



April 5, 2021

Statement by The New York Landmarks Conservancy on the Proposed Rezoning of the South Side of Governors Island

ULURP No. 210126ZRM

The New York Landmarks Conservancy opposes the proposed zoning change that would allow 4.3 million square feet of new building bulk on two sites just south of the Governors Island Historic District.

The proposal before you today would allow buildings up to 250 feet high with an additional 40 feet of mechanical bulkhead on top of that. Buildings of this height and bulk bear no relation to the special history and sense of place of Governors Island. We also question how such huge buildings can be sustained on a small island with limited infrastructure and with only ferry connections to the rest of the city. To give an example of how big 4.3 million square feet is, One World Trade Center contains 3.4 million square feet, almost a million square feet less than what is being proposed for this small harbor island made largely of land fill.

The Conservancy is not opposed to new buildings on the south side but the proposed zoning would allow for extreme excesses in size and density. Twenty-five story buildings would be grossly out of scale with existing buildings on the Island. In addition, more scrutiny needs to be given to what types of structures will be permitted to encumber public open spaces in the park areas and on the esplanade. The proposed scheme is driven by consideration of the supposed financial return of the sites with little thought given to the historic character or physical beauty of the Island, which welcomes over a million visitors a year. This is public land. It is a popular public park. Other important considerations apart from financial return must be considered when planning future development there.

The New York Landmarks Conservancy has a long history of involvement with Governor's Island. For decades we have worked with the Trust and its predecessor organization to push for the preservation of the historic buildings on the Island, most of which are vacant. New uses should be found for these existing buildings before millions of square feet of new construction is approved.

In conclusion, the Landmarks Conservancy believes very strongly that Governors Island is a valuable public amenity for all New Yorkers and that its future development needs to be harmonious with the special physical and visual characteristics that define the Island and that attract millions of visitors. The proposed up-zoning would permit unsustainable and out of context development. The Landmarks Conservancy urges you not to approve it.