a balance and far too often that balance is lacking when the Bronx is being considered – we ask that you take the full time allotted to you to consider all options available to deliver a better-balanced action for our communities. Before you vote today, we ask you to consider this question: Does the current action allow for a protective policy over the long term, so that when the community grows it does so in a healthy way? Most significantly, this rezoning will lower the open space ratios in a community with extremely low ratios to begin with (.74 acres per 1,000 people to .69 acres per 1,000 people), a 6.6% decline. In addition, to greater stress on existing parks, the rezoning will also shift the percentage of active to passive open space in the area. The active open space ratio in the residential study area would decrease from .25 acres per thousand users to .24 acres per thousand. Is this the best possible outcome for the community you can offer?

While we may not have the perfect method for ensuring this, developers who take advantage of this rezoning should mitigate for the increased demand for green spaces and recreation that these new residential units will generate. Everyone should contribute their fair share to the long-term maintenance and programs of the Bronx River Greenway and parks in the vicinity, so that the Bronx River and parkland in the vicinity remain safe, well functioning and attractive. Most importantly, sustaining and activating the greenway will ensure that existing and new residents of this area—particularly young people—have the opportunities for active recreation they deserve that mitigate for the lowered open space ratios this action could cause. As you know, it is only after hard work, sweat equity and vision that many Bronx residents are finally able to reap the benefits of their labor with these newly celebrated parks and we thank you for all you have done to help make them happen! We ask that you please help them grantee that their grandchildren too will enjoy the same right.

We ask that the council make this the best action it can possibly be for all Bronx residents by delaying a vote today and using the full time allotted by the ULURP process in order to work towards a hearty and just plan that adequately and fairly addresses and cancels out the potential disparities of this proposed action and include such changes in the restrictive declaration of this action before voting to pass.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

David Shuffler
Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice
Executive Director
Crotona Park East /West Farms Rezoning
City Council – October 3, 2011

Good morning, I will like to thank this subcommittee and the rest of the City Council, for hosting this public hearing to examine the Crotona Park East/ West Farms ULURP on the intent and shortcomings of the proposal.

My name is David Shuffler and I am the Executive Director of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice, a community based organization located just blocks away from the Signature site.

Founded in 1994, the mission of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ) is to rebuild the neighborhoods of Bronx River and Soundview/Bruckner in the South Bronx by preparing young people to become prophetic voices for peace and justice. YMPJ's purpose is to transform both the people and the physical infrastructure of blighted South Bronx neighborhoods and change the systems that negatively impact them. We accomplish this through political education, spiritual formation, and youth and community development and organizing.

If the Community Board is going to approve the process to move forward I will ask three things:

HOUSING

Before approving this rezoning it will be important for the City Council to hear the specifics on affordable housing. This project is a mixed use project and a snapshot of the performer for the project should be more thoroughly reviewed.

OPEN SPACE

This rezoning will lower the open space ratios in a community with extremely low ratios. Developers who take advantage of this rezoning should mitigate for the increased demand for green spaces and recreation that these new residential units will generate. Developers should contribute to the long-term maintenance and programs of the Bronx River Greenway and parks in the vicinity, so that the Bronx River and parkland in the vicinity remain safe, well-functioning and attractive.

Safety

Safety is an issue that needs a really good look both on the short-term and long term. This project should design a plan around street front uses to activate the strip of West Farms Road. In the long-term the buildings along West Farms Road should keep the possibility open for a presence along that corridor.

As a live long community resident, homeowner and Executive Director I am here to ask this subcommittee as part of the approval process have a more clear sense of the commitments made in this plan. Thanks for attentiveness. I have additional copies of my written testimony for submission.

