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NEW YORK, NY 10007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 15, 2014

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**RUSH TRANSCRIPT: FULFILLING PLEDGE, MAYOR DE BLASIO JOINS
BROOKLYNITES TO BREAK GROUND ON 100 PERCENT AFFORDABLE
BUILDING AT PACIFIC PARK**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you so much, Bruce. Thank you, everyone, for being here. There are very few phrases I like better than “100 percent affordable housing,” so this program is off to a good start.

I want to thank Bruce – he has been a partner throughout. And Bruce is someone who truly cares for Brooklyn and for this city. Remember, long ago, served in this city government – he has continued his passionate commitment to this city. And I want to thank you for that, Bruce, and I want to thank you for today’s accomplishment – it’s something to be very proud of.

A new phase begins today – something a lot of us have been waiting for for a long time, something that is a harbinger of things to come. So, the next phase of what I still will remember as Atlantic Yards – now, Pacific Park – begins today. And in June, we had a series of conversations about the need to move forward – and move forward rapidly – with this development, get it to the original vision again, achieve what so many of us hope for who supported it from the beginning. And part of this was to really ensure that we maximized and front-loaded our commitment to affordable housing.

We knew we had to start now, in this year. This groundbreaking is a symbol of our accelerated commitment to realizing the dream – the full dream – of this development. And 535 Carlton – to me, this is exactly what we came here to do – 298 units, all affordable. This is a symbol of what we intend to do with our affordable housing plan over and over and over.

Now, before I go on, I want to thank a number of people who are here today. I especially want to thank community leaders, community residents who are here, elected officials – a lot of people who’ve been a part of this for a long time. I want to give a special thank you to Reverend Daughtry, who I’ve worked with for many years – thank you so much.

[Applause]

And I want to thank all of the participants in this effort. We are joined today by Chairman Zhang, the chairman and president of the Greenland Group – and we are pleased to be working as partners in this effort; we’re joined by the deputy consul general for the Chinese government, Cheng Lei; we are joined by members of my administration – Gary Rodney, the president of the HDC, and Rick Chandler, our buildings commissioner; we are joined by our partner at the state level – Ken Adams, the president of the Empire State Development Corporation; and then my colleagues in elective office who have been absolutely devoted to the cause of affordable housing – and there is a sure unity on this point, that this is what the people of this city are demanding and that we have to produce. I want to thank Borough President Eric Adams, Councilmember Laurie Cumbo, and Councilmember Brad Lander for their partnership. And my colleagues from labor who have been so devoted to ensuring that we build affordable housing – I would like to thank, on behalf of all of them, Gary Labarbera, the president of the Building and Construction Trades.

This is a group effort to change things in this city – to create affordable housing, to create jobs, to ensure that this can be a place where New Yorkers can afford to live. There are so many people in our community here in Brooklyn – and it’s my community – I could walk to my real home – I like to say I’ve been temporarily transferred to a government facility on the Upper East Side, but I am a Brooklynite at heart – I could walk to my real home from here – for our community, which has seen not years, but decades of rising costs and gentrification, this development offers the chance to have a huge number of affordable units that people from this community can live in and continue to be Brooklynites. And that, to me, is a fundamental goal – that people can stay in the city they love, can stay in the boroughs they love, can be a part of their community, even as our city changes. Our goal is to create the affordable housing to maintain all of our diversity as a city, which is our strength – including our economic diversity. That’s what this kind of effort will achieve.

Now, I say that because I did support this development from the beginning, because I saw what was happening around us, and I knew if we didn’t change the dynamic, people would just be priced out over and over again. We had to build affordable housing – it was the only alternative. And this is allowing us to do it on a very substantial scale – and by the way, in the process, creating a lot of jobs – both construction jobs and permanent jobs, which our communities need. I’ve talked a lot about the tale of two cities. Maybe at this exact location, a lot of people in the immediate surrounding area are doing well. You don’t have to go very far from here to find a lot of people who are struggling – who are looking for affordable housing, who are looking for jobs. This development offers that opportunity.

