



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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BURT LAZARIN

Chair

JESSE R. BODINE

District Manager

February 12, 2019

Howard Zemsky
President and Chief Executive Officer
Empire State Development
625 Broadway, Albany NY, 12207

Holly Leicht
Executive Vice President,
Real Estate Development and Planning
Empire State Development
633 Third Ave., New York NY, 10017

Alyson Beha
Vice President
Real Estate Development and Planning
Empire State Development
633 Third Ave., New York NY, 10017

**Re: Former Seamen's House YMCA & Bayview Correctional Facility
550 West 20th Street**

Dear Mr. Zemsky, Ms. Leicht, and Ms. Beha:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 (CB4), by a vote of 31 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 abstaining and 0 present but not eligible to vote, voted to express its frustration and disappointment with, and strong opposition to, the latest developments in the lengthy process seeking the redevelopment of 550 West 20th Street, the former Seamen's House YMCA and Bayview Correctional Facility.

From the start of this process, CB4 and the local community have been active participants in the search for an appropriate adaptive reuse of the building. Once Empire State Development Corporation (ESD) selected the NoVo Foundation (NoVo) to develop the property into the Women's Building, we worked with NoVo and ESD to balance the preservation issues that were

important to the community and the zoning waivers necessary to permit NoVo to build the building they felt they needed to accommodate their program.

The building was declared landmark-eligible during the West Chelsea rezoning. Accordingly, the preservation of the historic elements of the building, reflecting its history as the Seamen's House YMCA as well as the Bayview Correctional Facility, was a critically important goal for us during the lengthy discussions and zoning work. In addition, NoVo made a written commitment not to add on to the building. The resulting project achieved these goals at the expense of some additional height on the adjacent building. While not perfect, we considered the project a successful outcome.

Last month, however, we learned that NoVo had concluded that the project that emerged from those discussions was not economically feasible and that an entirely new building proposal was being developed. The new proposal presented to us was said to be preliminary, but the fact that it called for the preservation of only the north and west facades of the building stunned us. While various artifacts would be preserved for future display, the interior of the building would be demolished completely, including the Seamen's Chapel, the tiled pool and the prison cells, thus severing the building's ties to its historic past.

We object strongly to this proposal, even in its most preliminary form, as long as there is no in-place preservation. Relegating the building's historic past to a few artifacts displayed in vitrines preserves only the idea of the building's past rather than its essence. We are willing to work with NoVo and ESD to develop an alternative proposal that preserves in place some of the building's historic elements and does not add on to the building.

Sincerely,



Burt Lazarin
Chair
Manhattan Community
Board 4



Lee Compton
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use
Committee



Betty Mackintosh
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use
Committee

cc: Hon. Brad Hoylman, State Senate
Hon. Richard Gottfried, State Assembly
Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
NoVo Foundation