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***** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE *****

BREWER ORGANIZES NEIGHBORHOOD RALLY TO SAVE BELOVED FOOD CITY

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Sunday, April 14, 2013 – Today, Council Member Gale A. Brewer joined members of Local 338 Retail Wholesale Department Store Union and United Food and Commercial Workers (RWDSU-UFCW) along with hundreds of neighbors to support Food City, 705 Columbus Avenue, Manhattan, a grocery store with over 40 years of doing business on the upper West Side. Food City has not been given a lease by the owner of the building since 2004 and may be forced to close as a result.

Food City is a family owned business of three generations, founded in 1953 by Robert Katz and partners. The first Food City market opened on Broadway and branched out, at one point including fourteen stores located throughout the city. The Food City on 70 West 95 Street/705 Columbus Avenue, New York, NY 10025 opened in 1969 and has since been an important place for the upper West Side community, offering quality products and reasonable prices to the local neighborhood. Food City has been a union shop since 1953, being part of Local 338 for groceries and Local 342 for meat products. It is currently home to about 45 loyal union employees, and an integral part of this neighborhood.

Aside from being a trusted place for people to do their daily shopping, Food City has also been an active part of this community and annual supporter of Goddard Riverside Community Center's softball league. In the 2012-2013 Age-Friendly Grocery Guide produced by Council Member Gale Brewer's office, Food City and its workers were featured as embodying the best practices of local businesses in addressing the needs of older adults, providing the option to shop by phone and a delivery service. Their produce, meat, fish and prepared goods are available in single portions. Their aisles are accessible, as are their publicly available restrooms. That is why, especially for the seniors in this area, Food City represents a store that cannot be matched by any other market in the vicinity when it comes to prices, range of products, and services provided.

Unfortunately, for eight years, Food City has not been offered a long term lease from the building owner, the LeFrak Organization. Without a guarantee of a long term lease, Food City cannot invest in the renovations necessary to continue to stay open and competitive. The site where Food City is located, 705 Columbus Avenue, is part of the now expired 1962 West Side Urban Renewal Area (WSURA) and falls under the jurisdiction of a 2008 City Planning text amendment. This zoning allows individual property owners within the WSURA to make an application to modify the ground floor and second level of the building for commercial and community facility space. In 2012, Community Board 7 was notified that the LeFrak Organization was exploring the possibility of redeveloping the space at 705 Columbus for additional commercial retail space. To date, no plans have been officially submitted to the City Planning Commission.

"The Lefrak organization should be proud to have a store such as Food City on their property," said Council Member Gale A. Brewer. "Food City is the principal food supplier to the residents of Lefrak's adjacent apartment house, and to thousands of other local residents like me. It is not just another disposable commodity, but a safe, trusted neighbor where customers are treated like family." Brewer added, "This situation, of a large landlord with no community ties buying a property and then driving out a decades-old neighborhood institution, is not the right way to do business or make friends on the Upper West Side. An enlightened landlord like Lefrak should be committed to keeping this key resource open, and to preserving the values of the community where it wants to put down roots."

New York State Assembly Member Daniel O'Donnell stated "Food City is an important neighborhood institution that provides essential services to our neighborhood, especially to the many seniors who live nearby. I am proud to stand with many members of our community in calling for the landlord to allow the store to remain open. We need more upstanding companies like Food City in our area, and for it to be forced to leave is a travesty."

"I am at a loss for words" said Barbara Berger, the owner of the Food City "Food City is more than just a business, it is a three generation family business, and we have always worked as a family that includes our employees and customers. This place lasted for three generations and has always been a part of my life. It is truly an end of an era."

"For over four decades, Local 338 has represented the workers of Food City - Columbus Ave. It's a tragedy that the Landlord for the property has refused to give this community grocery store a lease that would allow them to continue to serve the residents of the Upper West Side," said John R. Durso, President, Local 338 RWDSU/UFCW. "Our members are more than just workers in a store, they are part of this community. They are your neighbors, your friends and although you may not realize it, they are part of your daily lives. Some of our members in this store have worked here for than 30 years and, at the end of this month, they and their families will face an uncertain future. Both the residents of the Upper West Side and the men and women who work here each day to serve the community deserve better! They deserve to keep a great community grocery store like Food City. I join Council member Brewer and the other elected officials gathered here today in calling upon the landlord to work with Food City to reach an agreement for a new long term lease that will secure their ability to continue serving this great community."

"It's hard to believe that in this community which is still largely home to working families and retired elderly, we are threatened with the loss of yet another accessible source of affordable food and fresh produce," said Nick Prigo, local Democratic District Leader from Community Free Democrats. "We ask the LeFrak Organization to be the best of good neighbors by offering a reasonable, long-term lease to Food City so that it can update its equipment and services to our community."

Community Board 7 Chair Mark Diller noted that "Sustainable communities must provide options close to home to purchase healthy food at a variety of price points. Eating healthily should be available to all, and the loss of a traditional and beloved supermarket such as Food City is a serious concern. Community Board 7's Core Principles recognize the vital role of supporting and celebrating all forms of diversity, including economic and social diversity, as part of building a sustainable future for everyone, and losing Food City is a major step backward from that goal."

Stephan Russo, the Executive Director of the Goddard Riverside Community Center also expressed his regret upon hearing about the closing of Food City. "Food City has been a terrific community partner; they sponsored a softball team for children in the neighborhood. We purchased the food from them on many occasions and it will be a shame to lose such a valuable resource."

Hannah S. Hess, the Vice President of the Stryckers Bay Apartments Board of Directors, also expressed her disappointment about the situation. "Food City is the only existing supermarket with a five to seven block area. The other supermarkets are upscale, catering to the new, upper-income residents in the area. For the elderly and physically challenged, the loss of Food City would be a real problem. For the lower income residents of the area, neither D'Agostino's nor Whole Foods have the kinds of prices that allow them to maintain a reasonable budget. I am distressed that the Lefrak Organization is not renewing the lease of Food City."

"Food City's closing after 44 years will be a very sad day for our neighborhood. For many years they were the only market serving our immediate area. Food City has especially been a blessing for the elderly and infirm, providing patient and friendly service from their long-term devoted employees. This is another unfortunate example of how money in New York City is taking precedence over community," said Jim Victorine, resident of the 95 West 95 Street.