I also want to thank – and we’re going to hear from her in a bit, but I want to do a special thank you to a colleague I’ve worked with for many years, who particularly shared that vision of responding to changing conditions by creating affordable housing, and that’s Bertha Louis. And I had the honor –

[Applause]

– even though she’s shy, from time to time, Bertha does speak up –

[Laughter]

– and I had the honor of working with her at ACORN and now in her work at the Black Institute. And she had a clear sense of the fundamentals here. Without affordable housing, people wouldn't be able to live in Brooklyn anymore. It's as simple as that. It was our job to break through and create something different.

Now, the truth is, what attracted me to this project was the housing. Barclays Center is a great facility, but what attracted me was the housing, and the job creation, and the opportunities that come with it. But Barclays Center has brought extraordinary positive changes, because people throughout Brooklyn are benefitting from what happens at the Barclays Center. It's been a great boost to local businesses, it's been an employment center – and I want to thank Bruce and Mary Ann. They said from the beginning they wanted to focus on hiring locally and hiring people from neighborhoods in Brooklyn who needed more opportunity – and I want to thank you, because you kept that promise, and that means a lot to all of us.

[Applause]

Barclays Center also, I believe, will be the home of the 2016 Democratic Convention – and that will be a great thing for New York City.

[Applause]

But, again, to me, that was not the core – the core was the housing. And the housing – and I say this in front of my friends and colleagues – the housing wasn't moving fast enough, and we needed to break through, and we needed to find a different approach. And I said way back when I first supported this project as a council member, it's the job of all of us to make sure that a vision is adhered to. When Bertha and so many community leaders – Reverend Daughtry – so many people said, “We need this to be done the way it has been outlined,” that was the commitment we all joined into. Now, we saw a turn – a fundamental turn – towards a speeding-up of this process, towards a deepening of the commitment this summer. And I want to thank Governor Cuomo and his team, who worked with us, who worked with Forest City Ratner – everyone got on the same page – and we said the city government's going to take responsibility here as well to make sure this gets where it has to go.

So one of the things we did, which is, I think, the most important part of this whole step forward, is we cut the timeline for affordable housing. We said we have to fulfill the entire commitment and it has to happen ten years earlier than the previous agreement. So now we will see 2,250 affordable units by 2025 – in the next 11 years – 2,250 affordable units.

[Applause]

That was supposed to be a deadline of 2035. Again, by the agreement of the city, state, and Forest City Ratner, that deadline will now be 2025 – and that, by the way, my friends, makes a huge difference to hundreds and hundreds of families who will get that affordable housing that much earlier.

I remind you that when we say 200,000 units of affordable housing, we're talking about enough housing for about half a million people. That is more people than live in the city limits of Atlanta or Miami or Kansas City. This is a huge endeavor and fundamentally necessary for our city. It can't wait. So we are thrilled that what's happening here at this development now aligns to our timeline. And it is a question of speed – it's also a question of front-loading the affordable housing. So 535 Carlton will have twice as many affordable units as the first building that was started here at this development, B2. B2 – still under construction – 50 percent affordability is the goal. In the new 535 Carlton, 100 percent affordable, and a big increase in the number of two-bedroom and three-bedroom apartments – meaning, apartments for families, who will be the backbone and the future of this community. That, to us, is how we fulfill the original vision.

Now, a lot of community residents have rightfully felt over the years that their voices needed to be heard more clearly, and they needed to know what was going on, and they needed to be a part of the process – and they called for the creation of a community development corporation. And that is also a part of this new plan – to have a community development corporation that will speak for the community, connect for the community, that we in the city government will work with closely to make sure that this development works for everyone.

