

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND
FRANCHISES

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March 6, 2025
Start: 10:07 a.m.
Recess: 1:19 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room, 16th
Floor

B E F O R E: Kevin C. Riley,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Shaun Abreu
David M. Carr
Kamillah Hanks
Francisco P. Moya
Yusef Salaam
Lynn C. Schulman

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

David Karnovsky
Fried Frank, Representing Queens Future LLC

Michael Sullivan
Fried Frank, Representing Queens Future LLC

Julissa Ferreras Copeland
Representing Queens Future LLC

Gregg Pasquarelli
Shop Architects

David Quart
Representing Queens Future LLC

Rebecca Pryor
Executive Director for the Guardians of Flushing
Bay

Margaret Flanagan
Guardian of Flushing Bay

Annie Lo
Attorney at the Asian American Legal Defense and
Education Fund

Paul Pellizzari
Self

Danny Dromm
Former Council Member

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Denis Ibric
New York City District Council of Carpenters

Ted Tang
Taiwan Chamber of Commerce

Helen Jang
Director of the Workforce Development

Alan Sherman
Self

Judy Chase
Self

Jesse Friedman
Self

Bishop Mitchell Taylor
CEO and Cofounder of Urban Upbound

William Thompson
Former Comptroller of the City of New York

Senny Ho Jung
Hamilton Madison House

Karen Wang
Hamilton Madison House

Kai Shum
Self

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Michael Devallera
Chair of Neighborhood Advisory Board 3

Joseph Sutkowi
Chief Waterfront Design Officer at Waterfront
Alliance

Winston Liao
Board Member with Metro Athletic Dragons

Joseph Lam
Self

Reggie Pegues
CEO of Pegues Group Solutions

Tom Grech
President and CEO of the Queens Chamber

Jeehae Fischer
Executive Director of the Korean American Family
Service Center

Ahyoung Kim
Director of Economic Empowerment at the Asian
American Federation

Davon Lomax
Political Director at District Council 9

Megan
Hotels Trades Council

Nicole Bailey

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Jonathan Forges
Queens Together

Brian Chen
Self

Michael Hurtz
Self

Jim Burke
Self

Craig Lastres
Self

Robert Dorsky
Self

Eduardo Valentin
Self

Edward McWilliams
Self

Liang Ming
Self

Joseph Decco (SP?)
Self

Cody Herman
Self

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Melissa Zavalla (SP?)
Self

Shandra Gomes
Self

Patrick Young
Self

Bryan Lee
Self

Joann Yu
Self

Charles Apelian (SP?)
Self

Saheeda Dunston (SP?)
Self

Venny Lachela (SP?)
Self

Olga Rayas
Self

Maria Ferrell (SP?)
Self

Tammy Rose
Self

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Dian Sung Yu (SP?)
Self

Shenelle Thomas (SP?)
Self

Larry Gallegos (SP?)
Self

Elizabeth Vian (SP?)
Self

Isac Carmene (SP?)
Self

Arisa Wareham (SP?)
Self

Allena Ryan (SP?)
Self

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Microphone check, microphone
3 check. This is a microphone check on the
4 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. Today's date
5 is March 6, 2025, 250 16th Floor Committee Room.
6 This is recorded by Walter Lewis.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: The Zoom is ready.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Quiet please. Thank you.
9 Good morning.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Webinar is started.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Good morning and
12 welcome to the New York City Hybrid Hearing on the
13 Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises. Please
14 silence all electronic devices at this time. Also,
15 please do not approach the dais. If you have any
16 questions, please raise your hand, one of us Sergeant
17 at Arms will kindly assist you.

18 Thank you very much for your kind cooperation.
19 Chair, we are ready to begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: [GAVEL] Good morning everyone
21 and welcome to the meeting of the Subcommittee on
22 Zoning and Franchises. I'm Council Member Kevin
23 Riley, Chair of this Subcommittee. I'm joined today
24 by Council Member Moya, Schulman and Salaam.

1 Today we are scheduled to hold a public hearing
2 about the first of multiple proposals to develop a
3 casino complex in the city under the states
4 initiative to issue up to three gaming facility
5 license downstate. This first Proposal is known as
6 Queens Future and will be located next to City Field
7 in Flushing Queens. Before discussing this Proposal
8 and some more, I will now go over the hearing
9 procedures.
10

11 This meeting is being held in a hybrid format.
12 Members of the public who wish to testify may testify
13 in person or through Zoom. Members of the public
14 wishing to testify remotely may register by visiting
15 the New York City Council's website at
16 www.council.nyc.gov/landuse. To sign up and for
17 those of you here in person, please see one of the
18 Sergeant at Arms to prepare and submit a speakers
19 card.

20 Members of the public may also view a livestream
21 broadcast of this meeting at the Council's website.
22 When you are called to testify before this
23 Subcommittee, if you are joining us remotely, you
24 will remain muted until recognized by myself to
25 speak. When you are recognized, your microphone will

1 be unmuted. We will limit public testimony to two
2 minutes per witness. If you have additional
3 testimony that you would like this Subcommittee to
4 consider or if you have written testimony that you
5 would like to submit instead of appearing in person,
6 please email it to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov.
7 Written testimony may be submitted up to three days
8 after the hearing is closed. Please indicate the LU
9 number or the project name in the subject line of
10 your email. We request that the witnesses joining us
11 remotely remain in the meeting until excused by
12 myself, as Council Members may have questions.

14 Lastly, for everyone attending today's meeting,
15 this is a government proceeding and decorum must be
16 observed at all times. Members of the public are
17 asked not to speak during the meeting unless you are
18 testifying. The witness table is reserved for people
19 who are called to testify and no video recording or
20 photography is allowed from the witness table.

21 Further, members of the public may not present
22 audio or video recording as testimony but may submit
23 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant at
24 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

1 I will now open the public hearing on LU's 249
2 and 250 related to the Queens future city map and
3 rezoning proposal in Council Member Moya's District.
4 It is important to clarify that this proposal to
5 license up to three gaming facilities in the city is
6 a state initiative and that the state is leading the
7 process to decide which proposals are awarded a
8 license. The state led process consists of three
9 steps that will begin this summer. The first step
10 consists of a review by a Community Advisory
11 Committee known as a CAC. Followed by review of the
12 Gaming Facility Location Board and a final decision
13 will be issued by the State Gaming Commission.
14

15 A decision by the state is expected by the end of
16 the year. The Queens future Proposal was here before
17 us as the Council because the applicant must have the
18 needed local land use approvals to compete for a
19 state gaming facility license.

20 So to be very clear, we are not here today to
21 decide whether there should be a casino in Flushing
22 Queens. We are here today to determine whether the
23 requested land use approvals are appropriate.

24 Applicant is seeking two land use approvals. The
25 Proposed development site consists of City Fields

1 parking lots. For reasons that the applicant will
2 explain, these parking lots are mapped park land and
3 do not have a zoning district.
4

5 To build a casino, the Proposed site must have a
6 zoning district. To build a casino, the proposed
7 site must have a zoning district. As a result,
8 applicant is requesting the mapping of a zoning
9 district. The second approval is to amend the city
10 map to reconfigure some of the nearby streets to
11 accommodate the projectors traffic to de-map parkland
12 where the proposed buildings will be located and to
13 map new parkland.

14 It is important to note that the changes to the
15 City Map will be conditioned on the applicant being
16 awarded a gaming facility license by the state. So
17 if the applicant is not awarded a gaming facility
18 license, the changes to the City Map would not go
19 into effect. Similarly, if the applicant is not
20 awarded a license, the proposed development site will
21 remain parkland and the applicant will not be able to
22 use the new underlining zoning district that it is
23 seeking today.

24 Having made these clarifying remarks, for anyone
25 wishing to testify on these items remotely, if you

1 have not already done so, you must register online by
2 visiting the Council's website at
3 council.nyc.gov/landuse. For anyone with us in
4 person, please see one of the Sergeant at Arms to
5 submit a speakers card. If you prefer to submit
6 written testimony you can always do so by emailing it
7 to landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov. I would now
8 like to yield the floor to Council Member Moya to
9 give his remarks.
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Good morning and thank you
12 Chair Riley for the opportunity to share a few words
13 about the project before us today because it has the
14 potential to boost the economy of the Borough of
15 Queens and the city as a whole.

16 Throughout my career in public service, my
17 priority has been to support initiatives that truly
18 reflect our communities needs and strengthen our
19 local economy. When I was approached about the
20 proposal for Metropolitan Park, a new sports
21 entertainment and recreational destination envisioned
22 by the New York Mets owner Steve Cohen and Hard Rock
23 International, I made it clear that I would only
24 support the project if it genuinely served our
25 community. This project is about more than building

1 a new venue. It's about creating lasting job
2 opportunities, transforming this area into a world
3 class destination and elevating our local economy to
4 unprecedented heights. Metropolitan Park will
5 provide 100 percent union jobs in both the
6 construction and operations of the project.
7 Following the model that was established in Etihad
8 Park at Willets Point. There's also a firm
9 commitment to diversity and local hiring with
10 contracts for minority and women owned businesses and
11 opportunities for local residents. Community
12 involvement has been a part of this plan. Mr. Cohen
13 and Hard Rock International have actively engaged
14 with community leaders and shown real dedication to
15 partnership with local organizations.
16

17 I also emphasize the importance of not
18 overshadowing the current and future developments
19 that will help Queens become a premier destination
20 and I am pleased to say that Mr. Cohen and the Hard
21 Rock International have worked diligently to address
22 these priorities. Together through ongoing dialogue
23 with Mr. Cohen, local leaders and residents, we
24 crafted a vision that truly serves the borough of
25 Queens.

1 So, I genuinely support the vision that includes
2 a vibrant community centered sports entertainment and
3 recreation destination complete with new open spaces,
4 entertainment venues, a hotel and a gaming facility.
5 Like I mentioned before, it's a transformative plan
6 that could significantly boost our community and
7 city's economy so the development of Willets Point
8 and Metropolitan Park, we have a once and a life time
9 chance to create a world class destination that will
10 benefit not only Queens but all of New York. And by
11 transforming these underutilized parking lots into a
12 dynamic hub for commerce and entertainment, Mr. Cohen
13 and the Hard Rock International have demonstrated the
14 commitment to the best interest of Queens and New
15 York City, where we can create an economic engine
16 that will draw visitors year around, enhancing the
17 experience for millions who come to City Field, the
18 US TA Center and the soon to be New York City
19 Football Club for a state of the art soccer stadium.

20 So, I am looking forward to having a robust and
21 in depth conversation about this project here today
22 with the applicants and I thank you Chair and my
23 colleagues for the opportunity to speak here today.
24
25

CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I will now call no the Applicant Panel for this proposal, which consists of David Karnovsky, Michael Sullivan, Julissa Ferreras Copeland and Gregg Pasquarelli.

Counsel, can you please administer the affirmation?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Could you please raise your right hand and state your name for the record? Let's make sure all the mics are turned on. There we go. Let's try that again one at a time.

JULISSA FERRERAS COPELAND: Julissa Ferreras Copeland.

DAVID KARNOVSKY: David Karnovsky.

MICHAEL SULLIVAN: Michael Sullivan.

GREGG PASQUARELLI: Gregg Pasquarelli.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony this morning and in response to Council Member questions?

PANEL: Yes.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. For the viewing public, if you need an accessible version of this

1 presentation, please send an email request to
2 landusetestimony@council.nyc.gov, and now the
3 applicant team may begin. I just ask that you please
4 reinstate your name and organization for the record.
5 You may begin.

7 JULISSA FERRERAS COPELAND: Thank you Chair
8 Riley. I'm Julissa Ferreras Copeland. Next slide.
9 Good morning Chair Riley, Council Member Moya,
10 Council Member Schulman, and Council Member Salaam.
11 I am Julissa Ferreras Copeland representing Queens
12 Future LLC. I'm joined by my colleagues Gregg
13 Pasquarelli of Shop Architects, David Karnovsky from
14 Fried Frank and Michael Sullivan to represent our
15 project, Metropolitan Park along with the necessary
16 mapping actions. Next slide.

17 Our ULURP application - next slide. Our ULURP
18 application seeks to amend the city and zoning maps
19 to transform City Fields asphalt parking lots into a
20 dynamic sports and entertainment district, enabling
21 the creation of a new 25 acre New York City Park. In
22 2013, New York State voters approved issuing these
23 downstate gaming facilities. Metropolitan Park is
24 seeking one of these licenses, which is essential to
25 advancing our project. Next slide.

1 We are committed to delivering on what the
2 community has asked for and needs. Good paying jobs,
3 a world class hotel with a casino and live music
4 vendue and improved transportation with climate
5 resilient infrastructure, all anchored by a 25 acre
6 park. Next slide.

7
8 With gaming as our economic engine, we bring
9 together sports and entertainment as part of an area
10 already featuring the New York Mets, USTA, NYFCF, to
11 create New Yorks next great destination. The gaming
12 license process includes today's ULURP action, the
13 Community Advisory Committee as referred to as the
14 CAC and the Location Siting Board and a final
15 approval from the Gaming Commission as the Chair
16 mentioned in his opening testimony. Next slide.

17 As mentioned earlier, Queens future is a
18 partnership between Steve Cohen, owner of the New
19 York Mets, Jim Allen, Chairman and CEO of Hard Rock
20 International, Cheryl McKissack of McKissack and
21 McKissack and Bill Thompson [INAUDIBLE 00:13:23].
22 Next slide.

23 We assembled a New York based design and develop
24 team to ensure that Metropolitan Park is
25 authentically New York in both its design and its

1 impact. Next slide. Our site is city fields
2 surrounding parking lots in Queens highlighted on
3 this map in yellow. It is a prime location near
4 LaGuardia Airport, public transportation, major
5 sports venues and cultural landmarks, making it ideal
6 for its site and for this transformation. Next
7 slide.

9 This land is city owned and leased under a 99
10 year commercial agreement with Mets owner Steve Cohen
11 until 2105. Right now it is asphalt used only for
12 surface parking. The community agrees that this
13 space is underutilized, uninviting, and deserving of
14 transformation into something more beneficial to the
15 residents of Queens and all of New Yorkers. Next.

16 In 1936, Robert Moses used his authority as Parks
17 Commissioner to purchase and designate this land for
18 use as parking lots for the 1939 Worlds Fair. By
19 virtue of this history it became part of Flushing
20 Meadows Corona Park and was mapped as park land on
21 the city map despite continuous usage as parking
22 lots. Next. Although this area is mapped as park
23 land, during its entire existence, it has only ever
24 been a swamp, a garbage dump and then a parking lot.
25 First for the World's Fair and later to serve as Shea

1 Stadium in City Field. It has never had a public
2 park. Next.

3
4 I am honored to lead the community engagement for
5 Queens future overseeing a four year effort - a four
6 year long effort to gather input that has shaped the
7 design of Metropolitan Park. In those four years, we
8 held 16 community workshops where nearly 2,000
9 community residents participated, hosted over 1,000
10 one on one meetings with community leaders and
11 engaged with over 20,000 residents. Next. What we
12 heard from the community is, the need for good paying
13 jobs, expanded green space and support of local
14 businesses. They want an area they can enjoy all
15 year round that is climate resident that have safe
16 bike and pedestrian paths that give them access to
17 the waterfront. They are asking for a hotel, casino,
18 live music, and a dynamic mix of restaurants and
19 entertainment, and Metropolitan Park is designed to
20 deliver exactly that. Next.

21 In my 17 years of government experience and
22 sitting for the first time on this side of the dais,
23 I have never encountered a project with this level of
24 community board support. We have secured approvals
25 from all six community boards in the area as well as

1 the Queens Borough President and City Planning. Next
2 slide. All these ideas were given to or next
3 presenter Gregg Pasquarelli who will explain how his
4 team designed a plan that would reflect all these
5 community priorities.
6

7 GREGG PASQUARELLI: Thank you Julissa and thank
8 you to the Council Members for the honor to speak
9 here today. My name is Gregg Pasquarelli, I'm a
10 founding partner of Shop Architects here in New York.
11 This has been an incredible undertaking with an
12 incredibly supportive client and wonderful engagement
13 with the community over the years that we have
14 developed the plan. Next slide.

15 As Julissa was talking about here, you could see
16 on the left the original plan for the 39 World's Fair
17 site. You could see the idea was always to kind of
18 get the park up to the Flushing Bay but what you see
19 in the next slide was actually how Robert Moses - oh
20 sorry not the next slide, the next image back one,
21 thanks - is the parking lots that were built there.
22 You could see them in white at the top and then Moses
23 then used his authority as the Parks Commissioner to
24 take that land and drive highways through it,
25 separating the park from the surrounding communities.

1
2 What one of the most incredible opportunities here is
3 how many times do we get the chance to right the
4 wrongs of Robert Moses. And that has been a driving
5 theme throughout the design of this project. Next.

6 So, when we originally looked at it, we thought
7 about some of the natural beauty. We thought about
8 the architectural heritage and the history of the
9 site and it was really about making a connection to
10 get the park back up to the waterfront and to help
11 heal some of the east west connections to the
12 communities. Next.

13 What we ended up with, these series of sort of
14 shapes of forms that where you had kind of major
15 flows of people in park land that kind of created
16 these flat iron shapes. We looked at the original of
17 its field, which was the inspiration for City Field
18 and started to think of these series of flat iron
19 buildings surrounding a park. Next.

20 We looked at the architectural history of the
21 sites, some of the buildings from the 39 Worlds Fair.
22 Next, the 64 Worlds Fair, far more Jetsons kind of
23 looking but very, very cool and very important as
24 well. Next. And came up with this plan and so, the
25 plan really sort of centers at the 7 Train MTA

1 Station, which will be rebuilt. We'll show you some
2 images of that. It drives a 25 acre park through to
3 the north, also to the east and west to the new
4 soccer stadium and then on the east side, you could
5 see is the new integrative resort with the venue, the
6 gaming, hotels, entertainment, food and beverage.
7 What we've also tried to do is build all of the -
8 there's new structured parking around the site and
9 we're trying to keep all the cars on the perimeter on
10 the site and have the center for pedestrian only use.
11 Next.

12 So, the best way to sort of to explain this is to
13 just show before and after images. Here you are
14 standing in the parking lots, like we said 25 acres -
15 I'm sorry, 50 acres of asphalt. So, this is the
16 before and next slide and then this is the after. So
17 you could see the main portion of Metropolitan Park
18 moving straight from the 7 Train. You see City Field
19 on the right. You see the integrative resort on the
20 left and the hotel towers, which were made to be a
21 kind of skyline of the city and the design of the
22 project was really to make a civic building that sits
23 in the park, something far more like Lincoln Center,
24
25

1 rather than something that is not of the DNA of New
2 York. Next.

3
4 When you get off the 7 Train at the Willets Point
5 Station, it's a pretty tough station. There aren't
6 elevators, the ramps are difficult, there's a lot of
7 up and down. This is what you first see when you get
8 off the train. Next. And this is what you will see
9 when you get off the train in the rebuilt MTA
10 station. There will be a raised plaza. It will come
11 out. There will be ramps, elevators, bridges,
12 accessibility and the ability to get across and
13 through the station outside of the fair zone so that
14 it makes a continuous public access from Flushing
15 Meadow Corona Park to City Field and the integrative
16 resort and the soccer stadium. Next.

17 Looking back at the station, this is what it
18 looks like today. Next. And here you can see the
19 newly rebuilt MTA station and then on the left side
20 is a food hall that we're calling the taste of Queens
21 that has a lot of local offerings of food and at very
22 different price points and it becomes really a public
23 market for the entire community. Next.

