

COMMUNITY BOARD #1 MANHATTAN
RESOLUTION

DATE: NOVEMBER 19, 2002

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: SEAPORT/CIVIC CENTER

RE: South Street Seaport Rezoning

WHEREAS: The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission describes the South Street Seaport Historic District in its 1977 Designation Report as an area with “a special historical and aesthetic interest” that “retains much of its early 19th century character,” consisting primarily of “small-scale brick buildings which contrast dramatically with the soaring skyscrapers nearby,” and

WHEREAS: In order to retain and build upon the special character and scale of this district, Community Board #1 has put forth a re-zoning proposal to change the zoning from C6-4 to C6-2A, and

WHEREAS: This area was zoned C6-4, which allows development up to 10 F.A.R with towers over 40 stories in single block assemblages, in 1961, well before the designation of the Historic District in 1977, and

WHEREAS: Studies conducted by the Department of City Planning indicate that the vast majority of buildings in the Seaport Historic District are between 4 and 5 F.A.R. and under 60’ in height with no building taller than 96’ in height, and

WHEREAS: The proposed C6-2A zoning would allow buildings up to 120’ in height or more than double the average sized Seaport building, and

WHEREAS: This very same C6-2A zoning is in place in Tribeca and Chelsea, two thriving communities where the City has wisely and successfully adopted zoning that reinforces the look and feel of these neighborhoods, and

WHEREAS: The South Street Seaport Historic District has enjoyed a great deal of redevelopment and restoration since its designation and all the property owners have complied with Landmarks Preservation Commission requirements to maintain the small-scale quality of the district, and

WHEREAS: A great degree of confidence in the future of the Seaport Historic District was recently indicated when 24 developers responded to an EDC bid to restore eleven City-owned buildings and three lots, again in a small-scale manner, and

WHEREAS: The inherent conflict between the historic district designation and the current zoning has frequently been seen in the failure to develop the 250

Water Street site where the developer has for 20 years tried unsuccessfully to gain approval for large scale buildings with towers that meet the zoning requirements but have been rejected by the Landmarks Preservation Commission because, in the words of LPC in one instance, their proposed building would “dominate and overwhelm neighboring buildings in the district by virtue of its sheer size”, and

WHEREAS: The C6-2A zone is being proposed upon the advice and recommendation of the Department of City Planning following meetings and discussions with the Commission Chair and officials from the Manhattan Office of City Planning and would allow the development of buildings that are larger and taller than the vast majority of buildings in the historic district, and

WHEREAS: Prior to certifying this re-zoning proposal, the City of NY studied the financial feasibility of developing a C6-2A building on 250 Water Street and determined that a developer would receive a fair return on investment under C6-2A zoning, and

WHEREAS: The South Street Seaport C6-2A rezoning proposal has overwhelming support from affected property owners, local residents, local elected officials, and local organizations such as the Seaport North Business Association, the Alliance for Downtown NY, the Seaport Community Coalition, the South Street Seaport Museum and Southbridge Towers Inc., and

WHEREAS: Even the current lead architect for the 250 Water Street property was quoted in the NY Times on April 23, 1989 saying that it may be necessary to consider a downzoning to a floor area ratio of 6 or 7 at 250 Water Street to get a design that is truly appropriate, and

WHEREAS: Nearly all the opposition to this rezoning proposal is coming from a single entity which owns a single site in the Historic District (250 Water Street) and which is clearly motivated solely by **its** desire to maximize profits on a site it purchased in 1979, and

WHEREAS: Rich and powerful special interests should not be permitted to unduly impact the future of this very special historic district, now

THEREFORE
BE IT
RESOLVED

THAT: Community Board #1 strongly supports the South Street Seaport C6-2A rezoning proposal, and

BE IT
FURTHER
RESOLVED
THAT:

Community Board #1 urges the Mayor's Office and the City Planning Commission to abide by the recommendations of the Community Board and the vast majority of individuals and organizations concerned about the future of the South Street Seaport Historic District and adopt this most important rezoning proposal.