

# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT SEAPORT COALITION STRATEGIC PLAN

Manhattan Community Board 1 and our elected officials are to be thanked for their past support of the *Seaport Coalition*, an all-volunteer, grass-roots community alliance.

We choose to follow the *Guidelines and Principles* adopted by the Seaport Working Group.



Children  
First

NEW YORK CITY

November 18, 2019

# COALITION PLAN OUTLINE

- The Plan's Foundation
- A Model with the Public at its Center – Righting an imbalance
- South Street Seaport Historic District – Sense of Place
- Overcoming Challenges
- Public Space and Resiliency
- A new Public Market
- Seaport Air Rights
- New Market Building
- The Street of Ships, the South Street Seaport Museum
- 250 Water Street
- Eleanor's Walkway
- Guidance for an Historic Public asset
- Beyond the Physical Landscape

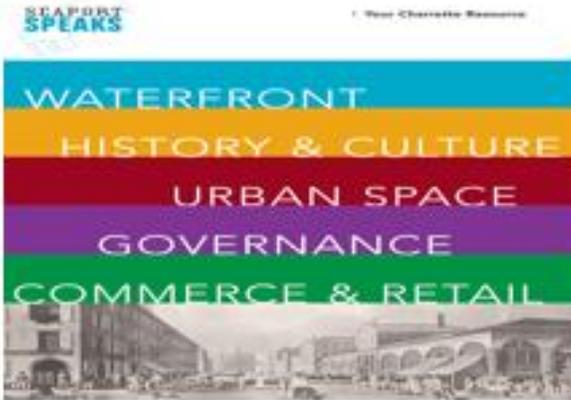


# FOUNDATION OF THE COALITION PLAN

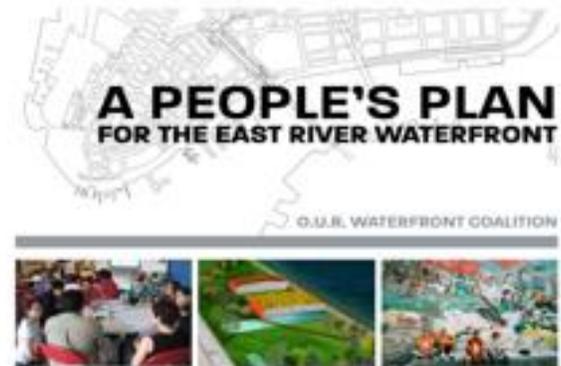
TRANSFORMING THE EAST RIVER WATERFRONT  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK



Transforming the East River Waterfront, 2002



SeaportSpeaks Charrette, 2006



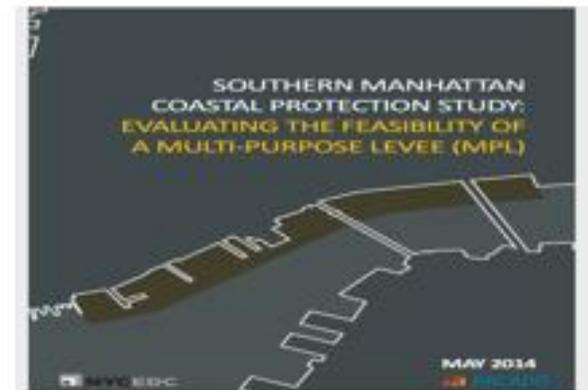
A People's Plan for the East River Waterfront 2009



Seaport Working Group- Guidelines and Principles, 2014



The Vision for the Seaport, 2014



Southern Manhattan Coastal Protection Study, 2014



A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP  
OUT OF BALANCE

RIGHTING A WRONG MODEL

It is increasingly evident that the public-private partnership model for revitalizing and restoring assets in the Seaport Historic District is out of balance.

Looking beyond Howard Hughes Corp.'s new master planning initiative – this after years of a segmented approach – the Seaport Coalition believes that a plan for the area that focuses on public value and use of this public asset is needed.

The following points underlie the various topics considered in the coalition plan:

- The public should have a leading role in the planning of public assets
- A private developer should not be the sole or primary engine for change in the historic area
- There are clearly written rules in place, thought out over time
- Public assets should not be used as bargaining items, and one constituency should not be pitted against another
- Public assets can and should be funded through the public process of government.

# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT HISTORIC DISTRICT

The South Street Seaport, adjacent to the iconic *Brooklyn Bridge* in New York City, is part of our nation's living history

- In 1977, the City of New York passed a zoning resolution creating a special 10-block historic district to ensure that the Seaport would survive for future generations to enjoy. It specifies as one of its purposes:

*“to restore, preserve and assure the use of the South Street Seaport Subdistrict as an area of small historic and restored buildings, open to the waterfront and having a high proportion of public spaces and amenities, including a South Street Seaport Environmental Museum, with associated cultural, recreational and retail activities...”*



# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT - CHALLENGES

The *National Trust for Historic Preservation* included the South Street Seaport in its 2015 list of:

**“America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places”**

Ongoing challenges :

- Threat of privatization of public assets
- Partnering with a sole developer
- Out-of-scale development

In his State of the City Address: Feb 3, 2015

Mayor de Blasio stated:

*“We are not embarking on a mission to build towering skyscrapers where they don’t belong. We have a duty to protect and preserve the culture and character of our neighborhoods, and we will do so.”*