24 This is looking towards the east towards where
25 the soccer stadium will go. You could see it's all

1 parking lot today. Next. And then here you see the
2 taste of Queens food hall. The park continues along
3 the right field side of City Field and makes a
4 wonderful generous open public space to get from the
5 train station to Willets Point east and to the soccer
6 stadium. Next. Here you are down in the middle of
7 the parking lots along the left field side of City
8 Field. Next. And what it will be like in that 25
9 acre park when it is completely. Really we've worked
10 a lot with the community on programming and
11 everything and it's really coming together quite
12 well. Next.

14 And then the east west connections along
15 Roosevelt. There's a lot of broken sidewalks;
16 there's places where there are no sidewalks. There's
17 no dedicated bike lanes. There's you know chain link
18 fences and the next slide please. That's the before
19 and then the after, we're setting the integrative
20 resort back so that there's a lot of natural sunlight
21 on both sides. There's separated dedicated pipe
22 land, bike lanes, there's playing fields and courts
23 and places to sit, playgrounds for kids, really
24 making a kind of an ability for people from Corona to

1
2 Flushing to connect across Roosevelt and bring the
3 community together. Next.

4 And then this is on the south field, it's on the
5 south side of the 7 train. This is the current
6 condition. Next. And here you could see all the
7 playing fields and ball parks that we are proposing.
8 Next. So, also you know incredible climate
9 resistance. The strategy was the entire site is in
10 the flood plain, so we are building garages on the
11 lower levels to lift all new structures up out of the
12 flood plain. Making it a park is actually really
13 good because when there is a storm surge or any kind
14 of flooding, it's the park that absorbs the water and
15 then lets it get back into the bay. We're doing
16 native plant species. We're holding water on the
17 roof for irrigating the park, so there is a very,
18 very strong climate strategy around the entire
19 project. Next.

20 And then I'd like to turn it over to David
21 Karnovsky to talk about the specific mapping actions.
22 Thank you.

23 DAVID KARNOVSKY: Good morning. I'm David
24 Karnovsky from Fried Frank, we are a land use counsel
25 to the project. As Julissa said, we are requesting

1 approval of two land use actions, a City Map change
2 and a Zoning Map Amendment. These actions would make
3 Metropolitan Park eligible to apply for the gaming
4 license as part of the state process Chair Riley
5 described. Next.

6
7 Today, the site is mapped as park land shown in
8 dark blue and it's bordered to the west by the Grand
9 Central Parkway, which is mapped as street. Next.
10 The City Map change has several interrelated parts,
11 the first is a park demapping. The portion of the
12 park land that will be demapped is shown in light
13 blue and corresponds to the footprint of the
14 entertainment facilities, the integrated resort that
15 Gregg described as well as the vehicular ramps that
16 will lead to and from that facility. Now portions of
17 those ramps would rise above Shea Road which is a
18 park road and those are shown in light blue. The
19 park demapping would also include the footprint of a
20 new ramp to the Grand Central Parkway located across
21 the Whitestone Expressway, north of the entertainment
22 facility. The footprint of this new ramp would then
23 be remapped as street. There is also a street
24 demapping of two open areas of the map Grand Central
25 Parkway that are not used for street purposes today.

1 The first, a sliver shown in pink on this diagram
2 forms a portion of the onramp that will lead to the
3 entertainment facility. The second area is shown in
4 yellow; it would be demapped as street and then
5 remapped as park. So those are the portions of the
6 action that relate to city map changes. Next. The
7 second action is a Zoning Map Amendment to establish
8 the zoning district designation for the entertainment
9 facility under the citywide zoning text amendment
10 adopted by this Council, the C84 District is one of
11 the districts where a state licensed gaming facility
12 would be a permitted use and therefore we're
13 proposing to zone the site C84. Next.

14 I just want to say a little bit about the
15 interrelationship between the ULURP, the alienation
16 legislation and the license from a timing and
17 sequencing standpoint. First, the state gaming
18 process requires approval of all landuse zoning,
19 local land use requirements prior to consideration of
20 a license, which is why we're here today pursuant to
21 ULURP. Alienation legislation is required for the
22 park land demapping that we proposed and we are
23 pursuing that concurrently with the ULURP. To be
24 clear though, if approved by the City Council, the
25

1 city map change will only take effect if legislation
2 is adopted and a license is granted and City Planning
3 Commission approval provides for that.
4

5 With that, I'm going to turn it over to Sully.

6 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: Thank you David. First, let
7 me thank Chairman Riley, Councilman Moya for your
8 tireless leadership to really transform the area
9 around City Field. The new soccer stadium is going
10 to be beautiful, transformative and we are really
11 excited about our project to help try to tie together
12 all these great supports venue. So, thank you for
13 your leadership. Council Member Schulman, thank you
14 for your input every step of the way, really
15 appreciate the Council's attention and look forward
16 to your questions. Next slide.

17 What we're doing with this project is basically
18 taking 50 acres of asphalt parking lots, taking half
19 the land, 25 acres of it and building a brand new 25
20 acre New York City public park. We are building it
21 for the Parks Department. We will maintain it long
22 term and provide the public safety for the park.

23 We are going to create 23,000 union jobs
24 throughout this project and over 6,000 full time
25 union jobs once the project is open. To my brothers

1 and sisters in labor who are here today who are going
2 to staff this building for us when it opens. We
3 appreciate you being here and we appreciate your
4 support.
5

6 As Gregg talked about, we're going to as part of
7 a community benefits package, completely transform
8 the MTA station. We're going to build a live music
9 venue, 5,000 seat venue, so that we can do concerts,
10 not just when the Mets are away a couple times a
11 summer but year around. We're going to have lots of
12 great food options. We are going to have an MWBE
13 local hiring requirement of a minimum of 30 percent
14 but we've committed to our Borough President that the
15 goal is 35 and beyond. If we hire from the
16 neighborhoods around us, we're going to blow these
17 numbers out of the water. We sit in the middle of
18 one of one of the most diverse neighborhoods on earth
19 and we have committed to local hiring and have a
20 number of local hiring partners that is going to help
21 us with this. Next slide.

22 We believe this is the best site in New York City
23 for a project of this kind. As Julissa mentioned,
24 we're right next to LaGuardia Airport. We're at the
25 intersection of three major highways. We're at the

1 intersection of these three great sports venues, the
2 New York Mets, the new soccer stadium for the New
3 York City Football Club and the US Tennis. We're on
4 the 7 line, we're on the Long Island Railroad and
5 thanks to Council Member Moya's leadership and our
6 Borough Presidents involvement, we're pursuing a new
7 ferry service to the site, really an ideal location
8 from the perspective of mass transit and
9 accessibility for a project like this. Next slide.

10 This is a wall to wall union project. We've
11 signed MOU's, agreements, neutrality agreements with
12 our brothers and sisters in labor. This will be a
13 wall to wall union project, not just in construction
14 but for the full-time long term employment of the
15 building as well. Next slide. Next slide.

16 As part of this project, we've made a \$1.1
17 billion and counting commitment to our local
18 community. It include \$320 million to build a brand
19 new 25 acre New York City public park, athletics and
20 ball courts that we've worked shop with the neighbors
21 around us. We're spending \$480 million to transform
22 the MTA station that Gregg just showed you and make
23 the climate infrastructure investments that he
24 described. A \$163 million community benefit fund
25

1 that will throw off dollars every year over the
2 history of the project to support local community
3 groups in the neighborhoods around us. \$150 million
4 to build the Taste of Queens, a food hall and
5 community space that Gregg just showed you, and \$25
6 million in one time neighborhood projects including a
7 health clinic and youth and senior services for our
8 neighbors. Next slide.

10 In closing, I just want to say we view this as a
11 once in a generation opportunity to transform the
12 area around City Field. As Julissa said at the
13 outset, this is a long term lease that runs till
14 2105. We're sitting on 50 acres of asphalt parking
15 lots. If we fail to advance this project, we're
16 going to have 50 acres of asphalt parking lot sitting
17 around City Field for at least the next 81 years.
18 This is the once in a generation opportunity to use
19 one of these three gaming licenses to completely
20 transform the area around City Field and I believe we
21 can do more with one of these gaming licenses than
22 any of the other opportunities the state will see and
23 the city will see to really deliver community
24 benefits and transform the area around us for the
25 good of our community and all of New York. Thank

2 you. I appreciate you Mr. Chairman and look forward
3 to your questions.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. Before I
5 turn it over to Council Member Moya, I just have a
6 few questions.

7 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: Yes sir.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: I know you stated a lot of
9 this for the record, but I'm just going to ask it for
10 the record so you can reinstate it. I realized you
11 touched on this issue but can you please restate for
12 everyone why you are seeking these land use approvals
13 now and not waiting to see you are actually awarded a
14 license?

15 DAVID KARNOVSKY: The state licensing process set
16 forth in the state gaming law is very clear that in
17 order to be eligible for the reward of a license we
18 must obtain our local zoning and land use approvals
19 prior to the consideration by the state entities that
20 you outlined in your opening remarks, so that's why
21 we're here today.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. It is important
23 to clarify the relationship between the rezoning you
24 are asking for and the park land alienation that you
25 need to obtain from the state to go forward with this

1 proposal. What happens if the Council approves this
2 rezoning but the state legislature does not approve
3 the alienation?
4

5 DAVID KARNOVSKY: The effectiveness of any
6 approval of the city map amendments by the City
7 Council is contingent on the receipt of legislation
8 and the award of a license. So, the City Planning
9 Commission adopted in favor with a condition that
10 basically said that the city map changes would not
11 effect unless and until a license is awarded. In
12 turn a license can't be awarded unless the state
13 legislation has been received. So, that's the way it
14 works.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: What happens if the Council
16 approves this rezoning, the state legislature
17 approves the park land alienation but the state does
18 not award you a gaming facility license. Can you
19 confirm that you would not be able to redevelop the
20 site based on the rezoning?

21 DAVID KARNOVSKY: That is correct.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Again, to be very clear, you
23 agree that if you are not awarded a gaming facility
24 license by the state, then the approvals you are
25 seeking today will serve no purpose?

2 DAVID KARNOVSKY: That is correct. They are all
3 linked to the reward of a license. If there is no
4 license, they will have no effect.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: What will happen at the
6 development site if the Queens Future project does
7 not receive one of the three downstate gaming
8 license?

9 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: We won't have the permission
10 to build anything else on the land it will likely
11 remain a parking lot at least for the next 81 years.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: If we seek approval, these
13 land use approvals you are seeking, what is the next
14 step for this proposal?

15 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: That's a great question. So,
16 there's a bunch of simultaneous actions going on.
17 We're obviously working through all our entitlements.
18 We need to pass a permitted use bill in Albany, which
19 we're working on throughout this session, and then
20 Mr. Chairman, as you outline in your opening remarks,
21 we then have to go through the CAC series of hearings
22 and then vote later this summer. Then ultimately it
23 goes to the Location Siting Board and then ultimately
24 to the Gaming Commission to determine whether they
25 want to give us a license or not.

1 So, this is a long process and this question
2 debate around the gaming aspects of this will happen
3 this summer as part of that CAC Community Advisory
4 Council process.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. I will
7 now recognize Council Member Moya for some
8 questioning.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you Chair Riley.
10 Thank you again for the presentation and I just got a
11 couple of questions before we turn it over to the
12 colleagues here. Going back to park land, how much
13 area of park land would be demapped and will it be
14 replaced with the equivalent area of public park land
15 in any other location?

16 DAVID KARNOVSKY: The amount of park land that
17 would be demapped to facilitate the entertainment
18 facility that was described is 25 acres. The amount
19 of usable park land that would be created through the
20 project would be the same amount.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great, thank you and how
22 will the new park land space be operated and
23 maintained? Will it have the same hours as
24 comparable to a public park?
25

1
2 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: Yes, it will be a New York
3 City public park and so the Parks Department is going
4 to set the rules for the park, the operating and
5 maintenance standards that we'll have to you know
6 live up to in terms of maintaining the park for them.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great and then during the
8 ULURP, the project team has committed to making
9 significant contributions in community benefits,
10 which you just mentioned. Is there a vision for some
11 kind of oversight or body to track these commitments
12 over time?

13 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: Yes, we're going to have a
14 seven person local committee that will be established
15 based on proximity of the site. We've committed to
16 both Community Board 3 and 7 immediately proximate to
17 us to have representation where they can appoint
18 somebody to be on that committee, but Council Member
19 we're also as part of our RFA application to the
20 state, including the \$163 million Community Benefit
21 Fund. So the ultimate enforcement mechanism is the
22 gaming license itself, our ability to maintain the
23 ability to operate the project and then ultimately to
24 get a license renewal down the road. So, this is
25 something that we're committing to as part of the

2 overall project and ultimately enforceable by the
3 Gaming Commission as well.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great, thank you. I'm glad
5 to hear that and also, can we go to traffic for a
6 minute? Could you describe the traffic circulation
7 of the proposed site? How you made your design
8 choices and how will the new circulation work on game
9 days? If you need me to ask again, I'm happy to so.

10 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: Yeah, I don't know if it's
11 possible to bring up my last slide of the site plan
12 but that may help David, our consultant from VHB
13 explain that.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: One moment before you start
15 testifying. Could you please raise your right hand?
16 Could you please state your name for the record?

17 DAVID QUART: David Quart.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you swear to tell the
19 truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony
20 today and in response to Council Member questions?

21 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: Yes. Could you go forward
22 just one slide please?

23 DAVID QUART: So, uhm you know the road - the
24 current Roadway Network as you know Council Member
25 Moya, is an aged network. It was originally laid out

1 to serve the world's fair and it works fine today
2 when we're thinking about one way traffic, which is
3 really how it functions. People coming, everyone is
4 coming to the Mets game at the same time and everyone
5 is leaving the Mets game at the same time but a big
6 part as Gregg started to describe as his team laid
7 this out, a big part of the way we planned the
8 project was to make sure that we had accommodated two
9 way traffic at all different times of the day and
10 that's how this is really laid out. So, the key part
11 of traffic circulation here is getting people to and
12 from the site at any given time of the day and not
13 having them go through the local roadways.

14 So, if someone is coming or leaving the garage at
15 the north, the north bill garage, they'll be directed
16 there from the Whitestone or from the Grand Central
17 Parkway and they can get out of that garage and
18 directly with our realigned roadway with the new
19 Grand Central Parkway ramps and the realignment of
20 those ramps, they can get directly from the garages
21 to the highways without going through the Local
22 Roadway Network. So that we're ensuring as much free
23 flowing of traffic as possible, people coming to and
24 from the site and also ensuring that people going
25

1
2 visiting Flushing Meadow Corona Park or other local
3 trips can continue to do that at the same time as
4 well. So there are a lot of improvements here that
5 are being made for traffic flow, enhancing safety and
6 the like to make sure that the project can function
7 as best as possible.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great thank you. And also
9 most of the project is in the map coastal flood plain
10 and the areas of Flushing Meadows Corona Park suffers
11 from regular nuance flooding. Can you - I know you
12 mentioned some of this in the presentation but can
13 you go back and describe the flood resiliency of the
14 proposed project and how flood risk influenced the
15 design?

16 GREGG PASQUARELLI: Yes, so when City Field was
17 built the flood plain was lower, now it's 13 feet
18 higher. So, what we did was we said let's leave the
19 first level of parking as it is on the field, build
20 one more level up and then build the base level of
21 the entertainment district. So, it brings it up 20-
22 something feet out of it. And then by you know we're
23 going to be putting in storm sewers and other
24 infrastructure for sustainability issues and also the
25 park itself, because the species and the soil

1 actually help absorb water in a small or large storm.
2 So, by lifting everything out of the park, lifting
3 out of the flood plain, berming the park up, creating
4 that ability to capture water and then release it
5 back in, that's what gives us the sustainable
6 strategy.
7

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Great, thank you and do you
9 also have an outline of the project timeline,
10 assuming approvals and licenses get done, when do you
11 think you would expect construction to begin?

12 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: We are doing in advance at
13 risk the design work to be ready to go, shovels in
14 the ground in January of 2026. That would put us on
15 track to be able to deliver the project in its build
16 year, which is the year 2030.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Got it, thank you and with
18 the improvements to the Mets Willets Subway Station
19 be built before, during, or after the main
20 entertainment complex?

21 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: So, like the Community Benefit
22 Fund I mentioned a minute ago, the MTA station
23 improvements will be part of our RFA submission to
24 the state. So, we're going to have to deliver that
25 project as part of the overall opening of the overall

1 facility. So, we will be in parallel making those
2 improvements as we're building the resort and we will
3 deliver the new train station. At the same time,
4 we're doing the grand opening for the overall
5 project. So, it will all be done in parallel.

6
7 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: And do you have any
8 estimates about how long construction for the new
9 Grand Central Parkway ramps would take and would
10 traffic lanes be reduced during that time? Sorry, I
11 should have asked that before I had you go sit back
12 down again, apologies.

13 DAVID QUART: We're all good. We're all good.
14 We're all a team here, it all works fine. Yeah, so
15 the active construction of those ramps probably take
16 between six months and a year. It will be
17 coordinated with the rest of the activities that are
18 happening on the site. I think a key to note is with
19 the new ramp, there would not be any sort of
20 reduction of traffic lanes. Obviously it will all be
21 staged and phased but for almost the entirety of that
22 construction, there will not be any closure or
23 reduction of traffic lanes during that period of
24 time. We can maintain that.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Okay great, thank you.
3 That was it. I'm not going to ask you any more
4 questions. You don't have to go back and forth
5 anymore after this.

6 DAVID QUART: Try any of my staff.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: And lastly also, if you
8 guys can just please describe what the lease
9 agreement would be between the applicant and the city
10 for the development site?

11 DAVID KARNOVSKY: Well, the lease would be a
12 lease with Queens Future for a long term lease
13 agreement based on the city's standard form of leases
14 adapted for the project and the key aspects of it
15 would require Queens Future to comply with all of the
16 construction and development that it is including in
17 its RFA proposal to ensure that it actually happens.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Thank you and could you
19 clarify the proposed tax incentives or finance
20 programs - financing programs being provided by the
21 city?

22 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: This is a publicly funded
23 project. My boss Steve Cohen and Hard Rock
24 International are committing to build this project
25

1 privately. I said public, private investment from
2 Steve Cohen and our partner Hard Rock International.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Got it, thank you. Thank
4 you Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you Council Member
6 Moya. I just want to state for the record, we've
7 been joined by Council Member Carr. Council Member
8 Schulman?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Yes, hi everyone. How
10 many union jobs will result from this project and how
11 will you support local businesses?

12 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: Thanks for the question
13 Council Member. It's 23,000 jobs, about 17,000 to
14 build it, about 6,000, 6,100 or so to staff it long
15 term. We're going to need a lot of local small
16 business vendors to help support this project. Hard
17 Rock has already been onsite in the neighborhoods
18 around us doing vendor fairs to help make our local
19 small businesses in Queens aware of these different
20 opportunities. We've signed up a number of different
21 local workforce development partners that are also
22 going to help us with this. It's everything you can
23 imagine Council Member you know local florists to put
24 flowers on the tables in the conference and meeting
25

1 areas. It's local laundry mats to help wash sheets
2 and towels, it's locksmiths. It's every kind of
3 local vendor you could imagine, over 90 of them that
4 we're going to need to partner with to help us with
5 this project.
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Are you working with
8 the Queens Chamber of Commerce?

