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July 11, 2013

Matthew Wambua, Commissioner
Department of Housing Preservation and Development
100 Gold Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Fulton Houses Project – 140001ZMM,
N140002ZAM

Dear Commissioner Wambua:

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) should immediately withdraw its plan to build housing on the grounds of the NYCHA Fulton Houses development and remove a playground and community garden and replace them with a parking lot, certified with the City Planning Commission earlier this week. HPD should then work in good faith with the residents of Fulton Houses, the Chelsea community, Community Board 4 and local elected officials to develop a suitable proposal for the site, consistent with HPD's long-standing promises to the community. The team at HPD who developed the plan and chose how to present it needs to be re-examined, and a new developer should be selected.

HPD's plan to rip out a playground and community garden to build a parking lot, and the fact that this plan was developed and certified for ULURP without any notice to or consultation with the community has quickly generated a high degree of anger and distrust among the community and its leaders. At the community meeting held last night about the project, HPD, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and the developer succeeded in heightening that level of anger and distrust, which I had not thought was possible.

It will not be enough for HPD to just agree to delete the plan to rip out the playground and community garden (which I assume HPD will do). Developers often put forth a proposal with some outrageous feature, whittle it down, and then expect to be rewarded for their spirit of compromise. In this case, this feature of the plan is so outrageous the community has not been able to study and discover what else is wrong with the proposal, and yet the ULURP clock has begun to run. So the plan must be withdrawn and negotiated openly with the community.

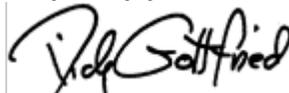
The plan must also be withdrawn because the fact that it was developed at all, and submitted without warning, demonstrates the shockingly poor judgment and contempt for the community of the people who worked on it and the developer.

At last night's meeting, the developer's representative repeatedly stated that this plan is flawed but had to be submitted before it could be put into proper shape because there were "election year pressures" to get it done. He said it is "unfortunate we had to get it certified" and "we will try to rectify it." Assuming he was telling the truth (and HPD's representative, Bea de la Torre, Assistant Commissioner for Planning, did not contradict him in any way), that further demonstrates that this plan is not fit for consideration and must be withdrawn.

Repeatedly in the course of the two-hour meeting, the demand that HPD withdraw the plan was made by me, Senator Brad Hoylman, Community Board 4 Chair Corey Johnson, Fulton Houses Residents Association President Miguel Acevedo, and many other speakers. Towards the end of the meeting, a man in the audience, with exceptional calm, asked Assistant Commissioner de la Torre if HPD would consider withdrawing the plan from ULURP. She said no. I said that perhaps she had misunderstood the question; he was not asking that HPD say the plan *would* be withdrawn, but only that HPD would *consider* doing so. I said that if HPD would not even say it would consider the request, that showed extraordinary contempt for the community and its leaders. Assistant Commissioner de la Torre did not respond.

Therefore, I urge that this plan immediately be withdrawn from ULURP, that HPD apologize to the community for what it put forward and the manner in which it was put forward, account to the community for how and why it was done, re-examine the team at HPD who developed the plan and chose how to present it, and select a new developer. Then HPD should work with the community and its leaders in good faith to develop a proper plan for the site.

Very truly yours,



Richard N. Gottfried
Assembly Member

cc: Eric Enderlin
Bea de la Torre
Fred Harris
Joe Garba
Steve Williams
Brian Honan