

# Seaport Community Coalition

250 Water Street:

History, Chronology, Zoning

Study for Appropriate  
Development

December 1997

The Seaport  
Community Coalition  
works to bring a  
unified voice and  
channel for action to  
quality of life issues  
that impact the  
community.  
The Coalition  
spearheads efforts  
regarding  
waterfront usage,  
environmental  
protection, historic  
preservation,  
commercial and  
residential  
development,  
sanitation and health,  
parks and recreation,  
and crime prevention.



# Seaport Community Coalition

## What is the Seaport Community Coalition?

The Seaport Community Coalition is comprised of representatives of several community groups and residents from the area south of the Brooklyn Bridge and east of lower Broadway. Its members include Southbridge Towers Cooperative, St. Margaret's House Residents Council, the 85 South Street Tenant's Association and the South-Water-Front Neighborhood Association. The Coalition was established in 1986 in order to bring a unified voice and channel for action to quality of life issues that impact the residents and businesses of the area. Through strong working relationships with Community Board #1 and local elected officials, the Coalition spearheads efforts regarding waterfront usage, environmental protection, historic preservation, commercial and residential development, sanitation and health, parks and recreation, and crime prevention.

## What has the Seaport Community Coalition accomplished?

In the past seven years, the Coalition has initiated action on many fronts and chalked up a number of successes. Among them are: • Extension of South Street Seaport Historic District to include block 106 (Peck Slip to Dover St.) • Defeating inappropriate development of the site at 250 Water Street • Establishment of award-winning Fishbridge Park under the City's Operation Greenthumb • Establishment of NYPD "Seaport Special Detail" • Relocation of tour bus staging areas away from residences • Restoration of brick facade of Peck Slip Station Post Office • Enforcement of public drinking laws within the Historic District • Sidewalk access for persons with disabilities to Seaport restaurants and shops • Coordinating community responses to the sponsors of the proposed homeless with AIDS medical facility at 264 Water St. • Relocation of 24 hour subway entrance to Fulton St. • Removal of commercial dumpsters from Southbridge Towers • Neighborhood liaison with Con Edison concerning the Peck Slip substation fire and blackout.

## What is the Seaport Community Coalition currently working on?

The Coalition has been actively broadening its base of support within the community and increasing the scope of its agenda. Among the on-going concerns to which the Coalition wishes to give priority in the near future are: • Presentation and implementation of a comprehensive, community-based plan for the use and development of the East River waterfront from the Brooklyn Bridge to the Battery • Enforcement of sanitation and safety standards upon owners of undeveloped property within the Historic District • Restoration of the Captain Joseph Rose House • Installation of child-proof railings on the piers at the South Street Seaport.

## How can I participate in the Seaport Community Coalition?

We want your input. If you would like to be on our mailing list or wish to get in touch with us, write to: Seaport Community Coalition, PO Box 435, Peck Slip Station, New York, NY 10272.



Battle-city of a feud



Southward Towers

Brooklyn Bridge



**SOUTH STREET SEAPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
 DESIGNATED: 10 MAY 1977

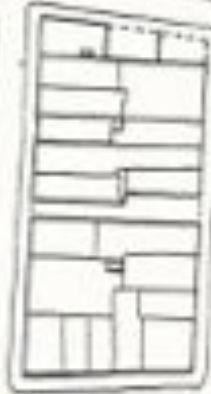
**EXTENSION**  
 DECEMBER 1989





Brooklyn Bridge

DOVER STREET



SOUTH STREET



PECK SLIP

PEARL STREET



WATER STREET



FRONT STREET



BECKMAN STREET



To Subway

subway

PEARL STREET

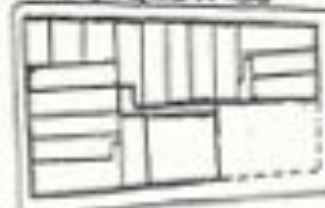


WATER STREET



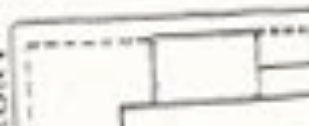
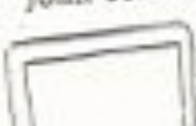
FULTON STREET

SCHUYLER SLIP



JOHN STREET (BURLING SLIP)

FRONT



SOUTH STREET

East River Drive

New Market Buildings

Texas Buildings

Pier 11

Pier 10





### **Introduction: The Challenge of 250 Water Street**

No site under the jurisdiction of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) has been debated as long or generated as much controversy as the parcel at 250 Water Street in the South Street Seaport Historic District. Its owner, Mistein Properties, has submitted no fewer than six distinct proposals to the Commission since 1983. The Commission has rejected four of these outright but approved a commercial design in 1986. It now is considering a two-towered residential scheme of 14 and 30 stories.

The height of this proposed apartment building in particular, as well as other design aspects, has generated intense opposition from residents of the Seaport and environs. The Seaport Community Coalition has offered extensive testimony as to the design's shortcomings. But it concluded in early 1997 that the debate needed to be enlarged to address the issue of what would, in fact, constitute an appropriate design for the site.

At that time, the Coalition proposed to submit to the LPC illustrations of what it would consider an appropriate design. In a public meeting on February 18, 1997, LPC Chair Jennifer Raab expressed interest in seeing such illustrations and stated that if they were developed, she would authorize their presentation to the Landmarks Commission.



The Coalition commissioned architect Barbara Marks – a Seaport resident – to conduct an architectural study of the site and prepare drawings and models of an appropriate alternative design. The intention was not so much to produce a specific or competing design as a paradigm of appropriateness for this site. Developing this concept involved extensive consultation by the Coalition and the architect with Seaport residents, local officials and business people, and several New York City preservation groups.

#### **District Characteristics and History**

The South Street Seaport Historic District largely comprises warehouses of three to five stories constructed in the late 1800s. As a group, they constitute a significant collection of such buildings over an eight-to-10 block area, presenting a coherent fabric of which the roofscape is an essential element. In its 1977 designation of the historic district, the Landmarks Preservation Commission noted, quite significantly, the “small scale brick buildings which contrast dramatically with the soaring skyscrapers nearby.”

The ground floors of many of these buildings have been occupied by Fulton Fish Market wholesalers and purveyors while upper floors long remained vacant. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, overflow from the artistic community in SoHo led to the occupation of upper floors as vacant warehouse space was converted into live-in studios. Even with this trend, the district's vacancy rate remained high for many years to come; many of the buildings in Front Street stood derelict and deteriorating under City ownership.

With the Rouse Corp.'s construction of the South Street Seaport, many Fish Market wholesalers were displaced. Other market trends further reduced the Fish Market, with vendors vacating some ground-floor spaces. Most of the purveyors formerly located on Water Street, Front Street and Peck Slip have left and the Fish Market has consolidated along South Street. Restoration of City-owned buildings in Front Street was obstructed for years by litigation between the City and a nonperforming leasehold developer.

There have been a few significant new projects in the Seaport in recent years. Among these were the rehabilitation-construction of the Seamen's Church Institute and the Best Western Seaport Hotel, and several private residential co-op conversions. Typically, the



developers asked LPC approval for penthouses or additional stories. The pattern of LPC decisions has been to authorize two-story additions with ample setbacks from the street. It is of note that both the Seamen's Institute and Best Western Seaport were allowed to incorporate nontraditional elements while respecting local scale and the roofline.

### **Practical and Aesthetic Challenges**

The task of the architect engaged by the Seaport Community Coalition was to propose a development approach to 250 Water Street that would respect the scale and character of the historic district while producing a reasonable rate of financial return.

Design work was preceded by a close analysis of the historic district's building stock and accompanied by an estimate of construction costs and a financial analysis (development pro forma) by professional analysts. While the developer might be expected to challenge such projections, they provide the LPC with an independent benchmark in addressing whether large-scale development is necessary to obtain a reasonable return.

The study sought to establish, in other words, that an insistence on the strict observance of appropriateness is not at all unreasonable and, moreover, that such a project can be economically feasible – that is, return a fair profit to a resourceful developer.

For this alternative design, issues relating to appropriateness were taken as the starting point, rather than economic considerations. With a definition of appropriateness for the site established based on the LPC designation of 1977 and current study, the architect developed a conceptual design, only then seeking to enhance economic viability.

The architectural study began with a photographic documentation of the neighborhood. Views from the Brooklyn Bridge, a significant local presence, underscored the district's uniqueness and stark contrast with the steel and glass towers of Wall Street. A scale model of the district was constructed to provide a context for analysis of the historical form of the 250 Water Street site as a baseline for its redevelopment.

The architect's objective was to envision a building or buildings whose footprint was consistent with the District's patrimony, while maximizing habitable floor area. Records dating from 1893 show that the parcel at 250 Water Street consisted of 43 lots, typically 25 feet by 80 feet. A reconfiguration of Pearl Street at an undetermined later date cut into the block, leaving the trapezoidal-shaped parcel in evidence today.

Most Seaport buildings had full-lot coverage with no rear yards, or yards only five to 15 feet deep. Such density of coverage is not attainable under current zoning and building codes, as the city now requires larger rear yards. Maximum coverage is about 70%.

Given full lot coverage and an average height of four stories, the 48,000 square foot lot would yield 192,000 square feet and a floor-area ratio (FAR) of 4 (see notes). Applying 70% maximum coverage reduced this to 134,000 square feet and an FAR of 2.8.

### **The Design Solution**

The architect then sought to determine what limits of scale a developer would have to observe in order to respect the district's character and meet the test of appropriateness. The first expanded model was a five-story building complying with the legal rear-yard requirements. This version yielded 177,200 square feet, for an FAR of around 3.6.

A six-story model was then developed, but its excessive mass convinced both the architect and the Coalition that five stories was the aesthetic limit for appropriate construction. Architect and client considered the possibility of adding a tower. But it was concluded, similarly, that this would disrupt the District roofline and alter perceptions of scale – two of the most critical components in judgments of appropriateness.

Nevertheless, both architect and client agreed that for the sake of economic viability, two more floors might be added to the street wall at the southern end of the lot facing the former Beekman Hospital building, one of the tallest structures in the district at about 75 feet. But this additional height was found to be inappropriate at the north end of the site, where Peck Slip offers a vista to the East River and also has historical significance as a



market square. Elevations over five stories would inappropriately dominate the space of Peck Slip, so a five-story street wall should be maintained at that end of the site.

The final design (A) contains 249,000 square feet of floor space. It is, in the opinion of the architect and Coalition, the limit of mass for the design to remain appropriate. With the addition of one story to the building at the southern end of the site, footage could be increased to 307,000. But the consensus among architect, client and community groups was that this version exceeded the aesthetic limit for massing. But this expanded version (B) is presented to illustrate the fine line between appropriate and inappropriate scale.

Given the difficulty of conceiving one building on a large and irregular parcel of land that had once been broken into small, variable units, the architect settled on the approach of a mews. The northern portion of the mews, along Peck Slip, has, as noted, a five-story street base with one penthouse story set back from the facade. The southern building, along Beekman Street, has a seven-story base with a three-story penthouse.

Mews facades along Water Street are not aligned with those of the older buildings facing from the east (river) side of the street. Variegated street-wall elevations are typical of this district and therefore help integrate the new structures into the neighborhood.

The architect prepared an elevation drawing intended to help Commission members and others to visualize the concept. Again, it is not a building design as such. The intention is to focus discussion on bulk, scale and massing, not materials and architectural details. A number of appropriate designs could be conceived for this site. This is just one possible configuration which meets the Historic District test of appropriateness by respecting the 19th century scale and roofscape while maximizing floor area and leaving open space.

### **Financial Projections**

The Coalition commissioned an estimate of construction costs from Scharf-Godfrey Inc. of New York and Washington, D.C., and a pro forma financial analysis from McCall & Army, Inc. of Boston. Key assumptions included a land value of \$15.7 million (based on the assessed value of the lot plus 6% for transfer and closing costs, and taxes), a

250,000 square foot gross building area, an 85% gross-to-usable construction efficiency factor, a 10% contingency for hard and soft development costs and a net rentable area of 212,500 square feet. Financial projections were based on per square foot sales prices and rents in the year 2000 of \$400 and \$30, respectively, assuming a construction start in January 1998. It assumes 8% mortgage financing under a rental scenario.

Based on these assumptions, the financial analysis showed an internal rate of return on this alternative-scale project of 19.3% on the sale of residential condominium units and 9.8% under a residential rental scheme. The actual returns obtainable by the developer could be greater, depending not only on his accounting treatment of the present value of the site, but also on actual construction costs as well as the eventual scale of the project as determined by the developer and Commission approvals. Other critical factors are market rents and prices at the time of completion of the project.

McCall & Almy prepared sensitivity analyses based on the 250,000 square foot version which the architect and the Coalition deemed optimal, showing the combinations of real estate market rates and densities needed for a return of 15% on equity in the case of a rental scheme, and a four-year 25% compound annual return on equity under a condominium construction-sale scheme.

These charts (see appendix B) indicate the rental scheme would return an appropriate 15% annually over 10 years at a rental rate of \$33 per square foot in the year 2000 for a density of 250,000 square feet. In the case of a condominium construction-sale project, an appropriate 25% return would be reached at a price of \$450 per square foot for the optimum construction size of 250,000 square feet, or \$420 at 308,000 square feet.

#### **Zoning and Historical Considerations**

The 250 Water site presents a particular challenge to the LPC and preservationists. In essence, the developer's application embodies a conflict between zoning regulations and the requirements of the historic district. Defining appropriateness necessarily involves a clarification of landmarks requirements versus those of zoning law.



The precise intentions of those who framed the district's landmark designation in 1977 have become obscured over the intervening years. But the evolution of proposals for Seaport District creation offer some hints as to what the framers had in mind.