9 MICHAEL SULLIVAN: We are. We are very proud to
10 have the strong support of the Queens Chamber.
11 They've been present at every Community meeting
12 speaking out in favor of this project. Tom Gretch
13 has really just been a tremendous ally and we really
14 support - appreciate their support but also that
15 connection that they bring us to our local small
16 businesses. It's a team effort and we're really
17 proud to have them helping us.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Okay thank you Chair.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Are there any
20 more Council Members with any questions? Okay,
21 alright, there being no Council Members with any
22 questions, this panel is now excused. Thank you so
23 much for your testimony.

24 DAVID KARNOVSKY: Thanks Mr. Chair.
25

1 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Counsel, are there any
2
3 members of the public who wish to testify remotely or
4 in person for this proposal?

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes Chair, we have quite a
6 few people here to testify in person and online, so
7 just to make it clear to everybody, first thank you
8 for coming out today. We will start with the in-
9 person testimony and there are approximately 40
10 people and then we will move to online testimony.
11 I'm specifying that for the people online in case you
12 are listening. So, we're providing about two minutes
13 per person, so it might take a bit of time before we
14 can do the online testimony.

15 Also, just before the Chair calls the first
16 panel, is Sean Caffrey who was part of the applicant
17 team, were you planning on testifying? No, okay,
18 thank you. And our last clarification as we will
19 follow our usual protocol, which is to start with
20 people in opposition and then in panels of four and
21 then we will follow it up by folks who have signed up
22 in favor of this application.

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you Counsel. For
24 members of the public here to testify, please note
25 that witnesses will generally be called in panels of

1 four. If you are a member of the public signing up
2 to testify on this proposal, please stand by when you
3 hear your name being called and prepare to speak when
4 I indicate you may begin.

5
6 Please also note, once all panelists in your
7 group have completed their testimony, if remotely,
8 you will be removed from the meeting as a group and
9 the next group of speakers will be introduced. Once
10 removed, participants may continue to live the
11 livestream broadcast of this hearing on the Council's
12 website. Members of the public will be given two
13 minutes to speak. When you hear the clock winding
14 down, please finish your remarks within five seconds
15 after the clock. Thank you. Please do not begin
16 until the Sergeant at Arm has started the clock. The
17 following individuals who signed up to testify should
18 now come to the witness table. We will start first
19 with John Park, Andrew Sokolf, Michelle Burke, and
20 Aimee Rosato.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair if I may because I
22 forgot, we do have another room as we ran out of
23 seats, so if you're in the other room and you just
24 heard your name, please come to this main room.

2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Thank you. You
3 guys may approach the panel. Thank you. Okay, you
4 could start from left to right, can you just please
5 reinstate your name for the record before you begin?
6 Well, I guess my left but you could start, sorry.

7 AIMEE ROSATO: I am Aimee Rosato. Okay, good
8 morning Council Members. My name is Aimee Rosato and
9 I'm a homeowner in East Elmhurst and a public school
10 parent. Please vote no on the Queens Future LLC
11 ULURP application to demap and rezone public park
12 land for our casino. This is a choice between
13 protecting the Queens we love by voting no or
14 embracing a future with more crime, traffic,
15 pollution, lower property values and strained local
16 businesses and cultural institutions. Not to mention
17 the families destroyed by an increase in problem
18 gambling, risky behavior and displacement.

19 This project will irreversibly harm our community
20 with no public benefit. A \$163 million community
21 improvement fund is pocket change for a billionaire.
22 Although billionaires Steve Cohen and his 14 firms
23 have manufactured a perception of public support, the
24 majority of the public does not want this project as
25 the harms out weigh the benefits. It goes against

1 our most pressing needs including those documented by
2 Community Boards like mine that voted for the
3 project. For instance, according to the community,
4 Queens Community Board 3 expense and capital
5 priorities Fiscal Year 2026 Report, the number one
6 most pressing issue for us is crime and public
7 safety. Casinos lead to an increase in crime. This
8 is undisputed. Dr. John Kin(SP?) found the crime
9 increases about ten percent each year every year
10 every year in locals with casinos and what it's
11 worth, a study by MIT found that 8.6 percent of
12 property crime and 12 percent of violent crime in
13 counties with casinos are due to the presence of a
14 casino. We don't want or need this.

16 Our third most pressing issue is street flooding.
17 Queens Future is a \$3.7 million square foot mega
18 development on a wetland which will make street
19 flooding in our neighborhoods worse. It doesn't
20 conform to the unified stormwater rules and
21 regulations and will contribute to additional
22 combined sewer overflows into Flushing Bay.

23 Over simplifying the choice as one between a park
24 or a parking lot is quite frankly insulting and
25

1 dismisses the broader negative impacts on our
2 community. Vote no to protect the people of Queens.

3
4 ANDREW SOKOLF-DIAZ: Okay, my name is Andrew
5 Sokolf-Diaz, I am the Cofounder of the 89th Street
6 Tenants Unidos Association in Jackson Height Queens
7 representing over 500 residents and homeowners in
8 Jackson Heights. I'm also a lifelong Queens resident
9 now raising my family there as well and our volunteer
10 driven group fights for dignified affordable housing
11 and against displacement while providing mutual aid
12 in our community.

13 We strongly opposed the Queens Future's ULURP for
14 a massive casino and hotel complex on public land in
15 Flushing Meadows Corona Park and as part of the fed
16 up coalition, we urge you to vote no or refer it back
17 to CPC with recommendations as is within the ability
18 of this Committee. This is a bad bet for Queens.
19 The impacts of a second casino in our borough have
20 not been properly studied. Displacment effects have
21 been ignored and the social harms to our immigrant
22 communities are clear. Our youth and seniors deserve
23 a park that's invested in, not a casino designed to
24 drain money and fuel gambling and addiction issues.
25 Billionaire Steve Cohen and Co is going all out,

1 hiring the most lobbyists in the entire state to push
2 this through for city and state this week. This
3 casino complex would extract wealth from our working
4 class communities, overwhelm our already maxed out
5 seven train and worsen our air quality. It would
6 also over tax our sewer system, sending tons of raw
7 sewage into Flushing Bay. Meanwhile the required
8 environmental quality review ignores the
9 socioeconomic effects on our community. This process
10 is being rushed and you have the power to stop it.
11 You'll hear a lot today about jobs from paid
12 supporters, but the casinos don't create real
13 economic growth. Hard Rock Casinos partners actively
14 union busting so what jobs are we talking about here,
15 low wage service sector jobs with no future? Come
16 on, Queens deserves better. We ask you to vote no or
17 at minimum demand modifications based on the Phoenix
18 Meadows Vision Plan, a 100 percent stormwater capture
19 no loss of public park land, no increase in parking
20 spaces, and better local connectivity. We need
21 adequate spaces for our local vendor, yes but this is
22 a moment of consciousness. Please do the right thing
23 for Queens. Thank you.

1 JOHN PARK: Good morning Chair and the
2 Subcommittee. My name is John Park, I'm the
3 Executive Director of the MinKwon Center for
4 Community Action. We have served immigrant and
5 working class Asian American communities in Flushing
6 and Queens and we also have a site in New Jersey for
7 over 40 years. We urge you to vote no on the
8 Metropolitan Park Zoning Application Amendments,
9 which would enable a casino on public park land.
10 Against, against the will and well-being of our
11 communities.

12 I also raise a family in Flushing and my kids go
13 to a local school, PS 79 Elementary School. You have
14 to ask yourself; do you want a casino that close
15 within a stop next to all your high schools with your
16 kids, right? Flushing had the lowest PPP success
17 rates of any neighborhood in New York City. I'm just
18 commenting on the area around there. It also had 28
19 times the poverty compared to the rest of New York
20 City coming out of COVID. This was the Undo Poverty
21 Coalition and then funded by Robinhood Studies.

22 Queens Future socioeconomic study only examined a
23 minimum required quarter mile radius, excluding
24 communities most at risk. It ignored communities
25

1 like Flushing and Corona where rising rents are
2 displacing residents as we speak and forcing out our
3 small businesses. That's why the Undo Poverty
4 Coalition even exists and this is before the casino
5 because we're having economic troubles, even
6 recovering from the pandemic.
7

8 So, residents on both sides of the park have
9 already voiced their opinions and reject the casino.
10 We did an exit poll along with all deaf for a lot of
11 areas in CB7. 70 percent rejected it. 68.5 said we
12 don't want this. These are the voters during
13 election day, okay? And then we only had two
14 questions, the second question was, it was like
15 what's your position on the casino? The second
16 question was would this effect your future vote on
17 people and 70 percent said yes, which means this, the
18 people and the families in these other areas, even
19 they know that they're going to be impacted by this
20 and they should be included in the zoning. I'm
21 asking people to vote no.

22 MICHELLE BURKE: Honorable Council Members, thank
23 you for having me here. My name is Michelle Burke,
24 I'm a mother of two and I'm speaking on behalf of
25 Jackson Heights indivisible. My statement has been

1 endorsed by 170 of my neighbors and I have copies of
2 their names that I can provide as well.

3
4 We fully support the concerns raised by guardians
5 of Flushing Bay and Fed Up Coalition, which I'm sure
6 they'll present today. Despite the misleading name,
7 Queens Future, the crucks of this plan is to bring a
8 predatory casino into our communities. The casino
9 will extract wealth from residents of all
10 socioeconomic classes particularly targeting
11 vulnerable groups to benefit a billionaire. Many
12 studies show that problem gambling disproportionately
13 harms people living in lower income neighborhoods and
14 exacerbates poverty and inequality. Research also
15 shows that proximity to a casino correlates with
16 higher rates of gambling addiction which is linked to
17 domestic violence, child neglect, debt, bankruptcy,
18 depression and suicide. With so many seniors and
19 immigrants living near the proposed site, this
20 project is not development. It's exploitation.

21 Research also indicates that crime rates are
22 higher in counties with casinos compared to those
23 without. This community consultation process has
24 been riddled with conflicts of interests. Queens
25 Future LLC, billionaire Steve Cohen and Hard Rock

2 International spent nearly \$3 million in two years,
3 \$3 million in two years lobbying for this casino.
4 The highest lobbying expenditure in New York City in
5 both years. Local community Boards, including mine
6 Community Board 3 have been targeted with some
7 members even working as paid consultants, community
8 board members as paid consultants to the developers.

9 Now, these biased votes are being used to
10 manufacture a perception of communities consent for a
11 predatory casino when there is none. The project
12 also lacks enforceable community benefits. There's
13 no binding agreement to hold developers accountable,
14 only vague promises with oversight left to the same
15 state agency that grants a license.

16 I also want to say a few words in my personal
17 capacity, as someone with a close family member, a
18 parent who has battled a gambling addiction for 20
19 years, I know first hand how problem gambling ruins
20 lives and devastates families. Hard Rock so called
21 safe guards, employee training and self-exclusion
22 forms are a token to sick PR tactics, not solutions.

23 This is not the future -

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Michelle, can you wrap it up
25 please?

1 MICHELLE BURKE: I urge you to vote no. Thank
2 you.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I have a question
5 for Andrew. You stated in your remarks that this was
6 a rush process. During the presentation, it stated
7 that they did a four year outreach to the community
8 and I know the ULURP process, which is the process
9 that we're in right now gives the community a
10 specific time to have outreach. So, I just wanted
11 you to clarify what did you mean by this being a rush
12 project?

13 ANDREW SOKOLF-DIAZ: Sure, thanks Council Member,
14 it's a good question. So we have a process that came
15 out in the middle of COVID, right when people were
16 still reeling, especially Corona Queens, which was
17 the epicenter of the epicenter right? So, if you
18 discuss any of these events and meetings and the
19 people who were invited to those meetings, the yes
20 people who remain part of that coalition to support
21 it, that's one thing sure. That's their events
22 right? Where they had them, not in the community per
23 say but if you speak to us, we are the community
24 right? We represent a coalition of people. We are
25 in your schools. We are the community. We're the

1 nonprofits. We provide the mutual aid, so ask people
2 in the hood, have they heard about this casino
3 coming? They're going to be like no, we thought
4 Jessica Ramos stopped it. Like what's going on. We
5 don't want a casino. So, that's the vibe and that's
6 the answer you get from people in the street. Ask
7 the churches, same thing.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay, thank you. Do any
10 other Council Members have questions for this panel?
11 There being no questions, this panel is excused.
12 Thank you so much for your testimony.

13 The next panel I'm going to call up consists of
14 Rolando -

15 UNIDENTIFIED: Sorry, I think someone left a
16 phone up here. I just want to -

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Oh, did someone leave their
18 phone up here?

19 UNIDENTIFIED: It looks like this. I just want
20 to -

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Alright, thank you. The next
22 panel consists of Rolando Rendon Cantero, Former
23 Council Member Costa Constantinides, excuse me Costa.
24 I used to call him Costa when he was here that's why.
25 I'm sorry everyone. Seth Bornstein, and Nicole

1 Labades. Thank you, appreciate it. Ms. Nicole, you
2 may begin and then just press the button on the mic
3 please.
4

5 NICOLE LABADES: Yes good morning.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

7 NICOLE LABADES: Thank you for having me. I'm a
8 little nervous my first time. My name is Nicole
9 Labades. I am a lifelong Flushing resident. I also
10 attend school in Corona and Jackson Heights, so I
11 know both areas very well. I have the fortunate
12 experience of knowing Flushing when it was Flushing.
13 When there were a lot of things going on for youth,
14 for seniors, for everyone that came to the area.
15 Right now, there is nothing going on. For people to
16 say and everybody has their own opinion, for us to
17 just have - they keep saying parkland. It has never
18 been a park. It has always been a parking lot. You
19 know and I understand those are just words but there
20 has never been a park that you can go to and sit and
21 enjoy, it's just been asphalt. Right now, it is not
22 safe. It is crime riddled. If you look up on the
23 news, Roosevelt Avenue is full of prostitution, they
24 constantly close it down and it is constant.

1 What they propose is a once in a lifetime
2
3 opportunity for our youth, for our seniors, for the
4 whole community to have jobs, to have a place to be
5 able to socialize. Right now, people don't have
6 money. Everything is uncertain. To be able to have
7 some place you can walk to and just get a breath of
8 fresh air would be a comfort to most people. There
9 is no place for people to bring their children. I am
10 a director of a community center, right now we're
11 getting ready to plan summer trips. I am afraid. I
12 do not know where to take my participants. I would
13 not be able to even walk there right now with them.
14 If this comes through, this would be an opportunity
15 for everyone, not just one demographic. Flushing has
16 - Jackson Heights, Corona, there's a lot of different
17 people that live there that come there. We need a
18 change. Thank you.

19 ROLANDO RENDON CANTERO: Good morning. Good
20 morning everybody. My name is Rolando Cantero and
21 I'm a proud city worker and a member of Hotel Gaming
22 Trace Council. I'm here on behalf of my union
23 testifying in support the Western Real Jobs Project.
24 This project will give us our city an opportunity to
25

2 create thousands of very high quality jobs including
3 permanent hospitality jobs like mine.

4 These jobs will help New Yorkers and boost
5 economic activity our city needs. And now, the city
6 needs now more than ever. I urge you to vote yes on
7 this application. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Go ahead Costa.

9 COSTA CONSTANTINIDES: Thank you Chair Riley.
10 So, this is what's it's like to sit on this side of
11 the table. It's a little strange. Thank you Chair.
12 Thank you Council Members for giving me the
13 opportunity to testify this morning. I'm a lifelong
14 Queens resident and as someone that's been to 28 out
15 of the 30 major league baseball stadiums, I'll say
16 that Queens is way behind of where we should be. If
17 you go to Atlanta, you go to Chicago, they've built
18 entire communities where you can go and spend an
19 entire day at the ballpark. Right now you can't do
20 that in Queens. Right now, you go to a game and you
21 leave. We're in the process of changing that with
22 Council Member Moya's vision for a stalker stadium
23 and arena. We're going to change the community for
24 the better. We'll be able to take my son and go play
25 catch, have a nice lunch, go catch a game and then

1 I'll be able to bring them home and find a babysitter
2 for my new daughter and take my wife out for a night
3 of entertainment. This is the possibilities that
4 Queens deserves. The jobs of Queens deserve. They
5 talk about parking and the environment. The only
6 park in this place is in the sign that says parking
7 above it. This is an asphalt parking lot, no more no
8 less. We have the opportunity to turn it into a
9 green space that can be a carbon sink. It can induce
10 the ambient temperature in the neighborhood, that can
11 capture stormwater, that can make us more resilient
12 and more sustainable.

14 And lastly, I'll talk about gambling. My father
15 had a very serious gambling problem with us growing
16 up. Like I was - you know he was a VP at Bankers
17 Trust. Everyone saw him as a strong member of the
18 community but he would go at night to underground
19 gambling clubs. I got beaten up as 16-years-old by a
20 bookie. You know anyone can gamble right now on
21 their phone and lose everything, then go to an
22 underground gambling club. I'd rather be with Hard
23 Rock and have controlled gambling in our communities,
24 have the opportunity to have someone that's looking
25 over things rather than the Wild West, which exists

1
2 anyway right now. This is an opportunity for this
3 community to be able to look at this and say we're
4 not going to be able to solve every problem but this
5 is a once and generation opportunity for jobs, for
6 community, for environment and for the needs of the
7 neighborhood. Queens deserves this. Thank you.

8 SETH BORNSTEIN: Good morning. My name is Seth
9 Bornstein, I'm the Executive Director of the Queens
10 Economic Development Corporation and have been part
11 of the organization since 1979. I'm here to voice my
12 support for the project. I have witnessed many
13 changes in the borough of the decades. Economic
14 development means growth that serves and benefits our
15 borough. The late Borough President Claire Shulman,
16 my mentor used to say it puts bread on the table for
17 people of Queens.

18 This is crucial for you to remain a worldclass
19 [INAUDIBLE 01:06:08] energy commerce and culture. A
20 project like Metropolitan Park would have been
21 infallible 25 years ago, even 10 years ago, but so
22 much has changed. Geographically, educationally and
23 socially, our borough is coming to its zone as
24 demonstrated by the growth of our hubs in Long Island
25 City, Jamaica and Flushing. We are the regions

1 largest transportation center with newly rebuilt
2 airports. Our schools, public and private from grade
3 school to grad schools to let students qualify and
4 eager to join the workforce. And as the most diverse
5 county in the world, we have the language and
6 cultural skills to succeed globally.
7

8 Metropolitan Park will harness the energy this
9 population and provide jobs to the thousands of young
10 people, many first and second generation New Yorkers
11 seeking careers in their own borough. This is true
12 across all skill sets from entry level jobs to highly
13 tenacle positions. Our businesses will be the
14 beneficiary of this investment, not just in the
15 construction period but in the decades to come. In
16 doing so, many small businesses will transform to
17 mid-size and bigger businesses, expanding the
18 workforce and increasing the tax revenues.

19 The bottom line is that we have a chance to
20 transform one of the largest tracks of underutilized
21 land in this city and turn it to an economic engine
22 that future generations will thank us for. Let's not
23 squander this opportunity.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. There
25 being no questions for this panel, this panel is

1 excused and you did a good job Mr. Cantero, alright.
2
3 I just want to state for the record, we're joined
4 virtually Council Member Abreu.

