



The Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance

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**For Immediate Release:
September 22, 2009**

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Newly Elected AFL-CIO President Trumka Weighs-In For Responsible Development

NEW YORK, NY –Richard Trumka, the newly elected President of the AFL-CIO, joined Stuart Appelbaum, President of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), clergy and community leaders in the Bronx, NY, today to highlight the need for responsible economic development.

“Economic development has to be about building communities and not just building profits for developers,” said AFL-CIO President Trumka at a meeting with community and labor leaders in Kingsbridge. “Too many developers see our communities as a place to turn a quick buck without returning anything of lasting value,” said Trumka. “We need to change that.”

“Economic development that creates jobs that keep people in poverty accomplishes nothing,” said RWDSU President Appelbaum. “What’s happening here in the Bronx reflects what we are fighting for across the country. We are creating a better approach to economic development; an approach that calls on developers to create living wage jobs, respect workers right to join a union and to give back to the communities where they operate. Especially when a developer is benefiting from public support like tax breaks and other incentives, that developer has an obligation to improve the lives of working families in our community.”

Trumka’s visit came as New York City considers plans by the Related Companies to develop the Kingsbridge Armory into the “Shops at the Armory” mall. After construction, Related’s plans would result in no full-time jobs, only low-wage part time jobs without benefits. Related’s plans would turn the Shops at the Armory into a poverty-wage center.

“This is our Armory and we will not allow it to be used solely as a profit center for Related,” said Desiree Pilgrim-Hunter, a leader of the Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance (KARA), said as she met with Trumka and Appelbaum. “We need good jobs and better schools, not just more shopping options.” KARA is a coalition of unions, community groups, churches and small business owners advocating for living wage jobs, community space, recreational facilities and schools at the Armory.

Fred LeMoine, KARA member and Vice President of the Bronx Board of Business Agents, the Bronx branch of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York and vicinity, said, “Responsible development means sitting down with all the community stakeholders to make sure their needs are met. We stand with President Trumka and our labor and community partners today to make sure that when we build in the Bronx, or anywhere, we do it in a way that doesn’t just drain resources but provides real and lasting benefits.”

“I have been involved with the grassroots movement to redevelop the Armory for 13 years,” says Reverend Doctor Katrina Foster, Pastor of the Fordham Lutheran Church. “The support of our nation’s top labor leader is an affirmation of our core principle that everyone who works in the Armory has earned the right to a living wage, job security and unionization. This community asset can be transformed into an economic tool for our community and a profit maker for Related. These two things are not incompatible.”

Community Benefits Agreements have been negotiated in cities around the country with developers who would be receiving tax dollars and tax exemptions to help underwrite their projects. These agreements have helped developers build profitable projects while guaranteeing good jobs that pay living wages and create community spaces.