



December 7, 2020

Hon. Bill de Blasio  
Mayor of New York City

Hon. Gale Brewer  
Manhattan Borough President

Hon. Corey Johnson  
NYC Council Speaker

Hon. Margaret Chin  
NYC Council Member

Dear Mayor de Blasio, Borough President Brewer, and Council Member Chin,

Enclosed please find a Resolution approved by Downtown Independent Democrats General Membership on December 7, 2020:

**Resolution to Protect Governors Island**

The Trust for Governors Island (the "Trust"), an instrument of New York City, has presented a major development plan encompassing 45% of the southern portion of Governors Island. This plan would create 4.5 million sq. ft. of development with 300 foot tall buildings along parts of the waterfront that will vastly diminish public views, island use and access justified by unclear financial need, uncertain gain yet at potential large taxpayer cost.

DID urges the City to withdraw this plan and reassess this and any future development proposal to reflect a reprioritization such that public open space takes precedence over real estate development.

Sincerely,

Richard Corman  
President, Downtown Independent Democrats

Enclosure

cc: Hon. Chuck Schumer, U.S. Senator  
Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Senator  
Hon. Carolyn Maloney, U.S. Representative  
Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, U.S. Representative  
Hon. Nydia Velázquez, U.S. Representative  
Hon. Andrew Cuomo, NYS Governor  
Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, NYS Sen. Leader  
Hon. Carl Heastie, NYS Assembly Speaker

Hon. Brad Hoylman, NY State Senator  
Hon. Brian Kavanagh, NY State Senator  
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NY State Assembly  
Hon. Yuh-Line Niou, NY State Assembly  
Hon. Scott M. Stringer, NYC Comptroller  
Hon. Jumaane Williams, NYC Public Advocate  
Tammy Meltzer, Chair, Manhattan Community Board  
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# Resolution to Protect Governors Island

December 7, 2020

## Whereas:

1. **Governors Island** (the “Island”) is located 800 yards from lower Manhattan and provides 172 acres of public land. The National Park Service owns 22 acres operated as a National Monument and The Trust for Governors Island (the “Trust”), a nonprofit organization of the City of New York, operates the remaining 150 acres:
  - a. The Island is subject to numerous deed restrictions, the most significant is the prohibition of permanent residential uses, except for specific non-permanent residential such as hotels and dormitories. The Island must be used for public open space or education and permits other uses such as arts and culture, recreation and entertainment, hospitality and retail, health, and commercial offices. Finally, all funds generated on the Island must be used on the Island.
  - b. The Island is divided into two sections: (1) the North Island, which includes the Governors Island Historic District and (2) the South Island, which includes 33 acres designated for future development.
  - c. The island is zoned R3-2 throughout, with a Special Governors Island District mapped over the northern part of the island to permit a wide range of commercial, recreational, cultural, and educational uses that provide flexibility in the adaptive reuse of the historic buildings;
  - d. Basic maintenance and operations cost \$5 million, which is now generated by existing activities on the Island. The City contributes an additional \$15 million that covers ferry service and city employee salaries.
  - e. There is great unfulfilled demand for public open space in downtown Manhattan. For example, 40,000 students attend schools in community boards 1, 2 and 3 and in lower Manhattan alone, there are 40 high schools, many of which do not have access to sports fields or facilities. Governors Island could fill a significant portion of this need.
2. **2013 Rezoning.** In 2013, the City rezoned the Island, establishing the Special Governors Island District on the North Island and permitting 3 million sq. ft. of development, 1.5 million sq. ft. on the North Island and 1.5 million sq. ft. on the South Island.
3. **Proposed 2020 Rezoning.** The Trust proposes a plan to redevelop 33 acres of the South Island, permit 4.5 million gross square feet, up *three times* from the 1.5 million sq. ft. approved in 2013 and allow buildings up to 300 feet tall. The development would



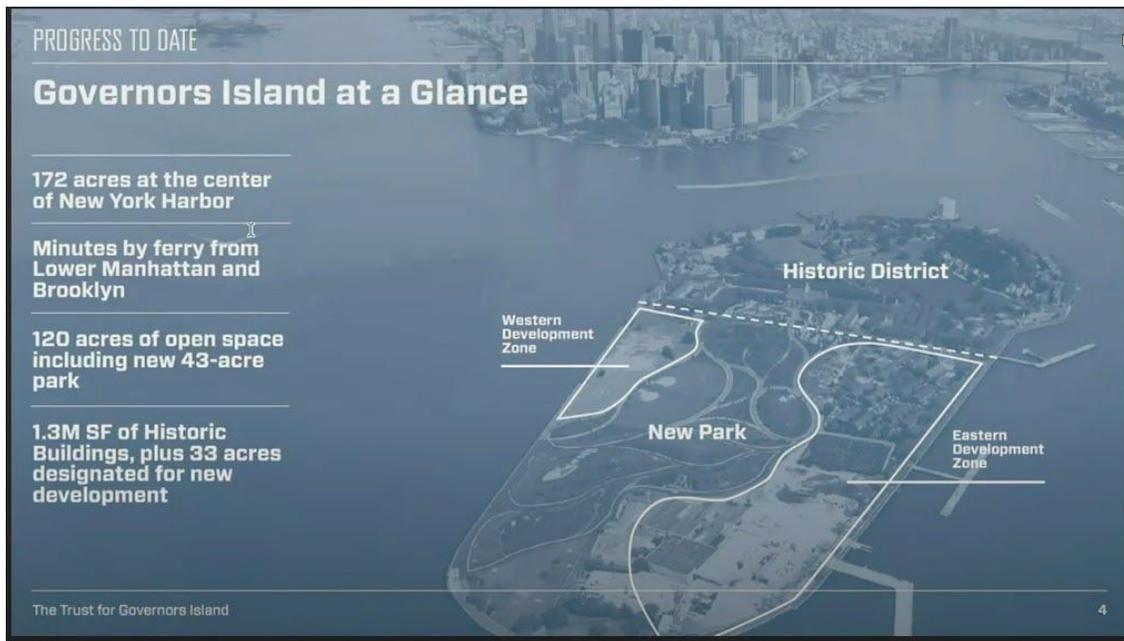
encompass 45% of the South Island, 6 acres in the Western Development Zone and 27 acres in the Eastern Development Zone (“The Plan”).