5 The next panel I'm going to call up consists of
6 Rebecca Pryor, Annie Lo, Margaret Flanagan and Paul
7 Pellizzari.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: If you heard your name and
9 you're in the overflow room, please come to the main
10 room.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Okay, the following panel
12 will consist of Former Council Member Danny Dromm,
13 Denis Ibria, Ted Tang and Helen Jang. That will be
14 the following panel. Paul Pellizzari. Okay, we
15 could get started, you may begin. Just state your
16 name for the record.

17 REBECCA PRYOR: My name is Rebecca Pryor.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Oh Rebecca, just press the
19 button please.

20 REBECCA PRYOR: My name is Rebecca Pryor.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: There you go.

22 REBECCA PRYOR: Good morning. I'm Rebecca Pryor,
23 the Executive Director for the Guardians of Flushing
24 Bay. Thank you to the Council for the opportunity to
25 comment on the Queens future ULURP application. Upon

1 review of the applicants environmental impact
2 statement, Guardians believes that the proposed
3 projects impacts are so profound that the project
4 should not receive ULURP approval. I'm going to note
5 two key concerns here. The first is that the project
6 fails Flushing Meadows Corona Park. The project is
7 in Flushing Meadows Corona Park which is formed in
8 the path of Flushing Creek. Any development of the
9 site should be considered by its merit of being an
10 investment in the park land and aligning with park
11 design and uses. Queens Future Vegas like casino
12 fails on all counts. Queens Future proposes to
13 privatize 77 acres of public park land for a
14 sprawling hotel and casino complex that includes nine
15 story parking garages and 15 to 26 story hotels.

17 While Queens Future promises a 20 acre park, the
18 main area that the developers claimed will be a park
19 is actually a seven acre, privately owned, steeply
20 graded plaza tucked in between a hotel complex and
21 the City Field Stadium.

22 Number two, the project fails Flushing Bay.
23 Flushing Bay receives over two billion gallons of raw
24 sewage and polluted storm water every year through an
25 overwhelmed sewer system and stormwater system. The

1
2 development will increase sanitary sewage demand on
3 the Barry Bay Waste Water Treatment Plant and will
4 dump more sewage and stormwater into one of the
5 largest overflow pipes in the city.

6 Queens Future also fails to give sufficient
7 clarity in their FEIS and to how it will comply with
8 the city's unified stormwater rule. If the City
9 Council chooses to vote yes on this project, we are
10 calling on you as Council Members to include the
11 following recommendations: The first is to include
12 an acre for acre replacement of parkland. The second
13 is to prohibit a casino on the development site,
14 which we understand would change the zoning. The
15 third is a meaningful study of indirect residential
16 and commercial displacement. The fourth is a
17 meaningful investment in public parkland in alignment
18 with the Phoenix Meadows Vision Plan and the fifth is
19 a robust and transparent community benefits
20 agreement. Thank you so much.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you Ms. Pryor. Did we
22 get Paul? He's not here? Alright, thank you. You
23 may begin, just state your name for the record.

24 MARGARET FLANAGAN: Hello, I'm Margaret Flanagan,
25 a lifelong Queens resident and a Guardian of Flushing

1 Bay. Do not take previous levels of approval for
2 this project as a sign of wider community support.
3 The Borough President received 70 written comments
4 against this project and just three in support.
5 Though jobs are actually not part of the technical
6 ULURP analysis, speaking of jobs, work day hearings
7 like this are very difficult for people to take off
8 but pretty easy to fill with your paid partners and
9 consultants.
10

11 This week, Cranes reported that in 2024, Queens
12 Future was top of the list, spent the most of anyone
13 lobbying "dozens of city officials." Last year,
14 Senator Ramos concluded from her survey, it's been
15 hard to find supporters who haven't "received or been
16 promised a check." I call on everyone testifying
17 today to disclose if there is a financial or business
18 relationship driving your support for the applicant.
19 I have none. So I ask you to vote no on this
20 demapping. The acres of green in the slide show are
21 already park land. Demapping the casino part will
22 make Flushing Meadows Park forever smaller.

23 In response to your question, Sully used
24 manipulative word play. There is a loss of legally
25 designated acreage of park land in this land use

1
2 proposal, which is priceless to New Yorkers. That
3 public open space, call it a park or a parking lot,
4 it is our open space. Or if you do vote yes, modify
5 it to require an acre for acre replacement of lost
6 park land. Vote no on the commercial zoning, which
7 makes this an even worse deal. Multiply the
8 commercial rent by the acreage, by the height, by the
9 lease and there are so many more billions of dollars
10 in profit at stake making the current benefits list
11 crumbs. Or if you do vote yes, approve with
12 modifications that that million dollar community
13 benefit is an annual contribution and helps cover the
14 cost for city agencies like police, sanitation, and
15 Department of Health. Please do not vote by
16 deference, particularly considering the applicants
17 extreme lobbying and paid for supporters. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Ms. Lo.

19 ANNIE LO: Good morning Council Members and thank
20 you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Annie
21 Lo. I'm an Attorney at the Asian American Legal
22 Defense and Education Fund. We are a national
23 organization that protects and promotes the civil
24 rights of Asian Americans through litigation,
25 advocacy and organizing. AALDEF has a long history

1 of land use and environmental justice work in New
2 York City to safeguard the right of immigrant
3 communities to live in a safe and affordable
4 environment. One of our landmark lawsuits
5 established the requirement for environmental review
6 of new developments that may displace low income
7 tenants and small businesses.
8

9 Today, AALDEF urges this Subcommittee to
10 disapprove the queens future map change amendment.
11 Community Members in Queens first reach out to AALDEF
12 with concerns about the projects potential to
13 accelerate gentrification and displacement in the
14 area and AALDEF's 2024 exit poles subsequently found
15 that nearly 70 percent of Asian American voters in
16 New York and nearly half of all respondents from the
17 Flushing area are strongly opposed to the casino
18 proposal.

19 The Queens Future project is at its core proposal
20 to site a casino and a luxury hotel amidst working
21 class immigrant communities creating an influx of
22 wealth towards them and an avenue for gambling in
23 communities more vulnerable than gentrification than
24 ever. The city's own racial equity data reveals that
25 Flushing, Corona, and Elmhurst have the highest risk

1 of displacement out of any neighborhoods in Queens.
2 These neighborhoods each have non-White populations
3 over 94 percent. Flushing and Corona have poverty
4 rates over 50 percent and their residents are
5 severely rent burdened at rates higher than the city
6 average. Flushing has recently experienced a surge
7 in luxury condo and new rental unit development, the
8 vast majority of which has ushered in a newer,
9 wealthier population. As a result, the working class
10 tenants of Flushing and other nearby communities are
11 left more vulnerable to displacement than ever.
12 However, the environmental review process for the
13 Queens Future project failed to take the requisite
14 hard look at the projects potential negative impacts
15 including indirect, commercial and residential
16 displacement.

17
18 Despite pushback from residents and community
19 groups on the socioeconomic conditions methodology,
20 the EIS adopted a mere quarter mile radius study
21 area, most of which actually just encompassed
22 Flushing Bay, Corona Park and the Willets Point
23 development. That means that the potential for
24 displacement of small businesses and tenants is still
25 unstudied nor has the economic impact of the Queens

2 Future casino and hotels direct competition with
3 small businesses in those communities been fully
4 assessed. This proposal should not be approved
5 without a hard look taken at the socioeconomic
6 conditions as required by CEQR. AALDEF respectfully
7 request that this Subcommittee therefore disapprove
8 the Queens Future map amendment and change.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being no
10 questions for this panel, this panel is excused. The
11 next panel I'm going to call up is former Council
12 Member Danny Dromm, Helen Jang, Ted Tang, and Denis
13 Ibric. The following panel after that will consist
14 of Alan Sherman, Judy Chase, Jesse Friedman, and
15 Bishop Mitchell Taylor.

16 Helen, yes. Denis, you may begin just make sure
17 the mic is on.

18 DENIS IBRIC: How's that?

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yeah just move it towards
20 you.

21 DENIS IBRIC: Okay how's that? Good morning
22 members of the Committee. My name is Denis Ibric I
23 represent thousands of hardworking men and women of
24 the New York City District Council of Carpenters
25 including myself who calls Queens home. I'm here to

1 express my strong support for the Metropolitan Park
2 proposal. A transformative project that will bring
3 good paying family sustaining union jobs to Queens
4 both during construction and for years to come. This
5 development is more than just an economic engine.
6 It's an opportunity to invest in the skilled
7 workforce that keeps New York City growing. From the
8 moment this project begins, it will be built with the
9 hands of union trades people men and women who
10 dedicate their lives to their craft, ensuring the
11 highest quality construction, upholding the strongest
12 safety standards. Beyond the build out, Metropolitan
13 Park will provide long term stable union jobs that
14 will support families across our communities but the
15 benefits don't stop at just job creation.
16 Metropolitan Park will solidify Queens as the premier
17 sports and entertainment destination for the region.
18 With world class attractions and state of the art
19 amenities, drawing visitors from across the city and
20 beyond further boosting local businesses and the
21 boroughs economy. This is the kind of responsible
22 development that our city needs, one that prioritizes
23 working people will be the gateway for many to the
24 middle class and strengthens our communities for
25

1 generations to come. I urge the Committee to support
2 this project. Thank you.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Council Member
5 Dromm, go ahead.

6 DANNY DROMM: Thank you very much. I'm Former
7 Council Member Danny Dromm, Chair of the Finance
8 Committee back when I was here in the City Council.
9 As has been mentioned before, this is a once and a
10 lifetime opportunity for us to have additional park
11 space. When I was in the City Council, in order to
12 get additional park space in the neighborhood that I
13 represented which is right adjacent to City Field, I
14 closed the street, bought a school yard from a
15 private school and added, it actually doubled the
16 size of what we call Travis Park in that
17 neighborhood.

18 So, having the opportunity to get additional park
19 space in or near Flushing Meadows Corona Park is
20 really valuable to us and this would provide us with
21 the 25 additional acres. I'm going to say the 15,000
22 union jobs, very, very important to the community.
23 365 day use as well. That area from College Point
24 Boulevard up to the Grand Central Parkway, nobody is
25 there unless it's a game day or it is a tennis

1 stadium game. So, it would really provide
2 entertainment and business opportunities in that
3 area. Having been the Chair of the Immigration
4 Committee here in the City Council, I'm very proud to
5 say that Metropolitan Park will offer opportunities
6 for vendors, which has become a problem in that area
7 with the number of vendors in the area. This will
8 give them an opportunity to sell whatever it is in
9 the vendor spaces that Metropolitan Park will offer
10 them. It will give bike paths, additional athletic
11 fields which are not there now, a hotel will be
12 there, job opportunities in the hotel, a music venue,
13 meaning that those of us who don't always want to
14 travel into the city will have the opportunity to
15 have music and concerts in that area. And you know
16 the Community Boards that surround that area, that
17 Metropolitan Park area have all approved the
18 construction that would go on there.

19
20 And finally, let me say that this is an \$8
21 billion private investment and we're not going to see
22 that again and by the way, I am a person who is not
23 being paid any check to be here today. I'm here as a
24 former Council Member and an invested community
25 member and finally, let me just say that prohibition

1
2 didn't work either, so this business that other
3 people are bringing up about gambling and all that
4 stuff is not going to you know it doesn't hit - it
5 doesn't work for me. Thank you.

6 TED TANG: Hi, so my name is Ted Tang. I'm
7 representing the Taiwan Chamber of Commerce. First
8 of all I want to say thank you for allowing me to
9 speak with the honorable board. I had a whole speech
10 written out but I kind of want to change it because
11 of some of the comments that were made earlier. I
12 also am not a paid representative of any sort with
13 Queens Future or whatnot. I had an issue with the
14 previous speakers who kind of positioned themselves
15 as the voice of the community, despite the fact that
16 over I believe 80 percent of the Community Board
17 voted in favor of this project. Despite the fact
18 that even if you don't like gaming, the proposition
19 was voted and passed upon. So, for them to position
20 themselves in that manner kind of draws a lot of
21 questions and I think the board will see ratio of
22 people who are here in opposition versus the people
23 who are here for this project will show you who
24 actually has the voice of the community.

1
2 Furthermore, they were talking about the concepts
3 of no displacement and when we think about affordable
4 housing, really there's really two ways. It's a
5 supply and demand issue alright. Either if we're
6 running out of the resources, you either increase the
7 supply, which means constantly building more
8 affordable housing or decreasing the demand by
9 providing jobs like this project is going to do.

10 So, by providing those jobs you are in a sense
11 attacking those issues. I would also like to point
12 out that the large minority does not represent the
13 majority okay. Just because they're loud doesn't
14 mean there are the majority. I want to point that
15 out okay. Furthermore, I want to say that when it
16 comes to these issues in terms of giving away the
17 park, which we hear all the time, it is not giving
18 away. This is a land, not even a park. This is
19 asphalt that's already in under a lease. It's not
20 giving anything away in addition, alright. Some
21 people keep saying giving it away and then we hear
22 this word billionaire being thrown around like it's a
23 dirty word. Okay, here's the thing, you need
24 contacts, you need networking, you need resources to
25 do a project of this size. Find me a mom and pop

1 person who can do this fantastic. Thank you for your
2 time.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Ms. Jang.

5 HELEN JANG: Thank you for this opportunity to
6 speak. My name is Helen Jang, Director of the
7 Workforce Development and I'm here today on behalf of
8 the Korean Community Service of Metropolitan New York
9 to express our strong support for the Queens Future
10 plan. A plan that holds the promise of not just
11 transforming infrastructure but changing lives across
12 our board. For over 50 years, KCS has proudly
13 serviced the immigrant communities of New York City.
14 We are the longest and the largest Korean nonprofit
15 in New York City and we have been here for those who
16 need it most. Empowering 1,700 individuals daily
17 through programs focused on aging, mental health,
18 public health and a workforce development. There is
19 just the services, they are the foundation of the
20 economic resilience and opportunity for the most
21 vulnerable members in our society.

22 At KCS, we believe that economic empowerment
23 begins with across the good jobs, stable rewarding
24 career that help people build their future. Our
25 workforce development program is designed to give

1 people the tools, confidence and support they need to
2 secure their job. Over 55 paid internship program,
3 trained 72 to 80 individuals every year. Preparing
4 them for long term just as kitchen assistant, office
5 assistant, teacher assistant, housekeeping assistant.
6 This program isn't about temporary work. It's about
7 creating pathways to permanent employment and every
8 year over 25 percent of the participant going to the
9 secure long term career to transform their lives. We
10 don't stop there.

12 Through our career readiness program, we give an
13 individual the skills they need to thrive computer
14 and due to the marketing home health aide, this work
15 is already changing lives but the Queens Future plan
16 offers incredible opportunity to scale up our effort
17 and create 100 high quality jobs across sector. So,
18 the Queens Future plan isn't just about the new
19 beginnings of expense in infrastructure.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You can start wrapping up Ms.
21 Jang.

22 HELEN JANG: Can I just -

23 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yeah, I said you could start
24 wrapping up.

25

1 HELEN JANG: Okay thank you. It's an investment
2 in people. It's an investment in creating high
3 quality job and training opportunities that ensure
4 economic mobility for immigrant community and in New
5 York. Thank you again for your time and your
6 commitment to this region. KCS is ready and able to
7 collaborate with you bring the Queens Future plan to
8 life. Together we can create the brighter, more -

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you.

10 HELEN JANG: Equitable future. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you, appreciate it. No
12 one has any questions for this panel. This panel is
13 excused. The next panel we'll call up consists of
14 Alan Sherman, Judy Chase, Jesse Friedman and Bishop
15 Mitchell Taylor.
16

17 The following panel after that will consist of
18 Former New York City Comptroller William Thompson,
19 Senny Ho Jung, Karen Wang and Kai Shum.

20 Okay, I would love to spend the entire afternoon
21 with you all but I have places to go as well, so I am
22 going to be keeping these two minutes okay, two
23 minutes. Please as soon as you hear that bell, start
24 wrapping up please. Thank you so much. Bishop
25 Taylor okay, there is Bishop Taylor. We can begin

1 with Alan Sherman. Sorry Alan just make sure the mic
2 is on please.
3

4 ALAN SHERMAN: Okay. My name is Alan Sherman and
5 I have been a resident of Queens since 1963. Thank
6 you for the opportunity to speak in front of you. I
7 have seen many changes to Queens over the years some
8 good, some bad. I feel Metropolitan Park would be a
9 great addition to Queens County. First, I find it
10 funny that all the people who testify against the
11 park due to addiction all have cell phones. Gambling
12 on your cellphone is growing without anyone knowing
13 what is going on behind closed doors. Will they get
14 rid of their cellphones? Will they try to have
15 gambling apps taken down? What about the addiction
16 of alcohol or marijuana, all legal now? With the
17 approval of the City of Yes, there will be a growth
18 in building within our county. In Willets Point,
19 they are building 2,500 affordable housing units
20 right across the street from City Field and
21 Metropolitan Park. Next to the new major league
22 soccer stadium currently under construction. Next to
23 housing, our beloved city needs jobs, jobs, jobs. We
24 don't want to make the same mistake we made with
25 Amazon.

1 Where will these people work? The 7 Subway line
2
3 is one of the most over crowded lines of New York
4 City. If you check the numbers, there's not enough
5 room on the trains for these people to commute to
6 Manhattan for work. What better idea then having to
7 employ these people as well as other people from
8 Queens at Metropolitan Park. They can walk or bike
9 to work. Thousands of good paying union jobs will be
10 available once Metropolitan Park is complete. This
11 will also help local community and businesses in the
12 surrounding neighborhoods. The 1964-1965 New York
13 World's Fair had the theme, there's a great big,
14 beautiful tomorrow. Metropolitan Park is a great
15 big, beautiful tomorrow, the next generation. I can
16 go on but my time is up. I'm going to close with
17 let's go Mets. Let's go Queens.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Alright, now your time is up.
19 Now your time is up.

20 ALAN SHERMAN: Don't tell me you're a Yankees
21 fan.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: No stay right there. Stay
23 right there. Stay right there. Come on man, I'm a
24 Bronx Council Member, you should have known better
25 than that.

Next, we're going to have Judy Chase.

JUDY CHASE: Hello everybody. Well, first of all I'm nervous. I wasn't expecting to speak in front of everybody. I am also a lifelong Queens resident. I was born in Forest Hills and I've moved all the way to Regal Park, attended school and college all in Queens and that's my son, he is as well.

My three biggest passions in life are baseball and I am involved in youth sports. I own a batting cage in Queens. I also run travel baseball teams and work at a parks facility in Canarsie Brooklyn. I'm also a lifelong Mets fan. Let's go Mets and food and music are my other passion. So, anytime we go traveling because of our baseball teams or whatever we're doing. We're always seeking out restaurants, you know casinos to be honest with you and obviously baseball fields and I think Costa said that going to other cities, there's cities that we enjoy the most is when the baseball stadium is in the heart of the city with everything surrounding it.

I know other cities are planning on doing this but looking at the presentation that they have here for Metropolitan Park, it's awesome and I'm not going to get into all the other things that people are

2 talking about; flood zones, I know nothing about
3 that. I just know that the only time I'm ever in
4 that area now is to either go to a Met game or go to
5 the New World Mall that's off the block on Roosevelt
6 Avenue. It's a perfect place for people to spend
7 time. Greenery, flowers, trees, not concrete, I
8 don't understand how you would choose concrete over
9 what's being presented here. Nothing is perfect.
10 There's always going to be issues with whatever we do
11 but I think this is a no brainer. Let's go Mets.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Jesse.

