



***RENEWING THE CALL FOR CRUISE TOURISM REGULATIONS
AND RESTUDY OF FINAL TERMINAL LOCATION***

March 31, 2011

A recent citizen-driven proposal to move the location of a new cruise passenger terminal to the State Ports Authority's Columbus Street Terminal has revealed the obvious: no neighborhood wants the new terminal within its boundaries. Whether it is the Charlestowne or Historic Ansonborough neighborhood associations urging a location as far north as possible on the Cooper River downtown, or the East Side and Mazyck-Wraggborough neighborhoods hoping that it remains at Union Pier, each of these neighborhoods raises valid and serious concerns about quality of life impacts on their residents. It is unfair that because of a failure by city council to enact reasonable regulations on the size, scale and frequency of cruise ship arrivals and departures in Charleston, our historic neighborhoods along the Cooper River are left to fight among themselves to determine what the "least bad" option is. For this reason, among others, we have nominated Charleston to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 11 Most Endangered List.

The unanimous position of our board of directors, released on July 27, 2010, included a call for a reconsideration of the final location for the cruise passenger terminal. The location of this terminal will have a significant long-term impact on the areas in closest proximity to it and to the entire city as well. The State Ports Authority tells us that a Columbus Street Terminal location would raise security issues by mixing cruise and cargo operations. Although this may be a valid point, we are confident that security would be an issue at any location and presumably is a matter that has been reasonably addressed in other communities. We are told by city leaders that unless Carnival cruise ships dock at Union Pier, that old warehouses may stand as spite fences along East Bay Street for years to come. This is a short-sighted view that ignores the market reality that there is greater long-term economic value and local job creation opportunity in private ownership and redevelopment of that property and the restoration and rebuilding of our historic waterfront neighborhoods, which will protect and enhance property values as well.

The request for a restudy of the location of a cruise passenger terminal, and full disclosure of an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of various sites, is not too much to ask of our state and its ports authority. Last year in our position statement we called for maximum transparency. On February 23, 2011 our State Treasurer, Curtis Loftis, requested the same when he asked the State Ports Authority to present a detailed overview of the proposed use of Union Pier including documentation of property values, revenues, expenses and implications for existing operations based on various scenarios which included the sale of the entire property. The Authority's response was for the treasurer to look at its website, unionpierplan.com. This is not transparency, but a disappointing response that falls short of our expectations for full disclosure of the Authority's long-term plans.

Until we as concerned citizens of our historic city fully understand the long-term implications of the construction and permanent location of a cruise terminal downtown, until we have accurate economic impact data based on actual history rather than theoretical projections, and until city council imposes reasonable regulations on the size, scale and frequency of cruise ships loading and unloading on our riverbank, there is no reason why any of our residents and neighborhoods should allow the State Ports Authority to decide what is in our best interest. We deserve that our government officials make an intelligent and informed decision after a public discussion through a transparent process.

We should be working together as a city to improve and reinforce the quality of life of all of our historic neighborhoods, and one wonders how cruise ships advance that effort. Without transparency and without regulations, our future remains uncertain and endangered.