



April 6<sup>th</sup> 2021

To the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
Testimony on the proposed development at 250 Water Street,  
by Howard Hughes Corporation, designed by Skidmore Owings and Merrill

Dear Landmarks Preservation Commissioners:

We understand and deeply regret the current plight of the Museum, but we feel the city should look for other remedies to support it. It is unfortunate that that the EDC is not supporting the Museum. Instead it is coercing it into conflict with the community to support a zoning-for-dollars real estate deal that will benefit the EDC and Howard Hughes and whose over-scaled buildings will remain with us long after the financial benefit to the Museum has been exhausted.

The present scheme is different from the first one presented but, although somewhat lower, it is not markedly better – it is still too big – and we do not feel it is an improvement:

1. The key issue is that the western edge of the block, on Pearl Street, is still treated as a transition block: we feel that this is inappropriate, it is IN the district and it is not its role to be half in and half out, and it is not its role to transition between the scale of the Seaport and the scale of the buildings across Pearl Street. We feel that if the LPC endorses this proposal it is an extremely ominous precedent that endangers every edge property in every Historic District in the City.
2. The other issue is one of architectural design: the design of the walls, in particular in the lower buildings, has become extremely coarse – like brutalist architecture in drag – it looks like the vertical and horizontal elements are giant blocks of precast concrete faced in brick with extremely expressed, and expressive, black joints which create a disturbing pattern. Even if not overtly “Brutalist” this large component kind of detailing is totally foreign to the district, notwithstanding the applicant’s argument that it recalls the post and lintel Greek Revival storefronts where, in fact, the joints are never so aggressively expressed, and the elements are much smaller. So, this relationship to the historic post and lintel precedent does not exist.

So, sadly, we cannot see this proposal as appropriate to the Seaport Historic District because it does not support the District’s sense of place through its architectural language and massing. We have to ask the Commission to reject this proposal as inappropriate. Thank you, very much, for the opportunity to testify.

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