



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

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**Statement of the Historic Districts Council**

**Re: Penn Station Area Redevelopment Project**

**To: The New York State Senate Standing Committee on Corporation, Authorities, and Commissions, and the Senate Standing Committee on Finance**

**July 1, 2022**

The Historic Districts Council (HDC) is the citywide advocate for New York City's designated historic districts, individual landmarks and structures meriting preservation.

HDC thanks these committees for holding the hearing on June 24, 2002 regarding the proposed plan for the Penn Station Redevelopment Project. However this hearing was by invitation only and HDC was not invited to speak. I hope in the future we can be invited to participate as one of the key preservation organizations in the city and the only one with a constituency of more than 500 grassroots community organizations.

Our comments in this letter will focus on the historic resources of the Penn Station Redevelopment area. While HDC strongly supports improvements to transportation at Penn Station we believe this can be done without the wholesale demolition of two full city blocks and four partial blocks, which include at least six (6) New York City Landmarks or State and National Register of Historic Places eligible structures, and numerous other historic buildings.

During the Midtown East Rezoning, preservation groups submitted a list of priority buildings and the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) moved forward with designation of twelve of these sites. We would like to request that NYS Empire State Development and other related agencies coordinate with the LPC to actively consider the sites noted in the Final Environmental Impact Statement and consider how they can be designated and incorporated into the proposed development plan.

Urban renewal has been widely discredited and this plan can happen without eminent domain proceedings against dozens of active commercial establishments and hundreds of tenants. These historic buildings have provided housing, commercial, hotel, and worship space for decades and in some cases more than 150 years old. Demolition also eliminates many of the suggested environmental benefits of the proposal. Even if these new glass towers are the highest energy efficiency, the amount of embodied energy lost and the amount of landfill will cancel that out.



HISTORIC DISTRICTS COUNCIL



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Finally, we have heard several times from the agencies behind this plan that New York needs new buildings that can provide tax revenue the city and state. But what about the existing tax revenue? Is the Stewart Hotel not paying taxes? Or the businesses on 30<sup>th</sup> Street? Indeed the Hotel Pennsylvania would also be paying taxes if it was not closed and being demolished for the proposed PENN15, a mixed use project whose value is not yet determined. The give away to a single developer for the redevelopment area makes us believe that the financials of this entire project as suspect and we are losing tax revenue for tax revenue in the future that has not adequately or convincingly been detailed anywhere.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director

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