I remind you, this plan – 200,000 units – is the most ambitious affordable housing plan by any city in the history of this country, but we have to get there. It's necessary to preserve New York City as we know it, as we love it – that it be a place for everyone. So many families have been crushed by the burden of rising housing costs. It has undermined their lives. It has, in many cases, forced people out of the city they love – or so many others are just hanging on by a thread. We have to address that at the heart of the matter. A lot of that has to do with things we're going to do to raise wages and benefits and address other parts of people's lives, but the number one expense for all of us is housing. If we bring that expense down for hundreds of thousands of people, it will keep this city a place for everyone – and that is something we fundamentally believe in.

To date, this year, 10,800 affordable units have been financed under our plan. We are on track for over 16,000 units by December 31 – so, a strong start to our ten-year plan. It will be – obviously, you'll see the effects in all five boroughs, in every kind of neighborhood. Last week, we broke ground also on a 100-percent-affordable development for seniors in the Bronx. We've made major strides on other developments, like Astoria Cove – getting more affordability than in previous developments, because of mandatory inclusionary zoning. You're going to see a number of efforts as we go into the new year to speed up the process of moving development that achieves affordable housing – upping the ante so we get more affordable housing, producing it more quickly. We're going into 2015 committed to this mission – and you're going to see a lot more next year.

A few words in Spanish, if I may.

[Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish]

And with that, I say, Bruce, muchas gracias.

[Laughter]

[Applause]

[...]

Mayor: Okay, everybody. We are going to do first on-topic questions, then I have a couple of things I want to say before we go to off-topic. I am joined by the president of the Housing Development Corporation, Gary Rodney, and by our buildings commissioner, Rick Chandler. So, let's first take questions on this development here, and today's announcement.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Oops. Go ahead. Yeah.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, I think the executives of Greenwood made clear that they intend to have a greater involvement in New York City, and we certainly need investment to achieve our affordable housing plan. So we look forward to working with them more, and I – there may be other companies as well that choose to get involved [inaudible] – I think this market is very attractive. What matters to me is getting the capital we need to create affordable housing. But in terms of this, specifically, let me have Gary speak to that.

Gary Rodney, President, Housing Development Corporation: So, our investment is actually going to be a \$73 million dollar first mortgage, and then there's an additional subordinate mortgage from HDC's corporate reserves of \$11.7 million. So that's our total actual investment in this particular building, to help kind of spread this along, and keep – and help actually meet those affordability – affordability levels.

Question: [inaudible]

Gary Rodney: Long.

Mayor: [inaudible] Yes.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Hey, Norman.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, this is the first of many buildings. This parallels the reality with our affordable housing plan writ large. In the year 2014, we're on track to get over 16,000 units out of 200,000. As you see the plan progress, neighborhood by neighborhood, you're going to see buildings that

are 100 percent affordable, you're going to see buildings that are a lower percentage, you're going to see buildings that are primarily for folks at the lowest side of the income scale, you're going to see buildings that are mixed. Here, you're going to the original vision, in terms of tiered income scale, we intend to achieve. This building is 100 percent affordable – it's tiered, but we intend for the whole project to ultimately meet those goals. Yes –

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, I think that was a very particular dispute. I think it will ultimately be resolved and that building will be completed. I certainly am looking forward to the next building being started in June, which, again, will be 100 percent affordable – so that'll be the third building with an affordable component. What we made clear to the developers is we intend to see the maximum amount of affordability moved as quickly as possible. Obviously we've changed the timeline, reduced it by 10 years. We're going to be incessant in pushing the affordable housing agenda here. Yes –