*The New York Times*

## *South Street Seaport Tops Preservation Trust’s List of Endangered Historic Sites*

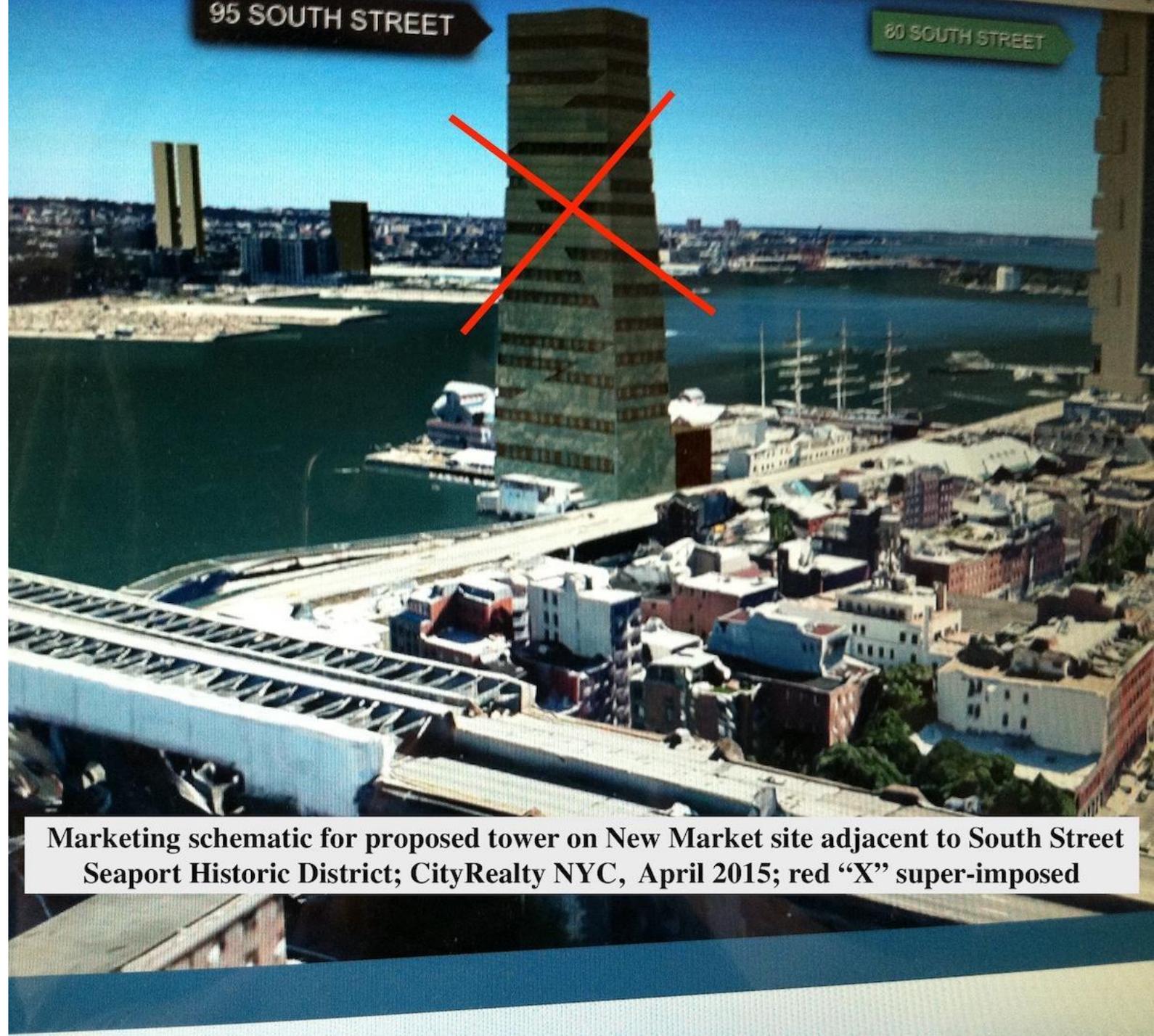


Construction at Pier 17 at the South Street Seaport. The Howard Hughes Corporation is spending \$425 million to rebuild Pier 17 and erect a glassy four-story mall. Pablo Enriquez for The New York Times



# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT CHALLENGE – OUT-OF-SCALE DEVELOPMENT

Rendering of proposed tower over  
New Market site  
CityRealty NYC, April 2015; red “X”  
super-imposed