SIGNATURE

Crotona Park East/West Farms Rezoning



October 2011

Sites- Overview



South Sites

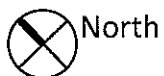
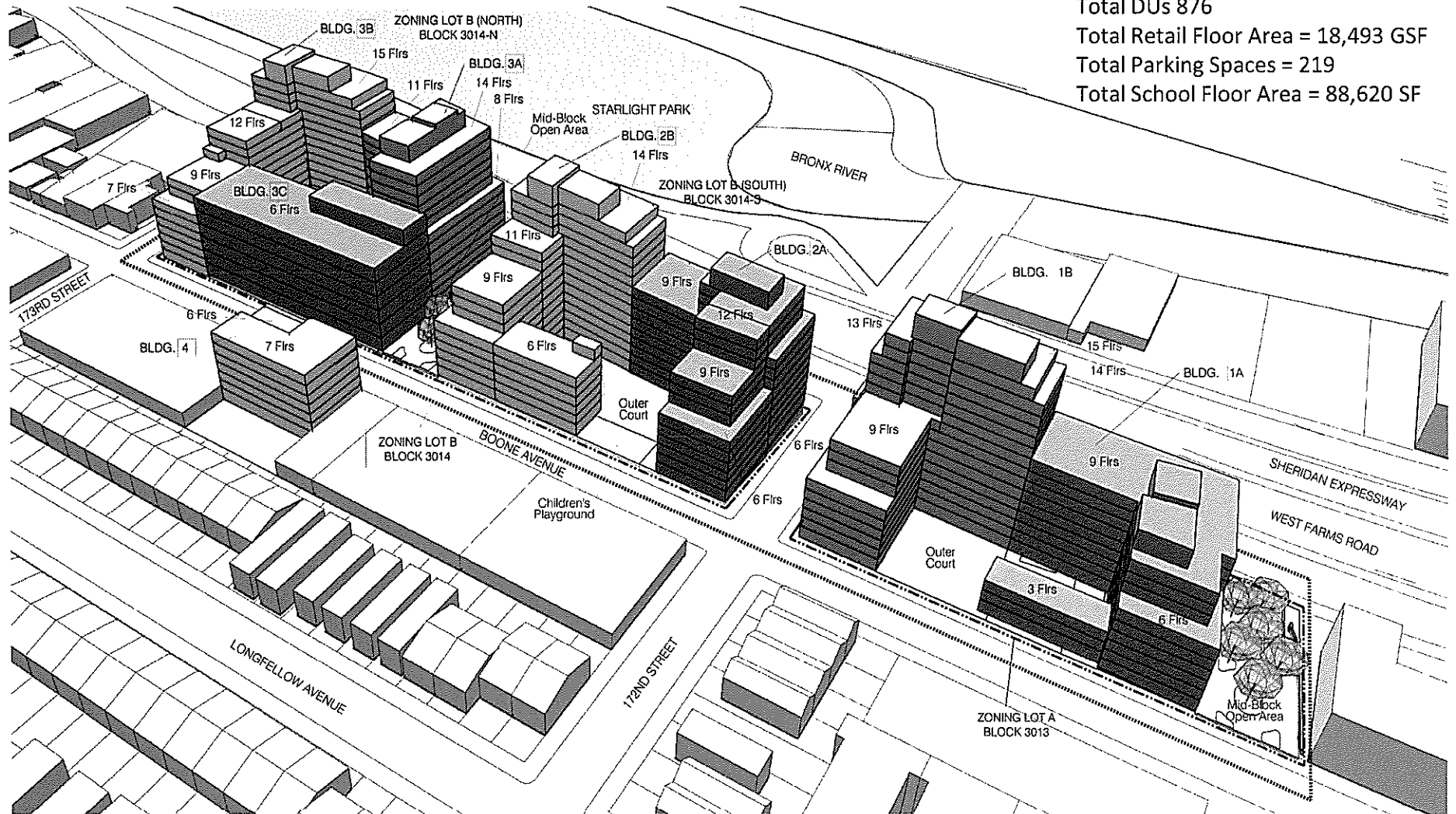
Blocks 3009, 3013 and 3014 – Massing with School

Total DUs 876

Total Retail Floor Area = 18,493 GSF

Total Parking Spaces = 219

Total School Floor Area = 88,620 SF



North

..... LARGE-SCALE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARY
 - - - - - ZONING LOT BOUNDARY

