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**Gale A. Brewer, Borough President**

## **Testimony of Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer Greater East Midtown Rezoning Draft Scope of Work**

**September 22, 2016**

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the Draft Scope of Work for the Greater East Midtown Rezoning proposal and its associated environmental review (CEQR No. 17DCP001M). The Greater East Midtown Rezoning is a momentous undertaking. It has the potential to not only ensure the future of a crucial part of our city, but also to serve as an example of successful, engaged, community-based planning.

I co-chaired the East Midtown Steering Committee with Councilmember Daniel Garodnick, and we met for many months to develop a framework that balances economic growth with neighborhood vitality and public improvements. The details of the rezoning plan will matter greatly, but so far it seems like the City is staying true to the spirit of the Steering Committee recommendations – real planning for increased density that addresses preservation, transportation, and public realm in advance of development. I'd like to express my appreciation for the hard work of the Department of City Planning, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, the Department of Transportation, the Metropolitan Transit Authority, and the Office of Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen.

I would also like to raise an issue that should be studied as part of the scope of the rezoning: the inclusion or exclusion of the east side of Third Avenue. I believe it should be part of the scope of work to study the effects of adjusting parts of the plan, such as exempting or increasing the 20 percent residential ceiling, or putting in height restrictions, so that this corridor can serve as a transition zone to the residential area to the east.

Second, I urge the City to study changing or modifying existing building conversion rules. Current rules allow for conversion as-of-right from commercial to residential. Since a major goal of the rezoning is to sustain East Midtown as a strong commercial center, I ask that the City look into the possibility of putting a residential cap on conversions as well within the subdistrict.

In addition, I would like to underscore the community's concern over the public realm, which is a primary focus of the Steering Committee Report. I hope the City will be creative and aspirational in the way it approaches public realm improvements, and that it will consider the full range of options. For example, I believe that the POPS program should be studied in more detail, including the possibility of developing a special suite of East Midtown POPS regulations in order to best serve the public space needs of the area.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the need to be judicious and careful in modifying height and setback rules. The Steering Committee is clear in recommending that existing regulations

that preserve light and air should generally remain in place, and that any proposed modifications should focus on commercial buildings on smaller lots.

My office is here to listen to the concerns and suggestions of all the speakers, and we will take them into consideration as we move ahead on this critical and exemplary project. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.