

STATEMENT REGARDING THE EXPANSION OF FORDHAM UNIVERSITY AT
LINCOLN CENTER

Council Member Gale A. Brewer (D- Manhattan)

June 10, 2009

At the City Council Subcommittee on Zoning & Franchises and Committee on Land Use today, June 10, 2009, Council Member Gale A. Brewer urged her colleagues to support the ULURP item that would permit Fordham University to move forward on their expansion of the Lincoln Center campus.

Brewer's support of the controversial project had been dependent on Fordham's willingness to modify their plans so that the high-rise campus would be more open and accessible to the general public and neighborhood residents, and would offer the community a way to benefit from the proximity of a world-class university.

The agreed-upon modifications include:

- An open, contiguous 3500 square foot atrium space accessible to the public located at street level along the Columbus Avenue side of the campus

- Installation of an escalator at the main Columbus Avenue entrance, creating much easier access to an elevated, outdoor "podium" within the campus

- Agreement on a narrower, taller building profile on Columbus Avenue in lieu of the original bulkier and shorter one, opening up space for the atrium

- Relocation of a curb cut for a 68-car residential garage from its proposed location on 61st Street to 60th Street; in addition, a six month total time period is stipulated for the garage application process

- Appointment of 2 people from the community with design, engineering, planning, or architectural credentials to a 7 person Fordham University Design Review Commission that will: 1. Review the design of two proposed residential buildings on the Amsterdam Avenue end of the campus, and 2. Review plans for retail and other ground floor space in these buildings with the goal of renting to independent small businesses and not retail chain stores

- Application of the "LEEDS" gold standard of environmentally sound design for all academic buildings to be constructed on the campus, except for the new law school which will be a lesser, "LEEDS" silver standard because it is already in design; the two proposed private residential buildings will conform to "LEEDS" 3.0

In addition to these stipulations, Fordham has agreed to lower the height of its tallest residential building on Amsterdam Avenue to 598 feet; all other buildings to be constructed on the campus will be considerably lower.

- As outreach to the surrounding community, Fordham is applying for grants to provide after-school programming for the high schools on the Martin Luther King Jr. Campus, located at 66th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, adjacent to Fordham.

- Council Member Brewer has announced that she will also advocate that Fordham employ residents of Amsterdam Houses/Addition/NYCHA, across the

street from the campus, during the time that Fordham's Master Plan is under construction.

"Fordham, an important institution in our city, is proposing to expand its Lincoln Center campus over a 25 year period," noted Councilmember Brewer. "As it seeks to enlarge its vision and mission, the question before us is not the legitimacy of Fordham's needs, but how these needs should be met."

She added: "This enormously complex project is in fact a master plan for a series of linked developments within a large, single, bounded site in a dense urban setting. Therefore, we have insisted that the community is a natural partner in its planning, because, 1. The proposed campus will permanently and dramatically alter the physical, visual, and historic nature of the area, replacing a low-rise campus with one of towering buildings, and, 2. Fordham has to date left unspecified almost all details about the design of individual buildings, their architectural materials, curtain wall appearance, the design of the residential and commercial overlays, and the resulting aesthetic and environmental impact on its immediate neighbors, including Lincoln Center."

Council Member Brewer emphasized in her remarks that "Fordham's master plan, unlike those created for other famous urban campuses in Manhattan, such as Rockefeller Center, Lincoln Center, and Columbia University, not only incorporates very tall buildings, but at present leaves their design unknown, as well as that of the residential towers to be created by private developers, who also remain unknown, and whose own plans are yet to be devised."

"The concessions won from Fordham in exchange for approval of this massive "tabula rasa," while important, pale in comparison with the scale and 25 year duration of Fordham's plans. Nonetheless, in partial compensation for the destruction of the beautiful green space that now exists on Columbus Avenue, the neighborhood is assured of access to a public atrium at street level, use of an escalator, stairs, and elevators up to the public podium green space within the campus, and a chance to have new Amsterdam Avenue "mom-and-pop" retail of a kind that serves the needs of the community."

Council Member Brewer expressed her profound thanks to: Ethel Sheffer and Richard Asche of Community Board 7, as well as Chair Helen Rosenthal and District Manager Penny Ryan; Michael and Terry Groll and Dr. Sydney Goldfischer of Fordham Neighbors United; Gail Benjamin, Christian Hylton and Alonzo Carr of the Council's Land Use Division, the Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and his staff, as well as the representatives from Fordham University. She also thanked Jesse Bodine and Kunal Malhotra from her staff for their long and hard work during the public process.

Council Member Brewer concluded: "Much has been achieved to date by working in an atmosphere of good will and serious reflection. With the agreements reached on June 10, I believe that we have improved the quality of Fordham's plans for an enlarged campus at Lincoln Center, and I look forward to continuing work on the tasks ahead."

The full Council will vote on the plan at the June 30, 2009 Stated Council meeting.