



Burt Lazarin
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May 16, 2018

Alicia Glen
Deputy Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, New York 10007

**Re: Slaughterhouse Affordable Housing Site:
Eleventh Avenue, West 39th/West 40th Streets**

Dear Deputy Mayor Glen,

As you know, Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) is a strong advocate for affordable housing. We have been instrumental in maximizing the development of affordable units throughout Community District 4. We have been proactive in identifying potential development sites. Long before Mandatory Inclusionary Housing, we created a comprehensive summary of the existing and potential affordable units in our district (MCB4 Affordable Housing Plan).

For years we have advocated for Voluntary Inclusionary Housing projects. They are vital to maintaining a diversity of income groups in our district.

We are writing to you to express our considerable frustration over our efforts to achieve that diversity because of the floundering of an extraordinary affordable housing project in our district in its attempts to get off the ground.

The Slaughterhouse site at 493 Eleventh Avenue between 39th and 40th Streets ("Site") was identified as a Proposed Development site in MCB4's 2014 Affordable Housing Plan and brought to your attention by the leadership of MCB4 through the efforts of our then newly elected councilmember, Corey Johnson.

MCB4's preliminary analysis identified the Site as being able to provide 322 apartments, 100% of which would be affordable to a range of income bands. The Site could, in part, satisfy the City's yet-to-be fulfilled affordable housing commitments in the district,

including 150 units from Site M (Tenth Avenue between 40th and 41st Streets) and 75 units from another proposed site on 20th Street in Chelsea. MCB4 still stands behind this analysis.

The DeBlasio Administration has set a laudable goal to preserve and create 200,000 units of affordable housing in short ten years. The Slaughterhouse site on the edge of the Western Railyards, adjacent to the Jacob Javits Center, should stand as a showpiece for successful affordable housing development. Unfortunately, almost four years after the project was identified, it has advanced no further than the Draft EIS and barely resembles the project envisioned by not only MCB4, but our councilmember, Speaker Corey Johnson, and Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer.

After a long process attempting to work with the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to develop an RFP that reflected as much as possible the community's needs and concerns, the few respondents to the RFP then had to endure program changes which significantly altered the project. After considerable delay, MCB4 was presented with the proposed project by the RFP winners, Radson Development and Kingspoint Heights Development. Their proposed development, just under 500-feet high, would contain:

- 234 affordable apartments;
- 217,000 square feet of office space;
- 536 dormitory beds; and,
- Over 10,000 square feet for a grocery store.

Despite not achieving all the community hoped for, MCB4 still looked forward to getting to the ULURP process and getting this project started.

On April 11th of this year, EDC and the (suddenly and inexplicably now lone) developer, Radson Development, presented to the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee the updated plan as evaluated for the required Environment Impact Statement (EIS). The committee members were surprised and troubled by an updated plan which bore scant resemblance to a very clearly articulated vision by our community over the past four years. The latest proposal includes:

- 250 affordable units, more than previously proposed, but far from the 322 units the community requested
- 804 dormitory beds
- a 21,073 square foot food court
- a 10,300 square foot fitness center
- 14,176 square feet of restaurant space
- 218,662 square feet of office space
- 11,327 square feet for a grocery store.

This latest presentation provides the approximate square footage for the proposed programming, but the numbers do not match those of the agreed upon size. MCB4 has not been able to confirm if this is simply an oversight on the part of the developer or if there is intent to again alter this project without consulting the community

The EDC teams assigned to the Slaughterhouse project have turned over three times since the beginning of this project. The lack of any continuity and the sudden and unexamined alterations to the project, alterations decided without either informing or engaging the community and MCB4 have contributed to the delays.

MCB4 is concerned not only for the loss of vision but we now question the viability of the project due to the continual shifting and reshaping of the plan's components, the as of yet non-committal of institutions of higher learning to lease dormitory space, and the inability of the EDC leadership to get this project, after four years, on the right track. We have also repeatedly cited the lack of public subsidy puts this project at risk.

We believe the Slaughterhouse Site still offers a tremendous opportunity to develop hundreds of much needed affordable housing units in the City and in our district.

But to do so requires rethinking the program. Reducing the number of dormitories and adding units for homeless families and seniors would not only provide a much needed service for our community; it would also make the project eligible for subsidies, thus allowing the Slaughterhouse to deliver for this Administration an inspiring example of what good, progressive government can achieve. Your assistance at this critical juncture is essential.

Sincerely,



Burt Lazarin
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Jean-Daniel Noland
Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

cc: Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council
James Patchett, President and CEO, Economic Development Corporation
Maria Torres-Springer, Commissioner, Dept. of Housing Preservation &
Development