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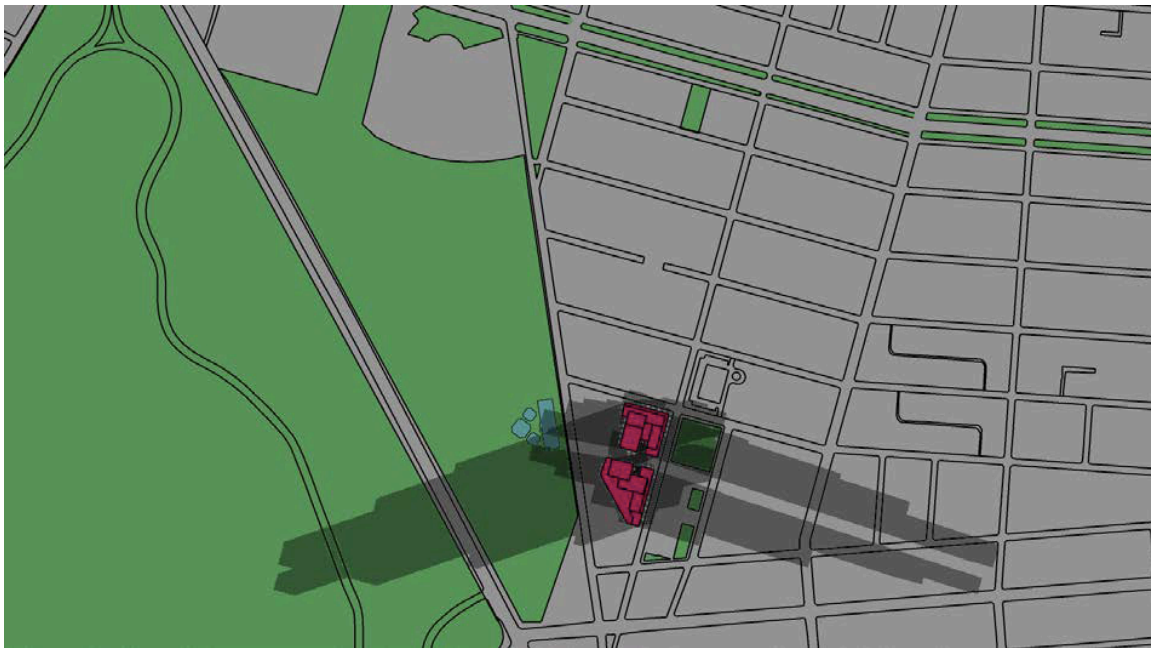
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**DEVELOPERS SUBMIT NEW PLANS FOR CONDOMINIUM TOWERS THAT WILL
CAST PERMANENT DESTRUCTIVE SHADOWS OVER
BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS**

***BBG and Municipal Art Society condemn plan and urge City Planning
Commission not to certify it at today's meeting. Developers' move comes despite
Mayor de Blasio's opposition.***

***The Towers would cover the Garden in shadows for hours each day, destroying
hundreds of species of plants and endangering thousands of others***



February 1, 2021 – The President of Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG), Adrian Benepe, and the President of the Municipal Art Society (MAS), Elizabeth Goldstein, today voiced strong opposition to a newly submitted development plan for 960 Franklin Avenue that would cause catastrophic harm to the Garden. They urged the City Planning Commission (CPC) to withhold certification of the rezoning application that is based on a review of the developer's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

The development in question is a nearly three-acre site in Crown Heights, which at its nearest point is merely 150 feet east of Brooklyn Botanic Garden, a world-class horticultural institution that is more than 110-years old. The huge structure would devastate large sections of it by casting a shadow over BBG for hours each day all

year long, with a particularly severe impact on the Garden's 23 glass houses, including the three conservatories that house its world-renowned Desert, Tropical, and Temperate living plant collections. It will also plunge the adjacent Jackie Robinson Playground into deep shadow every afternoon year-round, robbing the children's play area and its many trees of crucial sunlight. A petition opposing the development has over 50,000 signatures.

For Brooklyn Botanic Garden, this development may forever compromise the Garden's ability to grow, house, and display plants and educate children and the community. BBG partners with hundreds of local community groups and welcomes thousands of public school children into the Garden through its educational programs each year. Experts have suggested that BBG might have to close its Desert Plant Pavilion for lack of sunlight for those families of plants. And the loss of up to more than five hours of sunlight per day would severely hamper the Garden's ability to propagate plants that are currently grown to replace the nearly ten percent of plants that are lost to senescence every year. Most such plants are not commercially available.

"This entire ill-conceived, vastly out-of-scale project is an existential threat to Brooklyn Botanic Garden and its century-old living museum of plants, and it will also cast neighborhood parks into perpetual shadow," said **Adrian Benepe, President of Brooklyn Botanic Garden**. "The project itself, and the developers' insistence on pressing forward despite widespread opposition at all levels, is a slap in the face to the people of Brooklyn and New York City. We strongly urge the City Planning Commission to deny certification for ULURP, and if it proceeds, to completely reject this utterly inappropriate and destructive project"

The developers are requesting several rezoning changes that would allow them to create a mega-development that would be the tallest series of buildings in the surrounding area, topping out with two towers at about 420 feet with 40-foot bulkheads. The requested zoning class, R9-D would dwarf the existing zoning, which was put into place in 1991 specifically to protect the Garden from a destructive loss of sunlight. The developers' plan concedes that the project would cause "significant adverse impacts" to the Garden, in a phrase that is repeated throughout the DEIS document. It states plainly that the shadows' "impacts to both the Garden and Jackie Robinson Playground are unmitigable."

"City Planning cannot properly review a project of this magnitude without a realistic picture of its environmental impact," said **Elizabeth Goldstein, President of the Municipal Art Society of New York**. "The existing zoning was put in place to protect sunlight on Brooklyn Botanic Garden; nearby spaces like Jackie Robinson Playground and Medgar Evers College have been protected by it as well. If a developer wants special permission to defy that zoning, the people of Crown Heights deserve an honest assessment of the way their neighborhood may be forever changed."

About six weeks ago, Mayor Bill de Blasio, who has to approve any rezoning proposal, announced his opposition to the project, stating the development was, "grossly out of scale." Many assumed that the Mayor's opposition was the death knell for the project, but the developers, Continuum Partners and Lincoln Equity

Group, are pressing forward with their project, requesting certification and entry into the City's land use process.

The NY City Planning Commission will consider certifying the rezoning proposal at its meeting today, February 1st, at 1 PM. If the City Planning Commission votes to certify the project, it will trigger the start of the city's Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP).

The Garden launched its "Fight for Sunlight" advocacy campaign in opposition to the rezoning at the March 2019 Environmental Impact Scoping, giving testimony about the permanent, damaging impacts of the scope and scale the development. Since then, the Garden has communicated regularly with its supporters and led trainings and other outreach to educate the public about the impact of the loss of sun on its collections.

In July 2019, MAS released an [analysis of 960 Franklin Avenue](#) and the tactics being used to upend existing zoning on the site. Later that year, MAS released [Bright Ideas](#), a report summarizing nearly a year's worth of research, debate, and conversation about the role of sunlight in the public realm. It serves as the foundation of a campaign called [Fight for Light](#), which seeks stronger protections for the natural resources that are essential to an equitable city and the health and happiness of city dwellers. In a follow-up brief in 2020 titled [A Public Champion for the Public Realm](#), MAS called for the creation of a New York City Director of the Public Realm.

To virtually watch the City Planning Commission meeting today, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/about/commission-meetings.page>

For more information about BBG, visit https://www.bbg.org/support/save_the_sunlight_oppose_rezoning