South Sites

Boone Avenue: Today



South Sites

Boone Avenue: Proposed with School



South Sites

West Farms Road – Today



South Sites

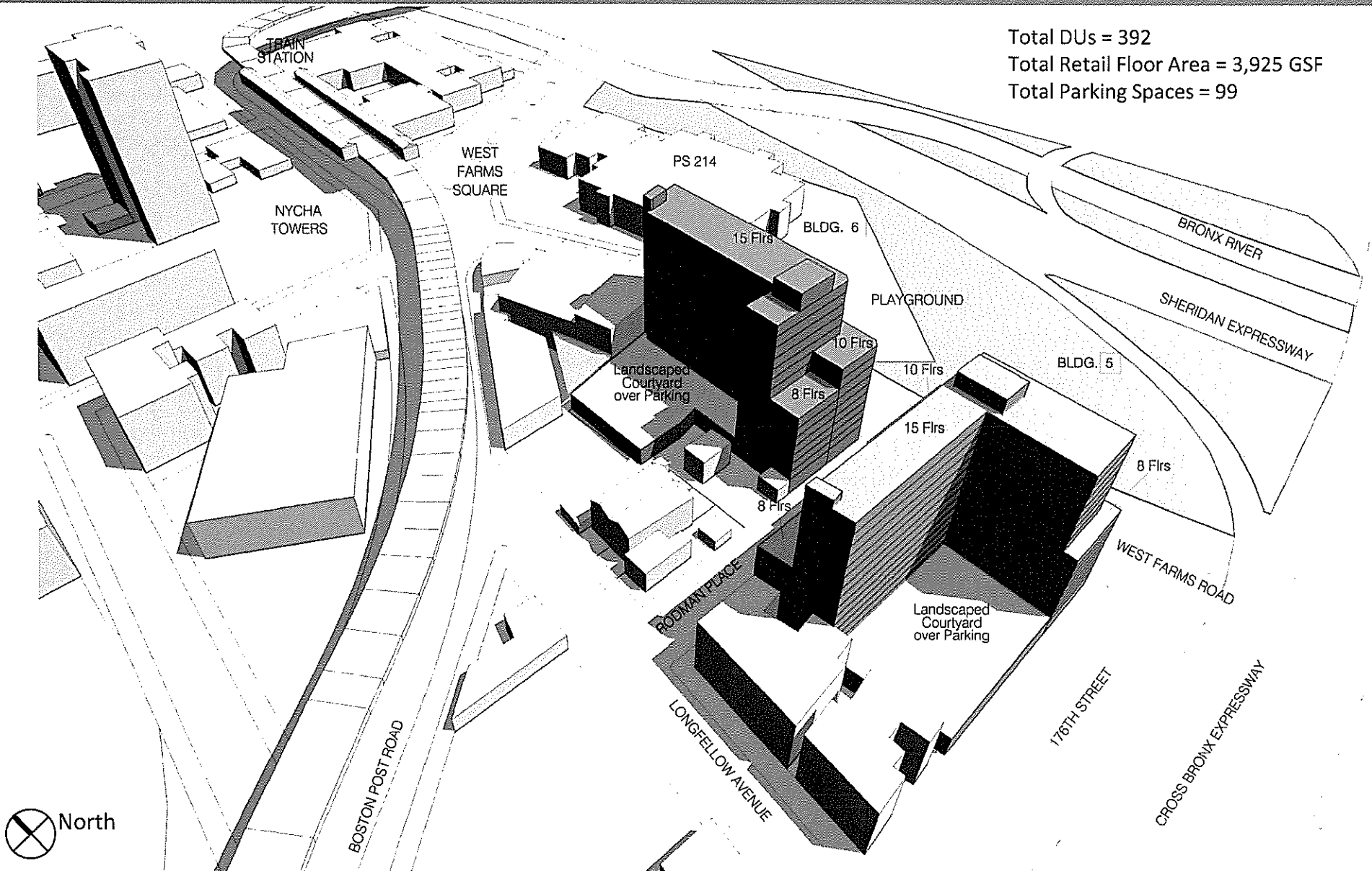
West Farms Road – Proposed



North Sites

Blocks 3016 - Massing Study

Total DUs = 392
 Total Retail Floor Area = 3,925 GSF
 Total Parking Spaces = 99



North Sites

West Farms Road – Today



North Sites

West Farms Road – Proposed



RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY INPUT

Input

Provide pedestrian-friendly streetscape design and commercial overlay along West Farms Road

