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TESTIMONY OF JERROLD L. NADLER
Before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Re: St. Vincent's Catholic Medical Center

July 15, 2008

Thank you for providing me and the general public an opportunity to provide testimony regarding St. Vincent's Hospital's request for a hardship exemption in their revised development plans. I would like to first begin by thanking all of the parties involved in this important decision for their dedication and hard work to ensure that the development proposed at this site takes into consideration all of the unique characteristics that is Greenwich Village. It is because of these efforts that there has been great improvement in the development plans for both the new hospital as well as the residential development by Rudin Management.

This past April I submitted testimony to the Commission which outlined my concerns for the various applications submitted by St. Vincent's and its development partner Rudin Management. In that testimony, I articulated my support for a new hospital located on 7th Avenue South, while calling into question the demolition and construction of new residential buildings inside the historic district. Today I renew my support for St. Vincent's Catholic Medical Center, and support their hardship exemption application to replace the O'Toole building with a new, state-of-the-art, green hospital.

It is not enough for there to simply be a hospital in Greenwich Village; the current facility is old and antiquated and cannot offer the state of the art medical care that is so desperately needed in the City and Greenwich Village. The proposal for the new hospital on the O'Toole site is the only appropriate place for a new hospital within the Village. The O'Toole site because of its location on a wide and major trafficked avenue is essentially the only location for a new hospital facility. Furthermore its location at a nexus of public transportation facilities makes its location ideal. The calls for the hospital to explore alternative sites for the hospital are misguided and do not take into consideration these crucial details.

Additionally, for St. Vincent's Comprehensive Cancer Center, located at 325 West 15th Street, to continue to qualify as an on-campus provider based facility for Medicare purposes the hospital must remain in the Greenwich Village area. According to Federal Law, the Cancer Center cannot be any further than 250 yards from the Hospital. In 2008, with the help of my office, St. Vincent's received a waiver from the Federal government to allow it to build the

Cancer Center 327 yards from the hospital. To date, this is the only waiver of its kind ever granted by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Region II (which consists of New York, New Jersey and the Virgin Islands). This adds an additional element, in which relocating the hospital from its current location would significantly impact St. Vincent's ability to continue to provide this critical service. Finally, let's remember the wonderful care that St. Vincent's has provided to the Village over the 150 years of its existence. St. Vincent's has the largest HIV/AIDS center in the entire state, provides in home services for seniors, works with numerous homeless shelters throughout the city and maintains many other community health programs essential to all members of the St. Vincent's community, not just those within the Greenwich Village Historic District.

The proposal before the Landmarks Preservation Commission is unique. The hardship application forces the commissioners to think outside their role as preservationists and to consider what it means to have a state-of-the-art hospital within a historic district. It is my belief that St. Vincent's can remain in the Greenwich Village Historic District on the O'Toole site and continue to contribute to the rich history of this neighborhood. The St. Vincent's architect has listened to the comments of not only the Commissioners, but those of the community and the elected officials. I look forward to their continued cooperation in exploring ways in which the massing for the hospital can fit more appropriately within the historic district. I stand in concert with the Community Board on their concerns regarding the proposed materials for the façade, agreeing that the color should strive to be closer to a warm amber than anything too yellow or orange. Based on the relationship the architect has demonstrated with the community I believe that as this process moves forward the architect will continue to be responsive to the concerns of the Commission and the community.

Moving to the residential proposal on the east side of Seventh Avenue, I commend the Commissioners for their call to preserve the façade of the Smith and Raskob buildings and allowing for adaptive reuse of the Spellman building and Nurses Residence. As mentioned in my April testimony, the preservation of these buildings serves to preserve the history of the hospital as told through these structures and helps to tell the story of this dynamic neighborhood. The preservation of these buildings is a true victory for all involved parties; however, concerns remain in regards to the overall height and bulk as well as the particular design elements selected by the architect.

While the community and I appreciate the reduction in height on the Seventh Avenue residential tower, I implore the developers to continue to explore ways in which further reductions can be achieved. The street wall proposal is fitting; however, the set back penthouses and mechanicals raise questions regarding their appropriateness in the Village. Additionally, the window openings are not reflective of the neighborhood in which the larger buildings consist of more fabric than glass. It is important that the replacement building is sensitive to the historic district. The introduction of ground-level retail space is welcome and reflects the mixed use nature of the neighborhood; however, concerns have been raised over retail entrances on the side streets. I encourage the development of a master plan for the retail storefronts that can serve to ease some of these concerns as well as others having to do with signage and awnings.

Many concerns have been raised within the community related to some of the design elements throughout the entire project. While the community appreciates the architect's attempts to design buildings that relate to the historic district, it is generally felt that some materials, including the channeled glass and patinated copper, are out of place. I encourage the architect to continue to work with the community to adapt various design elements to ensure that they are respectful of the historic district.

This process has been long and, at times, arduous. Many members of the community have dedicated much time to protect their neighborhood while at the same time understanding the needs of St. Vincent's. Our shared interest in the betterment of our community is noted, and I look forward to this dialogue as we move forward with a new St. Vincent's. I strongly encourage the LPC to grant the Hardship designation necessary so that St. Vincent's can continue to serve not only the neighborhood of the Greenwich Village Historic District but the entire west side of Manhattan from the Battery to 59th Street.

I thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today and look forward to the testimony of my colleagues and members of the community.