Sunset Park Library Redevelopment Project Approved by City Council

Innovative Partnership Between the City of New York, Brooklyn Public Library, Fifth Avenue Committee to Nearly Double Size of One of Brooklyn’s Busiest Branches, Create 49 Units of Deeply Affordable Housing

Plan Receives Unanimous Support in Final Round of Rigorous Public Approval Process

BROOKLYN, NY—The New York City Council has voted to approve the Sunset Park Library Redevelopment Project unanimously, Brooklyn Public Library, Fifth Avenue Committee and the de Blasio Administration announced today, finalizing the formal public approval process for the innovative project. The proposal previously received unanimous approval from the City Planning Commission and the City Council’s Land Use Committee and Subcommittee on Planning, Dispositions and Concessions. The project was also approved by the Borough President and the members of Community Board 7.

Developed in partnership with the Fifth Avenue Committee, a nonprofit with nearly four decades’ experience in affordable housing and comprehensive community development, Brooklyn Public Library’s new Sunset Park branch will provide the neighborhood with a modern, state-of-the-art library that is nearly twice the size of the current location. Sunset Park Library is one of Brooklyn’s busiest, with attendance and circulation that rank in the top 10 of BPL’s 60 branches.

“Thanks to the support of the City Council and the residents of Sunset Park, we will soon begin construction of a library that will offer the robust and diverse
programming, large multilingual collection and comfortable, inspiring environment that our patrons and staff deserve,” said Brooklyn Public Library President and CEO Linda E. Johnson. “We look forward to designing and building the new Sunset Park Library with input from the community.”

“Today’s vote on the Sunset Park Library project represents a major victory for the values we cherish – both creating new affordable housing and improving public libraries that are so central to our communities,” said Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen. “By bringing 49 affordable apartments online and funding the expansion and upgrade of the library, this development will serve the neighborhood for decades to come.”

“By combining affordable housing with improvements to public resources like the Sunset Park Library, we are serving local residents and the community for generations to come,” said Department of Housing, Preservation and Development Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer. “Today’s vote is an important milestone in making way for 49 new affordable apartments and a much-enhanced and expanded space for the library so it can continue to serve as a vital hub for the neighborhood.”

“Fifth Avenue Committee is grateful for the overwhelming support this project has received and that FAC and BPL will be able to move forward to bring a 21st century public library and 100% truly and deeply affordable housing to the Sunset Park community. This project is a model in how to ensure that the community can achieve the maximum benefits possible as part of redeveloping public land for public good. We look forward to continuing to work with the community as this project moves forward towards construction,” said Michelle de la Uz, Fifth Avenue Committee Executive Director.

“For the past two years, Sunset Park stakeholders and I have held public meetings and hearings on how to rebuild our aging library. A call for an expanded and modern library that meets local needs such as affordable housing and community space was at the center of this process. Together, we’ve worked to ensure that our residents’ recommendations were heard. Today, the New York City Council voted unanimously in approval of a project that includes legal requirements for 100% affordable housing and a permanently protected community library. I want to thank the Brooklyn Public Library and Fifth Avenue Committee for crafting a project that will serve Sunset Park residents for generations to come,” said Council Member Carlos Menchaca.

At 12,200 square feet, only 7,465 of which are accessible to the public, the current branch is too small to meet the needs of this growing community. Built in the 1970s, it is poorly laid out for modern use. The proposed new library will be 20,755 square feet, with 18,200 square feet expected to be accessible to the public. It will be outfitted for the modern era, with the collections, technology and flexible space needed to accommodate many uses and serve a large, diverse
The expansion of Sunset Park Library and the development of deeply affordable housing is especially timely given the growth of the neighborhood. A 2017 study by the New York City Comptroller’s office identified a 34% increase in Sunset Park’s population between 1990 and 2014, double the citywide growth rate. The median rent in the neighborhood has grown at a rate (63%) that far outpaces the growth in median income (25%).

The project will create 100% affordable housing atop the new library branch, with anticipated financing from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. Forty-nine affordable units will be available for incomes spanning 30% to 80% of Area Median Income (AMI). The majority of the units are reserved for incomes at or below 50% of AMI, and most apartments will rent for $500 to $1,000 per month. A minimum of 50% of the apartments will be reserved for Community Board 7 residents, 10% for city employees and 10% for the physically disabled. Nine units will be reserved for survivors of domestic violence. As a locally-based nonprofit developer whose mission is to advance economic and social justice, FAC is committed to permanent affordability for all of the apartments. Thirty-five percent of the apartments will be permanently affordable through City Regulatory Agreements that will be recorded with the property.

The Fifth Avenue Committee will construct the eight-story, mixed-use building, including the library’s core and shell, at no cost to Brooklyn Public Library. BPL will fit out the new library for approximately $10 million, using a portion of the proceeds from the redevelopment of its Brooklyn Heights branch. The city will own the library in perpetuity, as it does the current branch.

Interim library service will be provided throughout the construction process at 4201 Fourth Avenue, at 42nd Street.

More details on the project are available here.

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About Brooklyn Public Library:
Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is an independent library system for the 2.5 million residents of Brooklyn. It is the fifth largest library system in the United States with 60 neighborhood libraries located throughout the borough. BPL offers free programs and services for all ages and stages of life, including a large selection of books in more than 30 languages, author talks, literacy programs and public computers. BPL’s eResources, such as eBooks and eVideos, catalog information and free homework help, are available to customers of all ages 24 hours a day at our website: www.bklynlibrary.org.
About Fifth Avenue Committee
Fifth Avenue Committee, Inc. (FAC) is a nationally recognized South Brooklyn based non-profit comprehensive community development corporation formed in 1978 whose mission is to advance economic and social justice by building vibrant, diverse communities where residents have genuine opportunities to achieve their goals as well as the power to shape the community’s future. FAC works to transform the lives of over 5,500 low and moderate income New Yorkers annually so that we can all live and work with dignity and respect while making our community more equitable, sustainable, inclusive and just. To achieve our mission FAC develops and manages affordable housing and community facilities, creates economic opportunities and ensures access to economic stability, organizes residents and workers, offers student centered adult education, and combats displacement caused by gentrification. FAC has developed nearly 900 units of affordable housing, currently manages more than 500 units and has an affordable housing pipeline of more than 1,000 units. For more information about FAC go to www.fifthave.org.