

June 3, 2015

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, New York 10007

Re: The South Street Seaport

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

We received a copy of a May 20 letter addressed to you from The New York Landmarks Conservancy on behalf of itself and numerous parties. While we will not be responding to the Landmarks Conservancy, we are compelled to respond to you to clarify the letter's gross mischaracterization of the Seaport's redevelopment process which should not go unanswered.

Since we inherited stewardship of the South Street Seaport in November 2010, we have worked diligently to revitalize the city's original commercial hub and to create a much needed neighborhood gathering place for the rapidly growing population in Lower Manhattan where none had existed before. We processed a ULURP to redevelop Pier 17 and invest immediately in the district with a transformational project we knew would be a catalyst and the first step for additional meaningful development within the district. In late 2012, Superstorm Sandy inflicted immense damage to Lower Manhattan and rendered the already struggling and increasingly irrelevant South Street Seaport a ghost town overnight. In the aftermath of Sandy, the area struggled to attract visitors for months and many of our retailers left altogether. As leaders in the community, we took it upon ourselves to revitalize the district with our SEE/CHANGE programming and other community initiatives in which we invested over \$10 million to help the entire district remain vibrant and relevant to locals until our approved projects are completed. We are now seeing tangible improvements in the area with the development of new residences and the announcement of a new Cipriani Hotel that are planned to open along the Seaport's cobblestone streets.

Two primary objectives of our proposed Mixed Use project have always been to preserve the unique character of the buildings within the Historic District and strengthen the South Street Seaport Museum. We presented our strong commitment to the revitalization of the Seaport Museum over 18 months ago when we first introduced our project. While our steadfast commitment to the Museum has never wavered, we have not yet been recognized for our efforts to rejuvenate the museum. In our presentations to the Seaport Working Group last year and Community Board 1 earlier this year, we reconfirmed our transformational support of the Seaport Museum by outlining a proposed \$50+ million package of benefits to help revitalize and place it on sound financial footing for decades to come. Our proposal included the following:

- Museum space renovation in Schermerhorn Row.
- New Museum gallery space in Schermerhorn Row via an addition on the John Street lot adjacent to Schermerhorn Row.
- Historic Ship refurbishment contribution.
- New Museum building on Pier 16.
- Pier 16 deck replacement.

Howard Hughes

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- A square footage trade and an additional \$450,000 annual cash payment to Museum.

As stewards of the South Street Seaport, we take very seriously our obligation to protect, preserve and celebrate the historical significance of the district. We demonstrated our serious commitment to a transparent planning process by participating in the Seaport Working Group that was led by Council Member Chin and Borough President Brewer throughout much of 2014. When we made our Landmark Preservation Commission presentation to CB1 earlier this year, we incorporated nearly every single Seaport Working Group guideline into our proposed project. While we challenged our architect, SHoP, to design an architecturally significant building appropriate for its location, the one Seaport Working Group guideline that our proposal did not completely satisfy was the request for a shorter building on the "New Market" site. Following thoughtful planning and discussions with local officials and members of the community, we are now working on a significantly revised plan to address the height issue as well while retaining the vibrancy required for the district to be successful.

As we work through the height concerns, we are also striving to retain as much of the necessary infrastructure improvements and requested community benefits as possible, including the following:

- Provide a long-term solution for the Seaport Museum.
- Reconstruct the deteriorating waterfront infrastructure.
- Restore the Tin Building and develop a best in class food market.
- Complete the East River Esplanade from Pier 16 to the Brooklyn Bridge.
- Improve waterfront access for the entire Seaport District while at the same time ensuring its resiliency against future "Sandy" events.
- Provide additional community amenities, including new improved open space, community facilities, and possibly a school.
- Affordable Housing.
- Creative office space.

Our proposals have consistently met the stated needs and wishes of a majority of the community's stakeholders. We can satisfy these requirements only if we are able to obtain ULURP approval on a financially viable project that is also synergistic with our ULURP approved Pier 17 redevelopment currently under construction. We hope to present our revised proposal to you and the community within the coming weeks.

We also look forward to our broader continuing partnership to transform the Seaport District and make the iconic destination relevant again to a new generation of New Yorkers.

Sincerely,



David R. Weinreb

cc: Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer
Council Member Margaret Chin
Deputy Mayor Alicia Glen