

November 16, 2020

Marisa Lago
Chairperson
New York City Department of City Planning
120 Broadway, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10271

Re: Opposition to R-7 Zoning

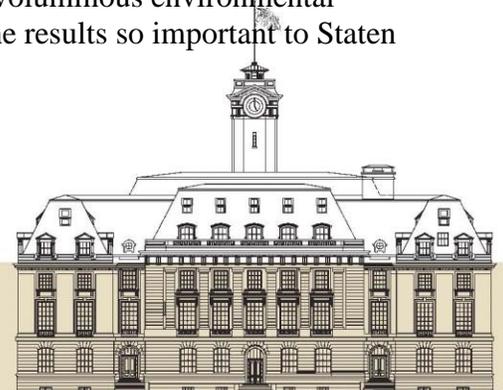
Dear Chairperson Lago:

We, the undersigned, collectively represent the 475,000 residents of the Borough of Staten Island, and we are writing to request that the Department of City Planning reject the Liberty Towers proposal in its entirety. Simply put, our constituency does not want this proposed out-of-character project, one that would so dramatically infringe upon their neighborhood's quality of life.

For the last forty years, Islanders have been expressing concerns about mid- and high-density development projects that would trample the borough's unique residential character. City Planning has always assured Staten Island residents that the predominately low-density communities of the Borough would be protected and preserved. In 1985, to that end, City Planning began a series of downzoning applications to remove most R6 districts from Staten Island. The applications acknowledged the concerns of many communities and elected officials by removing higher-density districts from the Borough forever. The effort continued – regardless of ongoing as-of-right proposals - until almost all the vacant R6 parcels in the Borough were rezoned.

However, the latest iteration of the Borough Planning Office seems exceedingly more inclined to ignore the will of the people, and are now promoting the tallest structures ever considered for approval in the borough. The proposed R7-3 rezoning is unprecedented, and represents the first time in the history of our borough that a residential zone of this density has been considered. This particular portion of St. George is not the place for a maximum building height of 185', which is more appropriate for Long Island City-type views and density. To add City Planning insult to Staten Island injury, the applicant is requesting an almost seventy percent increase in the permitted maximum building height.

It appears that the density of the surviving R6 zoning designation, the outrageous maximum as-of-right height of the proposed R7-3 district, the Special Hillside Preservation District, and the assumed protections for those unique properties located in the St. George Special District, is not enough for City Planning to flinch. Additionally, we are once again presented with a voluminous environmental assessment whereby the study area is carefully manipulated so that the results so important to Staten Islanders simply do not matter.

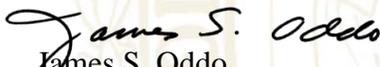


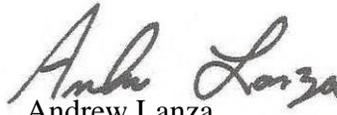
City agencies should be reviewing the merits of discretionary approvals based on their context within the existing community, as well as the overwhelming will of the stakeholders who live and work there. This should in no way be solely about the return on investment for the applicant. No, this is also about respecting the investments made over an extended period of time by the community, investments that have contributed to the quality of life at Staten Island's front door. They have a right to preserve the character of their neighborhood, and should not have to constantly be defending St. George from the latest agency proposals that go beyond the existing zoning standards. Their voices matter, too, do they not?

We will respond in writing more specifically on the scope of work, but we take this opportunity to say universally and publicly: "Enough!"

Enough of ignoring the wishes and opinions of people of Staten Island. Enough of enabling oversized proposals to navigate quickly through the process, while holding up smaller one-family applications for years. Enough of ignoring overcrowded schools in underserved communities with insufficient infrastructure. And finally, enough of disingenuously pretending that what Staten Islanders and their elected representatives say even matter, when the outcome is invariably predetermined.

Very truly yours,

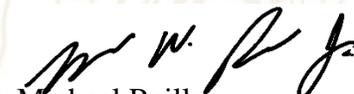

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