



May 20, 2020

Jenel Real Estate  
275 Madison Avenue, Suite 1100  
New York, NY 10016

A&H Acquisitions Corp.  
1412 Broadway, 3rd Floor  
New York, New York 10018

To the owners of 22-15 31st Street,

We write as four seriously concerned representatives of Astoria, which is at risk of losing an invaluable source of quality food and good union jobs — right in the middle of a global pandemic. It was frankly sickening to read in the Queens Daily Eagle last week that you seem to prefer to evict Key Food, even as their employees continue to serve Astorians who desperately need nutritious fresh food. Although our relations have been terse, you are a neighborhood stakeholder, so we would ask you to at least offer Key Food a one-year lease extension to guarantee Astoria residents don't go hungry as COVID-19 rages on. This request is made independent of the grocery store owner. Rather, we feel it is our duty as elected officials to fight food insecurity and job loss when we see it.

As you hopefully are aware by now, this Key Food has served northern Astoria for approximately 50 years. It has seen our neighborhood change, but remain strong, throughout that entire time. We are Astoria natives, who remember our parents asking us to run into the store as we got off the subway from high school or our first jobs. It provided our friends with their first jobs, taught them the value of honest work, and made them hard workers who became leaders in their own right.

This Key Food has always been here to serve our neighborhood, but perhaps never more so than right now. While other small businesses have been forced to close or modify service, the workers at Key Food have continued to work long grueling shifts to make sure we are fed. They have put their life on the line so that we can have food on the table. Many of them live right here in Astoria and care deeply for their neighbors. On top of it all, their employer has stepped up to provide hazard pay and personal protective equipment to keep them safe. This Key Food is an example of how you lead during a crisis.

How these lease negotiations have carried on, however, is a model of what not to do in a time of crisis. Since the Queens Daily Eagle story ran last week, we have come to learn that talks over the last year to save Key Food have been unproductive. It almost appears that any time Key Food of the other tenants make a concession, there is a new excuse to set the grocery store up for failure. Not only that, but it's shocking that you prefer to lose a stable commercial tenant for the sake of gambling that sometime in the future you may find other higher paying retailers to occupy a newly built development. With the economic uncertainty that's upon us, this is extremely ambitious to say the least. We have seen irresponsible real estate development thumb its collective nose at neighborhood institutions, all in the name of profit. Who benefits? Certainly, not the community.

Astoria's food supply will be put under extreme strain unless something is done to save Key Food. The grocery store will no doubt have to begin laying people off over the summer, as well as reduce its inventory to meet its unfortunate closure at the end of October. This is a section of the neighborhood that needs more grocery stores — not fewer. Your unwillingness to make a deal with Key Food will add to the already historic unemployment in New York City. Experts believe this virus can come back even stronger in the fall. New York City might once again come to a standstill. Our grocery store workers will be called upon to step up, only now dozens of them will be out of work. Astoria residents, forced back into their homes to cook more meals, will have to wait on even longer lines to get into a grocery store. And once they're in, it's almost certain there will not be as much food on the shelves with the higher demand you'll create.

Astoria is a real neighborhood. Our small business owners and residents sit next to each other at community meetings and the subway. They run neighborhood volunteer drives to help those at risk, whether from COVID-19 or any other threats to the neighborhood. If you want to be a part of that, here's your opportunity. We implore you to offer Key Food an extension as you continue to find a long-term solution. Astoria residents deserve access to quality food and jobs right now. We all have a role to play in guaranteeing that happens.

Sincerely,



Senator Michael Gianaris  
Deputy Majority Leader



Senator Jessica Ramos  
13<sup>th</sup> District



Assembly Member Aravella Simotas  
36<sup>th</sup> District



Council Member Costa Constantinides  
22<sup>nd</sup> District