

25th Street Pedestrian Plaza Public Announcement

(New York, NY - December 17, 2012) Baruch College of The City University of New York is pleased to announce that the New York City Department of Transportation has approved the College's proposal for the creation of a Pedestrian Plaza on 25th Street between Third and Lexington Avenues. Thanks to the leadership of the NYC DOT—especially Commissioner Janette Sadik-Khan—the visionary Plaza Program will add desperately needed public space to Manhattan Community District 6, an area recognized to have the least amount of open space in all of New York City. “With the ongoing assistance of DOT Manhattan Borough Commissioner Margaret Forgone, the creation of the 25th Street Plaza will be a transformative event that will forever enhance the campus experience for our students, faculty, and staff, as well as for the local community,” says Baruch College President Mitchel B. Wallerstein.

With the NYC DOT's approval and support of Plaza Program Director Vaidila Satvika, the College will proceed with the creation of an Interim Plaza that begins with today's street closure. As a signal of how important this is to the College community, the Baruch College Association voted to fund the entire cost of the 25th Street Interim Plaza beautification. The Interim Plaza is expected to be in place for approximately three years as the College and community work together on the design and construction of a permanent one. A ceremony to celebrate the opening of the Interim Plaza will be held on February 20, 2013.

The plaza will be a place where members of the Baruch College community and local residents can sit and enjoy food and drink from local businesses, such as Jimmy's House or Bagel Express. The plaza will be outfitted with Wi-Fi access, bistro chairs and tables and planters that will add more green on the block while also preventing traffic from using the street. Some ideas that have already been generated from community workshops include a book fair and productions from the Baruch Performing Arts Center.

The College community is deeply grateful for the support of Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and the leadership at The City University of New York's central administration for their commitment to making the plaza a reality. CUNY is helping to fund the design and construction of the Permanent Plaza. The College is also profoundly fortunate that a stellar group of alumni from Los Angeles, California, led by Lawrence N. Field ('52) and Daniel Clivner ('85), have agreed to provide private financing for a significant portion of the development costs. Just as the Permanent Plaza's design and construction will be collaborative, “we believe this joint funding model between Baruch and CUNY will result in the finest public space possible for the College and local community,” notes President Wallerstein.

During the approval process, Baruch College received strong support from prominent City and State officials, including Council Members Rosie Mendez and James Vacca—Chairman of the Committee on Transportation, State Assemblyman Brian Kavanagh, and State Senator Liz Krueger, as well as Speaker of the City Council Christine C. Quinn and Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer. “The entire College and our surrounding community are especially appreciative of the exemplary leadership of the NYC DOT and the Office of the Deputy Mayor of Economic Development,” says President Wallerstein.

The plaza proposal was strongly supported by the members of Manhattan Community Board 6 (CB6) and its then-Chairman Mark Thompson after the NYC DOT's Division of Traffic and Planning concluded that there will be “no adverse effect on traffic and pedestrian operations” from the closure of 25th Street between Lexington and Third Avenues. The CB6 full board adopted a final resolution supporting the plaza by a near unanimous vote on November 14, 2012.

The College also owes a debt of gratitude to our 25th Street neighbors, including the Carlton Arms Hotel, Jimmy's House Restaurant, Bagel Express, and the residential building owners on the block—many of whom provided letters of support. The plaza was supported by members of community-based organizations, including the 23rd Street Partnership/Flatiron Business Improvement District, the former 23rd Street Association, the Gramercy Brass Orchestra, and Gustavus Adolphus Lutheran Church. The Baruch Undergraduate Student Government was also involved providing a resolution to support the creation of the plaza and attending the Community Board meetings along with the College administration. Baruch undergraduate students put forward a request to the Baruch College Association Inc. to use some of its surplus funds to cover the costs of furnishing the Interim Plaza. The request was approved by the College Association board on November 6, 2012 for “25th Street Plaza Beautification.”

The creation of the Permanent Plaza is expected to be completed within 3 years and will include a process by which a committee of both internal and external stakeholders will be able to contribute to its design. This will ensure that the Permanent Plaza is one that the College and local community can be proud of and that will be able to support a wide range of programming. The 25th Street Plaza will truly be a community asset for all to enjoy throughout the year for generations to come.