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City of Buffalo Train Site Selection Committee
Public Discussion for Potential New Train Station Locations to replace Exchange Street
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Buffalo Common Council Chamber
City Hall, 13th Floor, Buffalo, NY

Ladies & Gentlemen of the train station site selection committee, I first want to thank you for hearing my comments today. My name is Laura Grybel. I am a public school music teacher. I grew up in Elma and currently live in Cheektowaga, but for the entirety of my life I have considered myself a Buffalonian; more so now than ever, as I was just recently able to return to the area after having been displaced to Rochester for 3 ½ years in order to sustain gainful employment in my field. It is great to be able to finally be back home to stay.

I come to you today with a plea to bring Buffalo's Central Terminal back to life as our great city's primary rail station. I know my account of my personal emotional connection to the station must echo that of many from the area. Buffalo is a city rich in history, culture, architecture, and heart, our main train station should be a reflection of those great attributes. I can't imagine that any newly drawn up plans for new sites could provide the same kind of reflection of those great aspects of our city as a fully restored, functioning, and revitalized version of the great building that played such a pivotal role in Buffalo's history.

My own humble story of my connection to the Central Terminal started long ago during one of my family's yearly Holy Week trip to the Broadway Market in 1998. I had been tasked with a school project that I can't remember the exact directive of- but it was something along the lines of "give a presentation on something culturally or historically significant that not many people know about or is forgotten." I knew the Broadway Market is a treasure trove of cultural activity, so I went in that year with a greater sense of awareness of everything happening at the market- hoping to find just that perfect, specific, "off radar" item to report on. The Central Terminal Restoration Volunteers had a booth loaded with information, pictures, and pleas for volunteers and support for the preservation and restoration efforts. I was stunned that something so magnificent was right here in Buffalo and even more confounded at the idea that it could be left to fall in such disarray. Armed with lots of pictures and info on the terminal, I requested that my parents take me to see it in person- my father, who grew up in the city Buffalo, admittedly had forgotten it was there and agreed to take us over that day. As we pulled up to the building, and I got out of the car- it was sort of a surreal experience. I was stunned and awed by the grandness of the building towering before me. Sure, it was run-down from neglect, but even during that time when it was probably at its worst condition-the building exuded a presence that just drew me in and captivated me. My father too, had been glad we stopped that day, being reminded of its awesomeness. Through further research for that school report I learned so much about this incredible structure lying right here in our big city. The more I learned the more I hoped to one day see it come to life again. The project and my fascination with the Terminal itself also had the added side benefit of me learning a lot about the history of Buffalo's East Side and it's connections to my own heritage.

Through my adult life I have tried to keep tabs on the progress of securing and restoring the terminal. My yearly Broadway Market trips continue to include a visit to see it. When I was rehearsing regularly at the Colored Musicians Club, I'd swing by to visit the building. I've attended functions like

the Halloween parties and car shows held there. I've brought along different people on these trips who have ranged from having "heard of the terminal before" and to some who didn't even know it existed. Regardless of background knowledge on the structure, every person's reaction to seeing it for the first time, is exactly like the one I had as a 13 year old- utter amazement. THAT is the kind of place we should have for our train station, and it's ALREADY there! We don't have to try to re-imagine some kind of marvel. One exists, right here, and it has all the historical charm to go with it. The kind of historical charm that is a signature of the City of Buffalo.

My next point in supporting the Central Terminal as our Buffalo train station is from that of the perspective of an Amtrak rail passenger. There is an annual international conference for music teachers in Chicago every year in December that always looms dangerously close to Christmas holiday. My preferred method of transportation is Amtrak because with Buffalo and Chicago weather who wants to be stuck in O'Hare airport on Christmas or Christmas Eve. I trust the trains, because come snow or ice, more often than not- if the planes are grounded, that Lakeshore Limited Line is usually still running. I have experienced this type of weather occurrence multiple times, where my Chicago to Buffalo bound train ticket becomes a hot commodity when someone's trying to get home for the holidays during winter conditions. The trains become packed full and often, Buffalo isn't the primary destination of my fellow passengers, but instead a re-routed means for them to get where they are going when they can't fly. This creates scenario #1 for our amazing train station to provide that wonder and awe to the pleasantly surprised passer-through. I believe that a restored Central Terminal holds the power to entice people to want to come back to Buffalo and stay a while. Scenario #2 to wow the unexpected traveler comes during the train stops and breaks. Periodically, on a trip, you can find yourself getting a few minutes at some stops, to get off the train to stretch your legs, use actual facilities, grab a snack, grab a smoke, etc. Do we want our stop to be a typical run of the mill, strictly business, nothing more than a restroom, ticket counter & a pop machine stop, when we have an existing building already equipped with tracks, platforms, AND the power to entice people to come take a closer look at what the great city of Buffalo has to offer- that many other cities can't and don't.

I briefed my students at school about why I wasn't going to be in today- I thought it was important to set a good example to them about speaking up about things that are important to you (through appropriate channels). Naturally, they asked to see pictures of the Terminal, so I showed them a few "then and now" photos. All reacted the same as everyone I've ever seen be introduced to the building for the first time (including myself): with wide-eyed wonder, and a desire to go explore it.

So while my account doesn't provide you with numerical facts or scientific reasonings for why the Buffalo Central Terminal should be chosen as site for a "new" train station; I know that I am not alone in the population of Western New Yorkers who hold an emotional connection to, sense of pride in, and fascination with the Buffalo Central Terminal site. I hope that the emotional, historical, cultural, and aesthetic potential of the new station is weighted in your discussion at least as equally as the number crunching and science. I also know that even the most elaborate, high tech, and fancy rendering of plans for other locations will fall short in their ability to provide the accurate and deep rooted reflection of our great city of Buffalo when they are compared to a revitalized Buffalo Central terminal.

Thank you again for allowing me time to speak today and for all of your time and careful consideration in this important decision for the city of Buffalo.