The history of the designation shows that the district was expanded over a period of six years, beginning with the designation of the Schermerhorn Row block and eventually reaching out to include the 106, 107W, 107E and 98 blocks – respectively, the blocks containing the Peck Slip Station Post Office, the Bridge Cafe and the nearby Joseph Rose House, the Con Edison substation and the 250 Water Street parcel. These four blocks were among those slated under earlier proposals for high-rise development.

The inference of this final version of the district designation is that the framers intended to preserve the entire District under equal protection, without high-rise development. So the architect and Coalition believe that intent is best honored by maintaining the low scale of the district and its historic roofline within the contested site at 250 Water Street.

The site's current zoning predates the designation of the Seaport Historic District. In the early 1980s, parts of the future district were slated for urban renewal – demolition and large-scale development – and thus were classified C6-4 with an R10 equivalent.

The City Planning Department officially describes C6 districts as "zoned for a wide range of high bulk commercial uses requiring a central location [such as] corporate headquarters, large hotels, entertainment facilities, retail stores and some residential development in mixed buildings. R10 is the highest density residential district (see note below)." The Planning Department observes that the R10 density is mainly found "on major avenues and cross-town streets south of 98th Street."

Architects for the present developer argue that this zoning ought to be the basis for determining the project's bulk. But this vestigial zoning is superseded by the Landmarks designation, therefore it is overridden by the process of LPC review. Moreover, the site is radically different from the uptown blocks where most high-rise zoning is found.

in retrospect, the zoning should have been revised at the time when the district received Landmarks protection. Efforts to obtain rezoning have not been successful. The CPC's response to such requests has been that the LPC's powers override zoning, therefore rezoning is unnecessary. Were rezoning to be undertaken, an appropriate designation for Block 98 would be C4-4A or CC4-5A, RTA equivalents with an allowable FAR of 4.

#### **Transitional Sites and LPC's Role**

Some discussion has been given to the notion of transitional sites: as noted, the 250 Water Street parcel lies on the District's western side. But unless every site in the district receive equal protection, there can be little meaning to the notion of a Historic District. So the standard of appropriateness -- particularly scale -- must apply fully in every case. So in that sense a transitional site is a contradiction in terms. Either a site is in the district or it is not in the district. Any architectural transition, therefore, must be effected outside of the legal boundaries of the South Street Seaport Historic District.

In this instance, the transitional site is, in fact, on the west side of Pearl Street. The architects of Southbridge Towers subtly deferred to the district by placing a low-rise building parallel to Pearl Street while situating the higher towers in a perpendicular orientation to Pearl Street. The effect of this positioning was to minimize the visual impact of Southbridge's apartment towers on the historic district to the east.

It has become common in New York to see towers rise to 30 stories or more alongside five-story row houses. In the past 10 years this type of development has proliferated on the Upper East Side. Initially, this was met with great opposition; now such juxtapositions are part of the city's architectural vocabulary. But 250 Water is in a historic district. If the designation of such historic districts is to retain any meaning at all in New York City, the Commission must approve only buildings which fully respect that designation.

The architect and the Seaport Community Coalition hope this study will assist the Landmarks Preservation Commission in its pending decision on the Milstein proposal. Such decisions may be difficult. But as the urban scholar Richard F. Babcock has noted:



"There is little evidence in the history of land development in America that the private decision maker, left to his own devices, can be trusted to act in the public interest."

This is the Landmarks Preservation Commission's *raison d'être*. Its decision in this case should be informed by an understanding of the intent of those who created the Seaport District and what appropriateness means in the true spirit of that designation.

#### Notes

(a.) Floor Area is the sum of the gross area of each floor of the building, excluding cellar space, floor space in open balconies, elevator or stair-bulkheads and in most zoning districts, floor space used for accessory parking that is located less than 23 feet above curb level.

(b) Floor area ratio, or FAR, equals total floor area of a zoning lot divided by the zoning lot's ground area. Each zoning district classification contains an FAR control which when multiplied by the lot area of the zoning lot, produces the maximum floor area allowable on such lot.

(c) Density maximums, or the number of dwelling units per acre, are based on an average of 2 1/2 zoning rooms per dwelling unit.

## HISTORY OF 250 WATER STREET SITE

### 250 WATER STREET: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

A 48,000 square-foot full-block site within the South Street Seaport Historic District, this is the District's largest development site. It is trapezoidal in shape and is bounded by Pearl Street, Peak Slip, Beekman Street, and Water Street. Until the 1950s the entire lot was covered with small four- and five-story brick buildings similar to those throughout the rest of the district. These were subsequently demolished, though a one-story garage survived until much more recently. The lot is currently used for parking; it contains about 250 spaces, for which the maximum full-day rate is \$20.30.

#### I. THE REGULATORY BACKGROUND: 1961-1977

Area zoned C6-4, allowing as-of-right development up to 10 FAR. .... 1961

Schermerhorn Row designated a landmark. .... 1968

South Street Seaport Special District zoning passed. .... 1977

The New York Times writes that its purpose is "...to preserve and encourage the restoration of old, historic buildings in the area..." and "to assure that the area, with its small historic buildings, will be open to the waterfront, with a high proportion of public spaces and amenities, serving as an urban retreat from the busy activity of lower Manhattan...Although the height of buildings in the special district is determined by an involved formula, in effect, no building put up along the historic waterfront may be more than five stories high."

South Street Seaport Historic District designated. .... 1977

In its designation report, the Landmarks Preservation Commission counted among the Seaport's "important qualities" that it "retains much of its early 19th-century character...; that some of the buildings of the District are among the oldest standing in Manhattan;...that the Seaport today functions as an important cultural enclave in lower Manhattan, drawing tourists to view the many ships and boats docked at the piers along South Street and the small scale brick buildings which contrast dramatically with the soaring skyscrapers nearby; and that the South Street Seaport Historic District serves as an important reminder of the early commercial development and history of New York City."

Upon designation, the Board of Estimate removed the block immediately to the north of 250 Water Street after testimony from Richard Ross, then with the Office of Lower Manhattan Development, that the block was needed for large-scale development. This block was restored to the Historic District in 1989.

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## City Spurs Fulton Restoration With Urban-Renewal Action

**Planning Group Designates  
Old Seaport Location as  
Urban Renewal Area**

By CHARLES G. BENNETT

The City Planning Commission yesterday designated for urban renewal an 11-block, 33-acre area of the Fulton Fish Market and surrounding waterfront property.

The designation will make it possible to transform the area into an "Old New York" neighborhood of restored historic buildings, museums, stores and apartments.

The commission's action means that for the first time full-scale urban renewal will be keyed to the preservation and restoration of landmarks.

"This area is rich in commercial history of the city and unique in that entire blocks and blockfronts have somehow survived to this day," the commission majority noted in a report accompanying its decision.

### Restoration Is Goal

"Designating this area for urban renewal," the report said, "is probably the only way to achieve its comprehensive restoration."

Five members of the commission voted for the designation. Chairman Donald H. Elliot and Mrs. Beverly Moss Spill, a member, abstained from voting.

A seaport museum is planned for the area. Ships that visited New York in the early 19th century and that are still afloat are being sought in many parts of the world. They will be docked permanently at the foot of Fulton Street and will be open to visitors.



The New York Times May 14, 1968

While the city proposes to use its own power of eminent domain and its money to condemn needed land, the money will be refunded in full by private sponsors; there will be no grants of public funds for the restoration project.

The Fulton Fish Market, established on the Lower Manhattan waterfront since 1821, is slated to move to the Hunts Point section of the Bronx soon.

The prospective sponsor for part of the restoration is the South Street Maritime Museum, Inc., which, using funds it is raising, proposes to restore most of the area between Peck Slip and Fulton Street to its former condition when it was the maritime center of the city.

### Area's Boundaries

The boundaries of the area are to be Water Street north from John Street to Fulton Street, Pearl Street northwest to Dover Street, Dover Street east to the pierhead line of the East River, the pierhead line south to John Street, and John Street west to Water Street.

1968



**SOUTH STREET SEAPORT PROJECT AREA**

(MAP RELEASED BY SEAPORT MUSEUM, 1968)





NEW "OLD NEW YORK": Gloucester fishing boat being exhibited at South Street Seaport yesterday. Area, part of waterfront restoration plan, is near the Brooklyn Bridge.

## Planners Back South Street Seaport

By EDWARD C. BURKS

It was all fair weather and clear sailing yesterday for the South Street Seaport restoration in Lower Manhattan as it came before the City Planning Commission for approval.

The planners approved the urban renewal plan for the 12-block area known as Brooklyn Bridge South East, of which a large part will be a restoration of early nineteenth century waterfront.

The over-all renewal area, about 38 acres, extends from Dover Street in the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge on the north, southward to John Street, and from the waterfront back to Poole Street.

It is the area in the vicinity of the Fulton Fish Market that is scheduled for restoration to its nineteenth-century seaport flavor. Many old structures in that area are to be refurbished by private interests, especially the blockfront of buildings on the south side of Fulton Street, known as Schermerhorn Row.

When the fish market moves to the Bronx, its block, just north of Schermerhorn Row, would be cleared as an open waterfront square, and many

early nineteenth century buildings nearby would be restored.

The South Street Seaport Museum, a tax-exempt corporation that plans to develop the "old New York" port area, told the commission that it already has financial backing for buying up at least 70 per cent of the required properties.

The seaport restoration project covers about 4½ blocks of the total renewal area. The blocks to be restored to their appearance in the sailing ship era are bounded by Peck Slip on the north and John Street on the south and either Water or Front Street to the west.

The rest of the renewal area will be given over to modern uses—high-rise apartments perhaps 25 to 35 stories tall for 2,500 to 3,500 residents on the north side of the renewal area, north of Peck Slip and about four blocks of commercial and office buildings.

The commission announced its approval of the renewal plan after being assured of the economic viability of the museum project. The developers emphasized that the waterfront restoration will not be an old-style museum but an active commercial operation, with res-

taurants and waterfront-connected shops in the rehabilitated structures.

Several old-time sailing ships are to ride at anchor at three piers as permanent "exhibits" of the South Street Seaport. Already a Gloucester fishing vessel and Ambrose light ship are there.

Both the developers and the planning commission look toward the eventual depression of Franklin D. Roosevelt drive in that area to permit an unobstructed view of the restored waterfront area.

Schermerhorn Row was designated as an official landmark by the city last December, but the real-estate developing firm headed by Sol G. Atlas and former City Corporation Counsel John P. McGrath, which owns most of the row, has sought to upset that designation through court action.

The seaport developers indicated yesterday, however, that the Atlas-McGrath firm might now be willing to drop its opposition.

The City Planning Commission action on the renewal area is subject to final approval by the Board of Estimate, probably in July.

The New York Times  
MONDAY JULY 30, 1973

## Air-Rights Deal Saves South St. Seaport

By CARTER HORSLEY

The South Street Seaport has been rescued from insolvency by a complex series of real-estate transactions involving the air rights over several city blocks.

The seaport had fallen \$2.5-million in arrears on a \$10.7-million loan extended by a consortium of five banks and also owed \$2.9-million to a benefactor, the Isbrandtsen Company.

The seaport has paid off the loan with the proceeds from the sale of the development rights above the early 19th-century building.

The banks acquired the air rights for future sale to developers along the downtown portion of the East River.

The transactions were made possible by the city's purchase of the four blocks in question, south of the Brooklyn Bridge, for \$8-million and the leasing of the blocks to the seaport by the New York Telephone Company's agreement to build a major equipment center on one of the blocks.

The arrangements were the most recent in a series of real estate deals over the last five years as the seaport has struggled to move into existence. Thus far, the seaport

development consist of a small museum at 16 Fulton Street and, at Piers 15 and 16, the square-rigger Waverler, the old Hudson River Day Line sidewheeler Alexander Hamilton, the Ambrose Lightship, a ferry, a tug and two smaller working sailing vessels.

Eventually the seaport intends to restore about seven blocks along the waterfront. The four blocks involved in the most recent negotiations.

### Skyscraper Plan

which took two and a half years to consummate, are bounded by Water, South, John and Beekman Streets and bisected by Fulton Street. The most important section is known as Schermerhorn Row along Fulton Street, which the city declared an official landmark in 1968.

The real-estate development concern headed by Sol G. Atlas and a former City Corporation Counsel, John P. McGrath, had owned part of the property and sought to challenge the landmark status barring its development. At that time, the office market was booming.

As part of the arrangements, the city has purchased the Atlas-McGrath site, part of the four square blocks the city

bought. It is understood that the Atlas-McGrath interests were compensated by the city for approximately the value of their original investments, and that this was contingent upon the abandonment of the legal challenge.

The air-rights transfer plan was originally worked out to induce Atlas-McGrath not to tear down Schermerhorn Row but to build a skyscraper adjacent to it on the block bounded by Water, John, Front and Fulton Streets. The seaport's first chairman, Jacob Isbrandtsen, the shipbuilder and industrialist, had arranged the \$10.7-million mortgage with the banks on the basis of the intended sale of the air rights.

When the office market softened, the value of the air rights declined, and the Atlas-McGrath interests decided not to proceed with a building on the site. The office of Lower Manhattan Development sought to attract other developers for the air rights.

The New York Telephone Company's building is planned for a site bounded by Fulton, Front, John and Water Streets. There is to be substantial retail and commercial space in the structure, as required by the South Street Seaport special zoning district, created by the city. Korvette's, the department store chain, is expected to lease space in the building.

The telephone company will lease, pending approval by the Public Service Commission, its square block in the district for 10 years for \$5-60,000 a year with an option to purchase the site for \$8-million, which would reimburse the city for its outlay.





## SEAPORT RESTORATION • AIR RIGHTS TRANSFER

- INFILL CONSTRUCTION
- BULLESTONE SIDEWALKS
- COBBLESTONE PAVING
- BOLLARDS
- GRANTING LOT (INCLUDING GREENS)
- RECEIVING LOT

1973?



**LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

305 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10007

BEVERLY MOSS SPATT, *Chairman*

MORRIS KITCHUM, Jr., *Vice-Chairman*

MARGARET BEYER

STEPHEN S. LASH

ELIZABETH COY

HAWTHORNE E. LEE

GEORGE R. COLLINS

MARIE V. MCGOVERN

WILLIAM J. COWLIN

PAUL E. PARKER, JR.

BARBARALEE DIAMONSTEIN

*Commissioners*

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 1976 at 10:30 A.M.

**I**

**ROLL CALL**

**II**

**REPORTS ON ITEMS PREVIOUSLY HEARD BY THE COMMISSION**

**III**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

Pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 60 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, public hearings are being held by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on the following properties within the City of New York:

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**Proposed for Designation as Historic District**

**BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN**

No. 1

(LP-0046)

**South Street Seaport Historic District**

The property bounded by Duver Street, South Street, the northern property line and part of the eastern property line of the Fulton Market (Block 73, Lot 11), the northern property line of Block 73, Lot 10, the eastern property line of Block 73, Lots 10, 8, and 4, the southern property line of Block 73, Lot 2, South Street, part of the southern, part of the eastern and part of the southern property lines of 84-85 South Street, the eastern and southern property lines of 165 Front Street, Front Street, Fulton Street, and Pearl Street to Duver Street.

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SPECIAL END-OF-YEAR HEARING

Tuesday, Dec 14, 1976

Calendar

Chnn Bmas spot  
V-Chnn Kozshum  
B-Drammington  
P. Carney  
South Street

H Lee  
E Cost  
M Boyer

Conlin  
Collins  
McCorm

Testimon

No.

District, 0998

✓

Mr. Aaron G. Blawie

Ag.

✓

rep. members of the Blank Family

✓

Mrs. Estelle T. ...

For

✓

rep. ... Architecture & Urban Design

✓

Mr. Bernard Miesel

For

✓

rep. ... Realty Co.

✓

Mr. James Hulme

For

✓

rep. Sierra Club

✓

Mr. Richard Buford

For  
(expand district)

South St. Seaport Museum, Pres.

✓

Mr. Robin Burns

For  
(delete parking lot)

Mayors Office of Development

✓

Mr. Lionel Sapiakoff

For  
(delete parking lot)

Rep. Dep. Mayor <sup>Ellet</sup> for Econ. Development

✓

Ms. Ellen Rosebrock

For

rep. self in testimony

✓

Ms. Clare Beckhart

For

rep. State Parks + Recreation

## FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this area, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the South Street Seaport Historic District contains buildings and other improvements which have a special character and special historical and aesthetic interest and value and which represent one or more periods or styles of architecture typical of one or more eras in the history of New York City and which cause this area, by reason of these factors, to constitute a distinct section of the City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, the South Street Seaport Historic District retains much of its early 19th-century character, which recalls the time when the seaport area was an important part of the leading port of the nation; that some of the buildings of the District are among the oldest standing in Manhattan; that the mercantile history of the area is reflected in the handsome counting-houses which once were occupied by such prominent 19th century merchants as Peter Schermerhorn, Josiah Macy, and Abiel Abbot Low; that the buildings of the District are fine and representative examples of 19th century American commercial architecture; that many of these structures were designed in a dignified and restrained version of the popular Greek Revival style, and that these buildings are among the few, of this once prevalent building type, to survive in New York City; that a number of the structures in the District have been carefully restored by the South Street Seaport Museum, which has done much to aid in the revitalization of the Seaport area; that the Seaport today functions as an important cultural enclave in lower Manhattan, drawing tourists to view the many ships and boats docked at the piers along South Street and the small-scale brick buildings which contrast dramatically with the soaring skyscrapers nearby; and that the South Street Seaport Historic District serves as an important reminder of the early commercial development and history of New York City.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 61 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 2-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as an Historic District the South Street Seaport Historic District, Borough of Manhattan, containing the property bounded by Dover Street, South Street, the northern property line and part of the eastern property line of the Fulton Market (Block 73, Lot 11), the northern property line of Block 73, Lot 10, the eastern property lines of Block 73, Lots 10, 8, and 2, the southern property line of Block 73, Lot 2, South Street, part of the southern part of the eastern and part of the southern property lines of 84-85 South Street, the eastern and southern property lines of 165 Front Street, Front Street, Fulton Street, and Pearl Street to Dover Street.

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
South Street Seaport Historic District Designation Report

MAY 10, 1977



## Chapter 8 Special South Street Seaport District

## 88-00 GENERAL PURPOSES

The Special South Street Seaport District (hereinafter also referred to as the "District") established in this resolution is designed to promote and protect public health, safety, general welfare and amenity and to implement the provisions of the Brooklyn Bridge Southeast Urban Renewal Plan, as amended (the "Urban Renewal Plan"). These general goals include, among other, the following purposes:

- To encourage the preservation, restoration and, in certain cases, redevelopment of real property and buildings thereon within the Brooklyn Bridge Southeast Urban Renewal Area into a south street seaport environmental museum having associated cultural, recreational and retail activities;
- To preserve and encourage the restoration of the Schermerhorn Row Landmark Buildings which have been so designated by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission;
- To assure the use of the south street seaport area as an area of small historic and restored buildings, open to the waterfront, having a high proportion of public spaces and amenities which would serve as an urban retreat from the neighboring commercial office buildings and activity of lower Manhattan;
- As a means of accomplishing the aforesaid purposes, to permit the transfer and disposition of development rights from designated zoning lots in the seaport area to south street commercial development in a manner consistent with the provisions of this District; and
- To promote the most desirable use of land in accordance with the Urban Renewal Plan and thus to conserve and enhance the value of land and buildings, and thereby protect the City's tax revenues.

88-01

## General Provisions

Except as modified by the express provisions of this District, the regulations of the underlying zoning districts remain in effect.

88-02

## Definitions

For purposes of this Chapter, matter in *italics* is defined in Sections 12-10, (Definitions), 88-00 (General Purposes), or 88-02 (Definitions).

## Development Rights

The basic maximum permitted floor area for a zoning lot if it were undeveloped allowed by the applicable district floor area regulations and shall not include any additional floor area allowed for plazas, arcades, or glass-connected open areas or any other form of bonus whether by right or special permit. Streets located within the District which have been closed or discontinued in whole, part or whose air space has been closed or discontinued pursuant to Section E15-3.0 of the Administrative Code shall have attributed to such closed area or closed air space the basic maximum permitted floor area allowed within the underlying zoning district within which such streets are situated. The lot area of a closed or discontinued volume of air space shall be measured by the area of the bed of the street lying below and within such closed or discontinued volume.

## Granting Lot

A zoning lot and closed or discontinued portions of streets or air space over streets which are identified as granting lots on the Transfer District Map upon which development is regulated by contract, lease, covenant, declaration or otherwise to assure compliance with the purposes of this District and from which development rights may be transferred. Such zoning lots and closed portions of streets or air space over streets are identified on such Map as Parcels 6, 7 and 9 and the adjacent hatched street areas.

## Person

An individual, corporation (whether incorporated for business, public benefit or not-for-profit purposes or otherwise), partnership, trust firm, organization, other association or any combination thereof.

## Receiving Lot

A zoning lot identified on the Transfer District Map to which development rights may be added. Such receiving lots are identified on such Map as Parcels 1, 8, 15, 16, 20 and 21.

Special South Street Seaport District  
(repealed from Section 12-10)

The "Special South Street Seaport District" is a Special Purpose District designated by the letter "S", in which special regulations set forth in Article VIII, Chapter 8 apply.

The Special South Street Seaport District appears on the zoning maps superimposed on other districts, and its regulations supplement and modify those of the districts on which it is superimposed.



88-03

**Transfer District Map**

The Transfer District Map, attached hereto as Appendix A and made an integral part hereof, sets forth each granting lot and receiving lot within the District.

88-04

**Transfer of Development Rights from Granting Lots**

Development rights from each of the granting lots may be conveyed, or otherwise disposed of (i) directly to a receiving lot or (ii) to a person for subsequent disposition to a receiving lot, all in accordance with the provisions of this District, except that with respect to zoning lots located on Parcels 6, 7 and 8, as identified on the Transfer District Map, only those development rights in excess of (a) an amount equal to the product of the Lot area of each of such zoning lots multiplied by 5 or (b) the total floor area of all existing buildings on any such zoning lot, whichever excess amount is smaller, may be so conveyed or otherwise disposed of. The City Planning Commission shall certify such initial transfer from the granting lots. Any person may convey its interest in all or a portion of such development rights to another person but such development rights may only be used for a development on a receiving lot.

88-05

**Addition of Development Rights to Receiving Lots**

All or any portion of the development rights transferred from a granting lot may be added to the floor area of all or any one of the receiving lots in an amount not to exceed the ratio of 10 square feet of development rights to each square foot of lot area of such receiving lot, except that with respect to a receiving lot having a lot area of less than 30,000 square feet, the total floor area ratio on such receiving lot shall not exceed a floor area ratio of 21.6. Development rights transferred to a receiving lot may be applied to the development of a mixed building to increase the floor area of the residential, commercial, and/or community facility portions of such building so that the maximum floor area for such building may be increased by the aggregate of development rights so transferred. In no event shall the floor area ratio of a residential building or portion thereof exceed 12.0. The City Planning Commission shall certify that the proposed development which utilizes such transferred development rights conforms to the regulations and controls of the Urban Renewal Plan.

88-06

**Conversion of Transferred Development Rights into Tower Coverage**

Development rights transferred to a receiving lot may be converted into increased tower coverage on

such receiving lot so that the maximum percent of lot area which may be occupied by a tower on such receiving lot shall be the sum of 40 percent plus one-half of one percent for every .1 by which the total floor area ratio on such receiving lot would exceed a floor area ratio of 21.6, provided (a) the development on such receiving lot has achieved a minimum floor area ratio of 18.0 and (b) tower coverage on such receiving lot will not exceed 55 percent.

88-07

**Recordation**

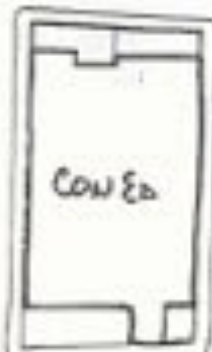
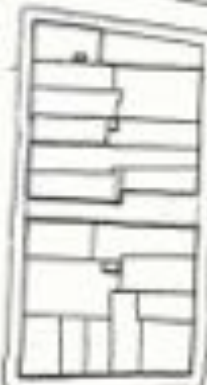
At the time of transfer of development rights from a granting lot, there shall be recorded in the land records, and indexed against such granting lot from which floor area is removed, an instrument removing such floor area and prohibiting construction on the zoning lot from which the floor area is taken of any building or other structure which would contain a floor area in excess of that still available to the zoning lot after deducting the floor area removed, such prohibition to be noncancelable for 99 years; and at the time of the addition of development rights to a receiving lot as provided in Section 88-05, there shall be recorded in the land records, and indexed against such receiving lot to which floor area is added, an instrument transferring the floor area to the receiving lot benefited and identifying the granting lot (by tax block and lot number and description) from which the floor area has been removed. A certified copy of such instruments shall be submitted to the City Planning Commission upon recordation thereof.

**APPENDIX A**



Brooklyn Bridge

DOVER STREET



SOUTH STREET



PEARL STREET



WATER STREET



FRONT STREET



BEKMAN

STREET



To Subway

Gas Street

Gas Street

FULTON STREET

PEARL STREET

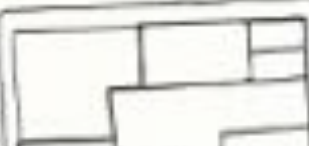


WATER STREET



JOHN STREET (BURLING SLIP)

FRONT



SOUTH STREET

East River Drive

New Market Building

Tip Outbuilding

Pier 15

Pier 16





*II. 250 WATER STREET, PART ONE: TOWERS AND SLABS, 1979-1986*

Milstein acquires site in foreclosure sale at total cost believed to be in the low six figures. . . . 1979

Proposal I: a 23-story slab-like office building designed by Ulrich Franzen. . . . 1983

*LPC action:* permit denied.

In explaining its vote, the LPC observed of the district that it:

- "consists primarily of four to five story brick commercial buildings constructed in the mid-nineteenth century" and
- "retains an intact nineteenth century roofscape with many distinctive gable roofs which are clearly visible to pedestrians approaching the district and from within the district as well;"
- its "unique siting...renders it visible from numerous points of view above street level; for example, the Brooklyn Bridge pedestrian walkway and the East River Drive";
- "the district, due to its small size, the low scale of its buildings, and its unique siting, can be perceived as a totality which stands in sharp contrast to its surroundings."

In addition to criticizing the proposed building's "formality and monumentality," and other aspects of its design, the Commission found that it would:

- "dominate and overwhelm the neighboring buildings in the district by virtue of its sheer size and boldly geometric massing;"
- "cause an abrupt change in scale within the district which would be disruptive of the district's homogeneous quality;"
- "interrupt vistas of the district as it is approached from the west and within the district as well,"
- "...relate more closely in scale and massing to the buildings outside the district than within, visually confusing the present clear boundary of the district;" and
- "...fail to capture the special character of the district."

Proposal II: a 43-story apartment tower rising over the north end of a five-story base covering the full block, designed by Ulrich Franzen. . . . 1984

*LPC action:* permit denied.

In its denial, LPC reiterated its 1983 observations on the district and found that the proposed new building would:

- "dominate and overwhelm the neighboring buildings in this low scale district by virtue of its size,"
- "cause an abrupt change in scale within the district which would be disruptive of the district's homogeneous quality;"
- "interrupt vistas of the district as it is approached from the west and within the district as well,"
- "...relate more closely in scale and massing to the buildings outside the district than within, visually confusing the present clear boundary of the district,"
- "...not succeed as a transitional building between the low-scale character of the district and the high-scale buildings outside the district;" and that
- "the proposed building, located at the edge and entrance to the district, fails to embody the special character of the South Street Historic District."

Proposal III: an apartment building, designed by Jan Hird Pokorsy, with two towers (thirty and twelve stories) rising at opposite ends of a full-block base of five stories plus two transitional stories. . . . 1986

*LPC action:* permit denied.

In addition to reiterating its observations about the character of the district, the LPC found that:

- "the proposed scale, size, mass and volume of the thirty-story tower would dominate and overwhelm the neighboring buildings in this low-scale district;" that
- "the size of the thirty-story tower would cause an abrupt change in scale within the district, disrupting the district's homogeneous, low-scale quality;" and that
- "the design of the proposed thirty-story tower, which is located at the western boundary of the district would relate more closely in scale and massing to the buildings outside the historic district rather than to those within, thus visually confusing the clear boundary of the district."



LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

20 VESEY STREET, NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10001

552-1100

Gene A. Norman  
CHAIRMAN

26 August 1986

Peck Slip Associates  
1271 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, New York 10020

Re: LPC 86-1943 and 86-1944  
CD 87-0009  
250 Water Street  
Block 98, Lot 1  
South Street Seaport Historic  
District  
Borough of Manhattan

Dear Sirs:

Pursuant to Section 207-6.3 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission, at the Executive Session following the Public Hearing of 26 August 1986, voted not to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of an existing building and the construction of a mixed use building at the subject premises as put forward in your application completed 4 August 1986.

The first application consists of the demolition of an existing one-story garage building; the second application consists of proposal to construct a mixed-use building. The proposed new building is to take up the entire block with a five-and six-story base supporting two residential towers, twelve and thirty stories in height, which would be visible from several points within and outside the historic district. The application is shown in greater detail in drawings numbered 1-23 and dated 26 June 1986, photographs and the model presented at the public hearing.

In reviewing the application, the Commission noted that the South Street Seaport Historic District consists primarily of four to five story brick commercial buildings constructed in the mid-nineteenth century; that the district retains an intact nineteenth-century roofscape with many distinctive gable roofs which are clearly visible to pedestrians approaching the district and from within the district



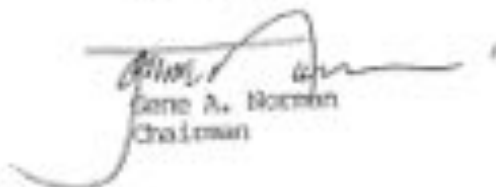
8/26/86  
Peck Slip Associates  
1271 Avenue of the Americas

-3-

as well; that the unique siting of the district renders it visible from numerous points of view above street level, for example, the Brooklyn Bridge Pedestrian Walkway and the East River Drive; and that the district, due to its small size, the low scale of its buildings, and its unique siting can be perceived as a totality which stands in sharp contrast to its surroundings.

With regard to the application to construct the new building, the Commission found that the proposed scale, size, mass and volume of the thirty-story tower would dominate and overwhelm the neighboring buildings in this low-scale district; that the size of the thirty-story tower would cause an abrupt change in scale within the district, disrupting the district's homogeneous, low-scale quality; that the design of the proposed thirty-story tower, which is located at the western boundary of the district, would relate more closely in scale and massing to the buildings outside the historic district rather than to those within, thus visually confusing the clear boundary of the district. On this basis, the Commission found the proposed new building to be inappropriate to the south Street Seaport Historic District. The Commission's finding that the proposed new construction was inappropriate rendered the application for demolition moot.

Sincerely,



Gene A. Norman  
Chairman

GNN/hb  
cc: Jan Kird Pokorny, Arch. of Planners  
W. Cary  
E. Molybowski  
file

NY TIMES 8/27/86

## Landmarks Panel Turns Down Tower For Seaport District

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

A double-tower structure meant to evoke 19th-century waterfront cottages housed at its base and an Art Deco skyscraper at its 20-story peak was rejected yesterday by the Landmarks Preservation Commission on the grounds that it would "dominate and overwhelm" its little neighbors in the South Street Seaport Historic District.

It was the third time in three years that the landmarks panel has turned down a tower planned by the Milstein family, New York real-estate developers, for what is now a parking lot at 200 Water Street, on the edge of and within the municipally protected 10-block district.

In denying the Milsteins' application by a vote of 6 to 4, the landmarks commissioners deliberately used much the same language as they had in their 1983 rejection of a 28-story office tower and their 1984 rejection of a 43-story apartment building.

### 'Dominate and Overwhelm'

"The proposed new building would dominate and overwhelm the neighboring buildings in this low-scale district by virtue of its size," they concluded sternly.

They voted just a little more than two hours after the public hearing began in an 11th-floor hearing room at 20 Vesey Street.

Late yesterday afternoon, through the public-relations firm of Howard J. Rubenstein Associates, the Milstein family said there would be no comment at this time.

Beside changing the size of their proposal since it was last rejected, the Milstein family had also changed their architects. Ulrich Franzen was the designer of the earlier plans.

### Details of New Design

Jan Ried Pokorny, who worked on the renovation of Schermerhorn Row in the South Street district, was the architect of the latest Water Street proposal.

Mr. Pokorny showed a six-story base covering the entire trapezoidal block between Water and Pearl Streets, Beakman Street and Peck Slip, filled with stores and offices. Two different apartment towers were to rise out of that base — a 12-story building to the south, a 20-story building to the north. They were to have setbacks at the top and other Art Deco details.



### III. THE CAMPAIGN FOR DOWNZONING, PART ONE: 1984-1987

Congressman Ted Weiss asks Department of City Planning to downzone South Street Seaport. 1984

Congressman Ted Weiss protests lack of response from City Planning, reiterates request to downzone South Street Seaport; Southbridge Towers asks City Planning to downzone South Street Seaport; Community Board 1 asks City Planning to downzone South Street Seaport. . . . . 1985

Southbridge Towers protests lack of response from City Planning, reiterates request to downzone South Street Seaport. . . . . 1986

City Planning Department carries out zoning study of Peck Slip and neighboring blocks. . . . . 1987

The study establishes that mean FAR within the Historic District north of Boekman Street is between 4.3 and 4.4. It also demonstrates that, in FAR and streetwall height, the existing buildings would show 98.7% conformance to R3A zoning (FAR=6.02) and 100% conformance to R9A (FAR=7.52), as well as to several bulkier contextual zoning categories.

### IV. 230 WATER STREET, PART TWO: COMMERCIAL BLOCKS, 1988-1991

Proposal IV: a fifteen-story office building designed by Emery Roth & Sons; later modified to a fourteen-story building, 185 feet high. . . . . 1988

*LPC action:* proposal withdrawn before it could be rejected.

*MAS position:* opposed.

In addition to criticizing the design, the Society addressed the relationship between zoning and landmarks regulation:

- "The size of this building in relation to its neighbors in the district is a legal and reasonable consideration for this Commission. It should be noted that the applicant is not necessarily entitled to build to the maximum level possible under the zoning."

*Other testimony:*

*Mayer David N. Dinkins:* "...the ultimate question is whether or not the massing and bulk of this building will make it a compatible component of this district. The building as proposed appears to diminish rather than contribute to the district's significant character."

*Margot Gayle:* "There are many values for the Commission to protect here. Not the least of these values is views of the venerated 1883 Brooklyn Bridge especially for pedestrians and visitors to the Seaport. Another value is the homogeneity and historically low-scale character of the Seaport area."

Proposal V: a fifteen story office building designed by Platt and Byard. . . . . 1989

*LPC action:* proposal modified following hearing (see below).

*Architects' rationale:* In undertaking the commission, the architects reviewed the reasons for the

rejection of previous schemes. They wrote to the Landmarks Commission chair, identifying the criteria for appropriateness they had deduced and applying them to their new submission.

"Each of the rejected schemes was found to 'dominate and overwhelm' the District. [The LPC's rejection letter of 1986] found that a thirty-story tower had that effect on the neighboring buildings. The present proposal is very different. It is half the height, it has an unusual configuration composed in response to the problem of transition between old and new.... The result, I suggest, no longer imposes an alien shape or character on the neighborhood...but rather expresses a shape and character gathered from the District....

"The letter rejecting the last scheme said that the 'scale, size, mass and volume' of the thirty story tower would dominate and overwhelm the district. While each of the four words has a distinct meaning...[they] seem to have been used because of their shared meaning as expressions for size, to emphasize a determination that the proposal seemed too big -- too big because its size would cause it to 'dominate and overwhelm' the district. The question thus remains one of size and, more precisely, of the effects of size....

"The Commission rejected previous proposals because they would cause 'abrupt' changes of scale within the district and 'disrupt...' the district's homogeneous, low-scale quality. The form of the present proposal is, I suggest, virtually the exact opposite of 'abrupt.' The problem of transition is central to the problem of design of anything new in the District and was a central preoccupation of our work from the beginning....

"Previous proposals were found to be inappropriate because their size and shape belonged elsewhere and hence, when located on the site within the District border, made it unclear where the District began and ended. This criterion does not refer to architectural expression, only to size and shape, suggesting that the buildings -- they were fairly conventional towers -- were the wrong type for the District.

"The present proposal is, again, very different....From its place on the border of the District the proposal makes it immediately clear that something very different is happening on the District side of the line..."

*MAS position: opposed.*

- "...this solution is a step in the right direction. The materials used at the building's base...relate to those found throughout the district and the fenestration pattern resembles nearby historic examples. However, like the previous proposals, this submission suffers from its overwhelming bulk. It is the Committee's opinion that the proposed building will oppress its neighbors and detract from the special qualities attributed to the seaport district. This building is simply too large and inappropriate for the South Street Seaport Historic District. A solution might be found if the applicant continued to pursue these design principles, but reduced the bulk considerably in order to make the proposed building more compatible with its neighbors.
- "The size of this building in relation to its neighbors in the district is a legal and reasonable consideration for this Commission. It should be noted that the applicant is not necessarily entitled to build to the maximum level possible under the zoning."

**Proposal VI: a twelve story office building by Platt and Byard, modified from 1989 proposal 1990**

*LPC action: proposal withdrawn after it failed twice to win approval.*

*MAS position: opposed.*

- "...the mass of the building is strikingly out of scale with the buildings that characterize the South Street Seaport Historic District."
- "This site was purposefully included within this historic district and should not be treated as transitional. The same rules of appropriateness should be applied to this site as are applied to



other sites within the district."

- "...the Landmarks Preservation Commission has the power and responsibility to regulate new development within a historic district, including scale, in order to protect the character of that district. The Society's Preservation Committee finds this proposal inappropriate because its bulk would overwhelm and dominate the neighboring buildings in the historic district."

**Proposal VII: a twelve story office building designed by Platt and Byard and slightly modified from 1990 submission, revised during the review process into an eleven story building and finally into a ten story building with eleventh-floor mechanical penthouse. .... 1991**

*LPC action:* approval granted to ten story office building with eleventh-floor mechanical penthouse and a total of roughly 380,000 square feet.

*MAS position:* opposed to the twelve-story and eleven-story proposals; no position on the approved version, which was developed during the final hearing and completed after the approval.

- "Because of the South Street Seaport Historic District's unique situation, the view of the rooftops -- for example from the public way along the Brooklyn Bridge -- is as important as the views along the streets, and protection of the rooftop view has always been an important regulatory goal.... would the proposed building fit with the Seaport's character, as seen from above, or would its roofs and upper walls appear alien to the district, perhaps not even part of it?"

---

#### V. THE CAMPAIGN FOR DOWNZONING, PART TWO: 1989-1990

**Community Board 1 requests update on Peck Slip Study. .... 1989**  
City Planning Chair Sylvia Deutsch affirms City Planning's belief that it is appropriate to "tailor zoning regulations so that land use policies complement landmark designations" and assures the Board that "CPC and LPC staff do coordinate their efforts...to ensure that they are complementary." She also states that further work on the Peck Slip Study has been postponed until LPC resolves the issues of possible extension of Seaport Historic District and development of 250 Water Street site.

**Municipal Art Society releases *Historic City* report. .... 1989**  
The report urges City Planning Commission to "adjust zoning provisions so that zoning policy and historic district designations are consistent. The purpose is to achieve zoning policy which is harmonious with the essential character of the designated historic district."

**Community Board 1 renews its request to City Planning to complete Peck Slip study, and appeals to Deputy Mayor Barbara Fife and to Landmarks Commission to support the request. .... 1990**  
The Community Board points out that the issues identified by City Planning as pending -- the designation of the Seaport Historic District extension and the development of 250 Water Street -- have been resolved.

## After 4 Setbacks, Developers Hire Critic to Design Seaport Building

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

In their fifth attempt to build a large building in the small South Street Seaport Historic District, the developers Pyral and Seymour Milstein have taken an unusual tack — hiring as their architect one of the most prominent critics of their fourth attempt.

The architect, Charles A. Platt, wrote in April to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, as head of the preservation committee of the Municipal Art Society. He urged the commission to reject that proposal, which he said "appears much too large and bulky." He criticized parts of its design as "unsympathetic," "unresolved," "repetitive" and "monotone."

Before the commission could vote, however, the Milsteins withdrew the plan. They had already been turned down three times since 1983. The first time, Mr. Platt was on the commission and voted against the plan.

Speaking about the April letter, James M. Yasser, senior vice president of Milstein Properties, said: "What I cared about was the depth of the underlying analysis. That seemed much more important than the recommendations aimed at this particular building."

### Need for 'Sensitivity'

Mr. Yasser said the choice of Mr. Platt and his partner, Paul Spencer Byard, was "a product of our inquiry as to which firm had the requisite sensitivity to the issues raised by this site" — a trapezoidal block bounded by Peck Slip and Water, Pearl and Beekman Streets.

The architects are expected to appear before the landmarks commission tomorrow to offer their solution: a 15-story building, 185 feet tall, with about 480,000 square feet of space, not much different in overall dimensions from

the fourth proposal.

The structure would have a four-story base, divided into 20-foot-wide segments and faced in brick or granite, echoing the surrounding architecture without imitating it. Above the base, it would set back several times, first into a mass of cast stone and then into a glass curtain wall. The bulk of the building would be pushed in steps toward the Peck Slip side.

"I've long thought that a fairly large building on this site was possible," Mr. Platt said. "There is nothing in the landmarks law that talks about size, bulk or mass. It talks about appropriateness. We think a large building can be appropriate."

In much of Manhattan, a 15-story building would scarcely be thought of as large, but the seaport district is mostly four-, five- and six-story counting houses and other mercantile buildings from the 19th century.

Indeed, Community Board 1 has already unanimously rejected the fifth Milstein proposal because of discrepancies in size, among other objections.

Although the board noted that the plan was "more carefully thought out and architecturally sensitive than some of the previous proposals," it called on the landmarks commission to reject it. The board said the Milstein project "would dominate and overwhelm the neighboring buildings" in its scale, mass, volume and height — four times that of the average seaport structure.

The landmarks commission rejected the Milsteins' third proposal in 1986 on the ground that it would "dominate and overwhelm" the district. Within a historic district, any demolition, construction or exterior alteration is subject to the commission's approval.





## At Last, a Plan Wins In Landmark District

### Design Approved For Milsteins' Project At South St. Seaport

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

**W**HAT would the following six projects possibly have in common? A 13-story office building designed by Ulrich Franzen, a 13-story apartment tower, one by Mr. Franzen, Jan Henk Peeters's design for a 30-story residential tower, a bulky commercial structure of 14 stories, by Emery Roth & Sons, a more complex, multi-level office building, by Peter & Stern, with 13 stories, and a 12-story version of that composition by the same firm.

Answer: All were prepared by Paul and Seymour Milstein for their parcel at 250 Water Street, in the South Street Seaport Historic Dis-

trict. And, over eight years, none of the plans was deemed appropriate by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

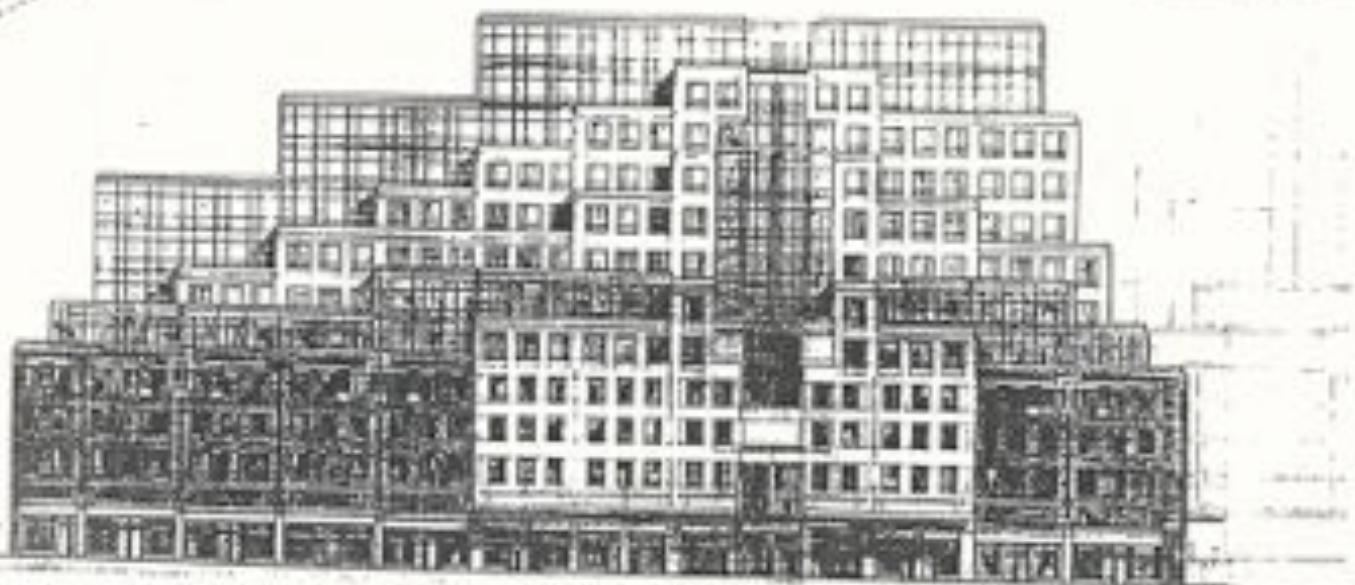
It was not until 11 days ago that the owners suddenly found a certificate of appropriateness for the Milsteins' seventh plan, a scaled-down version of the 10th and 11th. The successful proposal, by Charles A. Frier and Paul Spitzer Frier, calls for a building with 12 stories, an 112-foot mechanical penthouse, and a total of roughly 38,000 square feet.

To make that a workable compromise to get to the critical juncture, the structure was being redesigned until the last moment before the recent May 26, which found all nine commissions members in favor.

"In eliminating the 12th and 13th floor, it better relates to the scale of the South Street Station," said Lucie Beckstein, chairwoman of the commission. "A 13-story building at the edge of the district is appropriate because that's a transitional site" — between the character of the street and the largeness of lower Manhattan.

Opponents of the project disagree. "It is still too

Continued on Page 17, Col. 1



Rendering of 250 Water Street before the 12th story was eliminated in the final round of negotiations that led to its approval.

(over)

Commercial Property: South Street Seaport

# At Last, Plan Wins Approval in a Landmark District



## Four Proposals That Failed at 250 Water St.

**FEBRUARY** The first plan, submitted in 1980 by Ulrich Franzen, showed a 23-story office building with 700,000 square feet.

**FEBRUARY** The second plan, in 1981, also by Mr. Franzen, showed a 43-story apartment building with 171,000 square feet.

**MAY** Two years later, Jonathan Peckover proposed a 35-story apartment building on a lower base, with 307,000 square feet.

**MAY** A proposal by Emily Roth & Sons for a 19-story office building with 400,000 square feet was withdrawn before it could be rejected in 1980.



Continued from Page 1

ground taller than any other building in the district," said Peter Friedman, spokesman at Community Board 1. "I understand that being inside a landmark district, we may."

**T**he question remains whether the building will gain height. There is some concern to consider that when the zoning board meets, and the only because of the proposed plan of the building.

Reverend Friedman said that the building will be the tallest building in the district, and that it will be the tallest building in the district.

"We're in the process of a month or so of planning of the West Street property, located just to the west of the building," said Friedman. "I understand that being inside a landmark district, we may."

Reverend Friedman said that the building will be the tallest building in the district, and that it will be the tallest building in the district.

"We are very pleased that it will go ahead," said James H. Hayes, senior vice president of Skidmore, Peckover & Associates.

The zoning board is to be held on June 15, and the zoning board is to be held on June 15.

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This would give a large structure — at least half the square footage of the Chrysler Building, according to Mr. Friedman. The building is to be built on the site of the old building.

When the building is built, it is expected to be a landmark building in the district.

Before the building is built, it is expected to be a landmark building in the district.

Although the plan was not approved, it is expected to be a landmark building in the district.

Although the plan was not approved, it is expected to be a landmark building in the district.

**U**RBAN DESIGN, they say, is the key to the success of a building. The building is to be built on the site of the old building.

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## At Last, a Plan Wins In Landmark District

### Design Approved For Milsteins' Project At South St. Seaport

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

**W**HAT could the following six projects possibly have in common? A 12-story office building designed by Ulrich Franzen, a 16-story apartment tower, also by Mr. Franzen, 128 11th Place's design for a 30-story residential tower, a 16-story commercial structure of 14 stories, by Emery Roth & Sons, a more complex, multi-tiered office building, by Peter & Glynn, with 25 stories, and a 17-story version of 124 competition by the same firm.

Answer: All were proposed by Paul and Seymour Milstein for their parcel at 100 Water Street, in the South Street Seaport Historic Dis-

trict. And, over eight years, none of the plans was deemed appropriate by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.

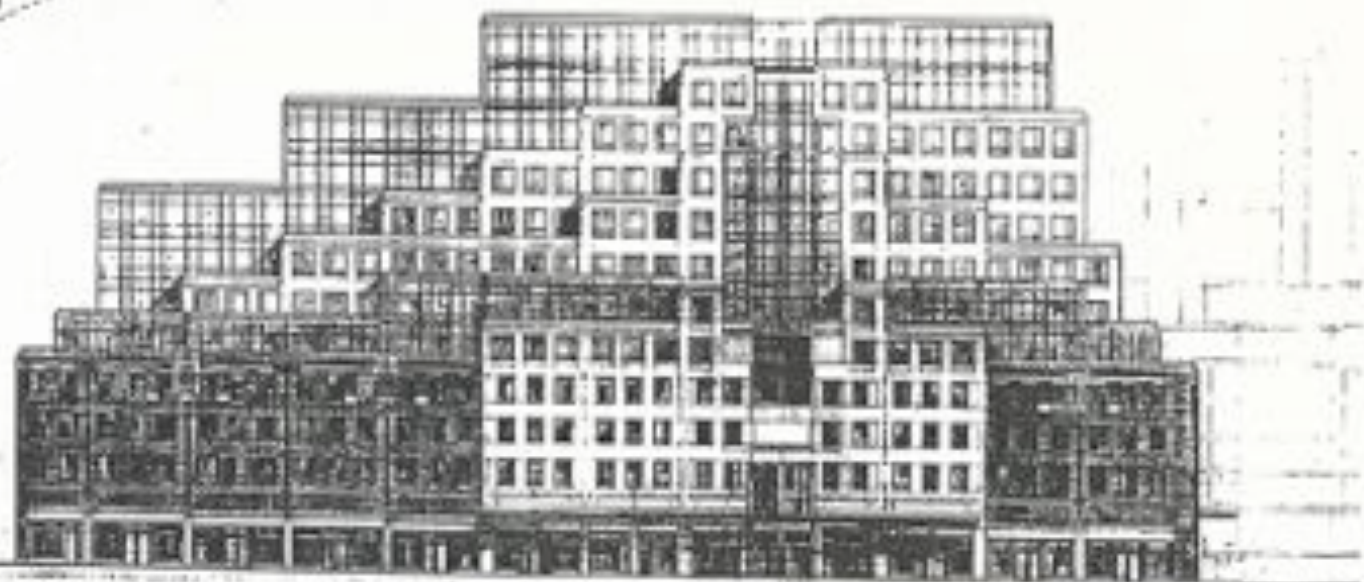
It was not until 22 days ago that the commission finally voted a certificate of appropriateness for the Milsteins' seventh plan, a scaled-down version of the 10th and sixth. The successful proposal, by Charles A. Platt and Peter Spanner Esq., calls for a building with 20 residential floors, an 11th-floor mechanical penthouse, and a total of roughly 30,000 square feet.

The matter that took almost a decade to get to the critical juncture, the structure was being redesigned until the last moment before the vote on May 28, which followed all nine commission members in favor.

"In addressing the 11th and 12th floor, it better relate to the scale of the South Street Seaport," said Laura Buckelstein, chairwoman of the commission. "A 16-story building at the edge of the district is appropriate because that's a traditional size" — between the smallness of the seaport and the largeness of lower Manhattan.

Comments of the project designer, "It is not 20

Continued on Page 17, Col. 1



Rendering of 250 Water Street before the 12th story was eliminated in the final round of negotiations that led to its approval.

Proposal VIII: an apartment building designed by Platt and Byard with two towers, thirty-two and fourteen stories high, over a six-story base with courtyard and automobile turnaround. . . . 1996

*LPC action:* sent back to applicants for further development without a vote.

*MAS position:* opposed.

- "The District perceptually will have been reduced in size by a square block. The looming towers of Downtown will have moved not only closer to the District but actually into it. And neither facade decoration nor modest reductions in height will disguise or mitigate the effects of that incursion."
- "By all means reiterate your earlier approval [i.e., of 1991]. But do not approve this new design. And do not approve a smaller, negotiated, but still inappropriate version of it."

Proposal IX: an apartment building by Platt and Byard, modified from the previous proposal, with two towers, thirty and fourteen stories high, over a five or six-story base. . . . 1996

*LPC action:* hearing held in December, 1996; record remains open for further comment.

*MAS position:* at the request of the applicants, the Society has taken no position but has agreed to undertake a board-level review of the proposal and of the Preservation Committee's recommendation, which is as follows:

- The Preservation Committee has voted to oppose the project, reiterating the Society's belief that a building of this scale, size, and disposition would be incompatible with the district; would intrude into important sight lines from the Brooklyn Bridge and elsewhere; would interfere with the district's characteristic roofscape; would violate the sense of the district's distinctive character by confusing its western boundary; and would diminish its perceived extent by introducing tower elements characteristic of other areas of Lower Manhattan but alien to the South Street Seaport Historic District.

*Other testimony.*

- *In favor:* ALA New York Chapter, Richard Buford.
- *Opposed:* Congressman Jerrold Nadler, State Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, State Senator Martin Connor, State Assemblywoman Deborah Glick, Councilmember Kathryn Freed, Borough President Ruth Messinger, Community Board 1, Fine Arts Federation, New York Landmarks Conservancy, Historic Districts Council, Friends of the Upper East Side Historic Districts, South Street Seaport Community Coalition, Seaport North Community Business Association, South Street Seaport Preservation Task Force, Southbridge Towers, Southbridge Senior Citizens, and individuals.

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## VII. THE CAMPAIGN FOR DOWNZONING CONTINUES: 1996

Community Board I requests that City Planning incorporate downzoning of South Street Seaport into comprehensive Lower Manhattan rezoning package. . . . 1996

In reply, City Planning staff makes no commitments but, with regard to 250 Water Street, emphasizes that "approval for its development is vested in the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The Landmarks Commission because of its discretionary review powers can address site-specific urban design and compatibility issues to a greater degree of specificity than could be achieved through the mapping of generic zoning districts."





## SOUTH STREET SEAPORT



Where cars park today developers would build an apartment complex with two towers, 14 and 30 stories tall.



Architectural rendering for The New York Times (left). Photo by David LaRocca (right).

## Plan for Apartment Towers Returns. So Do Protests.

With a 20th-century history of New York's great real-estate battles in written, a particularly long citation will have to be included for 200 Water Street, a trapezoidal site just inside the South Street Seaport Historic District that has been the subject of 10 lawsuit designs since 1983.

Year after year, Milstein Properties has proposed commercial towers for their parking parcel, most of which have been shut down by the Landmarks Preservation Commission as unforgivably large and incompatible with its small-scale, 19th-century surroundings.

But in 1985, after the Milsteins scaled back what had once been a 43-story building to one with 31 floors, the commission gave the developers a green light. By that time, however, the sluggish demand for office space in lower Manhattan helped kill the project.

Now that the Wall Street area is a nascent residential community, Paul and Seymour Milstein have returned with plans for an apartment complex that features two towers: one 14 stories tall and the other, 30.

To area residents who have been fighting the project for more than a decade, it is if

they are back to Square 1.

"We feel like we're living a recurring nightmare," said Gary Fagin, a musician who lives on Water Street. "There is no comprehensible logic in what they are doing."

Others say the Milsteins may be betting that the commission's 18 members, 7 of whom were appointed by Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, may be more inclined to approve the project than their Dukakis-appointed predecessors were.

"The Giuliani administration really wants to see this built, and if you're appointed by the Mayor, you're more likely to do his bidding," said Fanny Eberhart, executive director of the Historic Districts Council.

According to several appointees who speak on the condition of anonymity, there is a good chance the commission will approve the \$90 million project, which if built, would be the first unsubsidized residential housing in the Financial District in more than two decades. One commissioner who is undecided about the proposed design said he was troubled by the building's size.

"No matter how good the design, I don't see any graceful way to hide 400,000 square

feet of building," he said.

James M. Yasser, executive vice president for Milstein Properties, declined to comment.

In the meantime, the Seaport Community Coalition, an organization of area residents, has hired an architect to study the economic feasibility of a low-rise building and to come up with an alternative design that it plans to present to the Landmarks Preservation Commission next month. Barbara Marks, the architect, said she hoped the commissioners would see that a smaller structure could still be profitable.

"To approve the design as it stands would be an absolute disgrace," said Ms. Marks, who has lived in the neighborhood for 20 years. "We need to spark their imaginations, to show them that there are other possibilities."

Opponents of the Milstein project, citing the landmarks commission's past denial of similarly sized proposals, say they are prepared to sue the agency if it approves the current plan.

ANDREW JACOBS



## SHOWDOWN ON WATER STREET

## PIER PRESSURE: SEAPORT BATTLE BUILDS



Architects plan for proposed towers in South Street Seaport District (below). Buildings would be constructed as parking lot (above). Map projects location of planned project.

By William D. Hawkins

Asked by the city's largest library, a Manhattan mid-rise developer is seeking approval for a low-rise apartment complex in the low-rise South Street Seaport historic district.

On Tuesday, the Landmarks Preservation Commission will consider the 10th and most recent construction plan submitted by Miramax Properties in its latest attempt to develop a block apartment site at 200 Water St.

The 40,000-square-foot tract, the largest undeveloped site south of Midtown Manhattan, now is a 200-space parking lot.

Miramax Properties wants to build a 800-unit, 400,000-square-foot rental apartment complex on a six-story base with two towers — one 20 stories, the other 15.

If approved, the complex would be the first unadorned rental housing project built in Lower Manhattan in 20 years.

Opponents say the plan, for the area that previously is, would create a structure that dominates the district, where most buildings are five- or six stories tall.

They also contend that the existing district would clash with the area's historic landmarked streets.

Although the proposed project complies with local zoning decrees like maximum height and floor area ratio, the exact size of the complex fails to conform to landmarks Commission guidelines.

Added area resident Gary Fagin: "The Miramax gang wants to put something up that is totally inappropriate in terms of scale."

An issue that the Miramax architect dismisses as a detail is the height and bulk, when they are put up a building consistent with the historic area and make a cohesive job.

Frank Weiss, chairman of the Seaport North Community Business Association, disagrees.

He said his organization is "interested in the construction of the highest blocks around the project and so think that residential and retail development will have a big negative positive effect."

"Without the height, the project's not economically feasible for the builder," added Weiss, president of a construction company headquartered in a five-story building across the street from the Miramax site.

James Yasser, executive vice president of Miramax Properties, contends that tremendous economic and design considerations have been made so that the proposed buildings "harmonize with the older district."

In particular, he cited plans for an alternate passageway lane with Queen Revival artwork consistent with the historic-old structures nearby.

"We believe this project is a critically important element in the growth of the seaport area and an

## Lobbying may pay off in plan for twin towers

important element of the mayor's effort to revitalize Lower Manhattan," he said.

Yasser added that the twin towers are not done and the project is "having momentum" with a 50 percent vacancy rate.

He also stressed that the complex would be at the eastern edge of the historic district, opposite a 27-story apartment complex on Front Street, and several blocks from Pine Street, "the heart of the seaport."

Similar arguments have been made since 1980, when the 30-story project was presented as the first phase for the site bounded by Water Street, Front Street, Broadway Street and Park 5th.

Among those who've opposed past plans have been the Landmarks Commission, which opposed it in 1980, and the Historic District Landmarks Commission, which opposed it in 1981. Neighboring groups and the architectural preservation committee of the Municipal Art Society.

This time around, the opponents include state Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Rep. Jerry Nadler and Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger — all Democrats.

Community activists are quick to point out that a powerful Republican — Mayor Giuliani — is not on that list.

And they believe that the Miramax study will not proceed with the help of their influential lobbyist-law firms, whose principals include Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Skidmore, Peck, and the city's oldest newspaper and architectural firm.

The two groups in the middle of a contentious campaign announced Friday that they would now lobby the administration, seeking more input on how they should proceed.

They had many other reasons for their lobbying efforts, such as reports that their firm of architects, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, had been given an advisory role by the city.

News came close to Fagin's, he said, but not that the firm has represented the Miramax Water Street interests since 1990, long before Giuliani became mayor. They also note that the point man on the project, Ray Levin, brought the project with him when he joined the firm.

Despite Mayor Giuliani's stance, the city's lobbying efforts are expected to continue for some time, with the city's managing director who stated he will offer only "in an effort to avoid any building on the site."

City Landmarks Commission Executive Director Ruth, advised to continue on either the lobbying trail of the project.

# SHOWDOWN ON WATER STREET

## Developers mix stealth with steel

By WILLIAM SHERMAN

The Milstein plan is as tough as the marble and steel they build with — and more expert at engineering a low profile than any other in downtown Lower East Side.

Unless you live in tight housing with your family when Milstein Properties — headed by developers Isidor and Frances — and their 100 — acquire upper blocks in Manhattan with hardly a whisper.

Disputed by their competitors in addition, opponents, opponents and opponents, the Milstein investment had involved more and more than financial success in fast developments.

They are not David Greenglass.

They are Triumph architects.

And not just because they are so much publicly owned because of any MILSTEIN, spelled out in 24-foot-high brown letters on their buildings.

Trump likes 190th Avenue and Central Park West and goes through-market prices for prestigious buildings like the Plaza Hotel.

The Milstein like buying in SoHo, Avenue C and in SoHo and 10th Street. And they're patient, unlike the typically impulsive Trumps.

Five years ago, they bought a 30,000-square-foot tract at 42nd Street and Eighth Avenue for \$5 million. It has yielded its rent from a parking garage, while the Milsteins put forth a series of proposals for the site that were turned down by the state and city agencies that

govern the area's redevelopment.

But their wait has not been in vain.

The value of the property has increased tenfold — to more than \$40 million — in part because of the Times Square redevelopments.

And the Milsteins recently won the right to build a hotel and retail complex on the site.

In the 14 years the Milsteins held onto the Times Square site, they fought with other developers, the local politicians and the City of New York, State and County and even their own, while the Milsteins' Times Square project in other and

They are not David Greenglass. They are Triumph architects.

years," said a close associate who declined to be identified.

It was not until the late-1980s that the Milsteins' property on Water Street, which the Milsteins have been sitting on for 14 years, and to develop the site's potential, making plans over the past few years to take over Old Empire Insurance Building Center East in SoHo.

Despite their patience and persistence regarding the lot, the Milsteins have avoided spending by the government.

For Milsteins, it's a strategy. The Milsteins, in a strategic move, are not in a hurry to build. "I don't want to be the market for the city," he says. "I don't want to be the market for the city."

### THE MILSTEIN EMPIRE

**PRINCIPAL OFFICES** Empire and Four and Four West, Newark, Newark and Philadelphia.

#### 1996 REVENUE

Approximately \$2 billion.

#### MAJOR ASSETS

100 percent ownership of the Empire State Bank with \$2.7 billion in assets.

21 percent stake in First other area savings banks — the Greater New York Savings Bank, the Home Savings Bank and the Progressive Bank.

#### UNDEVELOPED PROPERTY

The Four Side of Eighth Avenue between 41st and 42nd streets, 30,000 square feet with an estimated value of more than \$40 million.

The 40,000-square-foot 1400 Street property with an estimated value of more than \$40 million if it can be developed.

#### BUILDINGS

Three high-rise apartment buildings at Lincoln Center, 3000 of America Plaza, formerly 100 10th St. The Milsteins own 43rd Street between Avenue and West 42nd Street, 220 to 230 Madison Ave. and 200 to 210 Madison Ave.

#### 50 Battery Place

The square block bounded by 21st and 22nd streets and Lexington and Third streets. The Roosevelt Hotel.

#### The New York Plaza Hotel

140 to 150 Broadway St.

#### CHURCH

\$20 million in Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in 1996 by Milstein Hospital Building.

Milsteins more plans more money to purchase, acquire and develop in New York City and other major cities.



THIRTIES-SOMETHING: The controversial 250 Water St. was the way it was in the 1930s. (Source: The City of New York)

## How historic Water St. rode waves of change

The biggest city at the center of the American has played a vital role in the city's development.

- 1625: The Dutch West India Co. establishes a trading post at the foot of Manhattan Island. Water Street does not yet exist — it is, in fact, under water.
- 1733: The city's first streets are laid out. Among them is Queen Street, now known as West Street, at the water's edge.
- 1790: Water Street is built on landfill and paved with cobblestones to serve the booming port. The site is lined with five-story buildings housing wholesale grocers and dry-goods dealers and chambers — merchants who prospered during the war.
- 1840: The area, because of the thriving port, has become the commercial center of the city.
- 1850: Developers begin to plan upper stories, and most of the city's port operations have shifted to the Hudson River, where the water is deeper and the docking space more extensive. Chambers and merchants have headed across-street on, making way for the immigrants who are part

of the growing Police District market.

- 1856: Some 500 merchants remain, but many of the city's old bars and taverns buildings have been converted into tenements and hotels to serve the city's growing immigrant population.
- 1875: All 40 buildings are razed, and the site is turned into a 40,000-square-foot parking lot.
- 1876: The site, owned by Joseph Properties, is designated a landmark as part of the South Street Seaport Historic District.
- 1930: Joseph Properties defaults on a \$5 million mortgage, and Milstein Properties buys the tract from Colonial Bank for \$1.7 million.
- 1987: The site, now being owned with Milstein Properties by Edison Properties Corp., receives a parking lot. An unimproved lot, it is valued at \$1.5 million by the city for tax purposes. With the possibility of development, its value would skyrocket to a minimum of \$40 million.



COMMUNITY BOARD #1 MANHATTAN  
RESOLUTION

DATE: MAY 20, 1997

COMMITTEES OF ORIGIN: LANDMARKS & SEAPORT/CIVIC CENTER

COMMITTEE VOTE: 3 IN FAVOR 0 OPPOSED 0 ABSTAINED 1 RECUSED  
BOARD VOTE: 33 IN FAVOR 0 OPPOSED 2 ABSTAINED 1 RECUSED

RE: Seaport Coalition's 250 Water Street Plan

WHEREAS: A series of public hearings on the most recent 250 Water St. proposal by the Milstein organization has produced an overwhelming and perhaps unprecedented showing of public opposition, and

WHEREAS: LPC Chairperson Jennifer Raab, in the course of these hearings, suggested that the community prepare a community proposal for 250 Water St., and

WHEREAS: The Seaport Community Coalition has taken on this challenging task, and

WHEREAS: The Coalition's conceptual plan envisions a 249,000 s.f. residential building on the site occupying 5 stories on the north side of the building and rising to 7 stories with a 3 story setback penthouse on the south side, and

WHEREAS: This conceptual plan correctly reflects our often stated belief that historic appropriateness, and in this case the scale of the building, must take precedence over zoning during Landmark's deliberations, and

WHEREAS: The LPC has the jurisdiction and responsibility to pass judgement on the Milstein proposal based on appropriateness and regardless of zoning, and

WHEREAS: The Seaport Coalition's conceptual plan clearly shows that an appropriate, pragmatic, and yet good-sized building can be built at this site to the benefit of the owner, community and historic district, now

THEREFORE  
BE IT  
RESOLVED  
THAT:

CB #1 commends and endorses the conceptual plan for 250 Water St. put forth by the Seaport Community Coalition, and

BE IT  
FURTHER  
RESOLVED  
THAT:

CB #1 calls on the LPC to immediately hear the Seaport Community Coalition's conceptual plan and to seriously consider this plan and the issues it raises during its deliberations.