Response

C2-4 commercial overlays added along West Farms Road

Retail space / community rooms added on West Farms Road

Outdoor stairways added to link West Farms Road to each of the mid-block open areas

Add new school if development would result in over-crowding

Developer has executed a letter of intent with the School Construction Authority (SCA) to donate an approximately 15,000 sf lot on the project site for \$1.00 if the SCA determines a new school is needed

New school would provide up to 570 additional elementary school seats

Developer responsible for clean up of any existing hazardous materials

Provide ample open space

New 1800 sf children's play area along Boone Avenue, between East 172nd Street and East 173rd Street, added to Project

Project also includes two new mid-block open areas, with landscaping and seating, which will be open to the public at all times

REQUIRED ACTIONS

Zoning Map Amendment

Rezone a primarily M1-1 manufacturing district to a mix of R6A, R7A, R7X & R8X residential districts with select C2-4 commercial overlays

Zoning Text Amendment

Establish the Inclusionary Housing program throughout the entire rezoning area and grant the CPC the authority to exclude enclosed accessory parking from lot coverage for LSGD's in Bronx Community District 3

Special Permits

For a Large-Scale General Development on Blocks 3013 and 3014 to allow

- Modest height, setback, street wall, lot coverage and other bulk relief
- Flexibility in the location of required on-site parking
- Street-level retail along Boone Avenue

SIGNATURE

Crotona Park East/West Farms Rezoning



October 2011

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. LU485-490 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10-3-11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kellie Terry - Sepulveda

Address: 1 Bronx River Parkway, Bx Ny 10462

I represent: Bronx River Alliance

Address: 1 Bronx River Parkway, Bx NY 10462

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. LU490 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10-3-11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CAROL CLARK

Address: _____

I represent: HPID

Address: 100 Gold St NYC

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. LU486 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/3

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JONATHAN KELLER

Address: _____

I represent: DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

Address: BRONX OFFICE

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

LU 485

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ED WALLACE

Address: 200 PARK AVENUE NY NY 10066

I represent: INDUSTCO HOLDINGS LLC

Address: 853 BROADWAY NY NY 10003

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/3/11

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joshua Laird, Assistant Commissioner for Planning

Address: 830 Fifth Avenue

I represent: Parks Department

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

LU 485

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ROBERT FIRST

Address: 853 BROADWAY NY NY

I represent: INDUSTCO HOLDINGS LLC

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant at Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

LU 485

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MELINDA KATZ

Address: 200 PARK AVE NY NY 10166

I represent: INDUSTRIAL HOLDINGS LLC

Address: 853 BROADWAY NY NY 10003

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

LU 485

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: NICK HOCKEANS

Address: 200 PARK AVE NY NY 10166

I represent: INDUSTRIAL HOLDINGS LLC

Address: 853 BROADWAY NY NY 10003

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

10/3/11

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 10-3-11

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DAVID SHUFFLER

Address: 1384 STRATFORD AVE

I represent: YOUTH MINISTRIES FOR PEACE & JUSTICE

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

LU 485

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERNESTO VELA

Address: 1385 BROADWAY 15TH FLOOR

I represent: INDUSTCO HOLDINGS LLC

Address: 853 BROADWAY NY NY 10003

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

LU 485

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: GIFFORD MILLER

Address: 853 BROADWAY NY NY 10003

I represent: INDUSTCO HOLDINGS LLC

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 60486 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/3

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RYAN SINGER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Address: _____

I represent: DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

Address: BRONX OFFICE

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 60485 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/3

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RYAN SINGER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Address: _____

I represent: DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING

Address: BRONX OFFICE

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 60485 490 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: Oct. 3, 2011

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elena Conte

Address: 200 Willoughby Avenue Bklyn NY 11205

I represent: PACT Center for Community Development

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms