

JOINT STATEMENT OF THE BROOKLYN HEIGHTS ASSOCIATION, DUMBO
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, FULTON FERRY LANDING ASSOCIATION
RE: DOCK STREET DUMBO PROJECT

The DUMBO Neighborhood Association, Fulton Ferry Landing Association and the Brooklyn Heights Association (collectively, the “Associations”) have joined together in opposition to the proposed development by Two Trees Management Corp. at the intersection of Water and Dock Streets, adjacent to the Brooklyn Bridge. Approximately three years ago, Two Trees Corp withdrew its application to build a similar high-rise building on this site after local elected officials and the Associations raised an array of objections to the proposal. Despite the inclusion of a school and affordable housing units, the defects of this new project are essentially the same as those that resulted in the failure of the previous project. The proposed high-rise project will have a substantial negative impact on the surrounding historic neighborhoods, is completely out of scale with adjacent structures, and fails to recognize its unique and historically significant urban context. Moreover, it will profoundly diminish the views from and of the Brooklyn Bridge, one of our City’s – and, indeed, our nation’s – most important monuments to architecture and engineering.

The “Bowl”:

The site is positioned at a key transition zone between the five-story row house scale of the Fulton Ferry Landing Historic District to the west, its squat and massive Empire Store complex to the north, the assembly of DUMBO Gair Buildings to the east, and the Brooklyn Bridge Anchorage to the south from which springs the diagonal span of the bridge northwest to Manhattan. The view of this entire span must be protected. The area around the Brooklyn Bridge forms a vast spatial “bowl”, allowing residents and visitors from around the world views of and from this global landmark. This open urban space welcomes the bridge and its thousands of visitors to Brooklyn with open arms as it spans from Manhattan. Interrupting this, the proposed building sits completely within this “bowl”, cutting off views from the bridge of the waterfront and the Empire Stores, and views of the bridge from the DUMBO streets. The building would be substantially closer than any other building of its height to the bridge, in either Brooklyn or Manhattan, and would effectively eliminate the “bowl” completely on this side of the bridge. Meanwhile, for those moving along the bridge towards Manhattan, especially pedestrians and cyclists, the proposed building significantly diminishes panoramic views of the Manhattan skyline and Manhattan Bridge.

The “Density”:

The project as proposed does not reflect the low-density scale of this part of DUMBO and the Fulton Ferry neighborhood to the west. “The area proposed for rezoning is framed by the context of the four-to-six story buildings located at 64-72 Water Street and the Civil war era Empire Stores and Tobacco Warehouse in Brooklyn Bridge Park located directly across the street from the subject site. This area serves as a transition zone between the taller concrete industrial buildings found along Main Street to the 2-to-3 story buildings in Fulton Landing which are in character with an R6B contextual zoning designation.”¹

¹ *Borough President Marty Markowitz’s Recommendation Report to the City Planning Commission regarding 38 Water Street, dated 7/1/04*

“The Size”:

Two Trees is requesting a number of modifications and exemptions to zoning requirements, all of which combine to create a building that is simply too tall and too large for this site.

a. Proposed Zoning Designation: This site should act as a transition from DUMBO to Fulton Ferry rather than a wall. We maintain, as we and many others did in connection with the developer’s prior proposal, that any new building on this immediate area should be no higher than 80’. Only by limiting the height of any building on this site to below the height of the Brooklyn Bridge span, can the sweeping views one enjoys of the river and Manhattan from the Brooklyn Bridge be preserved. The proposed R8 zoning without a contextual designation would enable the developer to build a structure that breaks the gradual transition from DUMBO to Fulton Ferry and impairs the viewscape from and of the bridge.

b. Proposed Floor Area Exemptions: The proposal seeks to exempt over 92,000 sq.ft. of space from the floor area calculations. While a public middle school is in great demand for our communities, we do not believe that this need should be met at the expense of the character of our neighborhoods or historic integrity of the bridge.

c. Proposed Modifications to Setback Requirements: The proposal seeks a complete exemption from setback requirements. We maintain that this site should act as a transition zone between DUMBO and Fulton Ferry. The required setbacks would maintain some level of integrity to street wall heights that characterize the low, historic buildings of Water Street and the Fulton Ferry Historic District.

d. Proposed Modifications to Rear Yard Requirements: The proposal requests that no rear yard be required. The intention of rear yard requirements is to maintain a minimum of light and air in our dense urban fabric. This already dense block would benefit greatly from compliance with these regulations.

e. Special Permission from DOT to Encroach on 70’ Bridge Limit: There is no substantive reason why, at such an early stage in the process, this issue cannot be solved architecturally rather than requiring DOT’s permission to compromise its regulation. We believe that any such compromise would not only be premature, but could also set a dangerous precedent for future development and for the security of the bridge.

To mitigate the above concerns, the Associations contend that any development at Water and Dock Streets must recognize the unique historic character and context of the area with a building (including HVAC and other equipment) that is no higher than 80’ in height, contributes to the character of both DUMBO & Fulton Ferry Landing, and has special consideration for the historic views from and of the Brooklyn Bridge.

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