

Testimony of Randy Peers, President & CEO – Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce  
Brooklyn Borough President Land Use Public Hearing on the Industry City Rezoning Plan  
January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019

On behalf of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, the borough's leading business association serving over 1,500 members, I am pleased to offer our support for the Industry City (IC) ULURP application in its entirety. While our support is being offered without conditions, it is our hope that a mutually agreeable Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) can be negotiated between the designated community representatives and IC.

For us, this application is about Jobs and Opportunity – nothing more, nothing less. This application represents the difference between the 6,000 good paying jobs IC has already created, and the 20,000 jobs Brooklynites stand to benefit from in the years ahead. This application is a request for a reasonable zoning change that will continue moving forward the dramatic transformation of a campus, that less than a decade ago, consisted of mostly under-utilized and crumbling industrial space, much of it containing warehouses producing less than 1,000 for our residents. This application is about moving from heavy industrial zoning to light manufacturing, opening a greater range of options for business attraction and job creation that will ultimately serve as an economic engine for Sunset Park, and for Brooklyn as a whole. This is about a positive future for our youth, one where they can reach their full employment potential, rather than be told these jobs aren't for them.

Opponents of the project will have you believe this is about gentrification. While the issue of residential displacement is real in Sunset Park, this project has no residential component. In fact, the hotel, one of the more controversial aspects of the plan, will be removed from the plan. There have also been many conditions Councilmember Menchaca presented, from job training investments to manufacturing space set-asides, which IC has also agreed to implement. Yet this is still not acceptable for the project opponents - Why? Simply put, it's convenient for them to direct their anger about gentrification at IC, as opposed to the real perpetrators – residential landlords who have chosen to raise rents and opt out of subsidized housing programs. We have a name for this redirection – it's called scapegoating!

But there's a bigger question the community must now face. Will we allow a small group of people to determine what jobs can be created in Brooklyn and who can have them? There is simply something fundamentally wrong with that scenario. You see, having served for over ten-years as CEO of Sunset Park's and NYC's largest and most effective youth job training organization, OBT, I know firsthand what Brooklyn youth are capable of and how they are hungry for greater opportunities. The companies IC will attract and the jobs that they will create are the jobs our youth aspire to, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Once again, this is about Jobs and Opportunity.

Having grown up in Brooklyn during the 1970 and 80s, I know firsthand how far the borough has come in creating a vibrant and dynamic economy. In Sunset Park in particular, 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue was once an area that nobody wanted to be in due to its high crime and desolation. The IC complex for decades stood as an

example of urban industrial decline. With the new investments that have been made by the IC investors, we have seen a resurgence that would be welcomed in almost any community around the country. Yet some seek to close the door on furthering the potential for greater community investments. We cannot allow this to happen to Brooklyn and its citizens.

Therefore, we ask the Borough President to again stand up for what the majority of people want in our community – jobs and opportunity.

Thank you.

Randy Peers  
Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce  
[rpeers@brooklynchamber.com](mailto:rpeers@brooklynchamber.com)