by Marty Markowitz
Monday, January 19, 2004 12:00 AM - Last Updated Wednesday, March 21, 2012 10:04 AM

In This Series:

â€˘ **Field of Schemes** by Letitia James
â€˘ **Cheerleaders for Real Estate?** by Tom Angotti

Since the announcement of the proposed Nets arena plan there has been tremendous enthusiasm generated throughout Brooklyn. I continue to believe more than ever that bringing world-class professional sports and a world-class arena to Brooklyn would tremendously benefit our borough, by boosting our profile around the nation and the world, by enhancing pride in Brooklyn, and by creating desperately needed economic development, jobs and affordable and middle-income housing for the Brooklynites who need them.

I am well aware of negative comments by some who live in the immediate vicinity of the proposed project. I know there are real concerns that must be addressed - and they will be. Netting the Nets must be a win-win for all of us who call Brooklyn home, and any project of this scale must have real community involvement to be successful.

The plan as presented so far is not perfect nor is it final.

That's why if the Nets are purchased and their move to Brooklyn is approved, I will be working with the community on a variety of issues, such as parking, traffic, and city services that must be addressed for this project to work.

But in my opinion the benefits of this project for all of Brooklyn greatly outweigh the arguments

against it.

MASS TRANSIT TO THE GAME

Unfortunately, some of these comments in opposition are misleading, and others are simply less than accurate.

For example, referring to "20,000 extra cars," as if each and every man, woman and child would drive their own car to the game! Come on now, the reason why an arena works at this location is precisely because cars are not needed to access it.

Common sense, good urban planning, and care for the environment would tell you that the arena must be located where visitors have the best access by mass transit, and this location is Brooklyn's best for public transportation, with nine subway lines, four bus lines and the Long Island Rail Road all meeting there.

The irony is that if land were available to put an arena in another area of Brooklyn, as some have suggested, it would definitely result in the use of cars almost exclusively!

ENHANCING THE NEIGHBORHOOD, CREATING JOBS

Of course nothing would make me happier than if this project didn't take a single home or business, and I have urged flexibility in the plan to limit such action if possible. However, much of this project would be constructed almost completely over empty land - yes, empty space - over the Long Island Rail Road Tracks tracks, which is not exactly one of the garden spots in Brooklyn.

The project will also create a real wealth of jobs: from construction on the project, to working in the offices and retail stores, and the boost to local businesses who will sell to both tourists and new residents, all on top of the jobs working in the arena and the ancillary businesses (sound and light technicians maintenance, catering, cleaning, etc) at the arena itself and for specific events held there.

In fact, Andrew Zimbalist, one of America's leading opponents to urban stadiums and ballparks is a consultant on this project, and he supports it fully. We have learned from the past mistakes of new facilities - there is a right way and a wrong way to build.

And with a design by the world's leading architect, Frank Gehry, I am confident this will be an attraction and a landmark that will make us all proud.

The public's investment in the proposed arena would be rather modest for a project of this magnitude. The benefits and amenities it would provide - social and economic, short- and long-term - would be the most significant project accomplished in Brooklyn in decades, especially when you factor in the overwhelming demand in Brooklyn for affordable housing and jobs.

WORLD CLASS PROJECT

It comes down to this. I believe very strongly that all of Brooklyn would benefit from the return of national sports to our borough; an arena for world-class attractions and high school and college athletics; the construction of affordable and middle income housing, which is the number one need in every survey of Brooklyn residents; the development of office space for more employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for residents; and the tremendous number of jobs and economic activity that would result on Atlantic Avenue, Flatbush Avenue, Vanderbilt Avenue, Washington Avenue, and beyond.

I am confident that a national basketball franchise in Brooklyn will immediately become one of the country's best-loved teams.

As a result, this would draw new visitors to our borough and be a huge boost to Brooklyn's growing tourism industry. Brooklyn's need for an arena is perhaps just as important. Currently, we lack a large multi-purpose indoor space.

So in addition to a home for the Nets, an arena would allow Brooklyn to host college and high-school athletic events, graduations, trade shows, concerts, the kennel show, Ice Capades, conventions and numerous other events that we currently miss out on and that Brooklynites are forced to go to New Jersey, Long Island or even Manhattan to attend.

For all of these reasons and many more, I am an enthusiastic supporter.

At the same time, I understand the concerns, and on issues such as traffic and parking, they are real and need to be reviewed by experts with the participation of our community. Sadly, thus far the cry from some has not been "let's make this work," but rather, "let's stop this project totally."

Fortunately we live in a democracy that celebrates different opinions and encourages public debate. I look forward to such a debate and am confident that a successful win-win will result for the immediate neighborhood and for all of Brooklyn and New York City. I believe we can have both: an arena and a better neighborhood.

We can elevate Brooklyn to the national stage while enhancing the neighborhoods we love.

Marty Markowitz is the Brooklyn Borough President

#####

In This Series:

â€˜ **Field of Schemes** by Letitia James
â€˜ **Cheerleaders for Real Estate?** by Tom Angotti