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By JAMES C. McKINLEY

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PEOPLE living in a gritty, 11-block neighborhood in downtown Brooklyn are mounting a last-ditch attempt to stop the \$770 million Metrotech office development that would force the demolition of their rowhouses and loft buildings.

About 250 residents and 100 business owners who would be displaced by the development have pooled their financial resources and vowed to fight the project in court if the Board of Estimate approves it Tuesday.

Plans call for renovating three buildings on the Polytechnic University campus and erecting eight new ones, ranging from five to 25 stories, in an area bounded by Flatbush Avenue and Jay, Tillary and Willoughby Streets. In the center will be a three-acre plaza that will block several existing streets.

Opponents say the giant project will increase air pollution by generating new traffic in an area where exhaust fumes from idling cars already raise the level far above Federal standards on many days.

The residents, who aired their views at a Board of Estimate hearing two weeks ago, maintain the Federal Environmental Protection Agency erred in approving the project while the air quality downtown continues to violate the Clean Air Act because of its already heavy traffic. They also charge that state law requires that the complex should include housing for displaced residents.

In addition, they charge that the city has given the developer, Forest City Enterprises of Cleveland, special treatment in the form of tax abatements and government subsidies, in part because it is owned by the family of a former City Consumer Affairs Commissioner, Bruce C. Ratner.

A lawyer hired by the group, Michael Gerard, said he will file a suit in Federal Court in July alleging that the project violates the Clean Air Act.

Donna Hennes, a spokeswoman for the residents, said Tillary Street, a main thoroughfare in the heart of the development, had one of the worst carbon monoxide buildups in

the country on some days last year.

"The reality of the situation is that the air is already poisonous," she said.

In May, the E.P.A. approved Metrotech and two other large projects in downtown Brooklyn despite a study by the city's Public Development Corporation that found the extra traffic they would generate would raise pollution still further above Federal guidelines. The decision cleared the way for the city to receive more than \$22 million in Federal Urban Development Action Grants, including a \$6 million grant for Metrotech.

At the time, Christopher Daggett, E.P.A. director for region II, which includes much of the New York metropolitan area, said that the agency would not stand in the way of development in Brooklyn as long as the city promised to try to reduce air pollution within five years by rerouting traffic.

The city has proposed changes that would ease traffic on Flatbush Avenue and Jay Street, including a \$20 million underpass at Tillary and Jay Streets and a \$4.5 million off ramp on the Brooklyn Queens Expressway near Navy Street.

But Mr. Gerard noted that the city's environmental impact study, which the E.P.A. used to make its decision, found that even with the proposed road changes, the traffic generated by Metrotech will lead to a buildup of carbon monoxide above the Federally mandated level in at least two locations.

ANOTHER group of Brooklyn residents, the ATURA Coalition, is planning to challenge the nearby Atlantic Terminal Renewal Area project at Flatbush and Atlantic Avenues on the same grounds, said Edward Copeland, who is an attorney for the coalition.

Although the environmental issue may be the biggest weapon in their legal arsenal, many residents are more angry about being forced out of homes and businesses they have improved over the last decade in what used to be a decaying, dangerous neighborhood.

The Brooklyn Legal Aid Society is preparing a separate lawsuit on behalf of impoverished tenants. It will charge that the project,

which will contain 4.2 million square feet of office space but no apartments, should include low-income housing because it is receiving city and state subsidies, said Mitchell Pratt, the tenants' lawyer.

"There is a duty, not to find them comparable housing somewhere else, but to replace the housing within the project," Mr. Pratt said. "A project which destroys homes of this sort and has no housing is wrongheaded."

The city Public Development Corporation, which is overseeing the project, has proposed a list of possible options for moving people to different parts of Brooklyn. City officials have located a total of 188 apartments in Park Slope, Fort Greene and Prospect Heights that will be rehabilitated by the developer and offered as condominiums to displaced people who can afford them.

