



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

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New York City Council Committee on Waterfronts

Oversight: Update on Governors Island

Testimony by Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson Manhattan Community Board 1

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Committee Room, City Hall, New York, NY

10:00 AM

Good morning. I am Catherine McVay Hughes, Chair of Manhattan Community Board One (CB1). Chair Rose, Councilmember Chin and Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Governors Island.

CB1 applauds the incredible planning effort that has taken place since the decision was made in 2003 to transform Governors Island into a public resource, including the recent plans to transform the Island into a vibrant, mixed-use destination. Now, more than ever, we are enthusiastic about the incredible potential of the island for appropriate redevelopment benefiting the surrounding communities, the City and the region.

The Special Governors Island District zoning and re-tenanting proposal on the North Island will allow most commercial uses to be developed in the existing R3-2 district in approximately 1.2 million square feet of space in existing historic structures. We believe the re-zoning and the re-tenanting plan will result in increased public use of the island, bring revenue to the Governors Island Trust, which will help maintain the island and create economic opportunities for local small business and organizations.

We are pleased that the Governors Island Trust staff has worked with us and the Department of City Planning staff to devise a formula whereby CB1 will have the opportunity to review all commercial developments 7,500 square feet and larger, which may have the potential for major impacts on the Lower Manhattan community.

CB1 is excited about recent developments on Governors Island, including the addition of 30 acres of new active park space, which includes two new ball fields. We also welcome Quadratic Spa, the Island's first commercial tenant, and plans for the expansion of both the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the Urban Assembly New York Harbor School. We were pleased by the Bloomberg administration's announcement of \$25 million in funding for the Harbor School, and we encourage quick action to implement the funding.

The mitigation of negative impacts of the potential development increase on Governors Island is important to CB1. Transportation to Governors Island occurs from two ferry portals, one in Manhattan and one in Brooklyn. We are particularly concerned about the area surrounding the Battery Maritime Building in Lower Manhattan and have specific concerns regarding the

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potential negative impacts from increased use of the Island. CB1 therefore requests that the following 10 factors be considered as we move forward into a new era for Governors Island:

1. *Air quality and noise issues resulting from ferries transporting to and from Governors Island* – Ferries should be retrofitted using the best available technology and industry standards. In addition, ferries should operate according to the highest safety standards.
2. *Air quality and noise issues resulting from helicopters* – City, State and Federal involvement must be achieved in order to determine a solution for the negative impacts caused by increased helicopter tourism both in Lower Manhattan and on Governors Island, specifically in regards to the heliport on Pier 6.
3. *Pedestrian and vehicular flow at the Governors Island Ferry Terminal* – Sidewalks and bike paths must be wide enough to accommodate increased traffic, with no vendors blocking the sidewalk. In addition, vehicular and pedestrian traffic must be separated in order to reduce pedestrian-vehicular conflicts. CB1 also requests more information about increased transportation opportunities such as additional bus stops when the terminal is built out. This issue is more important than ever now that Governors Island will be open 7 days a week, drawing more people for a wider range of uses with more students commuting resulting from the Harbor School's expansion to accommodate 300 additional students.
4. *Bike share at the ferry terminals* – The existing Citibike station between the Staten Island and Battery Maritime ferry terminal is currently inundated, and service should be expanded to accommodate demand.
5. *LEED and Energy Star* – New or renovated construction should be LEED rated and Energy Star certified.
6. *Consideration of possible future storms* – New Governors Island construction and terminal development must be built to the highest industry standards to withstand storms similar to Superstorm Sandy.
7. *Balanced retail uses* – Future development at Governors Island should seek a balance of retail uses that will attract residents of CB1 as well as tourists.
8. *Maintaining sufficient open space* – Sufficient open space must be ensured as part of any new construction on the island in order to maintain its park-like atmosphere.
9. *Minimize negative impact on wildlife habitats and the natural environment.*
10. *Maintaining access to the water* – Governors Island faces the same challenges as Lower Manhattan in terms of access to the water. We must ensure safe and adequate access to maximize visitors' interaction with the water's edge, and the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance's Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines should be followed when planning for the waterfront, such as incubating the Billion Oyster Project.

While we are concerned about the impacts of commercial development in the north island, we are also focusing on future park development in the south island. We are thrilled about positive progress being made on the island.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and we look forward to returning to discuss continuing redevelopment and implementation plans for Governors Island and to working together to create a paradise, a place of refuge for our community and all New Yorkers.