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Testimony by Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats (CBID) submitted to
Community Board 9's ULURP Hearing on 960 Franklin Avenue
March, 2021

The members of Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats (CBID) strongly urge members of Community Board 9 to reject any development proposal that would harm the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Members of CBID voted to support the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's "Fight for Sunlight" campaign and we are submitting this testimony to urge the members of Community Board 9 to use their power and influence to join us in attempting to preserve the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG), one of Brooklyn's most valuable assets.

We know that CB 9's Board members volunteer their time to help protect and improve the CB9 neighborhoods. We also recognize that CB9 members are often called upon to weigh competing interests. In terms of the proposed 960 Franklin Avenue development, we believe that the studies conducted by BBG's experts demonstrate that the best choice for the community is clear -- to keep the current limited height zoning laws in place.

If the developers are truly interested in creating housing for all price points, there are many available locations where they can do this. But there is only one Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

Because BBG is located within the purview of Community Board 9, the CB 9 members are also the guardians of one of Brooklyn's most important assets. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden provides education for children of all ages and from all neighborhoods. It is a major haven for the pollinators that our food supply depends on but are declining all over the world. It is a research institute for sustainable practices. It preserves endangered plant species, and it provides valuable green space to all Brooklyn residents.

Moreover, Brooklyn Botanic Garden is a major tourist attraction, bringing thousands of visitors and millions of dollars into our borough every year. Over the years, Brooklyn taxpayers have invested in many capital projects to improve the BBG and sustain its operation. Don't let the value of those investments be diminished by the proposed development.

The zoning laws around the Garden were designed explicitly to protect this valuable Brooklyn asset. If 960 Franklin Avenue were given a variance it could set a precedent for more tall and

massive buildings to be built in the area surrounding BBG. This would endanger valuable portions of the Garden and ultimately could create a situation where the entire garden could be in shadow.

To allow the proposed development of 960 Franklin Avenue to be built -- just 150 feet from the Garden's most important sites -- would be an act of vandalism on a valuable cultural and scientific icon and would be a crime against the families and children of Brooklyn. The greenhouses, conservatories, and nurseries that the Garden depends on would be compromised, threatening the conservation, research, and educational efforts that benefit all of Brooklyn.

We hope the members of Community Board 9 will join the members of CBID and thousands of other Brooklynites in supporting the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's "Fight for Sunlight" campaign to prevent critical areas of the Garden from being overshadowed by the proposed development at 960 Franklin Avenue. The Brooklyn Botanic Garden is one of the jewels in the crown of NYC and a national treasure that must be preserved.

Testimony respectfully submitted,

Rich Bennett, President, CBID

Alice Ott, Co-Chair, CBID's Climate Change & Environmental Justice Committee