13 JESSE FRIEDMAN: Yeah, so uhm as my mom said, I
14 grew up in Queens, born and raised my whole life and
15 you know I was a child in this area and I went to
16 Flushing Meadow. The only time I went to Flushing
17 Meadow was to play a game, a baseball game. I never
18 went there for any other reason, for no
19 entertainment, to have fun, nothing. It's dirty,
20 it's disgusting and I think that if you look at any
21 of the presentations that's going on and you have a
22 pride of being from Queens, how can you say no? I
23 mean I just don't understand it. It represents what
24 we are as Queens people and right now, what's over

1 there, it doesn't represent anything that we're
2 about.

3
4 As my mom said, we're into food and music and
5 sports and entertainment and I love going to the
6 games. I love going to City Field but that's all I
7 can do. I can go there and then I can go home and I
8 think that you know now that my childhood is over,
9 I'm 33, the kids coming up now to give them a great
10 place to go and a great place to be and to grow up
11 and to you know to see all these incredible things
12 instead of a dingy subway station. Walk down the
13 stairs and here you are City Field. I mean, you know
14 there's a lot more to that area that can be and right
15 now it is less than nothing besides a stadium.

16 So, I just - I don't see how anyone could ever
17 say no to something like this. Let's go Mets.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: If one of you say let's go
19 Mets one more time... Bishop Taylor.

20 BISHOP TAYLOR: Well, good morning Councilman
21 Riley and Councilman Moya and Council Member Lynn
22 Schulman. It is my privilege to be here on today to
23 testify before the Subcommittee on Zoning and
24 Franchise. Let me say before, I usually give my
25 remarks because this is a very passionate project for

1 me. I'm going to read today because I don't want to
2 miss anything that has to be said. This is that
3 important.
4

5 My name of course is Bishop Mitchell Taylor, I'm
6 the CEO and Cofounder of Urban Upbound. Urban
7 Upbound is a nonprofit organization that works to
8 break cycles of poverty and catalyze economic
9 mobility through business innovation, career
10 development, financial empowerment, and key
11 wraparound supports. Particularly in public housing
12 neighborhoods and other low income neighborhoods
13 around the City of New York.

14 Urban Upbound strongly supports Queens Future aka
15 Metropolitan Park, which we believe will serve as a
16 powerful economic engine and public realm upgrade for
17 Queens and for our city as a whole. The Metropolitan
18 Park project addresses a critical need for economic
19 revitalization. Stagnant wages have created profound
20 challenges for working families, especially as
21 housing costs and other expenses continue to rise.
22 This project will help bridge the gap, creating
23 23,000 good paying union jobs throughout its
24 construction operation phases. Offering stability to
25 local families and enhancing our communities economic

1
2 resilience. At Urban Upbound, we've already begun
3 partnering with employers and unions to connect
4 community members with these opportunities and
5 setting them up for success through a mix of career
6 planning, soft skills, hard skills, training. Center
7 to this project design is the commitment to inclusive
8 economic growth. Metropolitan Park minority and
9 women owned business enterprise lending program is a
10 bold step to provide historically marginalized
11 entrepreneurs and access to contracting
12 opportunities. This commitment reflects Urban
13 Upbound's mission as well as our commitment with the
14 Urban Upbound Federal Credit Union -

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Mr. Taylor if you could start
16 wrapping it up for me please.

17 BISHOP MITCHELL TAYLOR: And as we wrap up, we
18 are looking forward to as the Urban Upbound Federal
19 Credit Union, providing small business loans to
20 people that will connect to this project. And I
21 would like to say, anyone that wants to see this
22 project not go forward must, must reconsider common
23 sense. Thank you so much for this opportunity to
24 testify in support of this project. Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: There being no questions for
2 this panel, this panel is excused. Thank you so much
3 for your testimony. Next panel will consist of
4 Former New York City Comptroller William Thompson,
5 Senny Ho Jung, Karen Wang, and Kai Shum.

6 The following panel will consist of Michael
7 Devallera, Joseph Sutkowi, Winston Liao and Joseph
8 Lam. That will be the following panel. You may
9 begin.
10

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Good morning Chair Kevin Riley and
12 Council Members of Committee on Zoning and Franchise.
13 Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Can you just state your name
15 for the record, sorry?

16 SENNY HO JUNG: My name is Senny Jung, Senny Ho
17 Jung, I'm here on behalf of Hamilton Madison House in
18 support of the Metropolitan Park project. We believe
19 Metropolitan Park isn't just a position for develop.
20 It's a position for jobs and economic growth. The
21 23,000 union jobs projected during construction and
22 the 7,000 permanent union jobs once completed.

23 This project will provide stable good paying jobs
24 that our community needs. I will guess it's 40
25 housing manager at Hamilton Madison House, one of New

1
2 York City's reading, behavior health clinics
3 specialize serving the Asian American community.
4 Since 1983, we operated in an outpatient behavioral
5 house clinic, supportive housing at 1148 Avenue in
6 Corona as well we substance use disorder and problem
7 gambling clinic on the lower east side.

8 We are grateful for the way Metropolitan Park has
9 engaged our organization. They have shown a sincere
10 commitment to understanding what the community wants
11 and needs to drive here. Through this project we see
12 real chance to expand our clinic rich and deepen our
13 impact. This development would allow us to create an
14 even stronger support, not to work for community
15 members who desperately need affordable, accessible
16 mental health services, connecting them with the
17 resources they need and deserve. For all this
18 reason, job creation, economic revitalization,
19 community movement, and enhanced social services we
20 support this project and encourage you to approve it.
21 Thank you for your time.

22 WILLIAM THOMPSON JR. My name is William Thompson
23 Jr., former Comptroller of the City of New York and
24 it is an honor to be here. Chairperson Riley,
25 Councilperson Moya, it is a pleasure to see all of

1
2 you today and an honor to speak before you. Thank
3 you for the opportunity.

4 I'm going to be brief and I will not take two
5 minutes, so that you can get out of here earlier. I
6 sit here not as a person who is receiving a check but
7 as a partner in this investment, in this moving
8 forward in building in Queens. In this great
9 opportunity and as has been pointed out, a
10 generational opportunity. I could talk about the
11 outreach that has been done and you've heard about
12 that before and how much has been done and six
13 community boards were voted in favor of it. I don't
14 know that I've seen a project like that that has that
15 kind of support. The borough board that the borough
16 president had that listened and also supported this
17 and so much other support from across Queens.

18 I sit here because I've spent a lifetime in
19 working and focused on minority and women owned
20 businesses. I have yet to see a project that has
21 made this type of commitment to both the community
22 and growing minority and women owned businesses. You
23 heard Bishop Taylor earlier talk about the incredible
24 opportunity in the loan program that I have yet to
25 see in other places that will help minority

1 businesses have a foot hold in this project. It is
2 unique. It needs to be replicated in other places
3 but has been created here. I'm a partner in this.
4 There are minority and women partners in this also.
5 I have yet to see that in any other casino project
6 across the City of New York. So, this is an
7 opportunity for jobs, for growth, for businesses in
8 the Queens and other areas to grow as part of the
9 minority and women owned business community. This is
10 a unique opportunity. We should not let this go. I
11 urge the Council and this Subcommittee to vote yes in
12 favor of this project.

14 KAREN WANG: First of all, thank you for offering
15 me the opportunity to speak. My name is Karen Wang.
16 I'm here on behalf of Hamilton Madison House to
17 support the Metropolitan Park project. This is an
18 exciting project that we will bring year around
19 entertainment, dining, green space and public
20 transportation improvement to create a lively space
21 that all Queens and New York can be part of. The
22 Metropolitan project is more than just a development.
23 It's about creating jobs, boosting our local economy,
24 it is expected to create thousands of union jobs
25 during construction and several thousand permanent

1 union jobs once it's finished. Jobs that our
2 community that very needs.

3
4 I'm working as a Program Director at Hamilton
5 Madison House, often New York City behavioral health
6 connect service Asian American community. Since
7 1983, we have operated an outpatient behavioral
8 health clinic, a supportive housing at Corona Queens.
9 A behavioral health outpatient clinic in lower east
10 side. This is the first and only one in New York
11 City and state. We serve communities across with 11
12 Asian languages and dialect. We are grateful that
13 the way of Metropolitan Park has engaged our
14 organization and other local shareholder to numerous
15 listening sessions. They have showed a sincere
16 commitment to understand what the community wants and
17 need to drive there. Through this project, we see a
18 real chance to expand our clinic reach and deepen our
19 impact. The development allows us to create an even
20 stronger support network for our community members
21 who desperately need affordable, accessible mental
22 health services. Connecting them with the resources
23 that they need and deserve.

24 For all those reasons, job creation, economic
25 growth, community involvement and enhance of social

1 service, we fully support the Metropolitan project
2 and encourage you to approve it. Thank you.

3
4 KAI SHUM: Hello and good morning Chair Riley and
5 the Council Members. Thank you for letting me speak
6 today. My name is Kai Shum and I'm delivering a
7 testimony in support of the Metropolitan Park plan.
8 I'm a youth of Queens who has heard many promises but
9 not enough actions. I grew up around the Bland
10 Project parks, right by College Point and Roosevelt
11 Avenue where there are countless prostitutes, drug
12 dealers being picked up on the streets.

13 We have an opportunity to transform this area
14 which is a block away from the Bland Project parks to
15 have a beautiful park given live music and solely has
16 ensured security, more than just a handball court and
17 netless basketball courts.

18 From the renderings, we have seen the beautiful
19 space that this can transform into and as a New
20 Yorker, we're always hearing about countless projects
21 but when will these projects actually happen? We
22 actually have the funding now to make some of these
23 projects happen and when I have kids, I want to tell
24 them that I was part of something that made this
25 community better. We want to see things happen and

1 not just hear about it all the time. As a youth,
2 it's been about like 20, 30 years I have seen much
3 happening but we finally have a chance to have a
4 project that showcases the liveliness of the
5 community, gives diversity, gives back to the
6 minority business owners and which is why I truly
7 support this project.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. There
10 being no questions for this panel, thank you so much
11 for testifying today.

12 The next panel I will be calling up consists of
13 Michael Devallera. Excuse me if I mispronounced your
14 name Mike. Joseph Sutkowi, Winston Liao, and Joseph
15 Lam.

16 The following panel will consist of Reggie
17 Pegues, Tom Grech, Jeehae Fischer and Ahyoung Kim.
18 We will begin first with Michael.

19 MICHAEL DEVALLEA: Good morning Council Members.
20 My name is Michael Devallera, a resident of Corona
21 Queens, Community Organizer, Chair of Neighborhood
22 Advisory Board 3, Treasurer of Dory Miller Co-op,
23 former CB3 Executive Board member and an associate of
24 various affordable housing advocacies.
25

1 My guiding principle is how to make New York City
2 better and how we can leave a positive legacy. Let's
3 take this moment to embark upon an experiment. In
4 fact, let's say it's a journey into the future. A
5 future mind you, that is epic, transformative, and
6 well within our reach. Let's give it a name so it's
7 easy for us to recall, Metropolitan Park. Close your
8 eyes. Picture a vibrant 20 acre park where families
9 gather. Where children play on new sports field.
10 Where neighbors meet over meals at local restaurants
11 and food courts. Imagine a thriving community hub
12 with a theater, a hotel, a new ADA compliant subway
13 station, making Flushing Meadow Park more accessible.
14 6,000 permanent union wage jobs, 23,000 additional
15 construction jobs. Can you see the future now?
16 I'm speaking of a future where there is hope for our
17 young people, a future where in the blink of an eye
18 some historical wrongs can be righted, a neighborhood
19 renewed, and iconic landmark created.

21 This isn't just about development, it's about
22 purpose. It's about opportunity. It's about
23 investing in a neighborhood that has long deserved
24 more and yet has been woefully neglected. Can you
25

1 feeling the future nudging us? Metropolitan Park is
2 in your hands. It's here. It's now.

3 Council Members let's build it. Thank you.

4 JOSEPH SUTKOWI: Hi there. Thank you for the
5 opportunity to speak today. I'm Joseph Sutkowi, I'm
6 the Chief Waterfront Design Officer at Waterfront
7 Alliance and a resident of Woodside Queens. I'm
8 leading a project with Waterfront Alliance to make
9 Flushing Meadows Corona Park more resilient. We have
10 Metropolitan Park is a partner on that project along
11 with New York City Parks. They've been a great
12 partner to work in that central core of the park and
13 also in the Meadow Lake areas.

14 Through that work, we've seen the constant
15 flooding issues in Flushing Meadows. We know how hot
16 it gets around the park. Both of those issues are
17 made so much worse by just having giant parking lots
18 around. Metropolitan Park is a way to make that
19 space green again. We see how underfunded the park
20 is. City budget isn't going to allow the kind of
21 really generational change that this project would on
22 those existing parking lots. This is a way to create
23 a lifeline for improvements in Flushing Meadows and
24 we at Waterfront Alliance are very eager to see that
25

1
2 come to fruition. We fully support this project and
3 are excited to see the change in the neighborhood.

4 Thank you.

5 WINSTON LIAO: Councilman Riley and Council
6 Members. My name is Winston Liao, I'm a current
7 Board Member with Metro Athletic Dragons, Dragon Boat
8 Team. I live in Councilman Moya's District, lifelong
9 resident of East Elmhurst, probably one of the first
10 Asian American families to move in back in the early
11 80's of the time. I'm here today to support the
12 Metro Park development because one of my hobbies, two
13 of my hobbies is dragon boating and we practice out
14 of the World's Fair Marina. For a very long time
15 Pier 1 at Worl's Fair Marina has been around as long
16 as the parking lot that we're looking to rezone has
17 been, along 80 years, and ever since then the Parks
18 Department has always tried to make - has tried to
19 replace the Pier. That have never come to fruition
20 because of lack of funds or funds being diverted
21 elsewhere. For many years, members of my team, my
22 community have reached out to elder developments
23 along with the air train, the Olympics Bid but what
24 better development than Metro Park where they're
25 looking to reconnect Flushing Meadow Corona Park

1 through the stadium, through a new 25 acre park,
2 through the rebuilding of Shea Road and the
3 waterfront. To bring back the ferry, you need a new
4 pier, a pier that's up to date with standard codes,
5 safety regulations and all that. And not only will
6 the new pier bring back the ferry service, it will
7 also keep our dragon boat community home in World's
8 Fair Marina because we've been there since the 90's
9 and come this April, we're losing our home. Come
10 this April because the Parks Department, the Piers
11 have failed inspections.
12

13 So, I am supporting Metro Park because
14 contributions, their commitment to extending park to
15 park to waterfront, we'll have our new pier and we
16 get to keep our home to our World's Fair Marina.
17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Joseph.

19 JOSEPH LAM: Good morning. Thank you for giving
20 me the opportunity to testify. My name is Joe Lam,
21 I'm here to express my strong support for the
22 Metropolitan Park project. It's an informative
23 development that promises to bring 23,000 union jobs
24 during construction, 6,000 union jobs when it's open.
25 It will revitalize Flushing and surrounding

1 community, not to mention significantly boost local
2 businesses including restaurants and shops.

3
4 This visionary project offers a comprehensive mix
5 of benefit including a life concert venue, a foot
6 hall securing local vendors, a world class hotel and
7 casino. Additionally, the inclusion of 25 acres of
8 open green space for community use, which underscore
9 the teams commitment to creating a vibrant,
10 accessible and inclusive environment for everyone.

11 As someone with professional experience in
12 marketing and outreach for major organizations such
13 as MTM and [INAUDIBLE 01:53:04] Casino, I can
14 confidently say the Metropolitan Park teams extensive
15 community engagement effort set them apart. Over the
16 past two and a half years they have gone above and
17 beyond to involve local stakeholders particularly
18 members of the tiniest community, Chinese and Korean
19 community. Soliciting their input concern, ideas and
20 priority for this project. I firmly believe that
21 this project will be a catalyst for economic and
22 cultural growth in Flushing and beyond and I urge the
23 necessary authority to approve it without delay.

24 Thank you very much.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. I have a question
3 for Winston. Winston, what is dragon boating? You
4 hear me over here whispering, I'm trying to look it
5 up but can you explain it to me please?

6 WINSTON LIAO: So, dragon boating, it's a paddle
7 sport. Uhm, it comes with a boat with either 20 or
8 10 paddlers, more standard wide here in the states.
9 It has a dragon head in the front and a tail in the
10 back and it's a racing competition sport. We have
11 international competitions worldwide. The largest in
12 New York is the Hong Kong Dragon Festival at Corona
13 Park at Meadow Lake.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: When's that?

15 WINSTON LIAO: That's usually first weekend of
16 August.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: That sounds rich and diverse
18 New York City. There's so much talent here. Thank
19 you.

20 WINSTON LIAO: So, it's predominantly, it
21 originated in China and now it has grown where the
22 top teams in the world are the Canadians in our
23 region, at least in our region and they're non-
24 Asians, so it's a multi-ethnic sport.

1 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Well, thank you so much
2
3 Winston. This panel is excused. Thank you. Our
4 next panel consists of Tom Grech, Grech, excuse me.
5 It's not me, you ought to see how people are writing
6 their names. Reggie Pegues, you guys can correct me
7 on the mic, alright. Jeehae Fischer.

8 JEEHAE FISCHER: Jeehae.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Jeehae on the mic and Ahyoung
10 Kim. I got your name right, right okay. We could
11 begin first with Tom.

12 TOM GRECH: Council Members, it's an indeed a
13 pleasure to see you. Before my remarks, I want to
14 invite Council Member Riley. I got a passport and a
15 visa for you to come see Queens, anytime especially
16 for the subway -

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Sure, sure.

18 TOM GRECH: My name is Tom Grech, I'm the
19 President and CEO of the Queens Chamber, oldest and
20 largest business association in Queens County and we
21 are the most diverse business association probably in
22 all the great city of New York. We represent
23 thousands and thousands of member companies and
24 hundred of thousands of Queens based employees. As a
25 Native of Astoria, I'm here today to express my

1 strong support for Metropolitan Park and their plan
2 to turn the empty parking lots into actual public
3 parks around City Field. This is a great
4 opportunity. A couple quick comments, at the end of
5 the day, the ULURP process in the Community Boards, 6
6 and 0. When it comes to baseball or any other sport,
7 it doesn't get better than that 6 and 0 in favor,
8 near 82 or 83 percent of those community board
9 members voice their support. City Planning was a 9
10 to 1 in favor and as some of that was part of every
11 single one of those ULURPS and hundreds and hundreds
12 of meetings. I can tell you that the community at
13 large across the board is in favor.
14

15 As a business organization, you'll probably also
16 find that we are the most pro union Chamber of
17 Commerce in the history of the City of New York and
18 these are 23,000 union jobs, \$8 billion, and we talk
19 about it all the time in our business meetings, about
20 the fact that it's all private. No impact on the
21 taxpayers at all and the money this is going to
22 generate is going to be incredible.

23 For families living across Queens, finding a good
24 paying jobs is a really, really important thing,
25 especially in the current environment. These are job

1
2 opportunities for everybody, from working in the
3 construction and development of the site to working
4 at the hotels restaurants and parks.

5 I might add, if it hasn't been said yet, those
6 23,000 jobs to get started will then yield to 6,000
7 permanent jobs afterwards, all union.

8 What I want to say in closing is, we are building
9 a sports and entertainment mecca in our midst.
10 Between the Mets, the Queens Museum, Theater in the
11 Park, USTA, Tennis and a world class soccer stadium
12 on top of the \$8 billion LaGuardia Airport, it's a
13 great place to be and this is a generational
14 opportunity. I'm grateful for your time and I yield.
15 Thank you.

