

De Blasio blocks Crown Heights apartment project near the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens

By [Michael Gartland](#)

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Mayor de Blasio has reversed course on a controversial plan to build two apartment towers in Crown Heights, a project critics argued would kill plants in the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

The development, which was being pushed by Bruce Eichner of the Continuum Company, would have brought two 39-story apartment towers and the shade they cast near the edges of the famed plant sanctuary.



Illustrative view of the plan from the parking lot at the northeast corner of Montgomery St. and Franklin Ave. (Obtained by Daily News)

“We need to ensure that new developments meet public needs and support our communities,” de Blasio said. “I am voicing my opposition to the proposed 960 Franklin development in Crown

Heights that would harm the research and educational work carried out by one of this city’s prized cultural institutions.”

De Blasio called the project “grossly out of scale with the neighborhood” and called on Continuum “to go back to the drawing board and create a proposal that we can be proud of.”

The statement effectively ends the project, which would have brought more than 1,500 apartment units — many of them with below market-rate rents — to the quickly gentrifying neighborhood.

Eichner did not immediately return messages, leaving the fate of any future developments at the site unclear.

The mayor’s change of heart, which was first reported by Gothamist, comes 10 months after he pushed back on arguments against allowing the project to proceed.



Illustrative pedestrian-level view of the proposed development from the southeast corner of Montgomery St. and Franklin Ave. (Obtained by Daily News)

During a Feb. 7 interview on Brian Lehrer’s WNYC radio show, one caller described the project as “totally out of character” with the neighborhood, arguing that “the green oasis aspect of the gardens would be destroyed forever.”

De Blasio responded that he was “sympathetic,” but took a different view of the project.

“I don’t think it ruins the garden forever. I just don’t,” Hizzoner said at the time. “I would love it if we could have a city that could be a city for everyone and affordable, and we could keep some of the exact scale and aesthetics we had previously. I would love it if we could achieve those things, but we’re in this new world.”

He added that supporting the plan was more about “changing our laws to support working people and protect them.”

It is unclear why de Blasio issued a statement blocking the project now. His spokesman, Bill Neidhardt, said simply that “it’s never the wrong time to do the right thing.”

For more than a year, community groups like the Movement to Protect the People have opposed the development. The group’s leader, Alicia Boyd, said Tuesday that the decision probably stems from a lawsuit filed in Brooklyn Supreme Court in November.

The suit claims the city violated the planning process by failing to provide a detailed summary of the project to the public in a timely manner.

“It was going to be a very contentious and long lawsuit,” she said.



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