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February 1, 2016

Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

One year ago in your State of the City address, you committed to working towards revitalization in the Rockaways—an area that you described as “battered by years of economic distress even before Sandy’s gale force winds struck.” Since then, your administration has demonstrated its commitment to the Rockaways, and we want to thank you for your continued leadership. Today, we ask the City to turn to Downtown Far Rockaway, the historic commercial core of the peninsula. Downtown Far Rockaway has enormous potential, but has suffered years of disinvestment.

In November of last year, we convened the Downtown Far Rockaway Working Group, comprised of elected officials and representatives from the community, business, and nonprofit sectors, with the mission of developing a set of goals and recommendations to support the revitalization of Downtown Far Rockaway. Since then, the Working Group has met four times and co-hosted a public meeting with the City on January 19th with over 100 community members in attendance. We are proud to report that the Working Group, with input from the public, has developed the following list of recommendations to guide future public and private investments in Downtown Far Rockaway.

We ask that the City activate long-vacant sites, bring new housing and retail opportunities to the Downtown, and help this area realize its potential as the commercial hub of the peninsula.

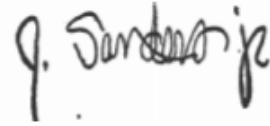
Sincerely,



Donovan Richards
Council Member, 31st District,
Queens



Melinda Katz
Queens Borough President



James Sanders Jr.
New York State Senate, 10th
District



Philip Goldfeder
New York State Assembly, 23rd
District



Michelle R. Titus
New York State Assembly, 31st
District



Jonathan Gaska
District Manager, Queens
Community Board 14

Kevin Alexander
President and CEO
Rockaway Development and
Revitalization Corporation

Sharon Anderson
Manager
Far Rockaway Branch Queens
Library

Glen Collins
President
Redfern Houses Tenants
Association

Silaka Cox
COO
Rockaways Youth Taskforce

**Reverend Dr. Arthur
Davenport**
Pastor
First Church of God

Reverend Dr. Les Mullings
Lead Pastor
Church of the Nazarene

Nathan Krasnovsky
Executive Director
Jewish Community Council of
the Rockaway Peninsula

Elaine Short
President
Far Rockaway branch of the
NAACP

Suzanne M. Timmer
Vice President, Development
St. John's Hospital

Carl Roberts
Owner
EazyLocks

Recommendations for the Future of Downtown Far Rockaway

GOAL 1: Re-establish Downtown Far Rockaway as the commercial and transportation hub of the Rockaway peninsula

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Redevelop the shopping center site at the heart of Downtown with mixed-income housing, commercial and community facility space.
2. Reinvigorate Mott Avenue, Central Avenue, Beach 20th Street, and Cornaga Avenue by attracting more diverse retail offerings with a balance of local, regional, and national businesses and restaurants that foster a walkable environment.
3. Create destinations to draw residents as well as visitors, including family and youth recreation and entertainment.
4. Highlight Downtown's unique character and history, including as a music and entertainment destination, by fostering a "Main Street" feeling in Downtown with storefront improvements, traffic calming, lighting, and free wifi.
5. Call on the MTA to increase service on the A-train and enhance the LIRR station through improved accessibility, lighting and other station area amenities.
6. Provide adequate parking for residents and shoppers through a comprehensive Downtown strategy that considers muni-meters and any alternative strategies.

GOAL 2: Reposition the area as a mixed-use district, including new mixed-income housing

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Create mixed-income housing that reflects the diversity of the existing community and prioritizes the needs of existing residents first, while attracting a mix of incomes.
2. Redevelop the shopping center site with a mix of uses, including mixed-income housing. Concentrate taller, denser development in the middle of the site, while stepping building heights down and introducing new public spaces to connect to Downtown's existing built character.
3. Redevelop the NYC DOT bus turnaround and municipal lot with housing, retail and community services, while maintaining and improving bus service.
4. Study opportunities to create housing, cafes, educational space, and community gathering spaces (such as a banquet hall) near the LIRR station and Redfern Houses.
5. Encourage mixed-use development, including housing, at vacant sites near Foam Place, Beach Channel Drive, and Central Avenue.
6. Ensure infrastructure and amenities are adequate to serve existing residents and businesses and to support new development.

GOAL 3: Activate the public realm with new connections and public open space

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Establish a gateway to Downtown at the intersection of Mott Avenue and Beach Channel Drive with traffic calming, pedestrian safety and aesthetic improvements.
2. Strengthen connections between Downtown and nearby destinations such as the beach and Bayswater Park, such as with signage and wayfinding.
3. Create new public plazas, including between the A Train station/Beach 22nd Street to Beach 21st Street, and across from the library near Mott Avenue and Central Avenue.
4. Connect the proposed greenway under the elevated train to a biking and walking network, including down Beach 20th Street to the beach, while maintaining traffic flow and circulation.
5. Establish new connections through the shopping center site north to south from Mott Avenue to the LIRR station, and from east to west.
6. Create pocket parks with multi-generational programming (playgrounds, adult fitness equipment, and gathering space) on small, vacant parcels.

GOAL 4: Improve the quality of life for residents through access to community services, education and quality jobs

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Improve and upgrade community services in the Downtown including the library, local recreation spaces, schools and other community facilities.
2. Explore opportunities for new youth recreation, workforce training and senior programs and services throughout Downtown, including near the Redfern Houses.
3. Leverage the “medical row” on Beach 20th Street by activating vacant land with healthcare-related uses and improving connections from St. John’s Hospital to Mott Avenue.
4. Activate unused upper floors of existing Downtown buildings to create office and community spaces for local organizations.
5. Encourage local hiring to provide jobs for residents and increase the population of daytime workers by attracting office tenants to Downtown.
6. Provide space for career training and job placement services, especially in the healthcare, aviation, tech, and construction sectors.
7. Explore opportunities to attract a public or private higher education institution, such as a community college, technical, or vocational school, to locate in Downtown.

GOAL 5: Build the capacity of community organizations and support local businesses

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Design small business improvement programs to support existing businesses and help new businesses start and grow, including existing and new minority- and women-owned businesses.
2. Encourage business growth and innovation through the creation of a business incubator or business park.
3. Provide support for consistent management of the Downtown including marketing, security, cleanliness, maintenance, and other services.
4. Work with community based organizations to develop multi-generational programming for new public spaces that serves the diverse interests of the community and existing merchants.