16 REGGIE PEGUES: Good morning. Thank you for
17 having me. My name is Reggie Pegues, owner and CEO
18 of Pegues Group Solutions where we empower
19 communities and also build futures through real
20 estate. I am an avid supporter of this project. I
21 live in Dorie Miller Housing which is the largest
22 residential community right now directly adjacent to
23 this proposed project. One of the major benefits
24 that you may or may not understand is that we live in
25 what's called an urban oven. From the parking lot,

1
2 absorbing heat through the summer months and the
3 runways from LaGuardia, the ambient temperature is
4 approximately 10 to 12 degrees higher than any other
5 surrounding areas in the community.

6 By transforming this parking lot into a park,
7 it's going to reduce that, improve the air quality
8 for people who maybe have respiratory issues but most
9 importantly it's going to be a designation where
10 people could come and participate and engage in the
11 park.

12 I fully support the program because the benefits
13 that it's going to provide, not only for the
14 immediate community but for the outlined borough and
15 for the city is going to be tremendous. So,
16 therefore, we're asking that you support this and
17 it's going to be a great benefit. We're going to
18 continue to correct the wrongs of Robert Moses,
19 reconnect the community and make it a landmark and a
20 designation place for people to come throughout the
21 world. Thank you.

22 JEEHAE FISCHER: Good after- well, it's actually
23 in the morning. Good morning. My name is Jeehae
24 Fischer, I serve as the Executive Director of the
25 Korean American Family Service Center. Thank you

1 Chairman Riley and Council Member Schulman and
2 Council Member Moya for the opportunity to testify
3 today. For 36 years, KAFSC has been dedicated to
4 serving individuals effected by gender based
5 violence. As a nonprofit committed to empowering
6 immigrant survivors and their families, we recognize
7 the critical need for a safe, accessible public
8 spaces that foster healing, wellbeing and community
9 connection.
10

11 Queens Future has set an important precedent by
12 actively engaging community members including
13 organizations like KAFSC in shaping this project
14 through community meetings, listening sessions, and
15 ongoing dialogues, the Parks Development has ensured
16 that the voices of Queens residents, particularly
17 immigrants in historically under represented groups
18 are heard and reflected in its design and
19 programming. We deeply appreciate that this process
20 has prioritized inclusivity, making the park not just
21 a green space but a vital hub for cultural
22 connection, wellness and shared community life. As a
23 proud partner in this effort, we strongly believe
24 that this initiative will bring lasting benefits to
25 all who rely on the community spaces for support,

1 recovery and connection. Investing in Queens Future
2 is an investment in the future of Queens, one that
3 will serve generations to come fostering a stronger,
4 healthier and more connected borough. I look forward
5 to seeing the positive impact of this project on our
6 entire community. Thank you.

8 AHYOUNG KIM: Thank you Chair. Good afternoon,
9 my name is Ahyoung Kim and I serve as the Director of
10 Economic Empowerment at the Asian American
11 Federation. We are a leadership organization that
12 works with 60 plus nonprofits across the city to
13 create a collective voice for the Pan-Asian community
14 and my team has been working for the past four years
15 giving direct technical assistance to small
16 businesses across Northeast Queens to make sure that
17 they have a fair chance to survive and thrive in our
18 bad economy.

19 I'm here today to express our support for the
20 Metropolitan Park Project, which stands to create
21 thousands of good paying jobs, provide critical
22 economic stability and offer new opportunities for
23 small businesses and local residents alike. This is
24 precisely the kind of investment our community needs.

1 Now, when I go around doing outreach to small
2 businesses along the northern boulevard in Northeast
3 Queens, a lot of them still tell that after years of
4 COVID-19 pandemic and Asian hate, they still have
5 high concerns for public safety and they don't know
6 how safe their business will be, not just from Asian
7 hate but also from like federal government coming in
8 to get them and targeting our communities.

9 This is really detrimental to our community and
10 our economy Chair and we want to ask those who are
11 opposed to this plan, have you actually talked to the
12 small businesses that are still struggling? Have you
13 talked to the businesses that are saying, we are not
14 having clients coming in. We don't have regular
15 people that used to support our business and we need
16 to make sure that we have a more diverse cliental as
17 well as a fair chance to promote our business to all
18 New Yorkers. This Queens Future is exactly the plan
19 that is going to bring the kind of opportunity to
20 Northeast Queens and our small businesses. Also, for
21 the same, when it comes to job opportunities Chair, a
22 lot of people have made blatant claims saying that
23 the jobs are going to be temporary. I don't think
24 they understand the current status of like where job
25

1 training programs right now do not actually have a
2 pipeline to real job allocation for the lower income
3 community members.
4

5 The federation and our member organizations that
6 do job training programs right now already see that
7 there is not enough jobs in our community and no
8 matter how much ESL classes you give to immigrant
9 communities, that is not creating a more economic
10 stimulus. So, we are happy to support this and we
11 urge you to vote yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being no
13 questions, this panel is excused. Thank you so much
14 for testifying. The next panel will consist of Davon
15 Lomax, Megan from Hotel Trades Council, Nicole Bailey
16 and - I heard that Reggie. And Johnathan from Queens
17 Together.

18 Johnathan from Queens Together, oh there you go,
19 Nicole Bailey, okay Nicole's online. Okay, so I'll
20 take Nicole out and I'm going to add Brian Chen to
21 this panel. Brian Chen. Oh and Nicole is here,
22 alright we're not going to add Brian. Nicole, come
23 on. We'll begin with Lomax.

24 DAVON LOMAX: Good afternoon. Thank you for
25 having me Chair and all the Council Members here.

1 My name is Devon Lomax, I'm the Political Director at
2 District Council 9. We're the Painters and Allied
3 Trade Union representing over 12,000 men and women in
4 the finishing trades and we come in complete support
5 of this project for Queens Future and Metropolitan
6 Park for this ULURP process. You know our members
7 live in the community and an earlier speaker said
8 something about what jobs? It's not you know what
9 jobs? It's not about jobs; it's about unionized
10 careers and that's what Metropolitan Park is
11 proposing for this project and that's why we support
12 it. You know we're living in uncertain times and in
13 the construction industry, if we don't work, we don't
14 get paid. If our members don't work, they can't feed
15 their families. They can't send their kids to
16 college and this project is going to help them
17 succeed in that and that's why we are in complete
18 support of this project and I personally am in
19 complete opposition of Council Member Moya's suit.
20

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: Chair, I would like that
22 stricken from record.

23 MEGAN: Good afternoon everyone. I'll start by
24 saying I'm in support of Council Member Moya's suit.
25 Okay, good afternoon everyone and thank you for the

1 opportunity to be here today along with my members.

2 My name is Megan and I'm a Queens Native and a
3 representative from the Hotel and Gaming Trades
4 Council.
5

6 As the union for hospitality and gaming workers,
7 we know first hand how good these jobs can be and
8 what a major shot in the arm projects like this are
9 for our economy. As for this project, Metropolitan
10 Park, the applicant has entered into an excellent
11 labor agreement and we are certain that these jobs
12 will be some of the best hospitality jobs in the
13 entire city. We urge you to vote yes on this project
14 and we look forward to seeing this project come to
15 fruition. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Jon, just turn the mic on for
17 me please. Thanks.

18 JONATHAN: How's that, oh there we go. Thank you
19 Kevin. Before I start, I want to say that I'm not
20 just here to talk about the future of Queens
21 together. I want to talk about what they've already
22 done in our community of Queens.

23 My name is Jonathan Forgas, your proud Queens
24 resident and founder of Queens Together. A food
25 relieve organization that partners with independent

1 restaurants and community organizations to fight
2 hunger.

3
4 This program provides real economic development
5 to the restaurants and provides culturally
6 appropriate meals and groceries to neighbors facing
7 economic insecurity. I strongly support Metropolitan
8 Park because they understand and invest in our
9 communities. Thanks to their financial support,
10 Queens Together provides food relief to thousands of
11 neighbors across the borough. This funding also
12 supports boots on the ground business resource
13 programs for our diverse restaurant community,
14 including advocacy, events, promotions and peer to
15 peer mentorship. Everything a business needs to
16 thrive.

17 Metropolitan Park is more than a once and
18 lifetime opportunity to transform 50 acres of vacant
19 asphalt surrounding City Field. It is also an
20 opportunity to positively impact the health and
21 wealth of the surrounding neighborhoods. Steve Cohen
22 has said that owning the Mets is a civic
23 responsibility with an \$8 billion private investment
24 from Steve Cohen and Hard Rock, Metropolitan Park
25 will bring 23,000 good paying union jobs and more

1 than \$1 billion in community benefits. And why are
2 these jobs important? In Queens, a good paying job
3 isn't just a paycheck, it's a life changer. Every
4 day I see families waiting in long lines at food
5 pantries and people juggling two or three low wage
6 jobs just to get by. The solution to fighting hunger
7 isn't more free food, it's access to well paying
8 union jobs. Metropolitan Park will provide exactly
9 that. Allowing Queens residents to support their
10 families and build financial security. Metropolitan
11 Park is a game changer for Queens. I hope you will
12 support the project and thank you for allowing me to
13 speak today.

14
15 NICOLE BAILEY: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Nicole Bailey. I'm the Founder and Principal of the
17 Learning Tree STEM-art School located in Flushing
18 Queens New York. As someone who has dedicated over
19 two decades to educating children from PK through 8th
20 Grade, I stand before you today or I sit before you
21 today, in strong support of the Metropolitan Park
22 project. Our school is a vibrant tapestry of Black,
23 Brown and Asian children who deserve access to
24 quality green spaces, economic opportunity and a
25 thriving community. I believe this project promises

1 to transform isolation into connection. Our students
2 will gain invaluable outdoor educational spaces that
3 compliment our Stem and Arts curriculum with a new
4 public park space and playgrounds.
5

6 As an educator, I'm particularly excited about
7 the projects commitment to creating 23,000 good
8 paying union jobs. Many of our families have
9 struggled with Queens 5.4 unemployment rate, higher
10 than both city and national averages. These jobs
11 represent real pathways to stability for families.
12 The modernization of the Mets Willets Point 7 Train
13 Station will make our community to more accessible
14 and ADA, that's the American Disability Act,
15 compliant, allowing our students safer transit
16 options. The improved street scape and widened
17 sidewalks will create safer routes for our children
18 to explore their neighborhood. For our community,
19 this project isn't just about buildings and roads,
20 it's about transforming unused space into vibrant
21 community resources that will serve generations of
22 students to come.

23 I urge you; I strongly urge you to join me in
24 supporting the Metropolitan Park project because our
25 children deserve a neighborhood as bright and

1 promising as they are. I believe this park and all
2 it offers will become an attraction locally and
3 internationally. I want you to put your imagination
4 caps on. Imagine families planning vacations from
5 across the country and states to come to this all
6 inclusive park that has something for everyone from
7 the youngest to the oldest. Thank you for your time.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much to this
10 panel. There being no questions, this panel is
11 excused. The next panel will consist of Brian Chen,
12 Michael Hurtz, Jim Burke, and Craig; I can't
13 pronounce your last name Craig, Lastres. You sure?
14 Positive? Okay. Jim Burke and Craig Lastres.

15 After this, we'll have one more in person panel
16 and then we'll transition to online testimony.
17 Craig? Jim? Craig, alright.

18 BRIAN CHEN: Brian.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Brian, go ahead.

20 BRIAN CHEN: Thank you Chair Riley and
21 Subcommittee Members for the opportunity to speak
22 today. My name is Brian Chen and I am the Chief
23 Strategy Officer at the Chinese American Planning
24 Council. We are a 60 year old social services
25 organization. We just celebrated our 60 year

1 anniversary last week. Routed in community and
2 anchored across 35 sites throughout New York City
3 that serve 80,000 individuals and families annually.
4 From early childcare and afterschool programs to
5 English Literacy classes and older adult programming,
6 our holistic services ensure community members not
7 only survive but thrive. The Chinese American
8 Planning Council is supportive of the inclusive
9 community integrated workforce and economic
10 development potential of the Metropolitan Park
11 project as it aligns with our agencies mission to
12 promote the social and economic empowerment of
13 immigrant and low income New Yorkers.
14

15 As an organization that provides linguistically
16 accessible and culturally competent employment
17 services and wrap around supports, we believe
18 Metropolitan Park has the potential to move the
19 needle on economic mobility for Queens residents by
20 creating real pathways for the upscaling, hiring and
21 retention of local talent. Through the projects
22 commitment to supporting workforce development,
23 workforce training, job creation and career
24 advancement, Metropolitan Park is positioned to be an
25 opportunity hub inclusive at the local business

1 community and the boroughs diverse but often
2 marginalized populations including multilingual and
3 multigenerational immigrants, individuals with
4 disabilities, and unemployed and underemployed Queens
5 residents served by community organizations such as
6 the Chinese American Planning Council. I want to
7 thank you again for your time.

8
9 CRAIG LASTRES: Good afternoon everybody. My
10 name is Craig Lastres and I'm the Chief Operating
11 Officer at Common Point and a resident of Queens,
12 which really supports this project. Common Point
13 serves over 100,000 people of Queens to use our
14 services each year. We see this project as a real
15 chance to help community. 30,000 of those people use
16 our food pantries every year. That's a chance to
17 bring those people in the surrounding areas from
18 crisis to stability. By offering them well paying
19 jobs, creating them workforce opportunities, which
20 means getting them off those food pantry lines and
21 giving them a real chance to flourish.

22 Second, we talk about a park and no one's really
23 mentioned but in that park, there's actually a park
24 for those with disabilities. How many parks have a
25 park that specializes for those with disabilities?

1
2 Having a park with a chance for children to play with
3 disabilities is something that's not you know
4 popular, it's rare, so I really think that's an
5 amazing opportunity, not just for the people of
6 Queens but people of New York City to go use and also
7 helps our 500 participants that do have disabilities
8 for a place to go to actually have fun in the summer
9 months. Lastly, we need to think about the future,
10 not just for today but our children then their
11 children. This really is a chance for everybody to
12 have a good opportunity to flourish in the future.
13 Thank you.

14 JIM BURKE: Hi, my name is Jim Burke. I grew up
15 in the Bronx but I've been in Queens since 1990 and
16 since then, we just recently got our 82nd Street
17 subway fixed in the Bronx with no elevator. After
18 waiting all these years to finally get it fixed and
19 you still can't access it. My mom is 81 can't access
20 it. What Metropolitan Park is going to do is bring a
21 lot of these infrastructure projects that we wait and
22 have waited for 10 or 20 years and they're going to
23 happen quickly. So, we're going to have a fully
24 accessible subway station that instead of being an
25 embarrassment and old and grimy, for many people it's

1 the only time they take the subway is to go to a Mets
2 game or a tennis game. They might not take the
3 subway any other time. It's an opportunity to catch
4 them and what do we show them, a maze up and down
5 sideways, stairs here, stairs there, ramps nowhere.
6 The other thing we're going to get open space. We
7 fight, I'm in Danny Dromm's District, we had to fight
8 for a tiny piece of Travis Park, it took forever, and
9 to get 25 acres of a public park including one that's
10 set aside for people with autism and a sensory park.
11 That's just incredible and whose paying for it? is
12 it us? No. They are going to pay for all of this
13 infrastructure that we desperately need and that we
14 can use to go to Flushing. You never even have to
15 step foot in the casino. You never have to even step
16 in City Field but if you walk and bike and take the
17 subway, you will benefit from this project. I'm
18 really happy about the lighting along Roosevelt, it's
19 really nice to walk on a summer day after a game but
20 not on a parked street with cars wising by and no
21 overhead lighting. They have addressed that. It's
22 going to make it pleasant and I think that when
23 someone else is footing the bill, let's take them up
24 on that please. Thank you.
25

1 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much. There
2 being no questions, the panel is excused. Thank you.

3 JIM BURKE: Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: The last in person panel and
5 if I don't call your name in this panel, please see
6 one of the Sergeant at Arms for a speakers card.
7 Robert Dorsky, Eduardo Valentin, Edward McWilliams
8 and Liang Ming.

9 If I did not call your name and you would like to
10 testify, please see one of the Sergeant at Arms for a
11 speakers card. Eduardo, you could go ahead. You may
12 begin. If you could just turn the mic on.

13 ROBERT DORSKY: Hello, testing, there we go. Hey
14 good morning Council. Good afternoon I should say.
15 Thank you for having me here today. My name is
16 Robert Dorsky, I'm a small business owner in Flushing
17 Queens. I employ close to 30 hardworking
18 individuals. I'm very involved in the hospitality
19 business and upon speaking with fellow business
20 owners in the Flushing community, restaurant club and
21 bar owners, we all agree that North Queens needs a
22 project like Metropolitan Park.

23 We want people who fly into LaGuardia and JFK to
24 stay and spend money in Queens. We are tired of
25

1 SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES 119
2 seeing people go elsewhere and spend their tourist
3 dollars. In addition to my Flushing business, I am
4 also a former board member of Sage House Apartments
5 next to Dorie Miller in North Corona a few blocks
6 from City Field. As a long time resident of Corona,
7 I can tell you Roosevelt Avenue is not a vibe. It is
8 not a hot spot. It is rampant with crime. We should
9 be grateful to Steve Cohen and team to invest in our
10 community, their money to give us more jobs and
11 opportunities.

12 So, moving forward on that, I've been hearing
13 some of the opposition and the conspiracies out
14 there. Four years they have engaged the community
15 and they've actually come up with a program, a Queens
16 Passport program engaging over 100 restaurants and
17 businesses so money can be spent in our community.
18 No one else is giving us that opportunity. So, as a
19 local business man, as a local resident with someone
20 who actually lives in Corona, not these outsiders.
21 This is my back yard, I'm from Queens. I would like
22 you to vote yes for Queens and vote yes for
23 Metropolitan Park. Thank you.

24 EDWARD MCWILLIAMS: Good afternoon Chairman
25 Riley, distinguished members of the Subcommittee on

1 Zoning and Franchises and my esteemed colleagues. My
2 name is Edward McWilliams and I am proud to serve as
3 the Executive Director of the Cement and Concrete
4 Workers District Council LECET Fund. On behalf of
5 our organization, which represents the important
6 contracting employers and the hardworking men and
7 women dedicated to building strong, sustainable
8 communities across New York, I am here to offer our
9 unwavering support for Land Use Numbers 249 and 250,
10 the Queens Future Map Change and Amendment Proposed
11 by Queens Future LLC.
12

13 These applications represent the bold and forward
14 thinking vision for Queens. One that aligns with the
15 needs of our workers, our industry and the broader
16 community. The proposed rezoning will unlock
17 significant opportunities for economic growth, job
18 creation, and infrastructure improvements, spanning
19 community boards 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9, and Council
20 District 21.

21 These are the kinds of opportunities that sustain
22 families, strengthen neighborhoods and ensure that
23 Queens remains a vibrant hub for working people.
24 Moreover, the thoughtful design of this proposal
25 demonstrates a commitment to balancing development

1 with community needs. For example, the adjustments
2 in the Grand Central Parkway, including the westbound
3 ramp will enhance connectivity and alleviate traffic
4 congestion, benefiting both workers and residents in
5 the area who rely on efficient transportation
6 networks. These changes reflect a comprehensive
7 approach to urban planning that prioritizes economic
8 vitality and quality of life.

