



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JOHN WEIS
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

January 20, 2010

Ann Weisbrod
President
Hudson Yards Development Corporation
225 West 24th Street, Suite 1402
New York, New York 10122

Re: Hudson Park and Boulevard

Dear Ms. Weisbrod:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) has reviewed the design concept presented by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. (MVVA), the designated landscape architect for the planned Hudson Park and Boulevard (the "Park"). The comments that follow are based on MVVA's presentation to CB4 members on December 9, 2010; it is our hope and expectation that this open dialogue will continue as the Park moves toward completion.

Brief History of Hudson Yards Open Space Plans

In February 2003, the Department of City Planning (DCP) and the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) released the Hudson Yards Master Plan Preferred Direction Open Space Plan (the "Preferred Direction") (Attachment 1) which detailed a new open space network of over 20 acres, including Hudson Park and Boulevard. Subsequently, DCP released the Hudson Yards Development Information (the "Development Information") (Attachment 2) which represented this extensive network of open space. The Preferred Direction and the Development Information also proposed:

- A series of parks and greening measures along Dyer Avenue;
- A mid block open space on West 42nd Street;
- A landscaped active recreation space on Block 675, between West 29th and West; 30th Streets between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues; and
- A full block open space on Block 679 between West 33rd and West 34th Streets.

DCP certified the Hudson Yards Rezoning in 2004; however, plans for this extensive greening did not proceed. Therefore, while a great deal of open space had been proposed and promised for this area, only the plans for Hudson Park and Boulevard materialized.

Originally part of a comprehensive plan for open space, Hudson Park and Boulevard, the sole remaining component, is currently before the Board. Hudson Park and Boulevard spans six blocks, from West 33rd Street to West 39th Street, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues. The three blocks between West 33rd and West 35th Streets are the only ones that are currently owned by the City of New York and controlled by the Hudson Yards Development Corporation (HYDC), and thus are the only ones that are certain to be built. Given this greatly reduced open space component, CB4 wants the open space to be as useful as possible for both residential and commercial users.

West 33rd – 34th Street: Block #1

Proposed Design

The proposed design for Hudson Boulevard Park Block #1 is essentially a landscaped plaza that accommodates the need for circulation space for the new #7 subway line entrance and elevator. There will be several paths crossing the plaza creating landscaped islands with benches at the edges of these islands. The Department of Transportation (DOT) is working on plans for a dedicated bus lane on 34th Street which would have bus traffic in the southern lane and one-way car traffic in the northern lane with the lanes separated by a median. The lighting in the park will be DOT's standard lighting and will be built into the planted areas instead of the paved spaces.

CB4 Comments & Requests

- CB4 agrees that this block needs to be a plaza in order to provide circulation space for the new #7 subway line entrance and elevator given the high volume of future pedestrian use.
- CB4 supports incorporating all of the lighting into the planted areas, however; CB4 requests that all lighting be the more welcoming white lighting that is used in the 34th Street Business Improvement District and Hudson River Park.
- CB4's primary concern with this block is that it pushes pedestrians to the edge of the space whereas CB4 would like pedestrians to be evenly distributed throughout the entirety of the open space.
- The Board is concerned that the bollards around Blocks #1 and #2 be of a design that complements the design of the Park.

West 34th – 35th Street: Block #2

Proposed Design

The proposed design for Hudson Boulevard Park Block #2 is again essentially a landscaped plaza. It includes a water fountain that can be used as a play element in the

summer and an ice ribbon for skating in the winter. The proposed design has open seating areas and moveable tables to support those retail establishments. The Hudson Yards zoning is a retail requirement for the two southernmost blocks which face the future Park.

CB4 Comments & Requests

- CB4 fully supports a summer water fountain with a play element on this block.
- CB4 is concerned that the consumption of usable open space resulting from the use of hardscape pavement for the proposed ice skating ribbon creates more plaza space and less green park space.
- The ice skating ribbon is a creative feature, but CB4 does not support the inclusion of an ice ribbon at this location. Since the ice skating ribbon would only be operable for approximately 4 months out of the year, the Board would prefer to have an expanded lawn that would draw both commercial and residential users throughout the majority of the year.
- The Park should clearly delineate moveable tables and chairs as a permanent *public* space such as those found in Bryant Park.
- Because the Board experienced “private café creep” at the Worldwide Plaza development and wants to prevent that from occurring at the Park, the Park should not include any private cafes or be used by any adjacent retail establishments.

West 35th – 36th Street: Block #3

Proposed Design

The proposed design for Hudson Boulevard Park Block #3 is again a landscaped plaza. This block includes a proposed water column, café, and small playground. In the summer, the water column would have flowing water and in the winter, it would become an ice sculpture.

CB4 Comments & Requests

- CB4 fully supports both the use of the café space as it has been presented by MVVA and the proposed water column and finds the water column to be a creative and distinct structure.
- Play space for children in this area is greatly needed and should be provided in the first phase of the Park. CB4 requests that this block incorporate a larger active play area for children to support the existing and expanding residential population of the neighborhood.
- New development in the Hudson Yards is expected to create approximately 12,887 new units of housing thereby increasing the population of the Hudson Yards neighborhood by approximately 22,200 residents.

- Already built near Hudson Yards are:

Development	Number of Units
455 West 37 th Street	388
505 West 37 th Street	836
Tower 37 – 350 West 37 th Street	205
Emerald Green – 320 West 38 th Street	569
River Place II – 600 West 42 nd Street	1276
440 West 42 nd Street	800
Total Units	4074

- Because 20% of the new units are permanently affordable, they support many families which have very limited access to play space for children.

West 37th – 39th Street: Blocks #4-6

CB4 is reserving specific comment on Blocks #4-6 at this time. If and when HYDC moves ahead with acquiring Blocks #4-6, CB4 will then comment on the design for those blocks. Generally, CB4 supports the uses proposed for Blocks #5-6 but believes that the proposed landscaping on Block #4 creates too much of an enclosure and that it is not sufficiently connected to the nearby streets and surroundings.

Overall Design Impressions

CB4 is impressed by the creativity and thought that has gone into the design of Hudson Park and Boulevard this far. However, Block #2 should be redesigned to more closely resemble the design for Block #5; featuring an expansive lawn for both active and passive recreational use. Block #3 should be redesigned to incorporate the large amount of play features that are shown on Block #4. The play features should accommodate children from toddlers to teens with play equipment designed to appeal to each age group. The Board believes that the combination of a larger playground and a larger lawn will animate the Park and be a central magnet for Hudson Park and Boulevard. CB4 is also concerned about how pedestrians will move between the Park blocks and the safety of pedestrian street crossings. CB4 requests that the connections between each block of the Park be maximized.

CB4 is pleased with the progress that MVVA has made and with the open dialogue that has occurred. CB4 requests that such dialogue continue as more progress is made towards a final design for the Hudson Boulevard Park. CB4 requests that HYDC and DCP work with the Board in order to ensure that modifications to the plan for the Park are made which create much needed additional play space and a larger lawn space. The Board believes that the combination of a larger playground and a larger lawn will animate the Park and be a central magnet for Hudson Park and Boulevard. Additionally, CB4 requests that publicly accessible bathrooms be installed in the adjacent new construction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Weis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John Weis
Chair

Cc: NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn
NYS Senator Thomas K. Duane
NYS Assemblyman Richard Gottfried
Congressman Jerrold Nadler
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
Erika Sellke – DCP
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