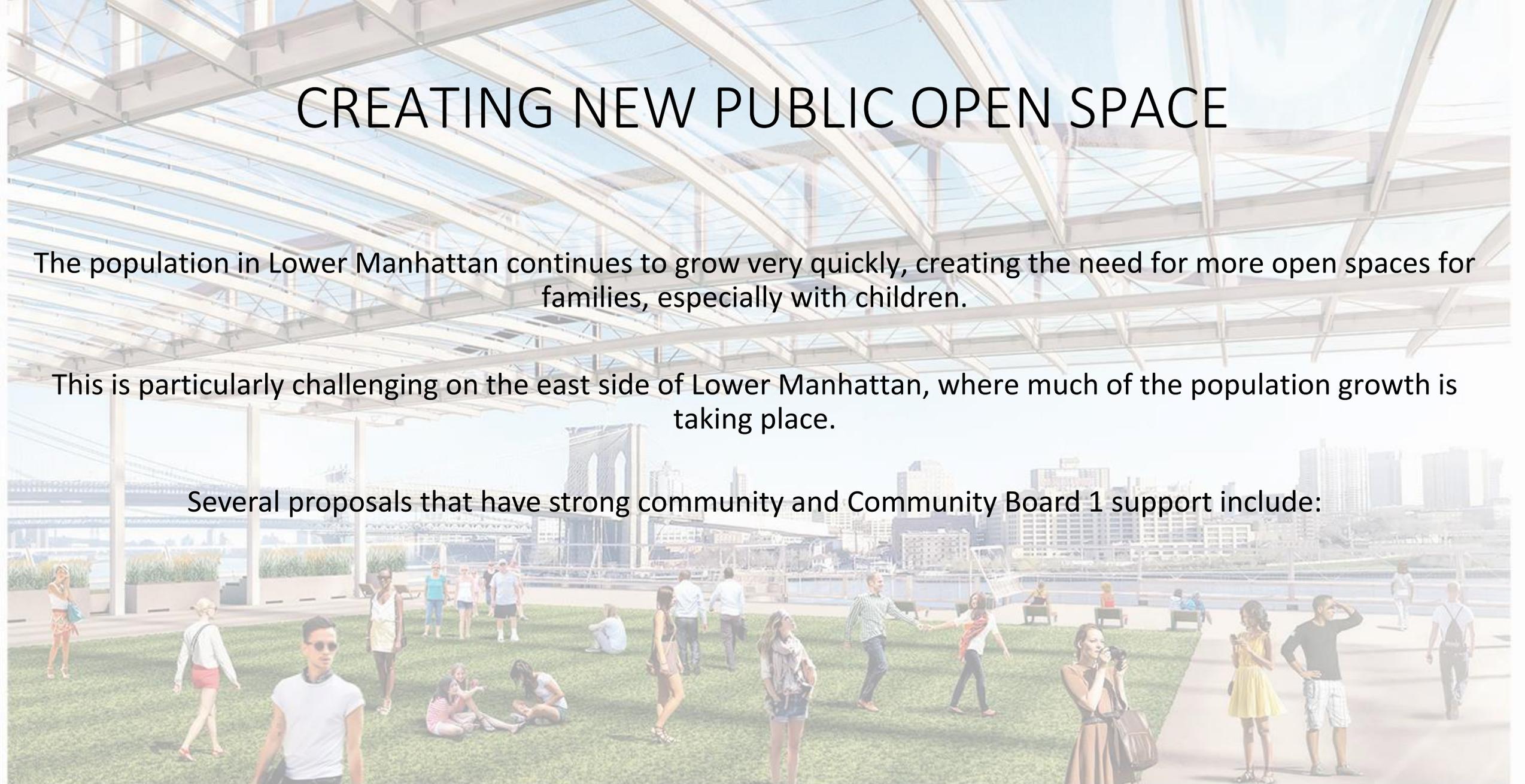
**Marketing schematic for proposed tower on New Market site adjacent to South Street Seaport Historic District; CityRealty NYC, April 2015; red “X” super-imposed**

# CREATING NEW PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The population in Lower Manhattan continues to grow very quickly, creating the need for more open spaces for families, especially with children.

This is particularly challenging on the east side of Lower Manhattan, where much of the population growth is taking place.

Several proposals that have strong community and Community Board 1 support include:





# ROOFTOPS

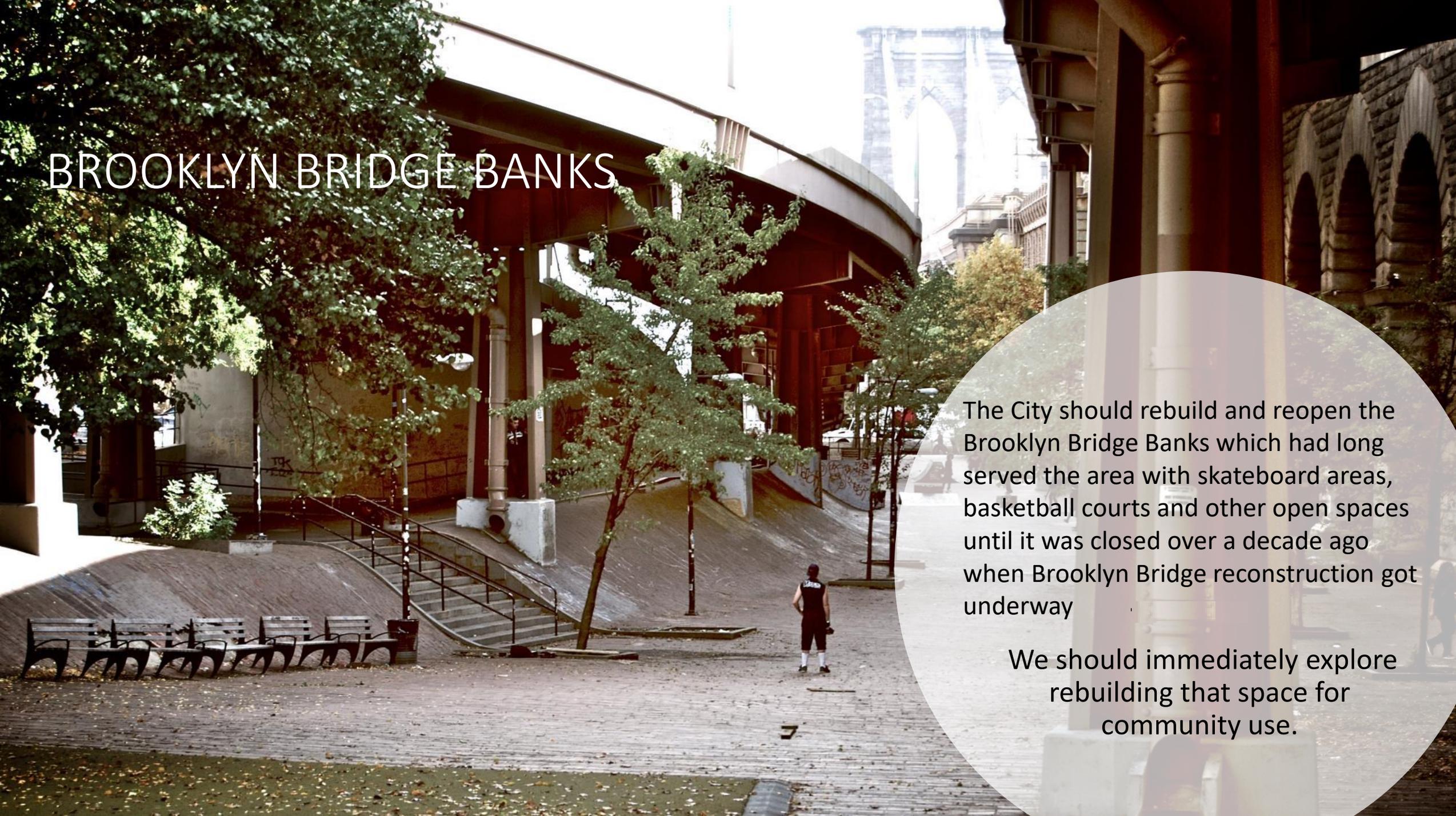
- Utilize the rooftops of existing and new public buildings in the Seaport to create playing fields and other recreation spaces. In the planning and approval stages, Pier 17 was designated to be utilized in this manner, with a grass turf roof for public use. But, after winning approval, HHC switched to intensive commercial use of the roof, for concerts and other activities. HHC should be told to make the Pier 17 rooftop far more accessible to local youth.
- We also suggest that a rebuilt New Market Building have a rooftop that can allow children and others to play/relax.

