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## COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

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### TESTIMONY ON ST. VINCENT'S CAMPUS REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT

#### (ZONING, WEST VILLAGE RESIDENCES, LLC AND SAINT VINCENT'S CATHOLIC MEDICAL CENTERS, MANHATTAN)

#### NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ON ZONING AND FRANCHISES

#### BRAD HOYLMAN, CHAIR COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

**March 6, 2012**

Good afternoon. Thank you Chairperson Weprin and Deputy Majority Leader Comrie and the members of the Subcommittee on Zoning and Franchises for the opportunity to testify today, along with Speaker Quinn, who as you know, represents this district.

My name is Brad Hoylman, and I am chairperson of Community Board No. 2, Manhattan (CB 2). The project before you today lies wholly within the boundaries of our district, as well as the Greenwich Village Historic District. On October 26, 2011, the Community Board, as part of its chartered mandated responsibilities, issued its formal resolution on this project, a decision five years in the making.

Before I turn to the summary of our resolution, I would like you to know one important thing our community feels very deeply. The closing of St. Vincent's Hospital was a tragedy for our community board and for the residents and visitors of the lower West Side of Manhattan.

St. Vincent's was a treasured institution in our neighborhood for 160 years. The hospital and the dedicated group of doctors, nurses and staff grew with us as our neighborhood grew. They served us well, delivering our babies, providing emergency medical attention to all of lower Manhattan, sponsoring clinics that prioritized the importance of

community medicine and leading the nation in a commitment to addressing the AIDS crisis.

Over the last five years, and particularly since St. Vincent's closed two years ago, our board has spent a great deal of time listening to our residents who are rightfully upset about the loss of St. Vincent's Hospital. We share their frustration and anger that this historic, essential, acute care facility and Level 1 Trauma Center – one that treated the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, the sinking of the Titanic, and the HIV crisis, and was prepared to do the same on September 11th -- will now become luxury condominiums under the plan before you.

Rather than accept our status as victims of an inequitable health care system and overheated real estate market, CB 2 has taken proactive steps to address this complicated and difficult situation:

- We launched a local health care needs assessment in conjunction with Speaker Quinn, our other local elected officials, over 30 health care organizations and the Hunter College School of Public Health. We think it is a blueprint for the new healthcare facility to be operated by North Shore/LIJ and that it presents a compelling case for the need for a full-service hospital on the West Side of Manhattan.
- Through our resolution to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in April 2008, Community Board 2 helped craft the compromise solution that helped preserve four historic buildings on the former St. Vincent's campus and the O'Toole building across the street.
- We formed a special oversight committee comprised of chairs of committees relevant to the application and local residents who would be most directly affected by the development and took testimony from hundreds of people over the course of several months. As part of this process, we helped redesign the 16,000 s.f. new park that is part of this plan.

Throughout our process, CB 2 has held firm in its belief that our neighborhood needs a full service acute care hospital, with Level One Trauma capabilities.

That said, we were called upon in this application to address the specifics of the proposal, which included zoning map amendments, zoning resolution text amendments and Large Scale Development special permits.

CB 2 opposes the plan before you unless the following issues are addressed:

- **The Applicant should not given an increase in development rights** – the Applicant, a for-profit private developer, should not be permitted to take advantage of the zoning intended for a non profit community use such as a hospital. It would set a dangerous precedent in neighborhoods such as ours that have a high concentration of community facilities.
- **Creation of Affordable Housing** – The Applicant, who already has a presence in our district, has a unique opportunity to create permanent affordable housing in the CB 2 area, either on-site or off-site, in order to strengthen the social and economic diversity of the area.
- **Support for Local Public Schools** – CB 2 is grateful for the Applicant’s assistance in securing a space for a new school in the Founding Hospital building in Community Board 5. This site was secured in 2008, however, before the current project was conceived, and is being financed by the City of New York, not the Applicant. We strongly urge the Applicant be required to make a capital contribution to the establishment of much needed, new public school in *our* district, such as at 75 Morton Street, a State-owned office building that is currently underutilized. This commitment would help to serve the very families the Applicant is seeking to add to the area.
- **Public Easement for the Triangle Park** – CB 2 thanks the Applicant for creating a public design process for a community park, and for agreeing to consider the inclusion of an AIDS memorial component, which CB 2 strongly supports. We hope that a mechanism can be created that ensures that the City of New York, not just the residents in the Applicant’s condominiums (as currently proposed), will have a role in governance of the new park so that it is truly “public.”

CB 2 has enumerated other concerns in our resolution, including the proposed parking garage, lack of disability access to the W. 12<sup>th</sup> Street subway entrance, proposed retail on 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets and demolition of the Reiss Building.

We believe that all of these concerns must be addressed in order to avoid the significant and irreversible negative impacts this project, as currently proposed, stands to have on our community.

On behalf of Community Board 2, again, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.