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, in principle, the vision for the whole development – mix of affordable housing and market housing – we want to see it all move as quickly as possible, and I want to see both pieces moved. We need all types of housing, we need jobs – we want the whole thing to move. Obviously, once those – all those buildings are in place, there will be permanent employment. It will have a positive impact on our tax base, et cetera. So there's no contradiction between moving both affordable buildings and market buildings at the same time. What wasn't happening enough in the past was the affordable buildings moving forward. We've made very, very clear to the developers that that has to be accelerated, and they've come to a formal agreement to do it. You see evidence of that today. Last call, on topic. Going once. Go ahead.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, I think it's a couple of things. Remember, I spent eight years as a City Council member in a community here – or nearby, I should say – that was experiencing a lot of development, so I'm very familiar with that balance that has to be struck. There are some places that are perfect for very substantial development with a great deal of height and density. There are other places that don't make sense for it, depending on the individual neighborhood. But what I'm going to say to people in neighborhoods all over the city is – where we can appropriately have greater height and density, it is the key to greater affordability – it's as simple as that. We are on our way to nine million people as a city. We have an affordable housing crisis right now that has to be addressed. We have to build. And I think the more people see the results of these projects, the more they see that there will be affordable housing for them and their family members and their loved ones, the more they will believe in it. And I've been all over this city as a candidate, now as mayor – there is no issue I hear more about from the people than the cost of housing and the need for more affordable housing. And if that requires height and density at appropriate locations, I think people will understand it, I think they'll embrace it, because they don't want to be forced out of their own city. And the people are smart, the people are discerning

– they can see the facts are the facts. If this is the way to create more and more affordability for them and their families, they’ll believe in it. Last call on topic, going once, going –

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, again, we – if you look at our affordable housing plan, which is the 200,000 units, we lay out, very specifically, the percent of units that’s for families that make under \$20,000, under \$40,000, under \$60,000 per year, etcetera. So, the bottom line is we need housing for people at a variety of income levels. In this development – 100 percent affordable – you have units for folks who make very little income; you have units for folks who – at this moment, given the cost of this city – are struggling to stay in the middle class. So, you have a range. But I think the bottom line is we have to produce – literally, consistently – units for all income classes within the affordability scale. Last call, yes, sir –

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Yup.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Do I look worried? I’m not worried at all. This is – Gary will speak to it because he is a professional in the field, but there is always a rush to the end of the year. And the end of the year actually is a target that helps people get to the final understandings on a lot of these closings – and that’s a good pressure. We feel good about the number. Gary, why don’t you explain a little more?

Gary Rodney: Sure. We’re extremely confident that we’re actually going to hit that number. My team and the team at HPD have been working tirelessly on this. A number of closing are planned. I think we have north of 23 that are going to happen, basically, between today and December 31. So, kind of – people are hard at work, documents are being drafted and signed, and, you know, like I said, we’re very confident we’re going to hit that number.

Mayor: All right, we will go – whoops – we will go to off topic. Before though, I do want to talk about a couple of points. One – we’ve all watched today, with deep concern, the situation in Sydney, Australia. We’re just getting news now about new developments [inaudible] the police having taken action in that situation. But let me assure all New Yorkers that we are taking appropriate precautions, making sure we are beefing up our presence at locations related to the Australian government and other pertinent locations around the city. You’ll see substantial activity to make sure that those locations are protected. So, NYPD, as usual, is in close coordination with our federal partners, and is on alert to make sure that we can keep the people of this city safe. On the topic of the incident on the Brooklyn Bridge on Saturday night, I want to make clear that we saw, over these last days, what we should’ve seen in the vast majority of cases – peaceful protests – in fact, tens of thousands of people participating peacefully, exercising their democratic rights. I have said repeatedly how much I admire and appreciate the efforts of the NYPD to manage that protest appropriately. I think it’s been a brilliant effort by the NYPD. In the vast majority of instances, there was no violence, there were no altercations, there

were limited arrests. What happened on Saturday night on the Brooklyn Bridge was fundamentally unacceptable. Of course, there will always be due process, and so events are alleged until we have all the facts. But what we believe we know is that individuals attacked our police officers in an entirely inappropriate and unacceptable way – and that won't be tolerated. It's as simple as that. And not only will it not be tolerated by me, it will not be tolerated by the NYPD. I want to speak directly to those who are protesting. I've spent plenty of years involved in efforts for social change. I've been to my share of protests. It is incumbent upon all those who are protesting to set a high standard, to respect the police who have done such a fine job of protecting them and working with them, and to stop any potential act of violence. It is up to the protestors to join the effort to keep the peace. And if anyone knows anything about the individuals who attacked our police officers, they need to come forward with that information. If anyone sees an individual preparing to attack a police officer, they need to intervene, they need to inform the police, they need to tell others that that's unacceptable. So, again, we had – I think the count by the NYPD was upwards of 25,000 people protesting on Saturday in the main part of the protest, peacefully. That is another indication of what's right about New York City – people expressing their views peacefully, the police handling the situation exactly right. We had a very small number of people who did the wrong thing. Again, it will not be tolerated, but I'm asking those who are working for change to step up and speak out and make clear that any attack on the police will not be tolerated, and to work with the police to find anyone and everyone involved. With that, I'm happy to take your questions. Yes –

