



BROOKLYN
HEIGHTS
ASSOCIATION

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**Statement of the Brooklyn Heights Association In The Matter of the Disposition of
280 Cadman Plaza West, November 18, 2015**

The Brooklyn Heights Branch Library is central to our community. A library serves its community best when it is comfortable and up-to-date. Features like reliable online access, good lighting, size and air-conditioning matter. What's true of the Brooklyn Heights Branch is true of the rest of the Brooklyn Public Library system. This proposal will provide funds for the renovation of other BPL branches, and that is why the BHA and its members support it. After the Brooklyn Heights branch has been outfitted, the remaining money will pay for repairs at the Walt Whitman, Pacific Street, Washington Irving and Sunset Park branches, benefitting many BPL users.

The experience of the NY Public Library with the reconstruction of the Donnell Branch has been instructive. As a result, the Brooklyn Heights branch project is subject to strict terms outlined in both the original Request for Proposals and a Memorandum of Understanding between the BPL and the City. Those requirements include: an interim library; time limits on construction; completion of the affordable housing before issuance of a certificate of occupancy for the condominium; and that all proceeds from the sale will be for the use of the BPL.

Of course, we have concerns. Community Board 2 has requested that the usable area of the new library equal the usable area of the existing branch. We completely agree. The preliminary plans show the branch to have 21,500 square feet of usable space, but we would like to see this figure significantly enlarged. A welcoming library space, with natural light and working air conditioning, will attract significantly more visitors than the existing branch, already one of the busiest in the system, and the new branch must accommodate them.

Our local school is at 140% of capacity, and the addition of 139 apartments to the school zone will increase the overcrowding. The City Council must insist that the New York City Department of Education address the burden that surging development in Brooklyn causes.

Many in our community have requested – and we concur – that the developer and BPL give further consideration to the configuration of the related affordable housing. The apartments are targeted to residents making 60-165% of area median income, which may be too high. Three-quarters of the affordable apartments will be studios or one-bedrooms, which means the project will not address the enormous need for two, three, and four bedroom family apartments.

The BPL has gone far to meet and address the concerns of our community. We look forward to:

- a spacious, state-of-the art branch library in our neighborhood
- well-designed, affordable housing in our district
- substantial repairs and infrastructure upgrades in at least four Brooklyn branch libraries.

We support this proposal, for the Heights, for Brooklyn Community District 2, and for all of Brooklyn, and we urge you to support it too.