

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF KINGS

-----X

In the Matter of the Application of

FRIENDS AND RESIDENTS OF GREATER
GOWANUS, VOICE OF GOWANUS, LINDA
MARIANO, MARLENE DONNELLY, ANN
KATHRIN KELLY, and MARGARET
MAUGENEST,

Index No. 501178/2021

Hon. Katherine Levine

AFFIDAVIT OF JESSICA KATZ

Petitioners,

For Judgment Pursuant to Articles 63 and 78 of the
Civil Practice Law and Rules,

-against-

CITY OF NEW YORK; THE NEW YORK CITY :
DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING; and
MARISA LAGO, in her capacity as Director of the
Department of City Planning,

Respondents,

-and-

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION,

Nominal Respondent.

-----X

GOWANUS RESIDENTS, OWNERS, AND
WORKERS (GROW)

Proposed Intervenor/
Respondent.

-----X

State of New York)
)
) ss:
County of Kings)

Jessica Katz, having been duly sworn, deposes and says:

1. I am Executive Director of Citizens Housing Planning Council of New York City (“CHPC”). CHPC is a non-profit organization that focuses on research and education to address housing needs in the City. Since 1937, CHPC’s mission has been to develop and advance practical public policies to support the housing stock of the City by better understanding the City’s most pressing housing and neighborhood needs.

2. I make this affidavit in support of Proposed Intervenor/Respondent Gowanus Residents, Owners, and Workers (GROW)’s (“GROW”) motion to intervene and in opposition to the Petitioners’ Petition and motion for a preliminary injunction.

3. Before joining CHPC, I worked for the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (“HPD”), where I served most recently as the Associate Commissioner for New Construction. In this role, I oversaw the creation of affordable and special needs housing for New Yorkers and I managed our staff and team in creating thousands of much-needed units for housing. I also served as Assistant Commissioner of Special Needs Housing, Senior Advisor to the Commissioner, and Assistant Commissioner for Preservation Finance. After leaving HPD, I was Executive Director of Lantern Community Services, a nonprofit organization that operates social service programs in the City and operates 1,000 units of permanent supportive housing. I have also taught several seminars about community engagement strategies.

4. I am very familiar with the Gowanus Neighborhood Plan (the “Gowanus Plan”), and I have been involved in the planning process. CHPC was asked by the Land Use Committee of Community Board 6 to discuss citywide planning needs with respect to housing and the Gowanus Plan. Our team has testified in two recent Community Board 6 committee meetings regarding the Gowanus Plan, on October 22, 2020 and November 16, 2020.

5. Both of these meetings were conducted virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and public health crisis. As I explain further below, in these meetings many people testified and spoke about the Gowanus Plan, including those voicing their opposition to the project. It appears to me that conducting the process virtually has been smooth and allowed for increased community engagement.

6. In our presentation on November 16, 2020, we explained that Brooklyn's Community Board 6 is less dense in population than other areas that have been upzoned for more affordable housing. We showed how creating new housing in Community Board 6 can help more New Yorkers live closer to where they work. Critically, our presentation also included a comparison of the average life expectancy to other rezonings in the City, and the Gowanus area has a much higher life expectancy than comparable neighborhoods in the City.

7. We advocate to advance the proposals for neighborhood rezoning in Gowanus in order to facilitate equitable housing development in the City and to increase housing opportunity for low-income New Yorkers in amenity-rich neighborhoods. This project will expand the housing stock, create new affordable housing, and increase the neighborhood's diversity. We support the housing objectives of the Gowanus Plan and have participated in the process to advance the housing aspects of the plan and associated rezoning.

8. We oppose the delay that this lawsuit has caused and the further delay sought by the Petitioners. Generally, a call to delay the process never comes from someone who is in favor of the project. Rather, like here, the Petitioners are seeking a delay in order to stop the project altogether.

9. After years of progress, negotiations, discussions, and planning, to stop the Gowanus Plan and rezoning from advancing forward would be detrimental to the many New

New Yorkers seeking permanent housing and affordable housing. There are currently 50,000 homeless people in the City, and a small group of opponents should not be able to tell these New Yorkers to wait six months or a year until in-person meetings are safe because this means delaying finding them permanent housing and creating affordable housing options that can improve their situations. The Gowanus Plan has been delayed enough already due to the pandemic, and the project should go forward to the next stage of review.

10. If permitted to move forward, I expect to participate and testify in the ULURP proceedings and meetings. To my knowledge, several other jurisdictions and neighborhoods have been undergoing ULURP review virtually with active community engagement. I would expect to testify on the need for additional housing supply in the Gowanus area, particularly in light of the pandemic. I would be perfectly comfortable testifying virtually, and I have participated in many other virtual meetings and discussions.

11. It has been my experience that there are benefits to conducting meetings virtually. The virtual discussions with respect to the Gowanus Plan to date have been productive, as those conducting these meetings have been fair in weighing potential impacts and have been very methodical in their review and analysis of the project. They have actively solicited and considered community input. The virtual setting has allowed people to disagree peacefully with respect to the project.

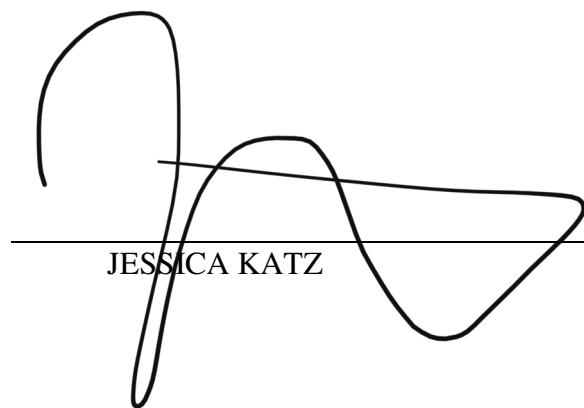
12. I have also found that people who could have never participated before in the planning process have been able to participate virtually. The result is a discussion that is more inclusive and open to different points of view. There is a real ability to have an actual debate about the project in the virtual setting. Moving forward, even after the pandemic, we should continue to

conduct meetings virtually or have a virtual participation option because of the benefits in allowing for more active community participation.

13. Delaying the ULURP process for the Gowanus Plan will have real consequences in delaying housing for homeless New Yorkers and affordable housing options for many other New Yorkers. The process so far has been extremely thorough and fair, and I have confidence that it will continue to actively engage the community. The virtual setting provides significant benefits for community participation, and further delay after years of planning does a disservice to the community and the many New Yorkers who stand to benefit from the project.

14. For each of these reasons, and as set forth in GROW's motion papers, I support GROW's motion to intervene and support the denial of Petitioners' Petition and motion for a preliminary injunction.

Sworn to before me this
25th day of January, 2021



JESSICA KATZ

Kelsha L. White

Kings County
LIC#01WH6294520
Commission Expires 12/23/21