10 The Queens Future Map changing amendment is more
11 than a rezoning, it is an investment in the boroughs
12 long term prosperity. By establishing a CA4
13 District, this project will pave the way for
14 commercial industrial growth, attracting businesses
15 to create jobs and generate revenue for the City of
16 New York. At the same time, it preserves Queens
17 unique character by integrating new development with
18 existing infrastructure and community assets.

19 On behalf of the Cement and Concrete workers
20 LECET Fund, I urge the Subcommittee to approve 249
21 and 250. It's a rare opportunity to deliver tangible
22 benefits to workers, businesses, and residents alike.
23 Thank you for your time and consideration.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Ms. Ming.
25

1
2 LIANG MING: Okay, good afternoon. I'm excited
3 for the opportunity to speak and my name is Liang
4 Ming. I'm the Program Director of Glow Cultural
5 Center located on 41st Avenue in downtown Flushing.
6 I'm also a Queens resident for ten years of
7 immigration experience.

8 Our center provides cultural wellness and our
9 youth development programs and serving as a hub for
10 community activity. We aim to serve the
11 multicultural potential population of our community,
12 including but not limited to the underserved new
13 immigrant, low income households in Flushing and the
14 nearby communities. I support the Metropolitan Park
15 plan because I have witnessed first hand how Sunny
16 and his team engaged with the Community at our
17 center. They hosted one of the very first visioning
18 sessions at our center with my crowd.

19 Residents from different ethnic groups were
20 invited to sit at the same table and share their
21 visions and concerns. I'm most impressed by the live
22 music venue that has the potential to bring the best
23 singers and the bands to Queens, which is nearby my
24 house. I don't need to take a train for four hours
25 to other place to enjoy the show. Please vote yes to

1 this plan and give a chance to move forward. My name
2 Liang Ming, that means double bright lights. We are
3 looking forward to a brighter Queens Future. Thank
4 you.

5
6 EDUARDO VALENTIN: Good afternoon Council
7 Members. I'm last but hopefully not least once
8 again. My name is Eddie Valentin. I am a homeowner
9 and own two LGBTQIA bars in Jackson Heights for more
10 than 35 years. One of my bars friends tavern
11 recently won the Queens Historical Plaque for being a
12 great community partner. The reason I mention this
13 is because I'm here to support this project because I
14 know Mr. Cohen, his team and the Hard Rock Hotel will
15 take on a new level of community partnership in
16 Queens.

17 For a reality check, each time I put a help
18 wanted ad, I get 50 to 100 people applying for a bus
19 boy or even a bar back position. Many applicants
20 tell me they want to be close to Queens because they
21 have children in school or they take care of their
22 elderly parents. It's sad to see how many excellent
23 candidates I cannot give a job to.

24 So, now we see a project that's coming and
25 creating 23,000 construction phase union jobs and

1
2 6,000 union permanent jobs, which our surrounding
3 neighborhoods definitely needs. I haven't seen too
4 many people reaching out to do this in the past and I
5 have been in business there 35 years. So, most
6 projects happen in Queens quietly without our
7 neighbors knowing about it. We have ugly warehouses
8 opening every where in the neighborhoods and our
9 opinions are never considered, however, Mr. Cohen,
10 Sulli and his team did things differently and they
11 asked a group of us in the community to get together.
12 They presented with a project that was already an
13 incredibly positive project and yet they still asked
14 for our opinion and they still, whatever comments we
15 made ended up under a vision board. So, it wasn't
16 like they were asking us and they weren't listening
17 to us. They listened to what the community wanted
18 and what the neighbors needed.

19 Mr. Cohen has been completely transparent with
20 this project without making promises, we have already
21 seen how much the Mets Foundation has given back to
22 our local communities. Imagine how much more they're
23 going to give back now that they have made promises
24 and I'm sure they're going to live up to these
25 promises.

1
2 They are billionaire companies outside selling
3 cellphones with algorithms. They don't want to
4 create algorithms to hook up our kids, what they want
5 to do is give back park space and we hear our
6 neighbors talking about more affordable housing,
7 there's many empty lots that are being turned into
8 these local food chains so they can be used for
9 affordable housing. This is park space and should be
10 used for green park spaces.

11 One last thing, please - right now the place has
12 the four d's, which are it's dingy, it's dirty, it's
13 dangerous and it's dark and they're turning it into a
14 well-lit, clean, beautiful and a safe space. Thank
15 you for listening to us all.

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Alright, thank you. There
17 being no questions, the panel is excused. Okay,
18 we're going to transition online. First, we're going
19 - thank you. First, we're going to go with a panel
20 that's against the project and then we're going to go
21 with a panel that's for the project.

22 First panel will consist of Joseph Decco(SP?),
23 Cody Herman, Melissa Zavalla, and Shandra Gomes.
24 Following will consist of Patrick Young, Bryan Lee,
25 Joann Yu(SP?) and Charles Apelian. So, first I'm

1 going to begin with Joseph Decco. Joseph, if you can
2 hear me, please unmute and you may begin.

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

4 JOSEPH DECCO: Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

6 JOSEPH DECCO: Thank you and pardon my voice.

7 I'm having a bit of a medical experience today. I've
8 heard Sulli give his pitch many times now and it
9 seems like each addition, the veneer comes off a
10 little bit more to expose the essence of it, which is
11 give us this land or it's going to stay a parking lot
12 for the next 80 years. This is a shakedown and the
13 supposed consensus on the part of the community
14 boards doesn't really represent since those positions
15 are appointed and not elected. The City Council,
16 however, is elected and I would like to implore you
17 to exercise some judgement and take some pride in
18 your role to not fall victim to a shakedown and to
19 not meekly deflect responsibility to well- it's the
20 State Gaming Commission or it's the State
21 Legislature. Please consider the issue before you on
22 its own merits and I will submit further written
23 comments as well but I am opposed and I believe most
24
25

1 of Community District 3, where I am shares this
2 sentiment. Thank you for your time.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next we'll hear
5 from Cody Herman.

6 CODY HERMAN: Thank you. My name is Cody Herman,
7 I'm a lifelong resident of Flushing and I'm
8 testifying against the Queens Futures proposal today.

9 I'm an appointed member of Queens Community Board
10 7, so I've been to a lot of meetings about this
11 project and all the projects that are really setting
12 out to change the face of 150 acres of land
13 surrounding Flushing Creek, from Flushing to Willets
14 Point to City Field. Many of these projects are
15 textbook green gentrification and I wish the city
16 would reconsider the long term outcomes and indirect
17 displacement on existing surrounding neighborhoods.
18 At my Community Board, I've been repeatedly silent,
19 stirring ULURP meetings for sharing my thoughts
20 against the Queens Future project and other projects
21 like this in the neighborhood. As I know many others
22 in different Community Boards have also been bullied
23 and threatened sometimes by the applicant teams
24 themselves.
25

1 I say this a lot but it's not poverty that causes
2 displacement, it's massive injections of wealth like
3 this that cause existing area residents and
4 businesses to have to move to move out of their
5 neighborhoods. I would also like to emphasize that
6 this is not likely a once in a lifetime opportunity.
7 Different iterations of this proposal have been
8 proposed on and off over the last 30 years since the
9 downtown Flushing revitalization plan in the early
10 90's. It's basically a false dichotomy to suggest
11 that you know this could never happen again and we'll
12 never have another chance at developing this land.

14 Sulli noted that he thinks this is the best site
15 in the city for a project like this. That this
16 waterfront adjacent site and a historic wetland might
17 be a great place for a massive 2,000 plus room hotel,
18 a convention center and a concert hall. And a NASA
19 study put out in 2023, they actually noted nearby
20 areas like LaGuardia Airport and the Arthur Ash
21 Tennis Stadium are sinking. Nearly half a centimeter
22 a year. They're sinking faster than any other areas
23 in the city. We know that this land used to be
24 wetlands and is incredibly vulnerable to flooding and
25 sinking. Why are we building a mega project here?

1 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

2 CODY HERMAN: Huh?

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You could wrap it up Ms.
5 Herman.

6 CODY HERMAN: Uhm, thank you. It's poor landuse
7 to approve these zoning districts to allow large
8 commercial projects in such ecologically vulnerable
9 places and ironically the Coney Island Casino,
10 another massive development is in an area that's also
11 notably sinking worse than any other places in the
12 city. I really think that it's time to start
13 thinking about a managed retreat and rethinking how
14 we build in Northeast Queens, and really what the
15 future looks like in terms of infrastructure -

16 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you Ms. Herman. Thank
17 you.

18 CODY HERMAN: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Next, we'll have Melissa
20 Zavalla.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

22 MELISSA ZAVALLA: Thank you for this opportunity
23 to speak. I could reiterate some of the really
24 important points that others have already made but
25

1 I'm going to try to just simply summarize my
2 opposition to this. I'm not an entirely a lifelong
3 resident of Jackson Heights but certainly of Queens
4 and I am in strong opposition to this plan on several
5 fronts. Mainly the point that Ms. Herman was just
6 making about the area sinking, it's after all the
7 wetland and it continues to behave as such and it
8 will do so especially if very heavy infrastructure is
9 added to it.
10

11 So, that alone is a real issue for concern, not
12 to mention the fact that really on the surface, if
13 you - for all those people that cannot believe that
14 there would be opposition to this once in a lifetime
15 project, if it sounds too good to be true, it
16 probably is as the saying goes right and this sounds
17 like a lot of pie in the sky. You have everything
18 from ABA compliance that hasn't been able - that the
19 city hasn't been able to achieve so far to a park for
20 disabled people. Every single thing that anybody
21 wants is there. What else can Sulli and Cohen
22 promise us? It's alarming actually that all of these
23 things would be added and then that we would all
24 believe that this is going to happen. We know that
25 corporations don't have the same aims as people. We

1 can build a project like this without the casino,
2 without the hotel and the luxury and all of that. We
3 can build a park that would enhance our resilience or
4 using city money. We can plan this at Guardian
5 Flushing Bay and the coalition have already been
6 doing some of this work and the communities approve
7 of these proposed plans. We can find the money. If
8 we are underfunding parks, making parks have to
9 rally, for one percent of the city budget every
10 single year, it's no wonder that the peers -

11
12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time is
13 expired.

14 MELISSA ZAVALLA: Okay, thank you. I just want
15 you to please vote against this and support the
16 public land that is Flushing Meadows Park.

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll hear
18 from Shandra Gomes.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Shandra Gomes, if you can
21 hear me, please unmute and you may begin.

22 SHANDRA GOMES: Hello, hello, I'm sorry, I
23 couldn't unmute. Good morning everybody. I just - I
24 am strongly opposed to this. First of all, I feel
25 that public parkland should never be sacrificed to a

1
2 millionaire developer to put more money in his
3 pocket. Once we give away public parklands, it can
4 never be reclaimed. [LOST AUDIO [02:35:19]

5 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you so much Ms. Gomes.
6 There being no questions for this panel. This panel
7 is excused. The next panel I'm going to call up
8 consists of Charles Apelian, Bryan Lee, Joann Yu, and
9 Patrick Young. We'll begin first with Patrick Young.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

11 PATRICK YOUNG: Thank you Councilman Riley and
12 it's good to see you again and to all those who share
13 on this Committee. I am Patrick Young, Pastor of
14 First Baptist Church. Our church has a tremendous
15 food pantry, I will call it free grocery store for
16 1,000 families that meet us every Saturday and they
17 stay from Friday to Saturday 12:00 noon preparing to
18 get their food that we serve them every Saturday.

19 I know first hand what's going on. I hear all
20 this opposition but it's interesting that they don't
21 feel the pain of the people. Them in my community
22 are filling with a lack of living wage jobs and a
23 lack of being able to deal with what I call a food
24 desert where we are in. But not just a food desert,
25 we are an economic desert and because we're an

1 economic desert, this project brings fresh water in a
2 desert that is starving for some fresh water
3 economic.
4

5 In light of our climate we are in right now, this
6 project it has just come in just in the nick of time
7 because we don't have an economic uncertainty and
8 this economic, new economic COVID that we're dealing
9 with now with this Administration. This wonderful
10 project would bring a lifeline to those who need hope
11 and need help in our communities, and I want to
12 encourage you to support this. I support it because
13 it makes economic sense. It makes a living sense.
14 It makes a transforming sense and it makes a better
15 sense for our community that definitely needs a
16 facelift. The community desperately needs an
17 economic lift and a community that desperately needs
18 someone who cares for their future, and that's what
19 Queens Future does. It cares for the future of those
20 in our community.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Time is expired.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next we'll hear
23 from Joann Yu.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.
25

1 JOANN YU: Good afternoon. My name is Joann Yu
2
3 and until recently I served as an Executive Director
4 of a nonprofit organization that worked with hundreds
5 of Asian American small businesses in New York City,
6 in particular Flushing Queens and the surrounding
7 area for at least 20 years. I am testifying to
8 express my strong support for the Queens Future plans
9 for Metro Park. I don't want to echo what everybody
10 else has said in support but I want to talk about a
11 reality right now. I want to shout out all the
12 nonprofit organizations and the community needs that
13 are holding up our community in this economic
14 climate.

15 Right now private philanthropies withdrawing
16 support from nonprofits who support vulnerable and
17 scared immigrants who refuse to ask for help because
18 of the immigration status. Federal government has
19 cut funding to local nonprofits that run food
20 programs, protect victims of domestic violence and
21 other social service safety net programs. I am most
22 excited about the Metro Parks commitment to creating
23 a funding pool to support the great work that's being
24 done by the community groups because we really need
25 the support to be able to maintain this - maintain

1 helping the most vulnerable members of our community.
2 During this time as we're all trying to recover from
3 the economic devastations of COVID that resulted in
4 the loss of thousands of jobs and now with the
5 draconian federal funding cuts, this project has a
6 chance to inject an economy with real paying jobs,
7 improvements to physical space and community
8 philanthropy. I ask this body and City Council to
9 put their visionary hats on and say yes to this
10 opportunity that will surely benefit Queens and our
11 entire city.
12

13 Thank you for your time and consideration.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll hear
15 from Bryan Lee.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

17 BRYAN LEE: Thank you. Thank you for having me
18 Chair Riley and Subcommittee. My name is Bryan Lee
19 born and residing in Queens and I've been running a
20 vocational trade school in Manhattan for over 30
21 years. We're currently graduating hundreds of
22 skilled workers each year who needs jobs. And I know
23 a lot of previous testimonies highlighted this exact
24 thing but that just shows how much gravity job
25 creation is really pulling right now. This is why

1 I'm voicing my support for Metropolitan Park. The
2 majority of the students I graduate from my school
3 happen to be illegal immigrants and we require that
4 all students to be high school graduates at a
5 minimum. So, as you can see, we're graduating trade
6 educated highly skilled citizens the jobs and careers
7 that Metropolitan Park is creating would be huge for
8 schools private like mine and public schools also
9 locally and in the whole city. They need these
10 opportunities and we cannot afford to pass this up.
11 That's the ultimate reason for my support and I look
12 forward to Metropolitan Park being built and us
13 reaping all of its benefits. Let's please get this
14 done. Shout out to Sulli and his team and thank you
15 again to the Committee for giving me this
16 opportunity.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next we'll hear
19 from Charles Apelian.

20 CHARLES APELIAN: Hello Chair Riley and Committee
21 Members. My name is Chuck Apelian, as the Queens
22 Community Board 7 Land Use Chairman, I have held
23 numerous hearings regarding Metropolitan Parks
24 application. To be clear, I want to address prior
25 broad stroke and irresponsible allegations and state

1 as a Community Board member I am not a paid
2 consultant, nor do I have any financial relations
3 with this applicant.
4

5 I am now the Community Board Chairman and I ask
6 this Committee to join our Community Boards
7 overwhelming support to begin the process to convert
8 the asphalt around City Field into a vibrant and
9 economic community hub. A lot of what I wanted to
10 say has already been said, so I won't repeat but this
11 privately funded plan does offer us a once in a
12 lifetime opportunity for new green space,
13 environmental resistance and opportunities for active
14 and passive recreation. Yes, the project will create
15 thousands of good paying union jobs, while ensuring
16 the local hiring of residents and securing contracts
17 with local minority and women owned business. I want
18 to focus on one major benefit that hasn't really been
19 discussed. When we're extremely and especially
20 impressed by the promise to privately fund and build
21 a \$400 million new MTA subway and Long Island
22 Railroad Station improvements, built to MTA
23 standards. I want to emphasize that these huge and
24 important improvements create a modern gateway for
25 the entire area that serves 42,000 fans that attend

1 every event at City Field. 25,000 fans that attend
2 every event at FC's Soccer Stadium, 23,000 fans that
3 attend every event at the USTA Billy Jean King Tennis
4 Stadium and the 10,000 residents and workers-

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Time is expired.

6 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: You could wrap it up Chair.

7 CHARLES APELIAN: That we use the station to
8 reach the new Willets Point development. Without the
9 Metropolitan Park, MTA will never fund these
10 important and much needed station improvements. I
11 ask the Committee to vote yes. Thank you.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being no
14 questions for this panel, this panel is excused. I
15 believe we have two more virtual panels. I'm going
16 to call up the first panel. It consists of Saheeda
17 Dunston, Venny Lachela, Olga Rayas and Maria Ferrell.
18 The following panel will consist of Tammy Rose, Dian
19 Sung Yu, Shenelle Thomas and Larry Gallegos.

20 The first person that I will ask to speak is
21 Saheeda Dunston.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

23 SAHEEDA DUNSTON: Good afternoon. Thank you
24 Chair. Our Council Member from my district,
25 Francisco Moya, and everyone else at the Council here

1 to talk about this land use. I will try to keep this
2 super brief. I am the CEO of Elmcors, we are the
3 oldest Black founded social service and human justice
4 organization in Queens, possibly in the five boroughs
5 for 60 years this year. I say that because one of
6 the things that is very concerning about the
7 opposition and repeatedly we say this over and over
8 again, there is tone deafness of telling Black folks
9 that they have been paid for. And I think that I
10 wanted to make sure that I put that on the record
11 because we continually say that. That we should stop
12 saying that to people who support this project,
13 especially people of color primarily Black folks are
14 being paid for. We are an organization. There was a
15 request to say if we're in business or have received
16 a check. We are in business with the Mets and
17 Metropolitan Park is a process. Our partnership is
18 philanthropic efforts and a relationship to move
19 forward with the idea of being a partner as a Black
20 agency whose been dealing with addiction for 60 years
21 to actually address problem gambling as an issue.

22 One of the things about casinos is we would
23 consider them as bars. They are safe consumption
24 sites. They are sites where people can consume
25

1
2 whatever their consumptions are and be able to get
3 connected to care if necessary.

4 So, that is Elmcors paid business because we are
5 in the business of human justice and they're in the
6 business of dealing with people who have issues with
7 addiction and we know that addiction will not go away
8 just because we don't build a casino but what we want
9 to do is to be in partnership with people who are in
10 need before they end up at the worst end of their
11 times. And so that's been our relationship with this
12 project and we do thank the Mets who have continued
13 to fund us through this process. I've said this
14 repeatedly, prior to this leadership at the Mets,
15 Elmcors who had been a partner in their backyard for
16 decades had not been reached out to. Had not been
17 asked to be a part of any conversations and have not
18 been allowed to -

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

20 SAHEEDA DUNSTON: Have any conversations. For
21 that reason, I just want to say this is still a
22 competitive process and we are just asking for an
23 opportunity to participate and to compete. That is
24 something that Black folks have continued to ask for
25

1
2 for years and will continue to ask. Thank you for
3 the time.

4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next we'll hear
5 from Venny Lachela.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

7 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Venny Lachela, if you can
8 hear me, please unmute. Venny Lachela?

