Statement of Findings

River North, Staten Island

SITE: Block 13, Lots 82, 92, 100 and a part of Lot 8 (Tentative Lot 95)
24 Stuyvesant Place, 170 Richmond Terrace, 180 Richmond Terrace

Special Permit Pursuant to ZR Section 128-62
Applicant's Discussion of Findings

128-62

Special Permit for Buildings in R7-3 Districts

For any zoning lot in an R7-3 District, the City Planning Commission may permit modification of bulk regulations, except floor area ratio provisions, and modification of mandatory improvements, provided the Commission shall find that such modifications:

(a) will aid in achieving the general purposes and intent of the Special District;

The Proposed Development would be located in the R7-3/C2-4 district within the Upland Subdistrict in the Special St. George District ("SSGD"), and would therefore be eligible for modifications to bulk and mandatory improvement regulations in accordance with proposed ZR Section 128-62. The Proposed Development would include three mixed-use residential buildings with a total of 592,014 square feet of zoning floor area at 6.0 FAR including 750 housing units of which 225 units would be affordable, 7,020 square feet of floor area for retail (a total 18,880 square feet including cellar space); and 331 accessory parking spaces. The three residential buildings would range in heights from a 26-story building located towards Stuyvesant Place and Hamilton Avenue ("Building 1") in the southern portion of the site, a 25-story building fronting on Richmond Terrace in the middle of the site ("Building 2") and an 11-story building fronting on Richmond Terrace at the northern end of the site ("Building 3"). The three buildings would include setbacks at different levels to modulate the height of the buildings, create transitions to surrounding buildings and context, bring in light and air into the open space and streets, and harmonize with the natural terrain of the site.

The placement and massing of the buildings respond to the curvilinear geometry of Richmond Terrace and Stuyvesant Place and the steep slopes of the site. The buildings would be separated by natural or landscaped passive open space for the residents of the Proposed Development that would also provide swaths of greenery through the site and views to the water from the adjacent properties to the west. In addition, an approximately 7,790 square feet publicly accessible open space is proposed at the corner of Stuyvesant Place and Hamilton Avenue that would be accessed from both streets and would form a destination and terminus to the Stuyvesant Place commercial corridor of the SSGD.

The Proposed Development would require waivers to: street wall and setback regulations pursuant to ZR Section 128-33 which allows a maximum street wall of 75 feet setbacks of 10

and 15 feet from a wide and narrow streets respectively; maximum building height pursuant ZR Section 128-34 of 185 feet or 18 stories and requires; rooftop regulations pursuant to ZR Section 128-31 which allows a maximum of 20 percent of building coverage for bulk heads above the building height and requires bulkheads to be setback at least 10 feet from the street wall; the minimum rear yard of 30 feet pursuant to ZR Section 23-47; and planting requirements pursuant to Section to ZR Section 128-42 in the area between the street walls of the buildings and the street line.

The proposed waivers would facilitate the placement of three buildings separated by green public and private open space. Further, the special permit would allow the proposed maximum building heights of 273.03 feet (26 stories) in Building 1 and 244.64 feet (25 stories) in Building 2 to exceed the height limit of 185 feet. The special permit would also allow the face of the 21-story portion of Building 1 to encroach within the 15 foot setback required from Stuyvesant Place by approximately 4.88 to 9.34 feet; the corner of the 20-story portion of Building 2 within the 10 foot setback required from Richmond Terrace by 5.17 feet and a sliver varying up to 3.01 feet of the 11-story portion of Building 3 within the 10 foot setback required from Richmond Terrace. It would also allow the bulk heads and other equipment at the roof Building 2 to exceed 20 percent of the building lot coverage (approximately 38 percent) to provide flexibility for screening or articulation at the top of the towers. Such waivers would facilitate a site plan and massing for taller, more slender building forms with less lot coverage to allow for more visual connections to the water from the adjacent streets and residential uses, more green areas, natural topography and vegetation, and to accommodate both public and private open space as part of an integrated site plan.

The special permit would also allow a small portion of Building 1 of maximum of approximately 9.13 feet to by 10.38 feet (approximately 95 square feet) to encroach into the required rear yard beyond 100 feet of Hamilton Avenue which is necessitated by the irregularity of the side and rear lot lines of the Development Site. However, the encroachment would allow the placement of Building 1, to be approximately 29.38 feet from Hamilton Avenue and a portion of the Building 1 to be approximately 42.5 to 46.8 feet from street widening line along Stuyvesant Place to accommodate the publicly accessible open space as well as provide generous visual connections to the water along Hamilton Avenue.

The Proposed Development, facilitated by the proposed waivers, would be consistent with the general purposes of the Special District. Specifically, the Proposed Development would capitalize on the existing strengths of the SSGD as the civic center of the Borough, and primary transit hub of Staten Island and create a critical mass by providing 750 housing units including 225 affordable units and 18,880 gross square feet of retail. The proposed waivers would allow for taller and slender building forms that would harmonize with the SSGD's topography, provide visual connections and corridors to the waterfront, and create an appropriate transition to the SHPD. The site plan would provide a physical and visual anchor to the northern terminus of St George and Stuyvesant Place by providing publicly accessible open space on axis with the Stuyvesant Place, a primary commercial corridor further south in the SSGD.

(b) will enhance the distribution of bulk on the zoning lot;

The proposed bulk modifications would enhance the distribution of bulk on the site so as to accommodate housing, retail and parking that would benefit the social and economic goals of the area, but at the same time respond to the varying context of surrounding buildings and the neighborhood and harmonize with the site's and surrounding area's topography. It would also provide for a significant amount of open space and the maintenance of a planted hillside on portions of the site. The distribution of bulk would facilitate a varied pedestrian experience with street walls and open space that create visual interest, and open up views and vistas from the surrounding upland areas to the waterfront and the New York Harbor.

The configuration and design of the Proposed Development would respond to a series of neighborhood and site conditions. The bulk and massing of the Proposed Development would serve to mediate transitions to the varying scales of the surrounding development - - Castleton Park Apartments immediately to the west includes two 20-story towers that reach the height of approximately 242 feet above Richmond Terrace and that dominates the streetscape and skyline in the area; the existing 11-story residential development, "the View" to the north which anchors the block at Richmond Terrace and Nicholas street; the row of one- and two-story detached homes fronting Hamilton Avenue to the southwest; and the two six-story apartment buildings across from Hamilton Avenue to the south. The massing would be consistent with the goals of the SSGD to facilitate slender towers at 200 feet in height that would open waterfront vistas from the upland areas.

The Proposed Development, as previously noted, would include three separate buildings that rise from 26 stories (Building 1) towards the south of the site, to 25 stories (Building 2) in the middle of the site and the 11 stories (Building 3) at the northern end of the site. Building 1 would have a street wall base of 37.53 feet or three stories which may increase to 75 feet under the zoning that would relate to the 6-story apartment buildings on the south side of Hamilton Avenue. Above the base, the building form would include an "L" shaped tower, where the two segments would be oriented towards Hamilton Avenue and Stuyvesant Place. Above the base, the tower would set back from Hamilton Avenue, gradually rising first to 8, 13, 18 and 23 stories and then rising to 26 stories, where the highest point of the tower would be approximately 142 feet from Hamilton Avenue. Similarly, the tower would set back from Stuyvesant Place where the highest portion of the tower would be approximately 15 feet from Stuyvesant Place. The composition of towers of varying heights along with the placement of the buildings, would concentrate the taller portions of the towers towards the middle of the site, and away from the row houses and the apartment buildings along Hamilton Avenue, and closer to Castleton Park Apartments. Further, the location of the towers would respond to the curvature of the street, and the setbacks of the buildings would express a gradual increase in height. Building 1 and 2 would take its cues from Castleton Park Apartments in terms of height. While Building 1 and 2 would be slightly taller than the Castleton Park Apartments, the height of the towers would generally fit within the scale and context of Castleton Park Apartments which forms a backdrop to the Proposed Development from Richmond Terrace and the waterfront. Building 3, which would be only 11 stories, would relate to the 11-story residential apartment building at Richmond Terrace and Nicholas Street and form a transition to the lower scale character to the north of Nicholas Street.

The distribution of bulk and massing would provide for the three buildings to be separated by approximately 40 to 60 feet of open green space which would gradually increase towards the street and would ensure that the massing of the buildings are to scale with buildings on smaller lots, similar to the block and lot patterns in the area. The Development Site is approximately 98,669 square feet with approximately 704 feet of continuous frontage along Richmond Terrace and Stuyvesant Place. By separating the buildings and providing open space with a width of 40 to 60 feet, -- the scale of typical narrow streets -- the building frontages would be scaled down to a more typical block front scale that relates to surrounding buildings. In addition, the open spaces would present the opportunity for visual corridors, landscaped areas and preservation of existing slopes and vegetation.

Finally, the distribution would allow for the creation of a significant amount of open space and green areas that would be integrated into the site plan and that would provide a buffer along Hamilton Avenue of approximately 29.38 to feet to 142.01 feet. The site plan includes approximately 53,675 square feet or 53 percent of the site as open areas, that would provide landscaped and natural areas where existing trees may be preserved, sidewalk widening of 15 feet along Stuyvesant Place and Richmond Terrace, and 12 feet along Hamilton Avenue, and a publicly accessible open space of approximately 7,790 square feet for the public to relax and enjoy the surrounding area and views of the New York Harbor. The location of the publicly accessible open space at the corner of the site would open up the views from Hamilton Avenue, and mediate the bulk of the towers with the surrounding streets and adjacent properties.

(c) will not unduly obstruct access to light and air from surrounding #streets# and properties; and

The proposed bulk modifications would facilitate establishing three building frontages along Richmond Terrace and Stuyvesant Place separated by swaths of public or private open space that would not only bring light and air into Proposed Development but also to the street and surrounding buildings. Further, it would allow Building 1 to setback approximately 29.38 to 142.01 feet from Hamilton Avenue, shifting the bulk of the Proposed Development away from the street and neighboring buildings. Similarly, the proposed bulk modifications to allow the building height of 185 feet to be waived for the 26 and 25 story buildings would not unduly obstruct access to light and air to surrounding streets and properties. While the height of the buildings would exceed the 185 feet height limit, the waiver to the building height would allow for significant amount of open space on the site, where otherwise the likely configuration would include an unrelenting wall of 185 feet in height extending without interruption along a sizable portion of the 704 feet of frontage along Richmond Terrace and Stuyvesant Place.

Building 1 would exceed the height limit by approximately 88.03 feet or 8 stories, however the tallest portion of the tower would be set back from Hamilton Avenue by approximately 142 feet. Building 1, itself would be set back approximately 29.38 feet from Hamilton Avenue, which would create a visual corridor from St Marks Place and Hamilton Avenue. The significant drop in elevation would further enhance the vista and mediate the effect of the tower to the south. The location of Building 1, set back from Hamilton Avenue, and placement of the 7,790 square feet of publicly accessible open space at the corner of Stuyvesant Place and Hamilton Avenue would allow for light and air to the streets and adjacent residential properties south and east of the Development Site, and lessen the effect of the towers on the streets.

Similarly, while Building 2 would exceed the height limit of 185 feet by approximately 59.64 feet or six stories, the face of the tower oriented towards Stuyvesant Place and Richmond Terrace would only be approximately 51 feet and would be set back approximately 15 feet from the Richmond Terrace. Further, Building 3 to the north of Building 2 would be only approximately 132.14 feet in height, approximately 52.86 feet less than the allowable height, but would have approximately 200 feet on frontage along Richmond Terrace. The lower height of Building 3, would more than compensate for the increase in height of Building 2, particularly in its overall effect from adjacent properties including Castleton Park Apartments to the west of the Development Site.

The setback waivers for Buildings 1 and 2 would be limited in their encroachment. Further, such setbacks would be taken from the sidewalk widening line for Building 1 and would therefore provide more open space and light and air at the ground floor level. The encroachment in Building 1 would also be towards the intersection of Stuyvesant Place and Richmond Terrace. Encroachments into the setbacks on Building 2 and 3 would be taken from the street line of Richmond Terrace, a major corridor and wide street in the North Shore. Further east of Richmond Terrace is of the Proposed Wheel and the waterfront which would bring plenty of light and air to the streets.

The proposed bulk modifications to rooftop regulations would permit the bulkheads above the overall building heights to exceed 20 percent of the building coverage to allow 38% percent in Building 2 to provide flexibility to the articulation and screening at the top of the buildings. As the towers would be set back from surrounding streets and the bulk heads would be located where the zoning lot depth is the greater, the effect of slightly greater coverage at the roofs of Building 2 would be not be discernable from the surrounding streets and properties, but instead would provide flexibility for articulation at the tops of the buildings.

The proposed rear yard waiver would only be required for Building 1 and would be limited to a maximum of 9.13 feet by 10.38 feet, beyond 100 feet from Hamilton Avenue along the side lot line of Lot 116 and rear lot line of Lot 8. The area of encroachment would be approximately 95 square feet and would face the side lot line of Lot 116 which is vacant and within the Project Area. However, the Proposed Development would provide a side yard of 30 feet, where one not is required, along the side lot line of lot 116. Similarly, the rear yard encroachment would be offset from one of the two Castleton towers, however, the Castleton Apartment tower is also set back approximately 70 feet from the rear lot line. Further, the tower is aligned with one of the proposed green swaths of open space which would provide a view corridor through the Development Site. The combination of yards and open spaces would secure ample light and air to adjacent surrounding properties and streets.

The site planning and massing on the buildings carefully considers potential shadows generated which would be oriented towards the north and away from the surrounding buildings and streets. As a result, the Proposed Development would cast minimal to no shadows on the adjacent residential uses along Hamilton Avenue, Castleton Park Apartments, Richmond Terrace and north of Nicholas Street. The environmental review (EAS 20DCP140R analyzed the impacts of incremental shadows created by the Proposed Development and concluded that the such incremental shadows would not create an impact on surrounding open space and historic resources, including the public waterfront.

(d) will result in a better site plan and urban design relationship with adjacent #streets#, open areas, and the surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed modifications are critical in facilitating the Proposed Development which would embody the goals of the SSGD and provide a superior site plan and urban design. The site plan and urban design responds to the surrounding land uses, built context and streets and incorporates several organizing principles: massing residential towers away from low- and mid-scale residential development: integrating natural and landscaped open space within the site plan; anchoring Stuyvesant Place commercial corridor with publicly accessible open space; enhancing connectivity through retail and street walls, and wider sidewalks along Richmond Terrace and Stuyvesant Place; and providing limited and strategic access to parking within the Proposed Development.

Residential Towers

The location and massing of the three residential towers would create a composition that draws from the SSGD's goals of slender towers that provide waterfront vistas from the upland areas and responds to the topography of the SSGD. The three towers scheme would allow the building mass to be more in scale with surrounding buildings on smaller lots. Further, the varying heights of the towers, would allow the concentration of height and bulk in Buildings 1 and 2 to take place in the southern and middle portion of the site, while Building 3, at 11 stories, to be located at the north would create a transition to the 11-story residential building at Richmond Terrace and Nicholas Street and the lower-scale residential character to the north. Further, the bulk and height of the towers would be concentrated away from the lower scale character along the north side of Hamilton Avenue and medium-scale 6-story apartment buildings to the south of the Proposed Development.

The massing and placement of Building 1 and 2 takes advantage of the site's configuration, where the tallest portions of the tower would be located where the site has greater depth from the street and would allow the towers to set back from the street. Further it would allow the towers to be oriented in an east-west direction towards the waterfront thus providing generous view corridors for Castleton Park Apartments. The depth of the site would allow the street walls of Building 1 to be setback from Stuyvesant Place and Richmond Terrace beyond the sidewalk widening line to create an enhanced pedestrian experience. Further, Building 3, would be oriented along Richmond Terrace and would provide a street wall and continuous retail at the ground level that would create a connection to the developments to the north. Finally, the site plan and urban design approach would create a dynamic skyline that is compatible with the existing context of Castleton Park Apartments and that recognizes future development along the waterfront.

Natural and Landscaped Open Space

The site plan would provide a significant amount of open space where 53% of the site or 53,675 square feet would be open and include landscaped and natural green swaths, sidewalk widening

along Stuyvesant Place and Hamilton Avenue as well as a publicly accessible open space. The integration of such open space within the site plan would achieve several goals; it would facilitate the scale of the buildings to be more in keeping with the surrounding context; it would provide opportunities for the maintaining the existing planted hillside and/or landscaped open space that reflect the slope of the site; and it would provide visual corridors and vistas from the adjacent upland properties including Castleton Park Apartments and Hamilton Avenue. The interspersion of open areas would also provide a more pleasing and variegated pedestrian environment, in contrast to a continuous street wall presence along the site's 704 foot frontage on Richmond Terrace and Stuyvesant Place that would be permitted under the R7-3 zoning district.

A key element of the site plan is a generous publicly accessible open space located at the corner of Stuyvesant Place and Hamilton Avenue. The open space that would be created would be designed to reflect the natural grade of the site through landscaping and provide access from both streets. Further, it would provide a significant area for seating, circulation and public enjoyment. The open space would be lined with retail within Building 1 which would further activate the space. The open space would also form the northern terminus of Stuyvesant Place which is a designated commercial corridor with the SSGD.

Enhanced pedestrian environment

The proposed site plan and urban design approach would ensure an enhanced pedestrian environment along Richmond Terrace and Stuyvesant Place, as well as along Hamilton Avenue. Richmond Terrace is a major wide street in the North Shore that connects further south to Bay Street. Stuyvesant Place, further south within the SSGD, is a designated commercial street – such designation would be extended to the east side of Stuyvesant Place immediately across from the publicly accessible open space. Existing conditions on the site include approximately 704 feet of vacant lots and unkempt sidewalks that discourage any pedestrian activity from the north to the recent developments, mass transportation hubs and downtown St George.

The site plan would create connectivity around the site that would link the neighborhoods to the north and south and east and west by including the following: improved sidewalks with street trees along the Richmond Terrace and Stuyvesant Place frontage of a minimum of 15 feet and along Hamilton Avenue of 12 feet; the presence of ground floor retail along Stuyvesant Place and Richmond Terrace; private landscaped and natural open space that provide a visual amenity on the street; and a publicly accessible open space that is paved and landscaped as a public amenity and an anchor to the Stuyvesant Place corridor. Street walls up to 75 feet in Buildings 2 and 3 along Richmond Terrace would help define the western side of Richmond Terrace and would complement future development on the waterfront to the east. Overall these features would significantly improve the streetscape and pedestrian environment, activating an important intersection and corridor that connects to different surrounding neighborhoods.

Limited entrances for Parking

The proposed site plan would also limit entrances to accessory parking to two entrances in Building 1 and one entrance in Building 3. The parking entrance on Hamilton Avenue to access the 2nd and 3rd level of a garage in Building 1 would be separated from the adjacent lot 116, by approximately 30 feet of landscaped area as a buffer. The entrance on Stuyvesant Place to

accessory parking below grade would be located away from the publicly accessible open space. The entrance to parking at the 2nd and 3rd level in Building 3 would be located at the northern end of the site. The distribution of the three entrances would ensure that pedestrian circulation would not be unduly interrupted. Moreover, all curb-cuts would be no more than 22 feet to be sufficient for an entrance and exit to the parking space. All above grade parking would be screened and integrated into the design of the buildings.

Conclusion

The proposed bulk modifications would result in a site plan and urban design that would transform a vacant and underutilized site into a vibrant mixed use development with housing, including a significant amount of affordable housing, retail, and landscaped publicly accessible open space and private open space as well as passive natural greenspaces that provide a visual public amenity. The Proposed Development would provide the connective tissue between mixed-use neighborhood along Bay Street, the mixed commercial and institutional areas of St George and the public and commercial activities along the waterfront to the upland residential neighborhoods to the north and west. The Proposed Development would complement recent and future developments and public investment in the SSGD as well as in the larger North Shore Area. It would provide a unique living and commuting experience for existing and future Staten Island residents, add to the dynamic streetscape and strengthen the retail and pedestrian environment. The Proposed design would contribute to the streetscape and skyline of Staten Island reflecting the Borough's position as a destination and as livable and sustainable neighborhood.

The Commission may prescribe additional conditions and safeguards to minimize adverse effects on the character of the surrounding area.