



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
SCOTT M. STRINGER

December 23, 2019

James Patchett
President and CEO
New York City Economic Development Corporation
One Liberty Plaza, 165 Broadway, 14th Floor
New York, NY 10006

Re: Ownership of Air Rights in the South Street Seaport District

Dear President Patchett:

We are writing regarding the Howard Hughes Corporation's plans to redevelop 250 Water Street in the historic Seaport District – a plan that proposes the transfer of air rights. An arrangement regulating the transfer of unused development rights from historic blocks has been integral to the Seaport District since it was first created in 1972. These air rights and the strict constraints that accompany their use have both spurred and limited development across downtown Manhattan, while also providing funding and protection for the historic district. These air rights were first conceived as an amendment to the Brooklyn Bridge Southeast Urban Renewal Plan to ensure that development occurs responsibly and with conservation of the Seaport's unique historic traits at its center.

Under current zoning, 250 Water Street is limited to a height of 120 feet. Under the scheme being floated, Howard Hughes Corporation is proposing to transfer 212,100 square feet of development from the New Market Site and 473,000 square feet from the Tin Building and Pier 17. The plan would produce a development over three times denser than currently allowed under zoning as 250 Water Street is not a receiving site and the New Market site, Tin Building and Pier 17 are not granting sites per the Special Lower Manhattan District (Zoning Resolution section 91-A6).

While undoing long standing community protections in the zoning would require public review under ULURP, many residents have raised concern regarding the current ownership of these air rights and whether or not Howard Hughes Corporation continues to have the option to utilize them without a new or amended contract.

As such, we are asking for a current and accurate accounting of the ownership of unused development rights in the South Street Seaport Subdistrict, and would appreciate your response to the following questions and requests.


1. How many square feet of unused air rights are available in the South Street Seaport Subdistrict?
2. Who owns available development rights in the South Street Seaport Subdistrict?
3. How many square feet of available development rights does each entity own?
4. Are there any agreements between NYCEDC and other parties regarding the current or future ownership of unused development rights?
5. Please provide any documentation (including but not limited to any leases, licenses, agreements, contracts, memorandums of understanding, etc.) that outlines Howard Hughes Corporation's rights and obligations regarding the South Street Seaport.

We would appreciate your written response by Monday, January 6, 2020. Please contact Luke Wolf in Comptroller Scott Stringer's office at 212-669-3501 or lwolf@comptroller.nyc.gov with any questions.

Sincerely,



Scott M. Stringer
New York City Comptroller



Yuh-Line Niou
Assemblymember



Jerrold Nadler
Congressmember



Gale Brewer
Manhattan Borough President



Brian Kavanagh
State Senator



Margaret Chin
Council Member

C: Manhattan Community Board 1
Seaport Coalition