



**The City of New York**  
**Manhattan Community Board 1**  
Tammy Meltzer CHAIRPERSON | Lucian Reynolds DISTRICT MANAGER

**New York City City Planning Commission**  
**Public Hearing on Governors Island ULURP Application & Draft Second Supplemental**  
**Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DSSGEIS)**  
**Testimony by Tammy Meltzer, Chairperson**  
**February 3, 2021**

Good morning Chair Lago and esteemed Commissioners. My name is Tammy Meltzer and I am Chair of Manhattan Community Board 1 (CB1). While Governors Island falls within Community District 1, it is an extraordinary public resource for our city, state and nation. In July 1997, CB1 testified at a Congressional hearing on the future of Governors Island that CB1 hoped that Governors Island would be kept as park land with active, open recreational space. Further, that “one thing that Community Board 1 does not want to see happen is for Governors Island to be converted into some kind of private or semi private area that would prohibit residents and workers and tourists from coming onto the Island. That would include residential communities...” This sentiment has remained largely unchanged over the past 24 years as demonstrated by prevailing opinions presented during CB1’s review of the Governors Island ULURP application.

CB1 held a public hearing on November 9, 2020 where dozens of individuals testified and CB1 collected about an additional 160 written comments. The majority of the comments have been in opposition to the proposed scale of density and development, and in-favor of preserving and increasing parkland, open space, connection to the water and recreation on the Island.

CB1 has long supported the Trust for Governors Island and recognizes the need for public/private investment to move the Trust’s vision forward. [On December 24, 2020 CB1 adopted a resolution](#) to serve as our formal recommendation on this ULURP application. CB1’s vote on the application resulted in a “no” unless all conditions outlined in the resolution are satisfied. It is important to note that the vote included 7 abstentions and 3 in opposition - these votes were representative between people who did not want to see any type of development on the island at all, those who did not approve of the scale of the development even with the modifications and three of those who wanted to vote in support with conditions. I encourage all to review the resolution which has been carefully crafted after many hours of review and deliberation. In the interest of time, I will address only a handful of the major points.

Currently Governors Island has a modest urban scale and density. The majority of public comments indicate that it is the existing density and scale that gives the island its identity as a refuge in its highly urbanized context. Earlier proposals for the South Island development envisioned much less development which the Trust has now indicated was merely conceptual. However, the public’s understanding of the development program was based on the earlier

models and the drastic increase in scale of development is unacceptable. In terms of mass and bulk, the proposed heights are substantially larger than the existing development on the Island. CB1's resolution states that the zoning must be amended to reduce the density, height and bulk for the development on the Island to respond to the community's many concerns. In order to be more consistent with earlier plans and the existing scale of the buildings on the Island (i.e. Liggett Hall), the zoning should be amended to cap heights at 125'.

The proposal for the redevelopment of the South Island is extremely complex. The Trust maintains that approximately 4.5 million square feet is required in order for the Island to become financially self-sustaining. However, the Trust has not yet provided the detailed financial modeling of the initial plans as compared to this proposal. In the absence of detailed financial modeling for this and for alternative scenarios, it is impossible for the public to determine the appropriateness of this current proposal. Further, any financial projections would have been based on pre-COVID trends and models. This is an unprecedented time and there is no telling if or when we might ever return to a pre-COVID "normal." Thus, there is much concern that plans will not actualize the way the Trust hopes or intends, and that the very flexible zoning being proposed will result in exploitative development that destroys the magic of the Island which has inspired so much passion from the public throughout this process. Diana Switaj, our Urban Planner for CB1, will speak in more granular detail on the DEIS, ULURP as well as changes proposed from "public parkland" consistent with the Deed's "Parkland Restriction Terms" versus "Open Space Areas and Subareas".

This application marks only the beginning of a long phase of redevelopment on Governors Island. Zoning is a blunt tool and cannot shape every aspect of redevelopment; many parts of this plan will be developed during future processes and conversations which may not formally require public or Community Board involvement. As such, CB1 has urged the Trust to assure further engagement on any subsequent Request For Proposals (RFP) to allow for robust regional and citywide outreach to all elected officials, civic not-for-profits whose mission is to promote sound environmental and urban design and all neighboring community boards (in both Manhattan and Brooklyn).

Governors Island is a true public asset. It deserves the time and attention needed to plan for the Island in a way that both allows for growth and progress, but also protects aspects of the Island so many have come to cherish. CB1 thanks the Trust for their efforts in responding to the concerns raised so far and we look forward to continuing to work with The Trust to preserve the legacy of the Island as a beloved public resource and to make the Island resilient and sustainable. Together with the Trust, our elected officials and the Department of City Planning CB1 hopes to ensure that the concerns captured in our resolution and expressed by the public throughout this process are addressed. Thank you for the time and the opportunity to speak today.