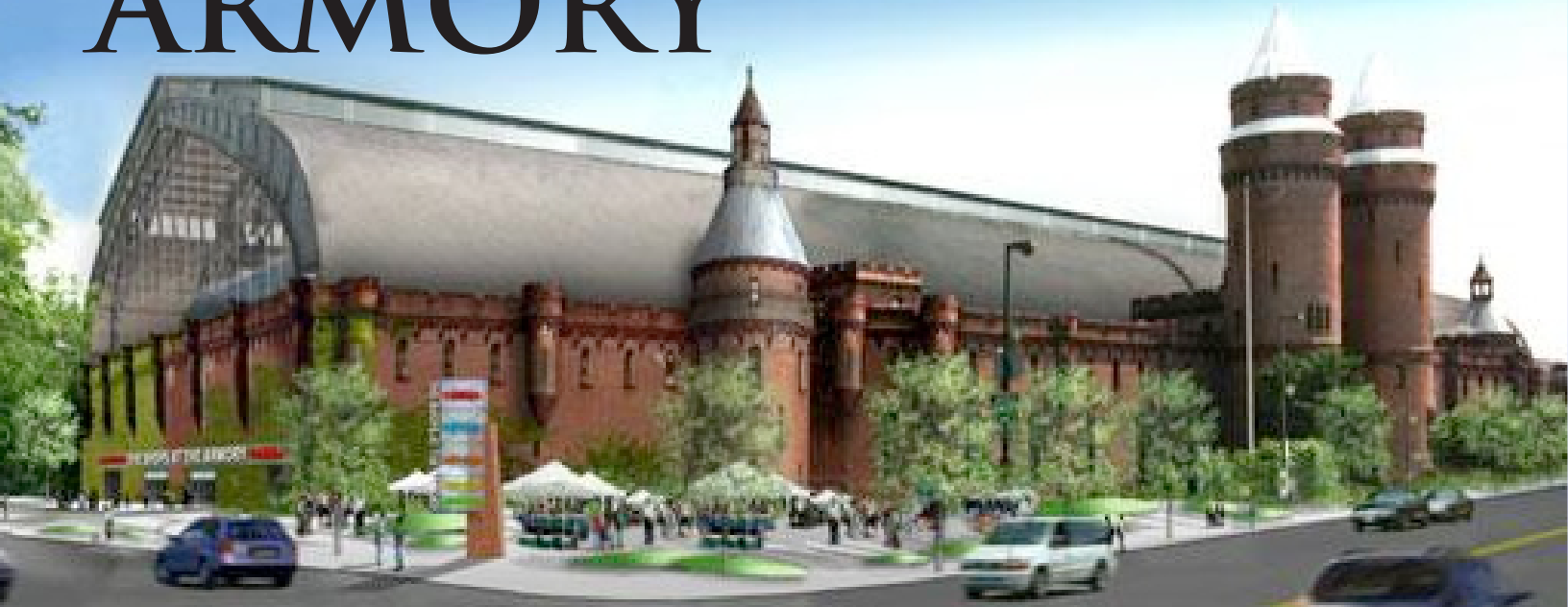


KINGSBRIDGE ARMORY



Organized labor took a rough hit this winter with the Kingsbridge Armory project in the Bronx. An overhaul of the long-abandoned property into a 500,000 square foot shopping mall would have been the largest development project in the Bronx since the beginning of the recession. On November 17, 2009, Louis Coletti, President and CEO of the Building Trades Employers' Association, expressed support for the project's

development in a strongly worded testimony to the New York City Council.

In a borough with a 13.4 percent unemployment rate and 28 percent of residents living below the poverty level, a project of this scope would have been welcome, but the debate teetered—and ultimately fell—on the issue of prevailing wage.

Mr. Coletti argued, on behalf of the 28 trade associations and 1,700 union contractors that the BTEA represents, that halting construction would damage the future economic development of the City and further deepen the economic crisis. He urged the committee to approve the project for three primary reasons: (1) The project would create 1,000 good, living wage union construction jobs in a suffering industry, lessening the staggering 25% unemployment rate; (2) It would create 1,200 permanent retail jobs for Bronx residents; and (3) The project's developer has a history of providing jobs for Bronx residents, contracts for M/W/

LBEs, and support for local community services, and has committed to the same goals for the Kingsbridge Armory project.

Despite such a plea, the City Council's zoning subcommittee, Land Use Committee and full council voted down the Kingsbridge Armory mall project in a 45-1 vote, under the reasoning that it failed to meet their demands that retailers pay a "living wage" of \$10 an hour with benefits. This served as the first rezoning voted down since Mayor Bloomberg took office. ■



[Click here for Mr. Coletti's testimony.](#)