



CITY OF BOSTON • MASSACHUSETTS

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
THOMAS M. MENINO

March 8, 2010

Mr. Steven Roth
Chairman of the Board
Vornado Realty Trust
888 Seventh Street
New York, NY 10019

Dear Mr. Roth:

Recently, I read an article entitled “Steve Roth, Uncorked” in the New York Observer (March 4, 2010). In the story, which deals with your recent remarks to an audience at Columbia University, you and Vornado are described as deliberately perpetuating blight at the former Alexander’s Department Store location in New York City on Lexington Avenue. Specifically, you are quoted as saying “Why did I do nothing?...the more the building was a blight, the more the governments would want this to be redeveloped; the more help they would give us when the time came.”

The quotes attributed to you on this subject are simply outrageous. Admitting that you embraced a deliberate policy of long-term blight, at a major commercial location in New York City, exhibits a callous disregard for the well-being of the city and its people. Let’s be clear about what blight means. It’s not just about aesthetics, though it certainly scars an urban environment. Blight kills jobs by destroying an area’s appeal to businesses and customers. It destroys a neighborhood’s residential appeal. It drives property values down, and it promotes crime. The notion that you would purposefully cause this to occur--not due to financing difficulties or other problems beyond your control, but as an intentional cynical ploy to extract concessions from the public sector--is inexcusable.

According to reports, you got a big laugh out of your audience when you confirmed that your blight strategy did, in fact, pay off. The humor is lost on me. Inflicting pain on people, businesses, and communities to inflate the return to your enormously profitable company is reprehensible.

Vornado’s deliberate blight strategy in New York raises questions about its failure to make any progress in the redevelopment of the One Franklin Street project in Boston. In the past,

Vornado and its development partner, Gale International, have insisted that One Franklin Street remains dormant because financing is unavailable. However, your recent remarks undercut the credibility of your team's explanation in Boston. While I appreciate that there are global economic forces that have slowed the progress of development across the country, your comments and past actions at the Alexander Department store indicate that a consistent policy of indifference is at work at One Franklin.

I am not willing to let One Franklin Street lay dormant. I am directing the Boston Redevelopment Authority to examine eminent domain options for the One Franklin Street site. I will also ask that the Authority re-evaluate the approvals it has already given this project. This development is too important to Downtown Crossing and to the entire City of Boston to be used as a bargaining chip to improve your bottom line.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas M. Menino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T" and "M".

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston