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Board of Representatives  
City of Stamford  
888 Washington Blvd.  
Stamford, CT 06901

Re: Henry Street Discontinuance/Gateway Development  
July 27, 2010

Dear Honorable Member:

I own property near the proposed Gateway Development at the intersection of Pulaski Street and Greenwich Avenue. I am also a long time Waterside resident who experiences daily the increasing irritation of traffic delays on Southfield and Greenwich Avenues, Pulaski Street, and around the train station.

Since you are now considering abandonment of West Henry Street to the Gateway development, this letter examines major issues raised by such an abandonment. This is a decision that asks that a crossing at West Henry Street for relieving traffic congestion in the area and better connect Waterside and the South End, long and repeatedly recognized by both the Traffic and Land Use Bureaus as an important link<sup>(1. a,b,c)</sup>, be forever abandoned for ourselves and future generations. A decision that requires the board to be so certain of its understanding of future needs that it can without a shadow of doubt make the irreversible, **and unnecessary**, decision to abandon a crossing that as recently as October 2009<sup>(1. c)</sup> was reaffirmed by the Traffic Bureau for mitigating the traffic impacts of this development and improving mobility to and from Waterside.

The need is not to discontinue, but to extend West Henry Street. This previously planned extension would relieve traffic on Pulaski Street. Henry and Pulaski Streets would back up each other when one is closed due to accidents, road, or utility work, ensuring availability of at least one crossing at all times for the public, businesses, and, more importantly, for first responders. This is a public health, safety, and welfare issue.

First: Abandonment of West Henry Street is **absolutely not necessary** to proceed with the project as planned; a previous, fundamentally equal application<sup>(1. b)</sup> did allow for a West Henry Street crossing. **This is not a false choice of either no development or no West Henry Street.** As evident from the latest proposed site plan for this development, parking would be reduced by only four spaces out of 1,899 to accommodate this crossing. The City can grant the developer an easement to construct the underground 1,794 car garage below the street right of way. Financing of projects with easement arrangements are common place. The project already proposes a public pedestrian easement over the very same street right-of-way which has not been an impediment to financing. The proposed dead-end layout is essentially a "super block" design which has long been abandoned by cities the world over. Even New York City, in redevelopment of the World Trade Center site, restored some previously discontinued streets to improve mobility and recapture their contribution to civic life.

Second: A Henry Street crossing, the very same street that is being considered for discontinuance, mitigates two of the following three major flaws in the currently proposed site plan:

Flaw #1. A single point of access on Washington Boulevard, already congested during rush hours.

This is a public health, safety, and welfare issue not to be ignored. Imagine first responders, such as a fire engine or an ambulance, attempting to reach the site during rush hours with Washington Boulevard as their only option. Imagine the need to evacuate the site.

Flaw #2. Access to the 1,794 car garage from Pulaski Street, a narrow, already problematic, key link between Waterside and the South End.

Given the mix of heavy industrial, commercial, residential, and first responders traffic on Pulaski Street, injecting the garage traffic from a 3-lane driveway into the Pulaski traffic is inviting tragedy. Imagine garage bound traffic from points west having to make a left turn against west bound Pulaski traffic; or eastbound cars leaving the garage, again making left turns into Pulaski traffic. **As officially noted by the Traffic Bureau**, this arrangement "will have adverse traffic safety and operations in the vicinity of the driveway"<sup>(2)</sup>. Imagine a 40-ton truck competing with passenger car garage traffic. This again is a public health, safety, and welfare issue that in good conscience cannot be ignored.

Flaw #3. The two "out parcels" left out of the site plan lead to a compromised, awkward design which shortchanges the potential of the site, leaves essential road infrastructure improvements unfinished, and deprives the City of 130 of the 200 housing units (and the proportionate share of affordable units) previously agreed to. Both the Planning Board and the Land Use Bureau recommend that these parcels be included<sup>(3. a,b)</sup>. Without them, the City may be faced with the troublesome and costly burden of having to impose eminent domain for property acquisition and eviction under delicate circumstances, and bear the costs of completing necessary road infrastructure improvements left unfinished.

The aggregate impact of these flaws will lead to massive traffic congestion, and will diminish the potential of this and other future developments and of the surrounding downtown areas.

However, this need not be. The long proposed West Henry Street crossing provides a solution that mitigates the first two major flaws discussed above, as well as enhance the redevelopment potential of nearby Waterside properties.

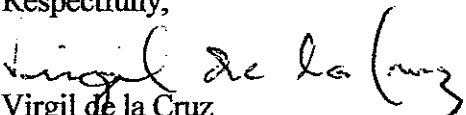
With this crossing, the Gateway development is no longer limited in access to a single point, no longer a "dead-end" super-block, no longer a challenge for first responders, no longer isolated from the rest of the city.

And, with a West Henry Street crossing a major portion of the Pulaski traffic will be attracted to the new crossing, mitigating the conflict with the garage access at Pulaski Street.

Regarding the two "out parcels", as indicated by both the Land Use Bureau and the Planning Board, every effort should be made to bring the out parcels into the site<sup>(3. a,b)</sup>. This will allow the required traffic improvements on Pulaski Street and Washington Boulevard to be delivered complete (not partially), and allow for the construction of the full 200 housing units (and the proportionate share of affordable units) previously agreed to.

As a minimum, the applicant should be asked to revise the application to accommodate the long planned West Henry Street Crossing, and the resolution to discontinue West Henry Street rescinded. The end result is a win-win situation where the critical flaws in the site plan are corrected, and the City and the developer achieve an end result worthy of the potential of the site.

Respectfully,

  
Virgil de la Cruz

Notes: (Copies of these documents have been submitted by multiple speakers at previous hearings)

- (1) (a) Traffic Bureau letter, June 24, 2007: ***"Extending Henry Street across west branch north of Pulaski Street with a new bridge across the river will significantly minimize the traffic impacts of the development and benefit the traffic in the vicinity..."***
  - (b) Land Use Bureau letter, June 17, 2008: ***"The applicant was requested to incorporate future plans for a revised Rippowam River crossing pattern within their site plan. The June 11 application does allow greater flexibility to provide a new bridge connection directly from Henry Street to Greenwich Avenue"***
  - (c) Traffic Bureau letter, October 2009: ***"...Henry Street...is an important and direct link across the river and is a future transportation link between the South End and Waterside area."***
- (2) Engineering Bureau Bureau Letter, October 13, 2009" ***".....it will have adverse traffic safety and operations in the vicinity of the driveway..."***
- (3) (a) Planning Board letter to the Zoning Board June 23, 2010: ***"Every effort should be made to acquire the two out-parcels as noted in the Pre-Application Report."***
  - (b) Land Use Bureau letter to Zoning Board. April 22, 2010: ***"Further effort should be made to acquire the two out-parcels...."***