EarthStrike NYC Testimony for Industry City Rezoning
Tuesday, January 14, 2020

EarthStrike NYC is an autonomous local chapter of EarthStrike International, a global movement fighting the climate crisis through the leadership of workers and the grassroots.

We are here to support Sunset Park in its fight for survival, and for a just habitable future. Within the national and global climate movement, UPROSE is a respected leader. The world looks to Sunset Park for UPROSE’s democratic, grassroots, dynamic climate leadership. We are honored to have worked with UPROSE on September 27th to organize a Communities Climate Strike, where over 300 New Yorkers, workers, and frontline fighters came to recognize Sunset Park as an epicenter of the fight for climate justice in New York City, marching on Industry City to demand a community-led just transition.

We recognize that at the root of the climate crisis is a racist, extractive economic system which blocks all efforts to safeguard our Earth systems and protect the most vulnerable. We remind you that business as usual will result in a climate breakdown so extreme that it will leave our planet unrecognizable. Our existing economy is on track to kill and displace hundreds of millions, if not billions of people through unprecedented heating and extreme weather events. If the borough president takes the climate crisis seriously, he will recognize that the neighborhoods he serves must dedicate as much of their capacity as possible to climate mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency. And he will understand that every decision he makes must prioritize climate change mitigation through a just transition, instead of giving business as usual another opportunity to destroy and displace.

This month, the Brooklyn Borough President faces two options: either he will bow to the wishes of developers, or he will honor the people of Sunset Park and their needs. This is a choice between climate denial and climate action. According to a recent Oxfam report, the 10% wealthiest Americans emit more than five times as much greenhouse gases than the bottom 50%. Industry City was created to serve this carbon elite. To approve the Industry City rezoning is to endorse a consumerist, unhealthy carbon-intensive lifestyle which bears great responsibility for the climate crisis. This City does not need more hotels for business travelers or luxury retail for people who already have it all. We must attend to workers, immigrants, and Black and brown New Yorkers who face intersecting crises of gentrification, racist policing, cost of living, and traumatic, deadly climate disasters.

There is a hopeful future for the waterfront that is struggling to be born. UPROSE has a plan that takes the climate crisis seriously: the GRID (Green Resilient Industrial District) plan. It is designed to strengthen the livelihoods of longtime Sunset Park residents, respond to the neighborhood’s many needs, and protect the climate resiliency of the entire city. Failing to implement the GRID will leave all of New York City more vulnerable in the event of a climate disaster. Industry City’s plan not only threatens to displace an entire neighborhood–it stands in the way of a powerful, detailed climate action plan.

It is an unfortunate fact that, in the face of monumental threats, City officials regularly take the side of capital and leave working New Yorkers to lose their homes and die in climate disasters. If the Borough President and the Community Board plan on approving Industry City’s application, they will find comfort in knowing that this is unremarkable, that this is business as usual. But may they always remember that business as usual is a dangerous path, it is a path of betrayal, and it is a racist path to suffering, displacement, and premature death for the most vulnerable.