# THE DUGOUT UNDER THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE



Another nearby site that should be explored for conversion to open space is the “Dugout” . This area is being used by NYC Dept. of Transportation (DOT) and only a handful of cars/vehicles park there. This space should be turned over to Dept. of Parks to create a new park

# BROOKLYN BRIDGE BANKS



The City should rebuild and reopen the Brooklyn Bridge Banks which had long served the area with skateboard areas, basketball courts and other open spaces until it was closed over a decade ago when Brooklyn Bridge reconstruction got underway

We should immediately explore rebuilding that space for community use.

# PUBLIC SPACE IN RESILIENCY PLANS

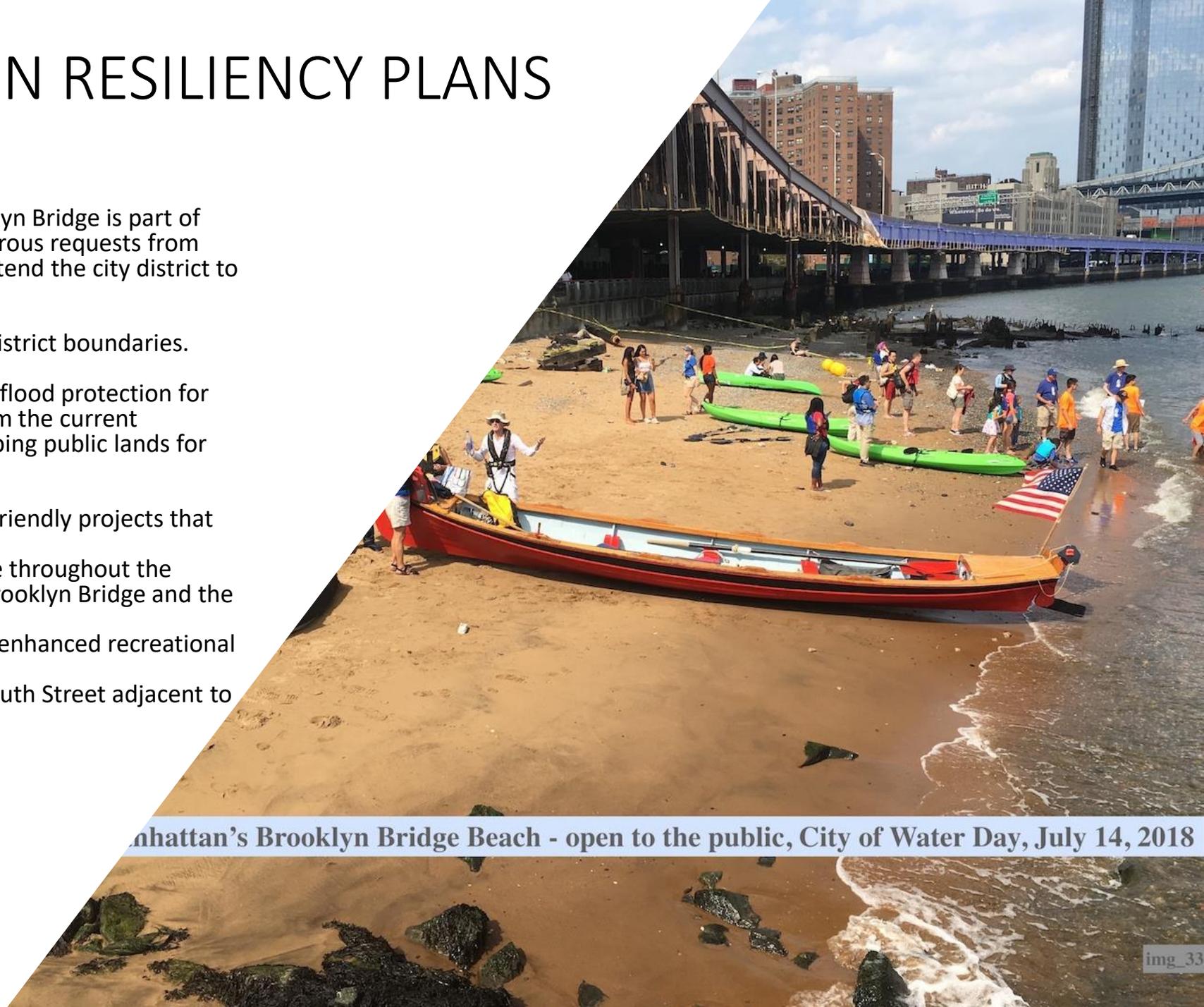
The area from the New Market site up to the Brooklyn Bridge is part of the national Seaport Historic District. Despite numerous requests from civic groups, the City of NY has refused to date to extend the city district to match the national district.

We support including the area in the city's historic district boundaries.

