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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY

Mayor Bill de Blasio: I want to start today's proceedings by praising Steve's mom and Steve's uncle.

[Laughter]

Who are figures of great wisdom. I had the joy – Steve, you have an amazing family. I want to start at the beginning – you have an amazing family. And when I got to know everything that your mom and your uncle felt there was no surprise that you've become the person you are in terms of your commitment to the city. So, you were raised the right way. You're the ultimate compliment to your mom, she's done good with you – and the whole family, one thing I've learned about you, and it means a lot to me, is your heart leads you in the best sense of the word. You do so much for so many people. Now, I want to emphasize, a lot of people here know Steve, there are many things that Steve does for people in need you will never know about. And that is the mark of someone truly charitable and truly concerned for others. We've had many conversations about times when Steve chose to get involved in something, and one of the things I heard was the last thing he wanted to do was put his name on it. He just wanted to help people in need. And he has done that time and time again. And I think that is extraordinarily commendable. So, Steve I want to tell you, I value [inaudible] as a friend, I also value you as a citizen because you're looking out for your fellow New Yorker in so many ways.

Let's give Steve a round of applause.

[Applause]

In your work you've had a huge impact on the skyline of the city, and it's just getting better all the time. And you have been committed to building the city; and you've been committed to building it in an equitable way. I remember when we had our first conversations about the importance of affordable housing – how much you believed in. I remember we'd talk about the importance of giving people good wages and benefit – you believed in it. You know that there's a way to strike all the right notes in the city. It is part of what made New York City great was a city for everyone; a city where there was opportunity across the board. We are trying to regenerate that; we're trying to make sure that that opportunity for all continues again. And this is a great example of it. Right here in the center of the universe – here buildings risen, that will mean opportunity for so many New Yorkers right now working on this great site, but so many going forward as well. And it's entirely consistent to what Steve and his partners have devoted themselves to.

Now, I want to thank some of the other folks here from our team. I want to thank Fred Dickson and Maria Wilcox of NYC and Company for the extraordinary work they do promoting to the world all that New York City has to offer. Our friend Maria here – it's not, that's Fred, okay, you look very dashing in your hard hat.

[Laughter]

Okay, thank you both for all the great work you do for the city.

Peter Ward – Peter Ward and I are on a roll. We go to groundbreakings for really extraordinary things. And I can say with no fear of contradiction – Peter and I were in Brooklyn a few months back at the groundbreaking for the extraordinary health center – an incredible cutting edge health center that his union is building there. Peter, you put together a string of great victories for working people. And you're proving that we can get a lot done and keep raising the standard of living that we [inaudible]. Let's thank Peter for all he does.

[Applause]

And I don't know if any of you have heard – maybe you didn't see this in the papers – Times Square was in the news a little bit lately, don't know if you saw that. We've worked with a lot of the stakeholders in Times Square to take all the good in Times Square – and there's a lot of good – and keep adding to it and keep addressing issues so it can be strong for the future. I want to thank Tim Tompkins, president of The Times Square Alliance, who's been a key partner in that work.

Thank you, Tim.

[Applause]

Finally, in City Hall we have an extraordinary day-to-day, hour-to-hour partnership to get things done for the city. I want to thank Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. We believe together – thank you.

Thank you, Speaker Mark-Viverito.

[Applause]

We believe together in building a city, but building, again, a city with constantly growing opportunity for people from all five boroughs. And this – this site is a great example of it.

Here we are, literally, in crossroads of the world – center of the universe, and here something great is going to happen at 20 Times Square. And what I want people to focus on is, first off, it's not easy to do this, as you heard Steve say in the beginning – when you talk to Peter it is not easy to do. It takes a lot of partnership. It takes a lot of vision. It takes a lot of persistence, but what it's going to mean for people is extraordinary. We're going to create a lot of jobs here, now and in the future. It's going to add to the attraction of Times Square. It's going to add to the attraction of the city. It's going to add a huge amount to our city economy. And it really emphasizes where we are as a city right now because we keep getting stronger. I'm very proud of the fact – right now, we're at 4.2 million jobs in New York City. This is an all-time high effort – 4.2 million jobs in this city. We intend to add to that figure. I'm very, very proud of the fact since I been in office we've added 177,000 new jobs. A lot of people around this site contribute to that – lots of people in all sectors of the business community help make that happen. We in the city government – it's our job to lay the foundation to make sure the conditions are there to keep building this economy, and we're very proud of where we've gone so far. What's going to happen right here, another 500 jobs when this is all built out – 500 jobs, adding to the over 360,000 jobs that are part of our tourism industry right now. Think about other cities around the world, other states – who wouldn't love to have 360,000 jobs in any one sector. We have it in tourism and its grown. And the fact is we're at a record level of tourism right now – 2014, 56.4 million people visited New York City – 56.4 million. Almost the population of my beloved ancestral homeland of Italy – to give you an example of just the sure magnitude, but that number is going to go up. We're planning on going farther because the appeal of New York City is only deepening around the world, and we can take that number and build on it in just the next few years, and we intend to show you something – and Steve you and everyone else in this industry, we're going to keep you very busy because we're going to keep the visitors coming.

So, I'll conclude by saying this, and I think it's important to reflect – we'll do a little audience participation because some of you may be new to the city, some of you may be a little younger, but I'm going to take you back 30 years ago – 1985. How many of you walked through Times Square in 1985 – raise your hand if you've ever walked through Times Square in 1985. Alright, my friends, we have come a long way. Times Square in 1985 was not fascinating. It was not beautiful. It was not intriguing. It was skeezy, okay. It was not a place you would want to be. And was a place that sadly spoke to what was wrong and what had gone wrong in New York

City in the years before. A huge effort was mounted in the 80s, 90s, and since to reinvigorate Times Square; to update it; to make it something positive again. Yeah, we had some challenges to overcome and we will overcome them. We're making real progress, but you look at the core of the matter and how we've traveled over the last two decades. This place really is one of the big crossroads of the world. It has an extraordinary thriving economy – between 350,000 and 450,000 people come through Times Square everyday – tourists, and people from all over who want to experience it, and who, by the way, like to spend their money there on restaurants, on the theaters, on the hotels that are making this industry so thriving.

So there's a lot to be proud of – another great story of New York City's resilience, and a story that continues to be built upon right here. So ladies and gentlemen, thank you to everyone – Steve a special thank you to you. It's a day to very, very proud of.

Thank you.

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