NEW YORK  
STATE  
SENATE  
JANUARY 1997 NEW YORK 12247



MARTIN CONNOR  
MEMBER LEADER  
CHAIRMAN  
VICE CHAIRMAN  
MEMBER LEADER  
MEMBER LEADER  
MEMBER LEADER  
MEMBER LEADER  
MEMBER LEADER  
MEMBER LEADER

May 30, 1997

Hon. Jennifer J. Raab  
Chairperson  
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission  
100 Old Slip  
New York, NY 10005

Dear Ms. Raab:

We are writing to urge you to schedule a presentation in June by the Seaport Community Coalition of their community concept plan for the 250 Water Street site at a Landmarks Preservation Commission's public meeting. We understand the next meetings will be held on June 10th and 17th. The coalition has now made such a presentation to a number of organizations. Community Board 1 endorsed this conceptual plan at its May 20, 1997 full board meeting.

It is our belief that this conceptual plan meets the requirements of New York City's landmarks laws that, in making a finding of appropriateness for any new building in a historic district, the new structure must above all be compatible in scale with the district. Like many of the earlier proposals the development under consideration by the Commission would dwarf its neighboring buildings in the Seaport historic district. We believe it would be most beneficial for the commission members to see this presentation at the earliest possible time. Further, this site has been so troublesome for more than a decade that you appointed a subcommittee of the commission to consider ways of resolving some of the problems of the submission by the owners. We believe it would be only fair to have the Seaport Community Coalition's concept plan presented while that subcommittee is intact. This should also make it possible for LPC's members to make an informed decision in their deliberations.

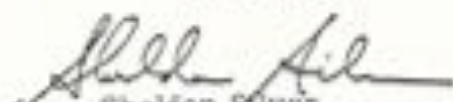
Furthermore, we urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to vote expeditiously on the pending proposal for this site. Over the past year, we have testified at several public hearings regarding this proposal. We hope you will vote in June after you see the Seaport Community Coalition presentation.



We look forward to your early response regarding these matters.

Sincerely,

  
Martin Connor  
State Senator

  
Sheldon Silver  
Member of Assembly

  
Kathryn E. Freed  
Council Member

Copies: Seaport Community Coalition  
Community Board 1 Manhattan  
Southbridge Towers  
St. Margaret's House  
Historic Districts Council  
Municipal Arts Society  
Landmarks Conservancy  
Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger  
Congressman Jerrold Nadler



COMMUNITY BOARD No. 1  
CITY OF NEW YORK



Paul Goldstein  
District Manager

Anne Compocchia  
Chairperson

June 2, 1997


Ms. Jennifer Raab, Chairperson  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
100 Old Slip  
New York, NY 10005

Re: Seaport Coalition Plan  
for 250 Water Street

Dear Chairperson Raab:

At our May 20th monthly meeting Community Board #1 adopted the attached resolution endorsing the conceptual plan for 250 Water St. put forth by the Seaport Community Coalition. This plan clearly shows that an appropriate, pragmatic and good-sized building can be built on the site which would have community support and would also be respectful of the historic district designation. We would certainly urge Milstein Properties and the LPC to seriously consider a building of this size and scale which would be fair to all the interested parties and would properly fit in the South Street Seaport Historic District.

The resolution also calls on the LPC to immediately hear and consider this plan and the issues it raises regarding the appropriate development of this site. We hope that you can arrange for this plan to be considered by the LPC at its June 10th or 17th meetings.

Sincerely,  
  
Anne Compocchia  
Chairperson

Enclosure



GREG SARGENT

## Ye Olde Seaport Mulls a Mews;

Residents of the South Street Seaport historic district have opposed one design after another for a towering apartment complex in their quaint, low-rise neighborhood. City Landmarks Preservation Commission chairwoman Jennifer Raab finally issued a challenge: Design something yourself!



So they did.

Guess what? Their vision for the site—swayed by the Seaport Community Coalition at Community Board 1's meeting on May 20—doesn't look anything like the towering glass and steel buildings envisioned by Milstein Properties, the developer of the site at 250 Water Street, between Bookman Street and Peck Slip. Instead, the coalition has proposed something more in keeping with their neighborhood's character: a row of five- and seven-story town houses that would be called the Water Street Mews.

Mews? For a Milstein property?

Milstein, a big-time real estate empire that owns towers all over Manhattan, wants to build a \$90-million, 450,000-square-foot complex. Do big-time developers with big plans really have time to muse about a mews? Of course not.

They don't even have time to talk about a mews. When *The Observer* contacted James Yasser, Milstein's executive vice president, for comment on the coalition's proposal, he said: "I'm on a conference call.

You'll have to call me back." Asked if he could return the call when he had a chance, Mr. Yasser said: "I'm not going to be able to do that now. Thanks." Don't hang up, Mr. Yasser—Hello? Hello?

The next day, an apologetic Mr. Yasser did call back. Although he said Milstein hadn't yet seen the coalition's proposal, he added: "We have consistently said we will carefully review any proposals emanating from community groups.... [Our plan has] received strong endorsements from some of the city's most prominent architects and preservationists."

The coalition gamely contends that its plan will work, and Board 1 at its meeting, voted to support it. (The landmarks commission has promised to review the proposal, although the plan it eventually approves will come from Milstein.) Board member Barbara Marks pointed out that, at 249,000 square feet, the coalition's plan provides ample space for proposals about buildings and a "broader footprint," or base, than the Milstein plan.

Another board member wanted to know why Milstein's hired architects hadn't thought of that.

"You get to charge more, higher up," was his stark response. "As the top part of their building, people would get a view of the Brooklyn Bridge." Not to mention Milstein's other towers.



Architects followed different muses in designing apartment buildings on Water Street: Milstein Properties' latest proposal, left, and a neighborhood coalition's "Water Street Mews."

## UPDATE

## Latest Plan Joined by Counterplan in Landmarks Fight at 250 Water St.

It's the project that just won't die: For 14 years, Milstein Properties has tried to build on the parking lot it owns at 250 Water Street in the South Street Seaport Historic District. At least a half-dozen designs — some as tall as 40 stories — have met with vocal neighborhood opposition. Only one, for a 70-story office building, was approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1981, and in that case the economy intervened to prevent construction, said an executive vice president of Mil-

stein Properties, James M. Yasser.

But all that may be about to change.

For while the latest Milstein proposal, for two apartment towers — one 14 stories, the other 26, has languished before the commission for a year, the delay may work in its favor, as members who have opposed any high-rise development in the district over many years leave the commission and are replaced by opponents of Mayor Giuliani, who is known to favor development in the area.

Still, while local residents who oppose the plan and local politicians sympathetic to their cause say they suspect that the Milsteins are deliberately dawdling, the opponents have not been idle. They are trying to rally support for a competing low-rise design, for a row of five- and seven-story town houses, put forth by the Seaport Community Coalition, a neighborhood group. Community Board 1 recently endorsed that proposal.

State Senator Martin Gossel,

Caucuswoman Kathryn E. Fried and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, the local Assemblyman, recently demanded that the commission review the alternative design and vote on the Milstein proposal by the end of June. But neither a review nor a vote has been scheduled, said the panel's chief of staff, Terry Rosen Deutch. Mr. Yasser said Milstein executives also have not studied the town house alternative, but he added that they "definitely plan to look at" it. **BERNARD STAMLER**



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540 Broadway, New York

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June 13, 1997

Ms. Jennifer J. Raab  
Chairperson  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
100 Old Slip  
New York, NY 10005

Via Fax

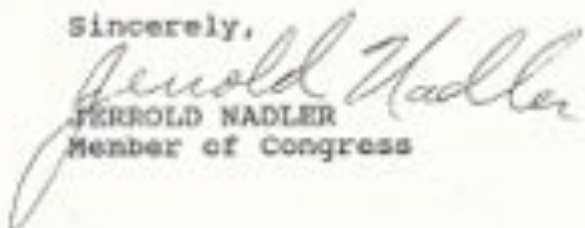
Dear Chairperson Raab:

I am writing to request that you schedule a presentation of the Seaport Community Coalition's concept plan for the 250 Water Street site for the Landmarks Preservation Commission's June 17, 1997 meeting.

The Seaport Community Coalition's presentation has been prepared in response to your request that they formulate an alternative proposal. It is vital that the full complement of Commissioners who heard the original proposal and subsequent testimony be given the opportunity to hear the Seaport Community Coalition's presentation and vote on the application Milstein Properties has made for a certificate of appropriateness. The Coalition's concept plan proposes a residential building in scale with the historic district. In the interest of fairness, the Commission should have the opportunity to compare the two plans.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your decision on these important matters.

Sincerely,

  
JERROLD NADLER  
Member of Congress

JN/mn  
Please Respond to:  
11 Beach Street, Suite 910  
New York, NY 10013

## New design for 250 Water?

The Milstein Properties Corp. is considering withdrawing its application to build a 30-story residential tower at 250 Water St., according to a Landmarks Preservation Commission official.

Terri Rosen, chief of staff at the agency, said: "The owners have indicated they may be rethinking their design."

Charles Platt, of Platt Byard Dowell Architects, said he did not know of any changes being considered for his design.

A local architect, Barbara Marks, has come up with a competing, scaled-down design for the site, and has received endorsement from Community Board 1 and most recently from the Seaport North Business Association, which includes F.J. Sciamie Construction, Best Western, and Seamen's Church Institute. Rosen said the commission hopes to see this proposal sometime in Sept. Platt submitted a plan for the perennial parking-lot block bounded by Peck Slip, Water, Beekman, and Pearl Sts. last summer, but the commission asked it to make modifications. The firm resubmitted a plan last Dec. and after public hearings in Dec. and Feb., the application has remained dormant.



# Municipal Art Society Newsletter



The Municipal Art Society  
437 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10022  
(212) 975-3960

November/December  
1997

## A New Design Concept for 250 Water Street

The Seaport Community Coalition has prepared an alternative design to the owner's proposed 30-story tower that shows how a low-rise building could fit into the neighborhood and produce a profit. The design for the 48,000 square-foot full-block site is for a perimeter building bisected by a row. The northern portion, facing the unusual and historically important space of Peck Slip, would rise to five stories with a one-story set-back penthouse. The southern portion would place three stories of penthouses atop a seven-story base, for a total height of 10 stories. Together, the two buildings would produce a total floor area of 249,000

square feet, for an F.A.R. of just under 5.2. Buildings in the historic district average between 4.3 and 4.4.

Since 1983, civic and community groups have been fighting high-rise proposals. Approval of a bulky but lower office building in 1991 was expected to end the controversy. But, in 1996, the owner again proposed a tower. The Seaport Community Coalition subsequently received approval from the Chair of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to bring forward an alternate concept and retained architect Barbara Marks, a community member, to develop it. The Coalition has informed the LPC that the work is ready for presentation, and they are awaiting a reply. We at the MAS are anxious to see this alternative presented and debated; we oppose the tower currently proposed.



Photo: Jack Greenberg

Above, framed by the towers of Lower Manhattan, the Seaport Community Coalition's design concept (center right, with detail) for 250 Water Street fits snugly in its historic district setting.



# Seaport Community Coalition **Action Agenda**

WINTER 1998

## ► Coalition Concept For 250 Water Street Awaits LPC Rollout

Community and political support is gathering for the Seaport Community Coalition's alternative design concept for 250 Water Street, as the SCC and architect Barbara Marks wait for the Landmarks Preservation Commission to examine the initiative in a public hearing.

But the LPC's chairperson has said her panel will not look at the community concept until its next public hearing on the proposal by Milstein Properties to build a 30-story apartment tower at the site.

"When [Milstein] asks the Commission to resume its consideration of this proposal, the community will be notified in advance and there will be ample time for more public review and comment on the development of this site, including but not limited to, the Coalition's presentation," LPC Chairperson Jennifer Raab stated in a Dec. 30 letter.

Raab made a commitment in early 1997 to let the Coalition present an alternative concept for 250 Water to the Commission. The Coalition, expressing local opposition to the Milstein plan, sought to demonstrate that it was possible not only to come up with an historically appropriate design for 250 Water Street, but to build it at a reasonable profit.

A Boston real estate consultant engaged by the Coalition found that the alternative plan, if built for some \$42 million, would yield up to a 28% financial return.

With local support, the Seaport Community Coalition engaged Marks to advance the debate on 250 Water by illustrating what would constitute an appropriate design for the site. She was asked to analyze the site's architectural and zoning contexts and to draft a preliminary conceptual design.

The Marks design pays homage to Seaport history by

*(continues on page 2)*



High-rise tower or traditional town for 250 Water Street?

## In Our Opinion...

It's time for the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission to stop dithering and pull the plug on the Milstein Properties proposal for 250 Water Street. The LPC is obliged under the law to give every applicant full consideration. But by bonding over backwards in this instance, it has given the impression that it is coddling a developer with friends in high places.

Purely on its merits, the Milstein proposal is manifestly inappropriate. It is no more than an ethel recapitulation of the 1988 design, also for a 30-story apartment tower, that a more decisive Landmarks Commission rejected. The Milstein architects, Platt Bayard Lovell, say their design is not only more subtle, but that public consultations have revealed such that a configuration once judged inappropriate should now be approved.

Or is it merely the politics that have changed with a more pro-development administration in City Hall — one which Milstein Properties supported so generously as to exceed the legal limits on corporate contributions

*(continues on page 2)*

The Seaport Community Coalition represents the interests of community groups and residents of the area south of the Brooklyn Bridge and east of Lower Broadway. Since 1988, it has been a united voice with a focus on historic preservation, environmental protection, historic preservation, development, recreation, safety and other issues.

To contact the Coalition or be added to the mailing list write to: FCC, Box 208, Area 516 Station, NYC, NY 10038.

Action Agenda Editor: Barbara Marks; Design: Daring Design; Photography: Barbara Marks; Photos: Richard Freed.



## Water Street Alternative... (continued from page 4)

proposing a low-scale menu of two brick and granite buildings. The higher of these would rise seven stories with a three-story penthouse set back from the street wall. The smaller building has five stories plus a one-story penthouse.

The two buildings, which run from Water Street to Front Street with a tree-lined pedestrian mall in between, are close in spirit to the 19th century buildings across Water Street. Marks has given her concept design the tentative name of The Seaport News.

