

October 16, 2017

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

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I hope this letter finds you well.

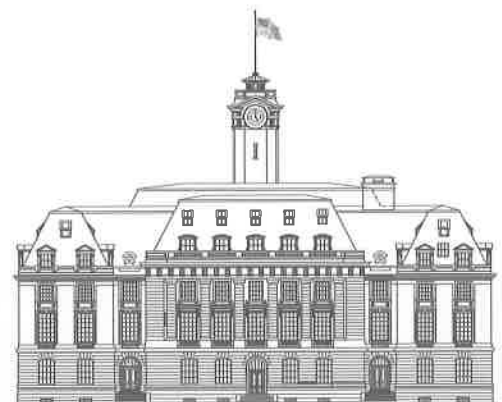
As you know, Staten Island has a long and tortured history of overdevelopment. For decades, builders took advantage of every loophole and every poorly written provision of the Zoning Resolution to cram as much density as possible into our infrastructure-starved communities.

Finally, by the late 1990's and early 2000's, with our borough at its breaking point as a result of the lack of planning, lack of mass transit, overcrowded schools, and soul-crushing traffic, we came together as a community – and a city government – to change many of the rules through the recommendations of the Staten Island Growth Management Task Force. Additionally there were efforts undertaken by the Borough President's office and others to downzone huge chunks of our borough to further address density.

Staten Islanders were tired of watching old homes in their communities torn down, only to see many townhouses built in their place, putting an even greater strain on our already overtaxed infrastructure. Under a mayoral mandate and timeline, the task force worked with a sense of urgency, and many of the worst abuses were finally addressed. Our efforts were so successful that within weeks of the Growth Management Zoning Amendment approval, other boroughs were requesting that the new Staten Island-specific text be applied to their communities.

Several years after the Task Force made its changes, the housing market collapsed and construction ground to a screeching halt. That was the reality for several years, and it seemed that overdevelopment was a thing of the past.

As the housing market began to make its recovery, however, we started to see something different happen. Barred from the type of large scale townhouse development that was the bane of our borough's existence for decades, developers took a different approach to maximize their profits, again to the detriment of the surrounding community.

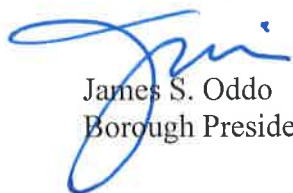


For more than a year I've been talking about what I have referred to as "The New Inappropriate Models," where developers have sought out "soft sites" to target for development. While we are no longer seeing a single house torn down and twelve townhouses constructed in its place, we now see large older homes being razed and three to five homes built in the front and back of the property. What is happening might technically comply with current laws and regulations, but it certainly doesn't comport with the spirit and intent of the Growth Management Zoning Text. This new round of inappropriate development is also dependent on access along private roads. In most cases the design and management of these privately-owned streets are substandard and do not protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the residents that live there.

For this reason, I am asking that your Administration partner with me in finding a constitutionally sound and valid way to address infill soft site overdevelopment on Staten Island. If nothing else, developers are persistent and after Growth Management continued to look for new and ingenious ways of making profits. It is up to us to respond for our constituents with new efforts to address public safety concerns and to protect Staten Island from unchecked and inappropriate growth.

I look forward to having this very important discussion.

Very truly yours,



James S. Oddo
Borough President