- a. The Trust would change the underlying zoning on the southern part of the island from R3-2 to a mid-density commercial zoning district, such as C4-5;
- b. There is no legal obligation for the Trust to be financially self-sufficient even though The Trust has a strategic vision to make the operation of the Island financially independent of the City’s budget cycle and claims that this would require it to further develop the South Island.
- c. The Trust projects the Plan would generate \$120 million of annual income from tenants, but has not i) disclosed financials to the public that demonstrate why this level of development, three times its prior projection, is required, ii) indicated how these funds, \$100 million more than the current operating budget would be used, nor iii) identified a future tenant, simply justifying the rezoning for a speculative non-profit called a “Center for Climate Solutions” -- to be run by an unnamed anchor tenant from the education or nonprofit sector. It is highly suspect that an education or nonprofit institution could be found that would provide that level of projected income and if found, existing buildings on the island could be adapted to such a use.
- d. The plan also calls for substantial, but undefined, taxpayer investment for infrastructure to support the anticipated development with no clarity on how much or when those investments are to be made.
- e. The plan proposes 4.5 million sq. ft. of development with 300 foot tall buildings along parts of the waterfront that will vastly diminish public views, island use and access.
- f. The plan calls for the public to cede ***forever*** a substantial, unique and desperately needed amount of public open space directly adjacent to the National Historic District in the 1% coastal flood plain, justified by an unclear financial need, uncertain gain and potential large taxpayer cost.

**Therefore be it resolved that Downtown Independent Democrats insists that the City:**

1. Reject the Plan;
2. Reassess this and any future development proposal to reflect a reprioritization such that public open space takes precedence over real estate development;
3. Reconsider the less dense plan approved in 2013, should any development be necessary;
4. Require public disclosure of all financial costs and benefits that are used to justify any loss of public open space and development;

5. Ensure and demonstrate the clear public benefit in return for any loss of public open space and development;
6. Specify and gain community approval for the use of any surplus funds deriving from development;
7. In any proposed development plan, permit allowable FAR and height only for low-rise development and minimal bulk provisions to reduce the impact to public enjoyment of this unique public place and waterfront.



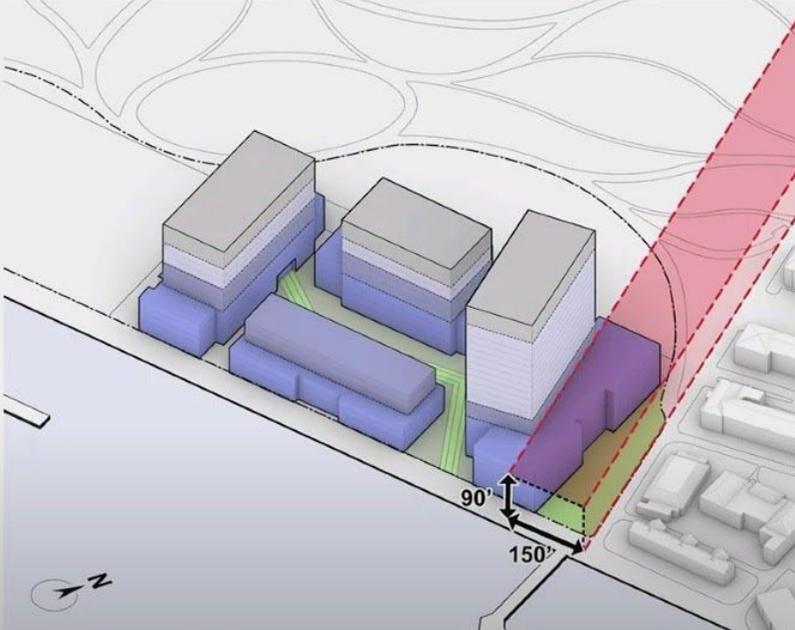


Governors Island is approximately ½ the size of Lower Manhattan below the Brooklyn Bridge

Proposed Actions

### Bulk Rules

- Mechanicals and Permitted Obstructions (gray)
  - 100% floorplate coverage up to 40 ft.
  - Additional 20 ft at 50% lot coverage
- Building Orientation
  - Parallel with Division Road, East-West orientation or anything inbetween.
  - Towers permitted to be wider as they move away from water.
- Within 150 ft of Historic District, max 90 ft height



Proposed Actions

## Illustrative Development

