'Christmas In July' As City Buys Terminal

By JUDY THRALL

A party atmosphere prevailed as Mayor Edward I. Koch and Gerald Turetsky, regional coordinator of General Services Administration exchanged check and deed in a July 13 ceremony marking the city's purchase of the Brooklyn Army Terminal.

Held in the yard between two of the abandoned 97 acre Terminal buildings, more than 75 people joined the mayor and officials in marking what City Council Minority Leader Angelo Arculeo and Borough President Howard Golden call an event that will bring from "2000 to 4000" jobs to the Sunset Park facility.

The microphone was set up in a narrow space between two deep furrows of old railroad tracks, but Deputy Mayor Karen Gerard, opening the deep pit with a side-cutting digger, introduced the guest speakers.

City Comptroller, Harrison Goldin, said it is good that "condominium converters were kept away from the Terminal site." He gestured to the overlapping concrete balconies lit up by sunlight coming through the deep, partially shuttered skylight and observed that nearby developers could easily turn them into terraces.

"It is far better to create jobs," Goldin stated.

Golden, Arculeo, the Comptroller, and every other speaker complimented Congressman Leo C. Zeferetti for spearheading the fight to get the terminal, abandoned since 1966, in operation again.

This is a day that all of New York can be proud of," said Zeferetti. "It was made possible by cooperative efforts on the part of federal and local officials.

The territory at hand contains two eight-story buildings, four piers, an administration building, a boiler house, and auxiliary structures, as well as railyards.

Turetsky related that the Terminal had been a "small city" for almost 50 years. During its time of operation through two world wars and the Korean conflict, it was a "major employer."

"The goal of the Terminal," said Koch, "is jobs."

He added that the deal was costing the city $8.5 million. $4.5 million is from the federal government.

Helmsley-Spear, manager of nearby Bush Terminal, will develop the Army Terminal which lies along the waterfront and is bounded by 56th and 66th Streets and Second Avenue.

New York Public Interest Research Group maintains that the economic terms and the development proposals put forth by Helmsley-Spear are far from adequate.

NYPIRG, a non-profit organization, and the City Club both state that the 50-60 a year rent offered by Helmsley-Spear is too low. In addition, they charge that the plans put forth by that group would only transfer jobs from other sections of the city, not create new ones. Only six developers offered plans, they said, because the call for plans was accompanied by inadequate publicity.

"We put out requests for proposals," stated Koch who said few companies responded. "And we took the one that was best for the city."

The Mayor hastened to add that the current proposal was being "improved" in regard to what it will do for the city. Rent will come to nearly $500,000 per year and the city would take 65 percent of the profits.

Transferring jobs, he said, is important. Given the loss of light industry in Manhattan and other boroughs due to high rents and conversion, the employer has a choice of taking the business outside the city or moving it to the low-end Terminal site.

"It is no loss to the city when jobs are saved," he stated. "People have said that the present deal doesn't offer enough. When is it ever enough? Would people prefer to see the Terminal remain closed?"

It was in March that the Reagan administration allowed the GSA to actually begin selling the terminal to the city. The terms could not be agreed upon until recently.

Golden said that he doesn't put down the desire to save jobs, but new ones must be created. There are a large number of unemployed people who have loyally stuck with Brooklyn despite the lack of jobs. It is these people Golden wants to see rewarded when light industry and manufacturing begin to move into the area.

"We can't improve by just building up the Heights," he said adding that although the borough is proud of neighborhoods such as Brooklyn Heights and Bay Ridge, it also has an "obligation" to serve people in the central and north sections.

This can be done, he explained, by offering employment to people in poor areas. By doing that, he continued, criminal behavior will decline, money will circulate back into neighborhoods, and the areas with essentially good housing stock, such as Bedford-Stuyvesant, will be "upgraded."

In addition, jobs in Brooklyn will take pressure off the city's beleaguered transit system because fewer people will need to travel to and from Manhattan each day, he said.

"We have to save jobs, but I'm not happy if that is all that will happen. I hope we also promote new jobs," stated Golden.

Among the dignitaries present at the 11 a.m. event were State Assemblyman, Florence Sullivan; Community Board Seven Chairman, Andrew DiOrio; City Councilman at large, Robert Steinagut; Democratic leader, Tony Carraciolo; and Conservative Party head, Mike Long.

Also, head of the Sunset Park Redevelopment Committee, Wilfredo Lugo; Anchor Bank official, Kathy Wykle; South West Brooklyn Industrial Development leader, Frank Spinnor; Bay Ridge Ambulance Volunteer Association president, Broder Myles Davis, and others.

Expected by Deputy Mayor Gerard but absent was City Council Majority Leader, Tom Cuite.

Zeferetti believes that the community will begin to see some of the promised and hoped for employment in six months. Whether these jobs are "transfers" or brand-new depends upon how the developers "shape up" the terminal sites.

At the present time, according to a spokesman from the Congressman's office, the buildings "have no heat, power, or toilets."

DiOrio believes that a revitalized Terminal is important to Sunset Park.

"It will mean jobs and new life to the community," said the Board Chairman. "It will mean people can work at the stores in the surrounding area and benefit from added business."

But it was the Borough President who summed up the general feelings of many officials.

"It's like Christmas in July," Golden announced.

CONG. LEO ZEFERETTI, whose efforts saved the Terminal for the U.S. speaks during Monday morning ceremonies. Mayor Ed Koch and Councilman-at-large Bob Steinagut are pictured, left.

(Phote By FRED OHLETII)