Marks found that the menu could rise higher at the southern end of the site facing the former Berkman Hospital building, one of the higher structures in the district. But at the northern end she concluded a five-story limit was appropriate, anything higher would dominate the vista down Peck Slip to the East River.

Her design "illustrates what we feel is appropriate for the historic district," said Marks. "One of the key points of the historic district was its low-

scale character, and the designation for the district says the small-scale brick buildings contrast dramatically with the existing skyscrapers nearby. This is the essence of what is going on in the neighborhood."

The Coalition has been ready to present her plan since last spring. But Raab has not scheduled a hearing despite repeated requests by the Coalition and the urging of officials including U.S.



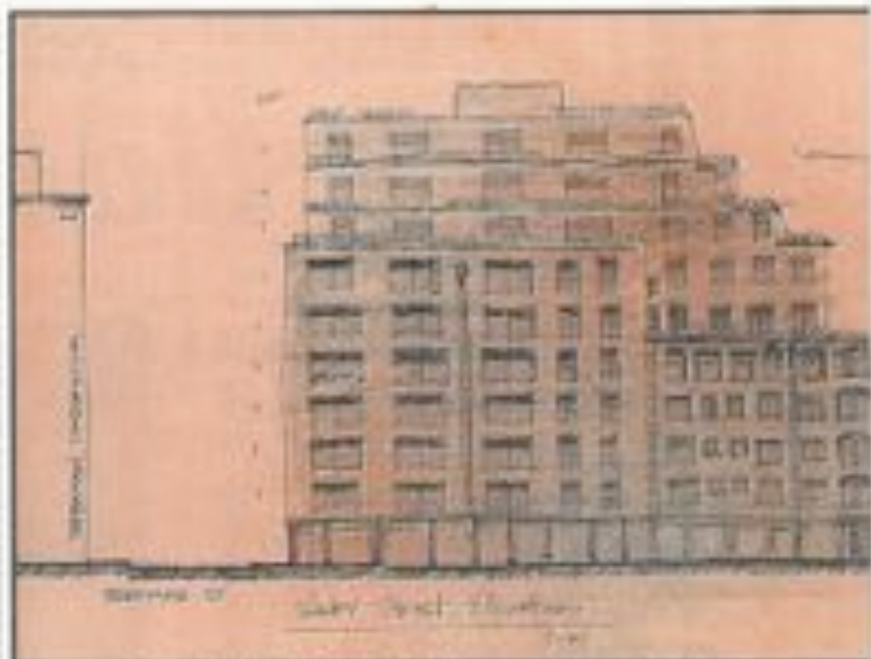
Architect Barbara Marks

Rep. Jermol Nadler, State Senator Martin Croston, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, City Council Member Kathryn Freed and Community Board No. 1 Chairperson Anne Compton.

"We believe it would be most beneficial for the Commission members to see this presentation at the earliest possible time," said Croston, Silver and Freed in a joint letter of May 30, 1997.

Croston added in a report to constituents that, "I strongly support the efforts of the Seaport Community Coalition, which has overseen the preparation of a 'concept plan' for a more appropriate, but viable, smaller scale development approach for this long dormant site."

More recently, the Rev. Peter Larom, executive director of the Seaman's Church Mission and president of the Seaport North Community Business Development Association, urged Raab in a Nov. 24 letter to give the concept a hearing. "I do not understand why the Commission has not studied this pro-



Seaport architect Barbara Marks's concept for a Seaport News

posal," Larom told her. He said that the Seaport North group is opposed to towers in the Seaport district.

He complained that although the LPC holds most applicants to the letter of the law, "powerful developers seem to be able to get wildly 'unhistoric' just because there is open property available."

He concluded, "This downtown area is going to blossom with or without towers, but it behooves the Commission to look at national alternatives."

Raab, responding Dec. 30, reaffirmed her commitment to give the concept plan a hearing, but specified this would happen in conjunction with a hearing on the developer's current revisions to the 250 Water proposal.

"When the developer is ready to proceed, the Commission will resume its review," Raab said. "That review will encompass the [Coalition's] presentation."

She took exception to Larom's charge that large developers have rammed inappropriate designs through her Commission. The LPC and its staff "strive to

maintain a fair, efficient and intelligent review process based on the statutory standard of fitness," Raab insisted.

The Coalition plan, meantime, is winning plaudits from NYC preservation and civic groups. The Fine Arts Federation of New York urged Raab in a Nov. 24 letter to "to favorably consider the alternative design."

FAF President Lorne Gould said the concept "maintains an appearance and height which the FAF considers appropriate to the character of the district... yet it is still of a square footage close to the [Milstein proposal] that the Commission approved years ago when the use of the project was deemed to be commercial."

"The FAF opposes any tower development, especially since it has been demonstrated that a residential building can be designed which would be limited to seven stories... and would thus fit into the scale of the Historic District while still producing a profitable building."

In its late-1997 newsletter, the Municipal Arts Society declared: "We at the MAS are anxious to see this alternative presented and debated," adding, "we oppose the tower currently proposed."

The LPC has been weighing the Milstein plan since mid-1996, a commission vote seems likely in a few months, particularly with the 1997 mayoral election out of the way. Rumors circulated late last year that the Milsteins were withdrawing the design and that Raab might be tapped to head a different city agency, perhaps the Economic Development Corp.

But CB1 District Manager Paul Gold

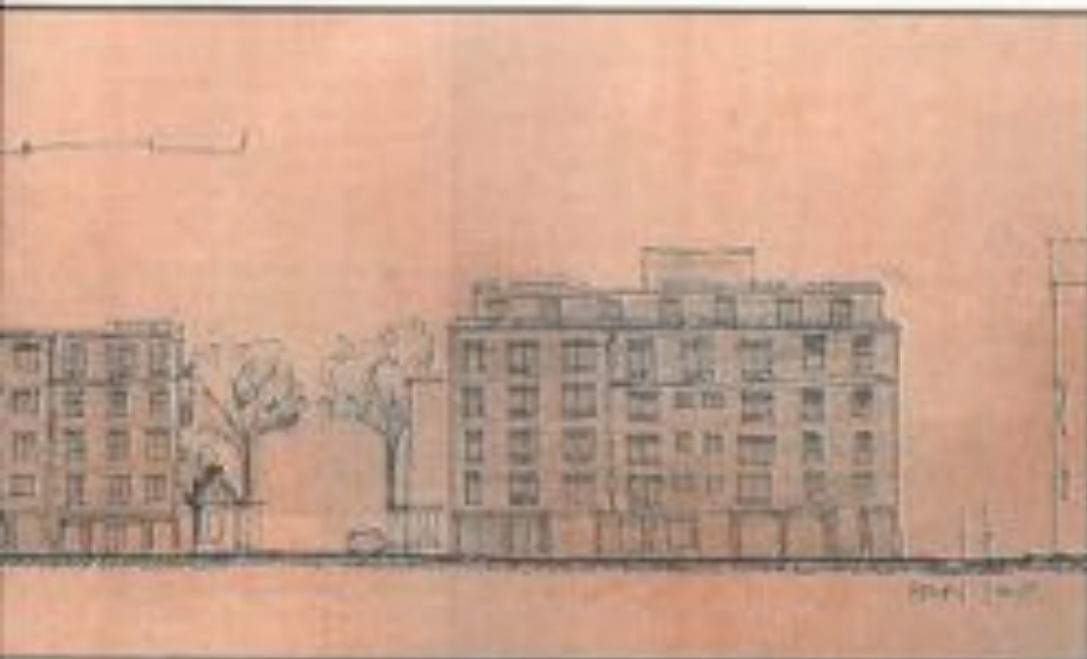
## Friends of the Seaport

The Seaport Community Coalition gratefully acknowledges the generosity of Friends of the Seaport Historic District whose support enabled the Coalition to illustrate arguments for a truly appropriate architectural design at the contested 250 Water Street site:

via Alex, Polly Agliardi & Alan Allen, S. Lawrence Atkins, Joseph Baccantini, Joseph & Peter Bratton, Isaac & Ruth Diemara, State Senator Martin Croston, Olga Casper & Serge Fink, Gail Cullen & Suzanne Cross, Florence Daniels, Lynda Davis & Alan Schifano, Elizabeth Drake, Dan Ehrman, Gary Fagin, Angela Ferraro, Council Member Kathryn Freed, Nikki Gargano, Barbara Harvy, Susan & Irving Howard, Julia Isaac, Julia Krasny, Suzanne Lora, Christine Lippman, Little Italy Chapter of Concerned Lower East Side Homeowners Dana Tom Joyce, Susan Mandel, Barbara Marks, Tom Martin & Tom Corling,

Maria Mellich, Richard Mulhearn, Sandra Murphy, Don Perkins, Nancy Peltz, Suzanne Pincus, John Quinn, Anthony Russo, Paul & Richard Sussman, Southbridge Towers Cooperative, Patricia Sloan Schuman, My Kim Lounging Inc., Amy Brook Seaton, Laura Stein, Wendy Stewart & Joel Grossberg, Susan S. Stone, Gail Sullivan, Robert Tanning, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Donald Patterson, Inc., Malgorza Tarsman, Timothy Wainwright & Beverly S. Jolly, M. White, Alexandra Whitton, Stephen Wink, Steve & Kathryn Wroblewski, Nelson Young & Kathleen Bell, J. Youngkin.





## Support The Coalition

The Seaport Community Coalition since 1989 has been fighting for the rights of all Seaport residents: opposing the Milstein Properties tower proposed for 250 Water Street; defending on-street parking against parking meter proposals; speaking out for the survival of the Fulton Fish Market; and other efforts. Help us continue this action with a tax-deductible contribution of \$25 or any other amount you wish to express your support for the Coalition's efforts. Make out your check to the Seaport Community Coalition and mail it to P.O. Box 425, Peck Slip Station, New York, NY 10272. The Coalition thanks you.

contracting with Wall Street's swarthy towers.

Nonetheless, Marks added a few stories to her plan to enhance its economic viability. The tower has 249,000 square feet of floor space, which could be raised to 307,000 square feet by adding a story, though at the cost of some measure of appropriateness.

Marks stressed that her design is intended to focus on issues of bulk, scale and massing. "A great many designs could be imagined which would be appropriate for this site. This is just one."

The response to her design in presentations to community and civic groups was overwhelmingly positive. "We have illustrated the obvious, but also discovered the delicate balance of the street wall," Marks explains.

Marks thinks the 1970-1976 LPC members who formed the Seaport Historic District meant for all parts of the district to get equal protection under the law.

Her research showed that the District expanded over a six-year period starting with designation of the Schermerhorn Row block and ending with inclusion of the 98, 100, 107W and 107E blocks. Those respectively contain the 250 Water site, the Peck Slip Station Post Office, the Bridge Cafe and Joseph Rose House, and the Con Edison substation. All four blocks were in the area of the Seaport initially slated for the kind of high-rise development the District-forming LPC had in mind to prevent, Marks says.

"The clear inference of this final version of the designation is that the intent of the framers was to preserve the entire District under equal protection, without high-rise development."

stein said he still regards the Milstein project as a threat.

"There was always a presumption that this was an issue (Mayor Rudolph Giuliani) would prefer to address after the election," he said. "Especially if it were approved, they would have to know it would not be a very popular decision."

Goldstein said it seems apparent that the mayor fully backs Rauh, who has "made it clear that she is sympathetic to the Milstein's case ... I think she would like to see some sort of building approved."

Opponents of the project face "some heavy lifting," Goldstein said, offering long odds on the possibility the Coalition design could derail the high-rise project. Yet it is "very helpful to have an alternative" to the Milstein plan, particularly as the Coalition had done the financial analysis which showed that the Milsteins would obtain a reasonable return were they to build with a design.

Architect Marks reviewed the Seaport's architectural tradition and Landmarks requisites for the site, also examining the conflict between the high-density zoning of the site, a legacy of ill-fated early-1960s proposals for urban renewal, and its protected status under Landmarks legislation.

She concluded that for a residential structure to meet the key test of appropriateness for LPC approval, it must respect the four-five story historical norm. Building higher would disrupt the District rooftop to which the Commission alluded in its 1977 designation is noting the "small scale brick buildings"

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## ▶ Front Street In Rehab?

Those city-owned 1800s buildings moldering in Front Street may be saved after all. The New York City Economic Development Corp., having prevailed in its legal efforts to evict former developer leaseholder Metropolis, is drafting a request for proposals to rehabilitate the properties.

Now focus has shifted to whether the EDC should seek a single major contractor to restore the 19th-century warehouses, or bring in a number of participants, said Kir White, a resident of Front Street and chairman of the CB1 Seaport Preservation Task Force on the buildings.

While EDC officials have said they would draft the RFP so as to leave the door open to multiple proposals, White said it seemed clear the city would rather deal with a single developer with the interest and capital.

White's main concern is that rehabilitation proceed quickly. But he's also worried that if NYC puts all its eggs in one development basket, it could end up in another Metropolis situation if its partner fails. That risk would be reduced by having several different developers, he argued, as a smaller-scale individual or commercial rehab can be carried out for up to 40% less than a large-scale project, which must meet tougher building standards.

**In Our Opinion...** *(continued from page 17)*  
in the 1997 electoral season? This is not to impugn the office of Landmarks Chairperson Jennifer Raab. But she has jeopardized the credibility of her commission by indiscretely handling a developer which has consumed more than its share of the agency's resources in the past 15 years by refusing to take us for an answer.

The Seaport Community Coalition's community concept for 250 Water Street offers Raab a face-saving way out of her political dilemma. The work of architect Barbara Marks on a Seaport Museum concept for the site, and the financial analysis which support it, disproves the developer's claim that only a high-rise tower is economically feasible for 250 Water. Raab should send the developer and its architects back to the drawing board with the advice to rethink their 250 Water Street plan from the basement up.

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Seaport Community Coalition

## Action Agenda

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