



Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Richard R. Lewis, Chairperson
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

February 28, 2019

Hon. John A. Catsimatidis
Chairman of the Board, CEO
Gristedes Foods, Inc. and Red Apple Group
800 3rd Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Hon. Maria Torres-Springer
Commissioner
Housing Preservation & Development
100 Gold Street
New York, NY 10038

Re: Resolution calling for the mixed-use redevelopment of the vacant lot at W. 162nd and 163rd Streets between St. Nicholas and Amsterdam Avenues.

Dear Chairman:

Please be advised that Community Board 12, Manhattan, passed a resolution with 38 votes in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, 0 not voting, at its Tuesday, February 26, 2019, General Meeting, calling upon the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development and other appropriate agencies to work with Mr. Catsimatidis; and calling upon Mr. Catsimatidis to work with the City of New York and/or a non-profit developer to structure a mutually agreeable transaction for the development of this site if he is unwilling or unable to undertake its development to benefit the Washington Heights community and New York City.

Whereas: The large triangular lot at West 162nd-163rd Streets between St. Nicholas and Amsterdam Avenues (Block 2121 Lot 1, 1040 St. Nicholas Avenue) has been vacant for the last 10-15 years and has been a long-term blight on the community; and

Whereas: The 10,560 square foot lot is in a prominent location at the intersection of two major avenues across the street from a subway entrance and is the largest privately-owned vacant site in Washington Heights suitable for residential development; and

Whereas: The last building on the site was a single-story structure containing a Rite Aid store that was demolished due to structural issues, after which the site was not well maintained and became an encampment for the homeless; and

Whereas: The lot is owned by John Catsimatidis, a billionaire who prides himself on his philanthropy. Mr. Catsimatidis is the owner of the Red Apple Group / Gristedes Foods, the largest supermarket chain in Manhattan, and an immigrant who grew up in a similar working-class neighborhood nearby on West 135th Street in West Harlem. His 2013 mayoral campaign materials state that

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he never forgot where he came from and is running for mayor because he believes every New Yorker deserves the opportunities he had; and

Whereas: There is a great need for affordable housing in our community, which has been one of Community Board 12-Manhattan's highest budget priorities, and a paucity of potential development sites. Residents of Washington Heights deserve the opportunity to live in decent, ADA accessible, well designed and maintained affordable housing; and

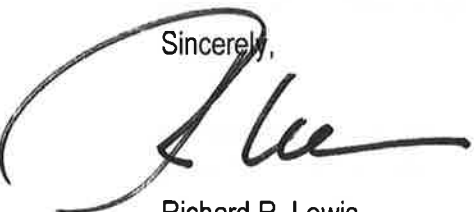
Whereas: The site is zoned R7-2 and C1-4. Residential, Community Facility and Commercial uses are permitted as-of-right; commercial uses may only occupy the first two floors of a building. The site can accommodate as-of-right a mixed-use building of 68,640 square feet, including up to 42,240 square feet of residential space or roughly 50 units (assuming approximately 850 square feet per unit). Now, therefore, be it

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan calls upon John Catsimatidis to develop this site as a mixed-use building, materially as outlined herein, that includes affordable housing with ground-floor retail uses and/or community space, with affordability being tied to average household incomes in Manhattan Community District 12, so that it will be an asset instead of a blight to the community, and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan calls upon the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development and other appropriate agencies to work with Mr. Catsimatidis to accomplish this goal, and; be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12-Manhattan calls upon Mr. Catsimatidis to work with the City of New York and/or a non-profit developer to structure a mutually agreeable transaction to facilitate the development of the site if he is unwilling or unable to directly undertake its development to benefit the Washington Heights community and New York City as a whole.

Sincerely,



Richard R. Lewis
Chairperson

cc: Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
Hon. Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman

Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator
Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member