

BQE RECONSTRUCTION UNIFIED VISION STATEMENT

November 25, 2019

To the Members of the Mayor's Expert Panel on the BQE Reconstruction,

Over the last six months, local communities adjacent to the proposed project area have continued to meet to discuss the future of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) and how its imminent reconstruction can best reflect our expectations and concerns.

We write on behalf of twelve neighborhood organizations and residential buildings to make clear that we share a unified vision, one we hope will be adopted by the Expert Panel and New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT). Below please find our Unified Vision Statement which has been updated since the initial version was submitted in June 2019 and has the support of all the signatories listed.

The end result of the BQE reconstruction process must be a transformative, sustainable solution that will permanently change the relationship of the expressway to our adjacent neighborhoods. That solution must protect our neighborhoods and parks, emphasize our neighborhoods' historic character, and enhance pedestrian connectivity and green space.

What we desire:

- A forward-looking design that incorporates future traffic requirements and alternative routing options, including newly imagined connections between the bridges and the BQE, along with enhanced public transportation;
- Unified and integrated adjacent neighborhoods and parks, including enhanced pedestrian access, and the improvement and creation of open space for public use throughout the corridor;
- The holistic re-imagining of Van Voorhees Park, Brooklyn Bridge Park, the Promenade and the network of smaller parks within their surrounding neighborhoods and with each other, with greater connectivity, welcoming gateways and safe pedestrian pathways;
- Maintenance of the historic character of the Promenade, while building direct pedestrian pathways to Brooklyn Bridge Park to improve park access and ease pedestrian flows on residential streets;
- Neighborhoods connected by new open spaces and community amenities, with no real estate developments;
- Minimal noise and visual impact on nearby residential buildings and all adjoining neighborhoods; and
- Significant reduction in air pollution levels from vehicle emissions in all adjoining neighborhoods.

What we expect during the process:

- Significant and meaningful engagement with our community during the design and construction phases to ensure that residents of all affected neighborhoods are included as important stakeholders throughout the process;
- Implementation of traffic demand management measures to minimize diverted traffic through local streets in all affected neighborhoods;
- Mitigation of all environmental impacts, and continuous air, noise, and vibration monitoring before and during construction;
- Protection of the buildings and character of our historically significant neighborhoods during construction;
- Support for small businesses on nearby commercial corridors during construction; and
- Community compensation for closures or temporary takings of existing parks or playgrounds with equivalent green/play space.

What we expect will be avoided:

- A mere rebuilding of the current expressway, even if upgraded to current federal standards, that perpetuates the noise and pollution impacts of the expressway on adjacent neighborhoods and on Brooklyn Bridge Park and Van Voorhees Park;
- A Promenade highway or any other temporary or permanent structure that would place a heavily trafficked interstate expressway at the doorstep of any of our neighborhoods;
- Connections between the BQE and bridges that route vehicles through local streets, like those currently existing on Sands and Old Fulton Streets;
- Disjointed and unsafe BQE vehicular transitions and access like those present at Sands Street, Atlantic Avenue, and Columbia Street;
- Unsafe pedestrian access points to Brooklyn Bridge Park like those present at Atlantic Avenue, Joralemon Street, and Old Fulton Street;
- Any type of new development or commercial space that impinges on any of our parks, green spaces, the waterfront, or the adjoining neighborhoods;
- Destruction or substantial reduction of any existing parks or green space; and
- Non-consensual eminent domain.

This is an opportunity to improve and correct the planning ideologies of the past that prioritized automobiles – dividing and destroying many of the city's historic neighborhoods. **We must not just rebuild and maintain the status quo, but reimagine the future of our city, with a greater emphasis on public space and healthy, walkable communities.** What is done here can help to lead the way for many more neighborhoods throughout the City of New York. This is our future.

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cc: Honorable Mayor Bill de Blasio
Honorable Corey Johnson, City Council Speaker
Honorable Jumaane Williams, NYC Public Advocate
Honorable Scott Stringer, NYC Comptroller
Honorable Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President
Honorable Nydia Velazquez, U.S. Representative
Honorable Brian Kavanagh, NYS Senator
Honorable Jo Anne Simon, NYS Assembly Member
Honorable Brad Lander, NYC Council Member
Honorable Stephen Levin, NYC Council Member
Polly Trottenberg, NYC Commissioner, Department of Transportation
Mike Racioppo, Brooklyn Community Board 6 District Manager
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