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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

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Testimony of Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer on The Gilder Center at the American Museum of Natural History

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of the American Museum of Natural History's proposed Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation.

By allowing for new exhibition and learning spaces with state-of-the-art technology, and connecting them to the Museum's collections and laboratories, the Gilder Center will be a place where students, teachers, and families can come to see research in action. I find such places harder and harder to come by in our city, even as the knowledge and application of science becomes ever more important to our world and our economy. The Gilder Center is a significant step in advancing the Museum's commitment to integrate scientific research and public education.

The Gilder Center is also the product of collaboration between world-class design professionals and the community throughout the planning process. I was a part of the Park Working Group co-chaired by the Museum and the Friends of Roosevelt Park. This group worked closely over many months, reviewing and giving input to the landscape designs prepared by Reed Hilderbrand. This process led to a sensitive and considerate end product that minimized the loss of parkland, included the planting of new trees, and rationalized the distinct uses of the open space.

Now you all know me, I like old buildings. Give me nice brick and stone buildings over glass boxes any day. But the building design by Jeanne Gang of Studio Gang Architects, inspired by geological rock formations, and in a way paying tribute to the Museum's study of the natural passage of time – I get it. I appreciate Ms. Gang's vision, and her use of stone. The Gilder Center will provide a new ADA-accessible visitor's entrance at 79th and Columbus, and 80% of the Center will occupy space within the existing footprint of the Museum. The building will reflect our contemporary period while being respectful of the historical context, and become the focal point of the Museum's western side.

Use of parkland in Manhattan should never be taken lightly, especially in a place as well-loved as Theodore Roosevelt Park. But given the mission of the museum, its commitment to working with the community, and the thought and inspiration behind the new building and park designs, I believe the Gilder Center to be worthy and appropriate to the historic character of the museum buildings and of the Historic District. Thank you again for your consideration of this testimony in favor of the Gilder Center proposal.