

August 8, 2016

The Honorable Alicia Glen
Deputy Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

The Honorable Carl Weisbrod
Chairman
NYC Department of City Planning
120 Broadway, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10271

Re: Workforce Housing, Bay Street Corridor

Dear Deputy Mayor Glen and Chair Weisbrod:

As elected officials representing the North Shore of Staten Island, we believe that to ensure the future success of the Bay Street Corridor there must be a balance between what Staten Islanders need and what City Hall wants.

We must all recognize that the borough and its residents simply do not fit the same cookie cutter mold as the rest of the city: their needs are dissimilar, their resources vastly different and Staten Island's path to revitalization and growth is unique. If we are to get this right – and we will only get one shot at it – providing housing for the young teacher married to the young cop needs to stop being a line in a speech. We need policies that match the rhetoric.

We have both consistently agreed and are firmly committed to the idea that workforce housing should constitute the bulk of the affordable component at this location. Civil servants like cops, firefighters, and so many other municipal workers form the backbone of Staten Island, and would form the backbone of any re-vitalization effort on the North Shore. The North Shore must include housing that is affordable for them, while at the same time creating an AMI range that will allow current residents to remain in their neighborhoods.

Indeed, the key to both on- and off-Island investment is the ability of those living in the area to be able to afford to shop in the stores, eat in the restaurants, and contribute to the local economy. It is our pragmatic belief that we must raise the income level of those living in the area if we are to fully rejuvenate it.



Working class, middle class and those striving to make it to the middle class – the same folks we have heard about for decades in countless speeches by candidates and elected officials in both parties on all levels of government – desperately need to have someone actually help them. For too long they have been a tag line in a campaign and a punch line in a speech: let's give them a decent place to live so they are not forced to leave the borough in which they were born and raised.

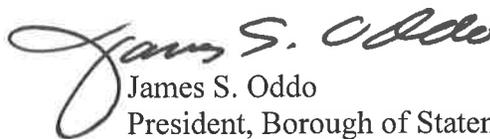
If we continue the current trend that has seen the Bay Street Corridor produce predominantly low income, senior housing and non-profit development on one end, countered by expensive market rate housing on the other, those hard-working individuals in the middle class will qualify for neither. This would create a scenario in which our efforts to create a living, working community will be in vain.

The city can and should take a greater stake in the borough's renaissance by recognizing that if we continue to develop housing strictly for the lowest income levels, the commercial districts of this area will never reach their full potential. If we continue to saturate the Bay Street Corridor with predominantly low income housing, those hard working individuals in the middle class will have nowhere to go but outside the borough – this is reality we cannot ignore.

This neighborhood will thrive when there is a mixture of incomes, a mixture of retail, a mixture of housing options and a mixture of opinions. In order for us to achieve the kind of success we are aiming for we need to bring all these points of view to the table. It is incumbent upon the city to strike the right balance in order for the North Shore to prosper.

Yes, we want affordability, but we remain firmly committed in our belief that the predominant type of affordable housing in this area should be housing that doesn't currently exist: workforce housing. Throughout this process, in all prior conversations on this topic with various members of the Mayor's staff, it was clear to all parties that we were in agreement on this issue. The purpose of this letter is to underscore that, to reiterate that we are on the same page regarding this approach.

Thank you for your kind attention.


James S. Oddo
President, Borough of Staten Island


Diane J. Savino
New York State Senate 23rd District