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For Immediate Release

Protect the Village Historic District Will Appeal Narrow Landmarks Preservation Commission Vote to Allow Demolition of Historic Curran/O'Toole Building

New York, NY, October 28, 2008—

Protect the Village Historic District (PVHD), a community advocacy group with over 1,000 members devoted to preserving historic Greenwich Village, expressed disappointment in today's 6 to 4 decision of the Landmarks Preservation Commission to allow St. Vincent's Hospital to demolish the historic Curran/O'Toole Building on the basis of hardship.

"We believe the law is clear that there is no hardship in this case," said Tom Molner, Chair of PVHD. "We will be appealing the decision to the courts. The Commission's ruling would not only do great damage to the Greenwich Village Historic District – it would open historic districts across the City to similar destructive inroads. PVHD will do everything we can to ensure that this does not happen."

"We agree with the strong dissents from four Commissioners that an energetic and independent review of alternatives is needed here. We call upon our elected officials to step in and act. They should help our community to find a solution which will allow the hospital to modernize without destroying a Greenwich Village landmark and building a 300 foot high-rise tower in its place," Mr. Molner continued.

The Commission's decision authorizes St. Vincent's to demolish the Curran/O'Toole Building even though the Commissioners unanimously agreed last May that the structure is

historically of great significance and should not be razed. Originally the headquarters of the National Maritime Union, and the one of the few remaining vestiges of an era when maritime commerce dominated the West Side, the Curran/O’Toole Building was designed by Albert Ledner, a student of Frank Lloyd Wright. In a recent review, the State of New York concluded that the Building had national, as well as Citywide, historic importance and qualified to be listed on the Federal and State Registers of Historic Places.

St. Vincent’s acquired the Building in 1973, when the protections provided by the Landmarks Law were already in place. St. Vincent’s has claimed that it needs to demolish the Curran/O’Toole Building in order to continue its charitable mission and make way for a new 300 foot tall hospital tower.

“If a charity can acquire a building knowing that it is protected by the Landmarks Law and then turn around and demolish it by claiming hardship, the law is going to be followed more in the breach than in the observance,” said Delia Guazzo, Vice-Chair of PVHD and an attorney. “And the consequence in this case is not limited to the destruction of a landmark building. St. Vincent’s plan is to build a 300 foot high tower on the site – a structure that will be tremendously destructive of the Greenwich Village Historic District, looming over the District and visible for blocks around. No person or institution – not a hospital and not the current Landmarks Commission – should be above the Landmarks Law.”

At the same time, PVHD applauded the four Commissioners who voted against the finding of hardship.

“We are very pleased that four Commissioners understood the law and recognized that the demolition of the Curran/O’Toole Building would be an irreparable loss,” said Albert K. Butzel, PVHD’s counsel. “Here is a historic structure that is being successfully used by St.

Vincent's in the same way it has been used for the last 35 years. So the Building is not causing the Hospital any hardship – it is simply inconvenient for a hospital corporation that wants to maximize its revenues from a high rise condominium deal with a for-profit real estate developer. By one swing vote the Commissioners misunderstood and misapplied the law, and the precedent the Commission has set, if affirmed, would severely undercut historic preservation in the City. Indeed, the Commission's ruling effectively seeks to turn back the United States Supreme Court decision that saved Grand Central 30 years ago. For the agency entrusted with protecting the City's historic resources to do this is inexplicable. PVHD is confident that the decision will be reversed on appeal.”

About PVHD

Protect the Village Historic District was formed to advocate for the Greenwich Village community and its interests in the face of a massive and inappropriate development proposal from the Rudin Organization and St. Vincent's. PVHD seeks to significantly downsize and reshape this destructive proposal and to protect the Greenwich Village Historic District. PVHD does not oppose the modernization of St. Vincent's. It does, however, consider it vital that any development respect our historic neighborhood, the City Landmark Preservation laws, and the values of our community. PVHD supports alternatives that accomplish these goals. PVHD is a sponsored project of the Citizen Action program of the Open Space Institute, Inc. (OSI). Views expressed by PVHD are not necessarily those of OSI.

For more information on PVHD, see www.protectthevillage.org.