Questions: [inaudible]

Mayor: Wait, wait, wait – let's do one at a time. I'm sorry – let's do one at a time. NYPD is who you should talk to about security – they make the security determinations. I'll state an obvious thing – the last time there was a family living in Gracie Mansion on a regular basis was before 9/11. It's a very different world now, and the NYPD assessed the situation and made a decision. You can follow up with them. On the portraits, we've said that we think the artwork in all of our buildings should reflect the totality of our city. We're going to work with the appropriate agencies on that. What was your next question?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Over time.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Yeah.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: We're working on a date. They will – we will get to public tours again soon. There's still a few more things that have to be resolved.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Again, we'll get to a date.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: He should absolutely be removed from his position – absolutely.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Yes, because I think an attack on a police officer goes against the grain of our civilization and our society, and I think it's absolutely unacceptable.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I don't – literally don't know anything about it.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Such strong language. I can't believe you said that publicly.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I responded on Saturday night very clearly to the fact that it's unacceptable to assault a police officer. And anyone who believes in social change needs to respect our police, work with our police. The police have been respecting and working with the protesters. And peaceful protest has been undertaken here in this city, in these last weeks, I think in a way that people all over the country admire. So, anybody who breaks that norm and attacks a police officer will obviously be prosecuted fully. And it's unacceptable – and again, other members of the protest should join the police in making sure that kind of activity doesn't happen. But again, I'm very, very clear about the strategy that we've undertaken. I've been working closely with Commissioner Bratton, Chief O'Neill, and their leadership team to figure out the right way to protect people's democratic rights, and to avoid disorder, and to avoid violence. And we've done that. These handful of incidents are unacceptable and we will address them. But I – I have found over the years that responding to self-interested critics with histrionic voices doesn't get you very far, so that's all I have to say.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I spoke to Cardinal Dolan. I think we're both troubled by anything that undercuts the norms of civility of this city. And it's fine to have differences – that's what a democracy allows for – but there still has to be mutual respect. And some voices in this city have decided to be divisive. That statement on Friday by the PBA was just plain divisive and unacceptable. And I appreciated the cardinal's words very, very much – I appreciate what he wrote in the Daily News – and I think he's calling for everyone to maintain civility, restore civility, and work together.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: There's no particular plan yet. That's something that's being worked on.

Phil Walzak: Last call, guys.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Again, I think it's normal that our public buildings reflect all our people.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, Dave, I would ask you to consider the alternative in a free society. Do we tell people they're not allowed to raise their voices? Do we tell people they're not allowed to march? This is the result of something organic. People are speaking out on an issue that has obviously pained them deeply – and it's happening all over the country, not just here. I think these things have a natural cycle, obviously. We've seen this reality time and time again – that at the point that something happens that truly disturbs people, there is a period of protest. We don't expect that to go on forever. But we want to respect people's rights, we want to handle it appropriately, but in a democracy, the people determine whether it's time for them to speak out. And once they speak out, it's our job to manage it and to respect it appropriately.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: Thanks, everyone.

Question: The Australian [inaudible]?

Mayor: Well, again, locations related to the Australian government, and some related locations – you can ask NYPD for the details. But the point is, NYPD – very consistently – when they see an attack that might have larger ramifications around the world, they swing into action, beef up potential targets, take precautions, and that's what they're doing right now. Thank you.

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