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10 VENNY LACHELA: Can you hear me?

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, we can hear you.

12 VENNY LACHELA: Okay, good afternoon panel. Good
13 afternoon distinguished Council Members and panelists
14 who took the time to come out today. I just want to
15 say that this project is something that this
16 community is in desperate need of. We've seen for
17 years this part of Queens has been underserved. As a
18 person who have lived here over 40 years, some of our
19 families have been here 70 years.

20 Not all of us can be doctors. Not all of us can
21 be for higher education. This provides construction
22 jobs. This provides the blueprints for families to
23 make a new life. It gives an opportunity to people
24 that might not have served. That did not have an
25 opportunity. This project itself is a full year

1 round opportunity for musical and events. This is an
2 opportunity to host different projects that we can't.
3 Anyone that knows in 2012, we lost the bid for the
4 Olympics because as the international body had
5 stated, New York City was not ready to host some type
6 of these events. This puts us on the forefront of
7 the future. It brings jobs to the local community.
8 We're literally listening to everything that this
9 community has asked for. The sessions, everything
10 that was asked for by everybody has been reached. I
11 want to thank Steve Cohen. I want to thank all of
12 the elected officials who have tried their best to
13 give this part of Queens what we need. We need this.
14 The community needs it. We owe it to our children
15 and we cannot stand to let it sit a value of ashes
16 for another 100 years. Thank you very much and God
17 Bless everyone.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll have
20 Olga Rayas. Olga, if you can hear me, please unmute.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

22 OLGA RAYAS: Hello everybody. Thank you for
23 having - giving us the opportunity to speak on behalf
24 of this project. My name is Olga Rayas and I have
25 been listening about this project and have heard many

1 arguments over why it shouldn't happen and why it
2 should happen. In my point of view, I am for the
3 project. Metropolitan Park is proposing a real
4 difference and basically what I'm trying to say is
5 that I keep on hearing people blaming the [INAUDIBLE
6 02:49:31] and they have explained many times, the
7 situation was created by somebody that decided to
8 create this parking lot and make it a park or they
9 name it as a park and I keep on hearing how many
10 times we tried to penalize Metropolitan Park for
11 trying to fix that. Let's talk about this parking
12 lot. The land that once they built has been on a
13 lease for and is going to be on the lease for the
14 next 81 years. With rent actively been caged, so I
15 don't understand why is there a position on building
16 something there of something they are already paying
17 for.

19 I want to see something big and beautiful in our
20 community. I don't want to look in the dark, empty,
21 parking lot anymore. I want to see jobs being
22 created for families and have families have a safe
23 space for kids to play while before a game, after a
24 game.

1 This have also - well brought up to my attention
2
3 is the fact that they're also offering throughout
4 this project, they are going to offer childcare for
5 their employees, something that it's very rare to
6 hear and see in Queens. With this, given the
7 opportunity for those families that work there to be
8 able to have an easier commute to pick up the
9 children and also to go home if they live in the
10 neighborhood. Which from my understanding, this is
11 the purpose of this project.

12 I know some people worry about the casino
13 bringing addiction into -

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Time is expired.

15 OLGA RAYAS: Sorry, let me just finish out this.
16 My kids are already surrounded by smokes and shops
17 and dispensaries and alcohol. I don't see the reason
18 why this project wouldn't come through. I think at
19 the end of the day we want something better for
20 Queens and I want to see more employees being created
21 and have a better and easier commute for families to
22 pick up the children from work and have more quality
23 time with them. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. The last person
25 for this panel is Maria Ferrell.

1 MARIA FERRELL: Good afternoon everyone. Thank
2 you for giving me the opportunity to speak and give
3 my voice to be heard. Again, I do echo everything
4 that everyone has said about supporting this. I'll
5 keep it short but we talked about you know jobs and
6 one of the things is part of my job and my goals and
7 my commitment to my community is to help them be
8 financially fit and I see so many people that don't
9 have good jobs, and what happens not now but what
10 happens when retirement time comes. They don't have
11 ways to retire because if anybody knows, some money
12 if they don't plan, Social Security is not going to
13 be enough. So, that's [INAUDIBLE 02:52:17]. I
14 support this project because we need good jobs with
15 retirement, with benefits and healthcare coverage.

17 The other thing that I hear a lot of people
18 saying about safety, I invite anyone to walk around
19 City Field, around 7:00 or 8:00 when it's dark and
20 let me know if they feel safe or not. I want to be
21 able to leave my job; I work on 94th Street and be
22 able to walk and enjoy green space. If I want to
23 play, I would definitely maybe attend a concert, go
24 out to dinner. So, the reason I support this project
25 is because we do need the jobs. We need the great

2 green space. Again, they talk about that we're
3 taking away parkland. Again, as far as I know
4 everything when I drive home, I just see an empty
5 parking lot. So, another thing, it's Queens yes, and
6 I think that everybody has expressed it. We do serve
7 worldclass entertainment in our backyards. So,
8 please support this project today and for the future.
9 We need it and I hope you decide to do the right
10 thing for Queens.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

12 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being no
13 questions for this panel, this panel is excused. The
14 last panel virtually will consist of Tammy Rose, Dian
15 Sung Yu, Shanelle Thomas, Larry Gallegos and
16 Elizabeth Vian. We'll begin first with Tammy Rose.
17 Tammy, if you can hear me, please unmute and you may
18 begin.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

20 TAMMY ROSE: Hi, good morning. Thank you Council
21 for allowing us to speak. My name is Tammy Rose, I
22 live in Jackson Heights. I'm a mom, an early
23 childhood educator, small business owner and veteran
24 and most of all, I'm a lover of my Queens community.

1 I'm here today to express my strong support for the
2 Metropolitan Park Project.
3

4 In full transparency, my company Little Friends
5 has provided and may provide in the future services
6 to Queens Future such as consulting services with
7 respect to the design and the onsite childcare
8 facility to be located at the Metropolitan Park site.
9 This childcare facility is what I'm here fighting
10 for. When I first heard about this project, I was
11 ambivalent but after attending the first town hall
12 and hearing about the 24,000 union jobs, my first
13 thought was, who is taking care of the children? And
14 my second thought was, wow, I am really against 50
15 acres of unused asphalt when we could build a park
16 there instead.

17 After having multiple conversations with the
18 team, I knew this project is exactly what we need in
19 Queens. To be able to offer childcare to the workers
20 of this project, not only for early childhood but for
21 after school, which includes sports, music, and a
22 wraparound schedule to accommodate the working
23 schedule of parents. This will be transformative in
24 Queens. No other company is doing this and it would
25 be such an asset to not only the families but also

1 the children. Childcare is often the first barrier
2 for families to go back to work. Childcare is also
3 one of the many positive community benefits of the
4 project, which includes a new park, public park for
5 the children to play and approved train station for
6 the families to access and local hiring that will
7 employ the members of our community.
8

9 I want to again thank the Council for allowing us
10 me to speak and again, I want to express my strong
11 support for Metropolitan Park where we have the
12 opportunity to put Queens first where our kids will
13 thank us for generations to come. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll have
15 Dian Sung Yu.

16 DIAN SUNG YU: Hi, good afternoon Council. My
17 name is Dian Yu and I am representing the Flushing
18 business improvement district and we're here to
19 support this project and we're excited for this
20 project for our borough and for our community.

21 So, I wanted to make two points. The first point
22 I want to make is that as a community in Downtown
23 Flushing, we have survived the housing crisis and
24 have managed the crisis by overly relying on local
25 customers. We suffer in the COVID time, so it's

1 crucial that we diversify our customer base and we
2 believe this project will finally put Downtown
3 Flushing on the map, especially with the location to
4 LaGuardia Airports. We are excited and we believe
5 that what could be a better project than this project
6 to diversify and recruit more consumers to our
7 community?
8

9 Now the second point I want to make is that there
10 are over 60 million tourists who visit New York City.
11 Now they typically use our airport as a pass through
12 but I believe with this project we finally have a
13 chance to put our neighborhood on a map. So, we
14 agree, we just want two percent of the \$60 million
15 with 1.2 visitors into downtown Flushing. We are
16 looking forward to this project. I think this
17 project is good for our community, good for our
18 borough and good for New York City. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next, we'll hear
20 from Shanelle Thomas.

21 SHANELLE THOMAS: Good afternoon Council and
22 thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is
23 Shanelle Thomas Henry and I've been a lifelong
24 resident of Corona East Elmhurst, right next to this
25 project site. I stand here as a wife, a mother and a

1 dedicated community advocate and I support
2 Metropolitan Park.
3

4 During this time of national uncertainty, the
5 creation of jobs is crucial as this project is
6 expected to generate at least 23 union, 23,000 union
7 jobs with a minimum of 6,000 permanent jobs that will
8 benefit our local families. Alongside job creation,
9 the team has collaborated to provide free healthcare
10 and jobs aren't nearly a concept or a checking of the
11 box. They have already reached out to several of our
12 nonprofits throughout the city to start training
13 residents and individuals from our communities to
14 make sure that they are fully equipped to get these
15 jobs. For small businesses, which are the life blood
16 of New York and a key factor in creating generational
17 wealth, the team has committed to at least 30 percent
18 minority and women business goals but in addition to
19 that, have developed programs aimed at building
20 capacity and securing funding for small businesses
21 that often struggle to compete in large scale
22 projects like this. This initiative aims to
23 eliminate barriers to participation.

24 Lastly, the Community Benefits Program, a \$1
25 billion initiative will establish a Queens school

1 hall, providing small vendors with a safe year around
2 venue to sell their goods, provide resources to our
3 community based organizations during these uncertain
4 times, supporting groups that deliver essential
5 services to our underserved populations. Enhancing
6 public spaces such as parks and recreational areas,
7 and the much needed overhaul of Mets Willets Point 7
8 train station making it ADA accessible and improving
9 transportation connectivity to encourage sustainable
10 commuting options and reduce traffic congestion in
11 our neighborhoods.
12

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Time is expired.

14 SHARNELLE THOMAS: I'm wrapping up. An ordinary
15 project, it is a transformative effort focused on
16 comprehensive community engagement, job creation,
17 support for small businesses and enhancements to
18 public spaces and transportation. This project sets
19 a new standard for urban development that prioritizes
20 people and our environment. Thank you for your time.

21 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. Next we'll hear
22 from Larry. Larry if you can hear me, please unmute
23 and you may begin.

24 LARRY GALLEGOS: Good afternoon everyone. My
25 name is Larry Gallegos. My wife and I are lifelong

1
2 Queens residents and hope our two kids can one day
3 say the same. Really quickly I'll address the
4 offensive allegations made by a previous speaker.
5 No, I have no business interest or personal financial
6 gains from this project. I think it's clear that
7 this is a once and a lifetime opportunity for our
8 community, which is why most of us are here. Yeah
9 Steve Cohen and his team have invested in the
10 surrounding community but isn't that what we have
11 ultimately asked of our corporate partners? I'd much
12 rather ask the encores of the world what is best for
13 this community whose leadership comes from the
14 neighborhood and not from outsiders who have provided
15 no legitimate; key word being legitimate alternative.

16 One speaker said on one hand you can't make ADA
17 requirements and then on the other saying that a park
18 can be built with city funds. Make up your mind.
19 Even if at least for the parking lot wasn't there and
20 you believe that the city could fund a project of
21 this magnitude, I have a bridge to sell you. You can
22 believe that.

23 We've seen this play out before. Certain people
24 come into our communities and try to tell us what is
25 best for us. I think I speak for a lot of folks here

1 when I say we are tired of it. I have actually hung
2 out on 103rd, I went to the movies when the theater
3 was there. I got my hair cut at 104th, eaten at La
4 Quina. I'm from this community. For the
5 professional agitators who want to stand in the way
6 of progress, I promise you that you will find us at
7 every turn. We will not be ignored anymore and I
8 will continue to fight for this project because our
9 community deserves it and our borough deserves it.

11 Thank you Council Members. I humbly ask that you
12 support this project.

13 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you Larry. Next, we'll
14 hear from Elizabeth. Elizabeth if you can hear me,
15 please unmute.

16 ELIZABETH VIAN: Thank you. So, my name is
17 Elizabeth Vian, I used to work for the Queens Borough
18 President Office and District Attorney's Office.
19 Now, I'm working for a nonprofit in Queens. So,
20 thank you for giving me this time to testify for
21 Metropolitan Park. I attended a couple of
22 presentations and an eye opening experience to see a
23 project that can transform the borough and the city
24 we live in.

1 Metropolitan Park will utilize private funds to
2 provide the public with a world class creation area
3 including parks, hotels, restaurants, a subway
4 station and many, many more. It will be a park I
5 will be very proud to introduce to my friends from
6 all over the world. This is not a one person
7 decision; it is a collective effort involving
8 thousands of hours of community input and
9 professional work. So the team led by Sulli deserve
10 applause for this. The park is multifunctional, the
11 most controversial aspect is the gaming casino. The
12 argument that the casino will bring gambling
13 addiction and other crimes does not hold. First of
14 all, how many people have not been to a casino, maybe
15 a hand full but how many have become addicted to it?
16 Maybe one percent or less.

17
18 So a managed place with quality services and
19 businesses won't be a bed of crime. On the contrary,
20 a neglected land is more likely to nurture inactive
21 things. So, if I ask you to name a few landmarks in
22 Queens, you might mention the remnants of the World
23 Fair from 100 years ago, the [INAUDIBLE 03:03:32] or
24 the US Open. Not many more, so let's vote yes to
25

1
2 Queens Future plan of Metropolitan Park as our next
3 landmark in Queens history.

4 The generation will be grateful for the vision
5 and the investment in Queens. So, thank you for your
6 time and consideration. Again, I want to express my
7 strong support for Metropolitan Park. So, thank you
8 so much.

9 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being no
10 questions, this panel is excused. We do have another
11 panel. The first person I will call up is Isac
12 Carmene (SP?).

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Isac, if you can hear me,
15 please unmute. Isac?

16 ISAC CARMENE: Yes, can you hear me?

17 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, I can hear you.

18 ISAC CARMENE: Okay, great. Yeah so let me just
19 get my video. There we go. Yeah, so uhm, my name is
20 Isac Carmene, I'm a member of Community Board 4 in
21 Queens. I'm a Corona resident and I am in support of
22 Metro Park. This is good for Queens. It brings a
23 much needed public transportation upgrade without
24 spending public dollars. It brings jobs to us,
25 23,000 or there about. There's the food hall,

1 there's the points card for restaurants, the Taste of
2 Queens. There's the work with Elmcors and other CBO's
3 to deal with the potential, the very low gambling
4 addiction issue that the previous speaker so
5 eloquently mentioned. There's tax revenues to MTA,
6 to schools, there's the local hiring center. It's
7 helpful environmentally and I know for myself, I'm on
8 the road a lot and I'm on the road now for a federal
9 agency and so I get to drive through a lot of towns
10 and look at a lot of ball parks, and we need what a
11 lot of other cities have. There's a destination
12 after the game and before the game for people to go
13 to. The easily accessible and this is not the case
14 with City Field and so, we need this upgrade badly
15 and so, I strongly implore you to vote for this
16 amendment, this proposal. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. We have an
19 unknown caller; the last four digits is 8670. If you
20 can hear me, you can unmute and you may begin.

21 UNIDENTIFIED: Yes, I'm the one with 8670.

22 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Yes, go ahead.

23 ARISA WAREHAM: Yes, my name is Arisa
24 Wareham(SP?). I have been a community member,
25 resident over 50 years. First of all, I want to say

1 that I am not a paid participant for the Metropolitan
2 Project. I definitely approve the project. I'm
3 sorry, I have made many needs and committee
4 testimonies and have not changed my mind about the
5 approval of this project. I vote yes. Not only does
6 it provide - it's providing economic development,
7 beautification, jobs and community benefits but my
8 one thing is you know these things have been thrown
9 around like it doesn't mean anything and this
10 community definitely needs these benefits.

12 I've lived over like I said, I've lived over
13 there for 50 years and there's been no major
14 development in this area besides the LaGuardia
15 Airport. The Number 7 Train Station is shameful and
16 has been that way for over 20 years. I want to see
17 change and I'm definitely you know approving and
18 supporting this project. And some of you - I've
19 listened to this since 10:00 and someone spoke before
20 and they said that the note is speak loud but do not
21 represent 80 percent of this community and that's
22 true.

23 So, yes, I urge the Committee to vote yes. I'd
24 like to thank the Committee for allowing me to give
25

1 testimony and for the Council Member Moya. Have a
2 good day.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you and the last person
5 whoever Second Story is, you can unmute. If you're
6 on the phone, you can press star 6 to unmute.

7 ALLENA RYAN: Hi, thank you so much. Apologies
8 for appearing as Second Story. My name is Allena
9 Ryan. I'm using my business zoom account and I am
10 calling in from my work. I'm a business owner in
11 Jackson Heights Queens. I'm a resident of Jackson
12 Heights Queens. I've been here, lived in Jackson
13 Heights for ten years and have lived in New York City
14 for 25 years and I am calling today to discourage the
15 permission for this project to continue. I think
16 that we know that proximity casinos are typically not
17 good for neighborhoods. I understand and recognize
18 that the project includes a lot of benefits that we
19 all want to see more of things like Queens food hall,
20 Taste of Queens food hall, you know jobs, hotels,
21 that type of thing but first and foremost, the issue
22 that comes to mind and why this would be a project
23 that is bad for our neighborhood is because it is
24 well understood that casinos do not benefit the

1 residents of the neighborhoods in which they are
2 built.

3
4 Furthermore, there is no enforceable community
5 benefits at all. There is no legally binding
6 community benefit agreement to hold developers of
7 this project accountable for delivering on their
8 community benefit promises. I believe the job offers
9 are misleading. I've heard things like 20,000 union
10 jobs. I've heard 30,000 union jobs. What we know is
11 that Hard Rock is not a union employer. Developers
12 have only promised union jobs for the short term
13 construction of the casino, not for any casino
14 workers.

15 Most of all, this is a public land giveaway.
16 This is parkland. This is park space. While the
17 developer of Queens Future LLC trumpets the projects
18 20 acre park, the proposal in fact features a 7 acre
19 privately owned grassy plaza tucked in between the
20 sprawling casino complex and the stadium with a
21 smattering of medians and walkways. Giving away park
22 land sets a real, real negative -

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time is expired.

24

25

1 ALLENA RYAN: Thank you for what kind of future
2 we want and I do not want to see the privatization of
3 our parks.
4

5 The last thing I'll say is that I'm a big Mets
6 fan. I go to City Field a lot. I appreciate all
7 that Steve Cohen has done for the Mets and I've also
8 traveled a lot and gone to a lot of stadiums that are
9 as another caller mentioned, frankly much more
10 engaging than -

11 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Please start wrapping up.

12 ALLENA RYAN: And none of them, not one that I've
13 gone to has a casino. We can do this without a
14 gambling facility. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RILEY: Thank you. There being no
16 questions for this panel, this panel is excused. If
17 there any members of the public who wish to testify
18 regarding this proposal remotely, please press the
19 raise hand button now or if you're here in person,
20 please identify yourself to the Sergeants. I will
21 stand at ease for ten seconds.

22 That concludes today's business. I would like to
23 thank the members of the public, my colleagues,
24 Subcommittee Counsel, Land Use and other Council
25 Staff and the Sergeant at Arms for participating in

2 today's meeting. This meeting is hereby adjourned.

3 Thank you. [GAVEL]

4

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date March 26, 2025