In addition, the city has promised to put displaced people at the top of waiting lists for renovated city-owned apartments, public housing apartments and rowhouses renovated through the Housing Partnership program. Under state and Federal law, the city must pay property owners a fair market price for property condemned for urban renewal and find renters comparable apartments for about the same price.

"We've put forth one of the most progressive relocation plans for a development of this type ever," said James P. Stuckey, president of the Public Development Corporation.

But the city has not made any concrete offers pending the Board of Estimate vote, said Mr. Stuckey. This policy has drawn fire from Councilman Abraham Gerges, the Democrat representing the Metrotech area, who says a firm relocation plan should be uppermost in the board's decision.

"To say there's X number of apartments available in Brooklyn is all pie in the sky," Mr. Gerges said.

One of the plaintiffs in the Legal Aid suit is Agnes Fale, a 90-year-old great-grandmother who has lived in an apartment on the second floor of a building at the corner of Myrtle Avenue and Bridge Street since 1925.

Mrs. Fale pays \$60 a month in rent and lives off Social Security and her deceased

husband's veteran's pension. For her, the issue is not whether another apartment can be found for that price in some other part of Brooklyn, but why she must move from the neighborhood where she has spent her entire life and raised five children.

"After all when people live their whole lives in one place, other people should leave them alone," she said. "I want to stay where I'm at until the Lord takes me."

In addition to the UDAG subsidy, the city has given Forest City a host of incentives: a 22-year property-tax exemption, energy subsidies of up to 30 percent, a \$10 million investment from the Municipal Assistance Corporation and a total of \$35.5 million from city coffers to buy land and make improvements to sewers and utilities.

OPPONENTS charge that the key to these benefits from City Hall has been Mr. Ratner, the former consumer affairs chief.

Mr. Ratner, a principal partner in Metrotech, left his city post in January 1982, four months before Polytechnic University and the city announced that the neighborhood would be condemned for urban renewal.

In December 1984, Polytechnic University, as the city's agent for the project, chose Forest City as the co-developer of the combined campus and office complex after meeting with Tishman Construction, the only other company that expressed interest in the project, according to Gayla Merryman, a spokesman for the university.

Under the New York City code of ethics, a company owned by a city commissioner can do business with the city immediately after he leaves office as long as the contract is with a department other than the one he headed.

According to campaign records, Mr. Ratner's law firm and real estate concerns have given generously to Mayor Koch, Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden and City Council President Andrew J. Stein since 1985, when the first Forest City development in Brooklyn, the Morgan Stanley Building, went before the Board of Estimate for a vote.

In the last two years, Mr. Ratner has funneled \$12,100 to Mayor Koch's campaign, \$19,750 to Mr. Golden's supporters and \$3,000 to Mr. Stein, according to records kept by State Senator Franz Leichter, a West Side Democrat.

Mr. Ratner said through a spokesman, Michele de Milly, that he had made the contributions because he has "an interest in ensuring good government."

Forest City has already won two anchor tenants for Metrotech, the Brooklyn Union Gas Company and the Securities Industry Automation Corporation, a Wall Street firm.

The project has also garnered the support of Community Board 2 and the approval of the City Planning Commission. The Board of Estimate vote is the last hurdle.

Some small businesses owners vow they will fight the development until the bulldozers arrive at the door.

Kam Chin and her husband, Walter, own W.C. Art Supply on Jay Street, a business they built from scratch over the last 15 years. Mrs. Chin said she fled China in 1969 after the government took over her father's art-supply business. She emigrated to New York with her husband and in 15 years they built up their business into a large shop that takes up two storefronts.

The couple see little difference between the tactics of the Chinese Communists and the city.

"They're doing the same thing," Mrs. Chin said of the city. "They condemn my property. They take it away like in a Communist country. Not only that but they give it to the rich. The whole thing is really sick."



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Donna Hennes, spokeswoman for residents in Metrotech area, in Jay Street loft with parade props she makes.