Dear Bermuda,

An ad published on Tuesday of this week in the Royal Gazette contained several statements about the Southampton SDO that are inaccurate and misleading. We understand that some people still have concerns about the SDO, but we think it’s important for you to have the correct information about the proposed development and the impact it will have on the island.

ZONING MATTERS: The SDO will result in minimal changes to zoning on the Southampton property. However, none of the land where we are proposing to build units is currently “protected green space.” Currently, the property is zoned for tourism, residential and recreational use; at this point, none of it is considered protected land. In the diagram on the right the two circles are the only areas we’re asking to be changed from recreational to residential and tourism. In fact, approximately 60% of the entire property will remain green space, including the three tracts of land that we are proposing be designated Protected Conservation Areas. Currently, this is a hotel property, not a nature reserve. Referring to this project as a “massive overdevelopment” is nothing more than fear-mongering and an exaggeration.

IF WE BUILD IT: We are confident that the residents and tourists will come. This is not the first time that other hotel properties have been home to two-, three- and four-storey buildings – consider Belmont Hills, Newstead, Tucker’s Point and The Loren where this development model has been a success. As the sketches below illustrate, it is possible for the proposed units to be tasteful, with an authentic Bermuda look and feel. In addition, some of the units will be built into the hillsides, reducing the actual visual impact. The construction will be done thoughtfully – why would we want to undermine the viability of the hotel and the experience of our guests? Ultimately, the Southampton SDO will be part of the organic evolution of Bermuda’s tourism sector.

STAYING THE COURSE: The modifications being proposed for the golf course are minor, involving slight reconfigurations to a number of holes. The Turtle Hill Golf Club will not be “downgraded” but will remain the world-class, 18-hole, par-three golf course that Bermudians and tourists alike have come to love. Plus, the course won’t be the only asset on the property. The revamped Beach Club, recreational facilities, and outstanding food and beverage options will make the Fairmont Southampton the place to meet, stay and play.

GOOD FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY: The economic gains related to the Southampton development will be significant – construction jobs, full-time employment for workers in the hospitality sector and revenue for the services sector, including maintenance, retail, restaurants and taxi drivers. Through this project, the Fairmont Southampton is poised to become the largest private employer on the island. The GDP benefit is estimated at between $23.6 million and $84.7 million per year.

As the public consultation period for the revised Southampton SDO draws to a close, the project’s detractors are encouraging you to “make your voice heard.” We couldn’t agree more. It’s time to really think about this proposal and the positive short- and long-term impact it will have on the island. If you want to see increased airlift, an improved tourism sector and a boost to the economy, make it known today. Future generations will thank you. They’ll thank you for a four-season destination resort and the year-round visitors and secure employment it will bring to Bermuda.

Sincerely,
Westend Properties