In keeping with the Mayor's newly released plan for flood protection for the Seaport area, any land created into the river from the current shoreline up to the Bridge should be developed keeping public lands for public purposes.

The Seaport Coalition proposes 2-story community friendly projects that would:

- a) Protect the views: of the iconic Brooklyn Bridge throughout the Seaport, and of the historic Seaport from the Brooklyn Bridge and the Brooklyn waterfront
- b) Support water-dependent maritime and water-enhanced recreational uses
- c) Stimulate compatible commercial activity on South Street adjacent to new public use facilities.



Manhattan's Brooklyn Bridge Beach - open to the public, City of Water Day, July 14, 2018

# A NEW PUBLIC MARKET



Even before New Amsterdam became New York in 1664, the seaport was home to a thriving farmers market, one that developed from what had already been a trading center for indigenous peoples. More recently, a growing public market – the New Amsterdam Market – was providing locally and regionally sourced fresh food to the New York community.

# SEAPORT AIR RIGHTS

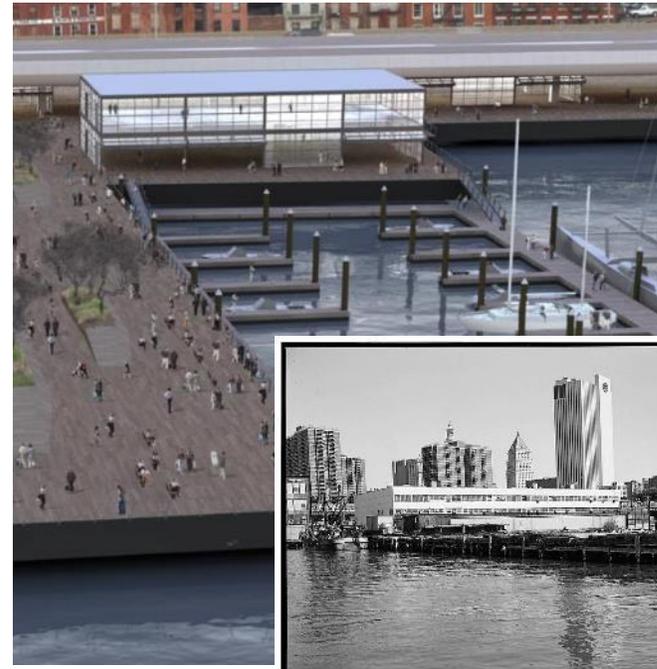
- ✓ Re-build the New Market pier/platform and building
- ✓ Re-build a John Street building for the South Street Seaport Museum
- ✓ Create community open spaces
- The Seaport Coalition believes that any and all air rights from the Seaport District should only be allowed to be transferred to sites **OUTSIDE** the Historic District
- **Funds received from the sale of city-owned air rights should be dedicated to new construction at the New Market and John Street Lot sites and other important community needs**
- The New Market Building has an estimated 210,000 +/- square feet of unused development rights (aka air rights) and there may be additional air rights which are owned by the city that could be monetized to fund a dedicated Seaport improvement district



# A REBUILT NEW MARKET BUILDING – NEW COMMUNITY FACILITY

In 2007, the NYC Dept. of City Planning in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement (2)* for the waterfront outlined parameters for a Proposed Action, when funding became available, for the New Market as follows:

*“... a new building of up to approximately 40,000 square feet is envisioned, potentially housing a mix of uses...It is expected to have an open floor plan for community, cultural, and/or commercial uses...The height of the building is assumed to be approximately 50 feet with a footprint of roughly 146 by 137 feet.” [ Pg 1-15 of FEIS; emphasis added]*



## NEW MARKET REIMAGINED

- Adjacent waterfront reserved for working waterfront components
- Rooftop outdoor open space for public access and recreation
- Dedicated space for community facility
- Dedicated space for South Street Seaport Museum (SSSM) maritime activities.

# NEW MARKET— CITY-OWNED



In a Dec. 12, 2011 *Letter of Intent* (1), the NYC Economic Development Corp. (NYCEDC) entered into a “public-private partnership” with the Howard Hughes Corp. which offered up the New Market as a private development venture (triggering strong community resistance in the years to come).



HHC missed a milestone date of Aug 31, 2016 (Exhibit B of Mixed-Use Project) to exercise this option.



NYCEDC has affirmed to the Seaport Working Group, and to its successor, the Seaport Advisory Committee, that the City of New York retains control of the air rights at the New Market Building site.

# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT – *THE STREET OF SHIPS*



Peking berthed at South Street Seaport



Wavertree returns to Seaport Pier 16

*"I hope we'll see the day when saving our great ships is as obvious as saving our great buildings."*  
Kent L. Barwick, Historic Preservationist

# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT – MARITIME MUSEUM

The *Historic Ships Coalition* - which brings together owners and operators of historic vessels, maritime museums and organizations that celebrate and support historic vessels - seeks better berths and infrastructure to open up the waterfront as a community access point for historic and educational ships, and hands-on educational activities.

The **Seaport Coalition** supports measures to facilitate a return to berthing of historic ships at the Seaport's piers, including:

- incorporating ship-compatible sections in bulkheads
- upgraded fendering at Pier 17 for use by historic ships
- docking space for Museum vessels at Pier 15 as originally envisioned
- docking spaces for visiting vessels, possibly through the rebuild of now “ghost” piers 19-21



The coalition also supports looking further into a transient boat marina for small vessels as proposed in the city's 2004 waterfront study; (refer: marina schematic, slide/page 20)

# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MARINA PLAN SCHEMATIC

## NEW MARKET BUILDING

When the Fulton Fish Market moves to the Bronx in 2005, the New Market Building will be returned to the City's control. The existing building and pier will be demolished and rebuilt to enhance aquatic habitat, as well as provide access to the water's edge where there currently is none. The new building will be transparent with an open floor plan for community and commercial uses. A new transient boat marina will provide a much needed location for boating enthusiasts and amateurs alike to temporarily moor their vessels. This marina will provide direct access for small to mid-sized vessels in the East River and a destination for boaters from around the region to access Lower Manhattan by water.



