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*For Immediate Release:*

## **MAS URGES CITY TO SUPPORT MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY, AREA JOBS IN GOWANUS CANAL REZONING**

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**New York, March 10, 2009**—The Municipal Art Society of New York, a private, non-profit membership organization that fights for intelligent urban planning, design, and preservation, has issued testimony urging the city to support the area’s manufacturing industry and to re-evaluate the adequacy of the area’s storm-water infrastructure for residential construction in its proposed plan to rezone 25 blocks adjacent to Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn.

MAS believes the proposed plan does not do enough to support the area’s existing manufacturing uses and industrial job growth and that it incentivizes medium- to high-density residential development in an area that lies in a flood plain with historical environmental contamination and a significant number of sewage overflow outfalls.

“The Gowanus area is a thriving manufacturing district, and MAS sees in the district a tremendous opportunity to nurture and safeguard existing businesses and create space for new industries and sorely needed job growth,” said Lisa Kersavage, director of advocacy and policy at the Municipal Art Society. “And, given the long-term economic challenges facing the city, we question whether rezoning the Gowanus area to favor residential development is prudent, especially in areas prone to flooding and environmental contamination.”

MAS urges the Department of City Planning to apply the following guidelines in planning for the future of the Gowanus Canal Corridor:

- Safeguard and provide incentives for continued industrial and manufacturing activity and expansion in the Gowanus Canal Corridor.
- Plan for canal waterfront development that is compatible with the continued use of the canal for industrial and commercial waterborne transportation.
- Evaluate the rezoning in light of the following environmental problems: the potential for storm surge and flooding due to climate change and the unabated combined sewage overflows into the canal.
- Preserve Brooklyn’s industrial heritage.

The city’s shrinking industrial land-base has already caused vacancy rates for industrial space to plummet to nearly 2 percent, driving up prices and squeezing out manufacturing businesses struggling to establish themselves or to expand. MAS believes there is potential for job growth in Gowanus and the proposed rezoning diminishes the city’s ability to locate new industries and jobs within its boundaries.

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MAS also pointed out that Gowanus is still an industrial waterway, and continued barging on the canal helps reduce environmental impact by eliminating hundreds of thousands of truck trips from city streets and highways. The proposed residential development and plans for promenades may, in fact, foreclose the opportunity to expand barging, Kersavage added.

A third concern is the area's lack of adequate sewage and storm-water infrastructure. When it rains, the combined flow can overwhelm the sewage treatment plants and raw sewage and runoff are then diverted into the city's harbor and rivers. The city must re-evaluate the adequacy of sewage and stormwater infrastructure, in light of any new residential construction that will further impact the Gowanus.

The Gowanus Canal itself is eligible for the National Register as a historic district, along with several adjoining buildings and structures; however the rezoning could negatively impact the character of the canal and some National Register-eligible resources. MAS urges that the canal's historic use as an industrial canal be reflected in the future development of the area.

*The Municipal Art Society of New York is a private, non-profit membership organization that fights for intelligent urban planning, design and preservation through education, dialogue and advocacy. The organization was founded in 1893. For more information, please visit [www.mas.org](http://www.mas.org)*

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