NEW MARKET BUILDING - EXISTING CONDITION



NEW MARKET BUILDING - PLAN

City of NY – East River Waterfront Study, 2004; New Market site. Proposed: “transient boat marina... to temporarily moor small to mid-sized vessels in the East River and a destination for boaters from around the region to access Lower Manhattan by water.”

SOUTH STREET  
SEAPORT MUSEUM  
SCHERMERHORN  
ROW



South Street Seaport: Fulton Plaza; Schermerhorn Row to right, East River waterfront-middle distance; 11.18.2017

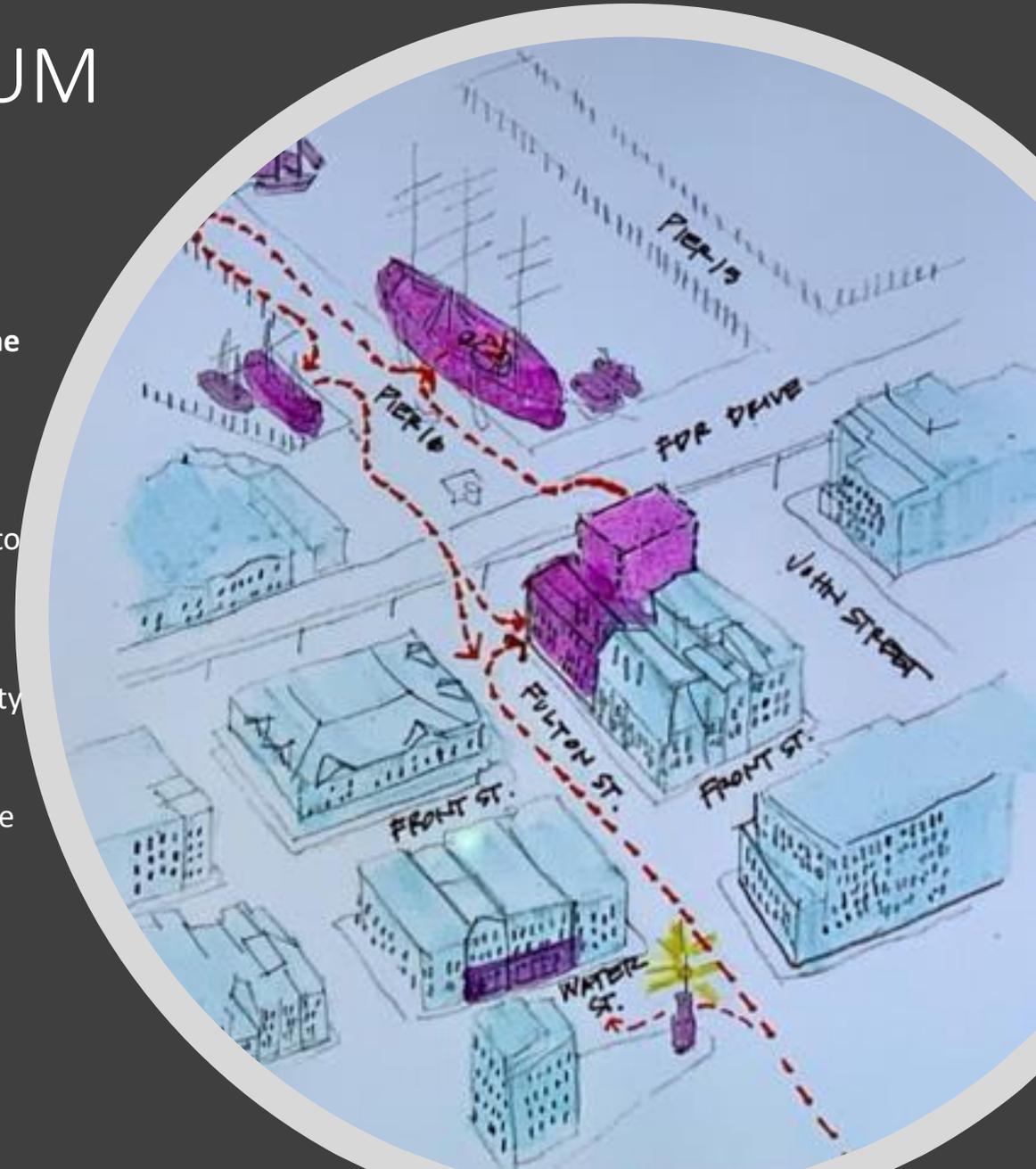
# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM

## THE SEAPORT MUSEUM AT RISK:

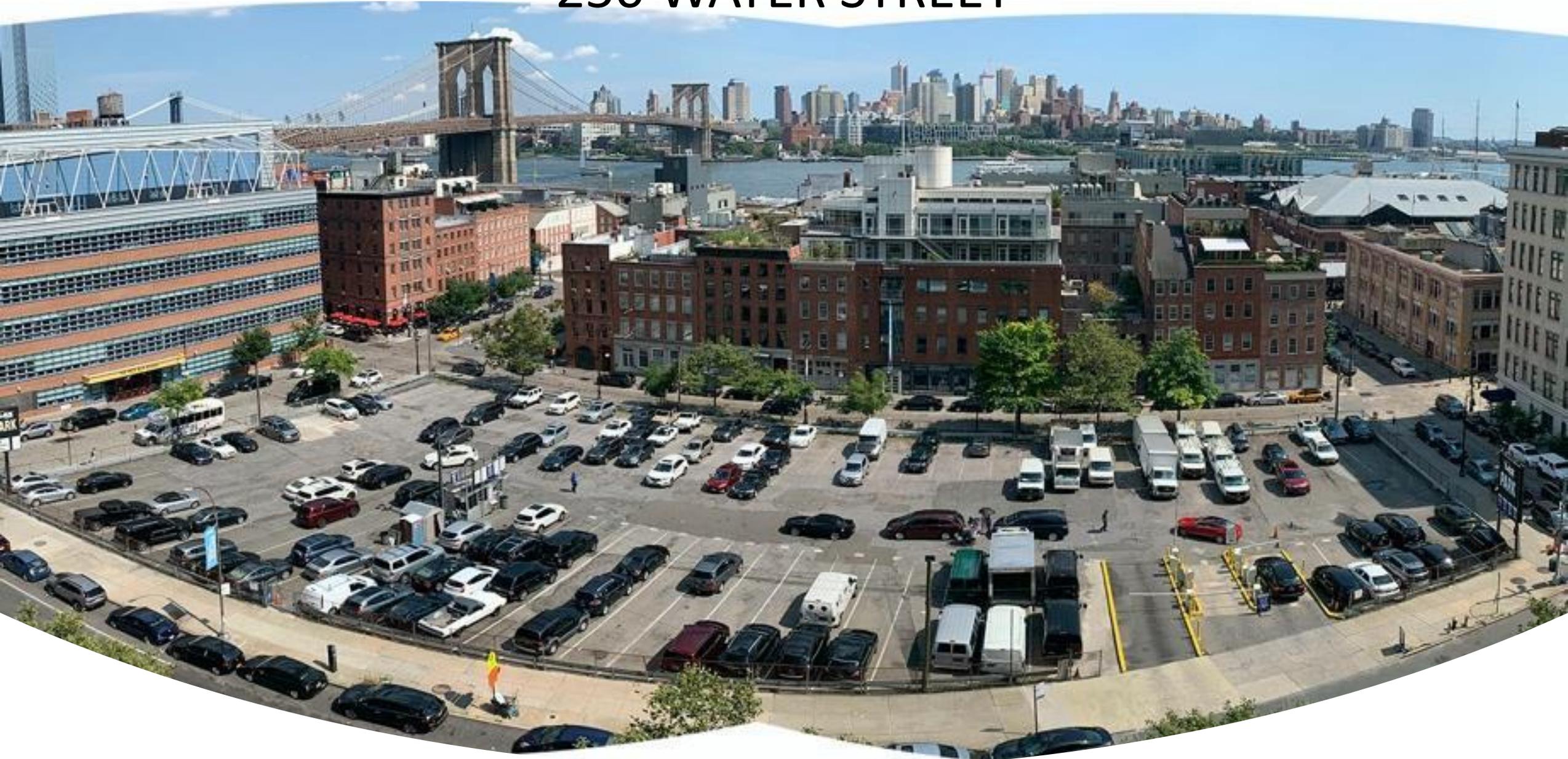
The model in place for over 30 years wherein the South Street Seaport Museum (SSSM) would derive much of its revenue from the commercial operator in the Seaport (now HHC) has failed. To date, the City of New York **has refused to amend the 1981 museum lease**

## ACTIONS NEEDED TO SUPPORT THE MUSEUM :

- The city needs to revise the museum's outdated lease
- The City must also provide more funding. One way to accomplish that would be to include the SSSM in the City's *Cultural Institutions Group* which would ensure such funding
- There has been a "value-add" to all new developments that promote a harbor view. Property tax revenues from surrounding buildings should justify a larger city investment in the museum
- The current marketplace lease (City of NY – HHC) provides revenue to the developer. The Seaport Coalition asks that a percentage of the unabated revenue received from the Master Lease Holder by the City of New York be earmarked to subsidize the South Street Seaport Museum on an annual basis



# 250 WATER STREET



**The Seaport Coalition supports only plans that can be developed under the current historic district zoning envelope.**

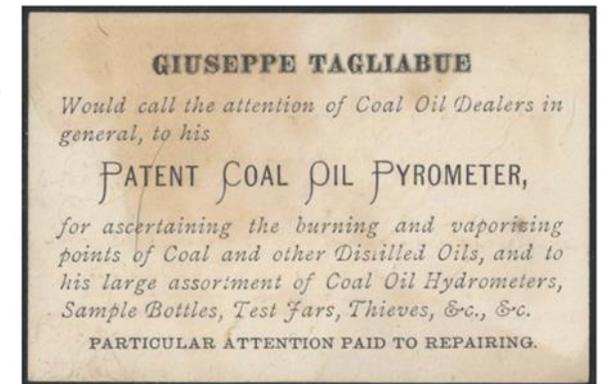
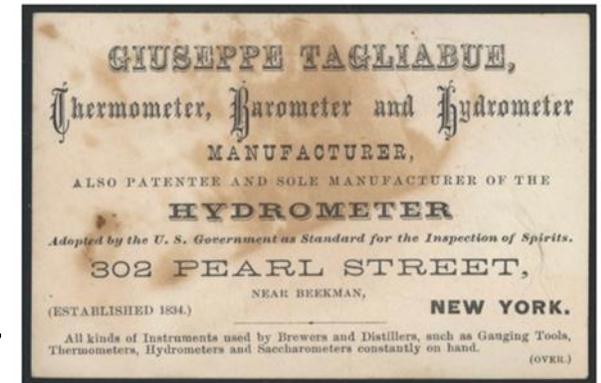


# NYC LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION ON 250 WATER STREET

- HHC's newest planning for the Seaport area is an effort to trade public amenities for a zoning exemption for another high-rise building, this time not on the water but within the historic district. The site HHC wants to put a new tower on - 250 Water Street - has a long history of proposals being rejected by the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) as inappropriate because new proposed tall structures "**would dominate and overwhelm the neighboring buildings in the district**" – LPC Chair Kent Barwick.
- After the numerous rejections by the LPC, the City rezoned the Seaport Historic District in 2003 to a contextual zoning designation (C6-2A) that limits the height of new buildings to 120 feet.

SAFE  
DEVELOPMENT AT  
250 WATER STREET

- This site was previously the location for three mercury thermometer factory buildings, a chemical company and a gasoline service station.
- The site requires extensive remediation to remove toxic materials before development can proceed. The developer HHC, has been approved for participation in NY State's Brownfield Cleanup Program; the early planning and investigation stages are now in progress.
- Given the recent financial challenges facing the Howard Hughes Corp., the Seaport Coalition seeks assurances that the work will be completed in a timely, transparent and professional manner.





HAER No. NY-156-1

Aerial view - of South Street Seaport area - showing piers 17 and 18, Tin and New Market Buildings – center middle; ca 1981-82; Library of Congress, HAER/HABS Collections

# ELEANOR'S WALKWAY A GOAL FOR THE FUTURE

One aspect of the Downtown *East River Waterfront Study* undertaken in 2002 by **Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM)**, is pedestrian and bicycle use of part of the FDR Drive Viaduct.

**According to the SOM proposal:**

- ✓ The FDR Drive Viaduct was long seen as an impediment to claiming the East River waterfront for pedestrian use
- ✓ The traffic capacity of the FDR Drive Viaduct roadbed is in fact wider than the traffic demand south of the Brooklyn Bridge. Studies show that the roadbed can be reduced to two lanes and still serve downtown access and circulation requirements.



# HISTORIC SEAPORT – WHO GUIDES THIS PUBLIC ASSET

**A new form of governance is needed to ensure that the public's interests are at the center of public asset planning and development.**





**Figure 8: Study Area Zones and adjacent upland areas**

# EAST RIVER TRUST – GUIDING HISTORIC SEAPORT DEVELOPMENT



The Seaport Coalition advocates support for the creation of a public asset oversight entity, **empowered by city mandate**, to ensure that the Seaport's history, character and sense of place are preserved



As with other major NYC projects, a new sponsoring entity (such as a Local Development Corporation) would act as a planning team for the management and funding of public assets in the Seaport, and serve as the public partner for private component coordination

# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT – *THE PEOPLE WHO WORKED THERE*



fish on the docks at Fulton



weighing fish on a scoop scale, Fulton



New York, New York. Loading boxes of fish to be shipped to hotels and restaurants at the Fulton fish market  
photo: Gordon Parks, 1943, Library of Congress, FSA/OWI Collection

# SOUTH STREET SEAPORT – *THE PEOPLE INSPIRED BY IT*

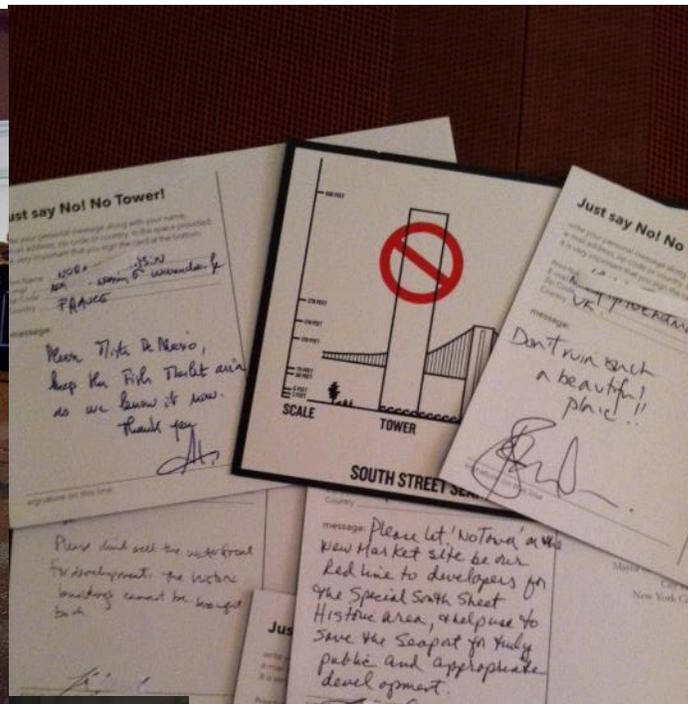


Untitled: [A dog walking in front of the Fulton Fish Market - New Market Building]  
Photo: ERICH HARTMANN, ca. 1955; credit: Erich Hartmann/Magnum Photos

EVERY NOW AND THEN, seeking to rid my mind of thoughts of death and doom, I get up early and go down to Fulton Fish Market. I usually arrive around five-thirty, and take a walk through the two huge open-fronted market sheds, the Old Market and the New Market, whose fronts rest on South Street and whose backs rest on piles in the East River.

JOSEPH MITCHELL, *Up in the Old Hotel*, 1952.

Untitled: [A dog walking in front of the Fulton Fish Market - New Market Building]  
Photo: Erich Hartmann, ca. 1955; credit: Erich Hartmann/Magnum Photos



Oct. 29, 2016 Rally to keep the New Market site in the public domain for public benefit and use, and redeveloped to honor its waterfront setting and working class history; hosted by Friends of South St. Seaport (FOSSS) with special guest speakers including - Council Member Margaret Chin and Manhattan Borough President Gail Brewer

## ADVOCATING FOR A SPECIAL PLACE

Clockwise from top left: Save Our Seaport (SOS) - "Pirates" march; Just Say No! No Tower! - Postcards to the Mayor; ChildrenFirst: children add their voices to concerns over 250 Water St.; Friends of South St. Seaport (FOSSS) – Rally to keep the New Market site in the public domain for public benefit & use