



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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BURT LAZARIN
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

April 16, 2019

Pastor Tiffany Triplett Henkel
Metro Baptist Church
c/o Hell's Kitchen South Coalition
410 W 40th Street
New York, New York 10018

Dear Pastor Henkel:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) would like to thank you and all the members of the Hell's Kitchen South Coalition (HKSC) for presenting an update on the Coalition's Neighborhood Plan (HKSC Plan) to several MCB4 committees during the month of March, including Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use, Waterfront, Parks and Environment and Transportation Planning. MCB4 acknowledges HKSC's accomplishments and is very supportive of the concepts put forth in the HKSC Plan. The Board recognizes that the HKSC Plan as presented will continue to receive input from various stakeholders and will be modified accordingly.

Background

The Hell's Kitchen South Coalition was formed in 2017 in response to the Port Authority of New York/New Jersey (PANYNJ) announcing a plan to replace the Port Authority Bus Terminal. This plan posed significant risk to the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood. Opposition to this proposal from MCB4, the community at large, and elected officials brought about a new approach by the Port Authority which importantly, would make a sustained and credible effort to engage the community.

In order to fund the new bus terminal development, PANYNJ plans to monetize its real estate holdings in Hell's Kitchen South which include nine sites. While MCB4 and elected officials lead the process of working with PANYNJ on the Bus Terminal Replacement Project, HKSC took the lead in developing a neighborhood vision and plan of how these nine sites could be developed. The Board applauds the Coalition for its extensive community outreach, which included several town hall meetings, leading to over 250 written suggestions. The Coalition has convened close to 30 times since its inception to develop the HKSC Plan.

The Neighborhood Plan has been well received and MCB4 appreciates the work that has gone into the Plan. We are particularly pleased with HKSC's proactive approach toward addressing

the key concerns of the community: air quality, transportation, open space, affordable housing, and local retail issues. The recommended transfer of development rights (TDR's) provides a strategy for generating funds for the Port Authority without negatively impacting the traditional residential neighborhood. We look forward to the Coalition's report which will describe existing neighborhood conditions and provide detailed recommendations.

Recommendations

The Board understands that the HKSC Plan is a work in progress and does not address all potential concerns, including future requirements, given the increase in population in Hell's Kitchen South and Hudson Yards, of civic infrastructure (schools, fire, police, water, and sewer). Recognizing that efforts to finalize the plan are ongoing and that the presentations to the public and to MCB4 committees were brief summaries of the plan, MCB4 would still like to offer the following comments and suggestions to further develop the HKSC Plan:

Vision and Rationale

- Expand on and articulate better the “vision” of the Plan: that is, how it would knit back together a once-thriving neighborhood torn asunder; how it would re-vitalize a large swath of midtown with parks, housing, and retail; and how it would greatly benefit the City. This description will help galvanize enthusiasm and support from readers and agency personnel who are not already familiar with the area.
- Provide a detailed rationale for why one site was deemed appropriate for public open space, another deemed appropriate for housing, and another for retail, etc. This will be critical to understand the logic of the planning decisions, and will make the plan stronger. In particular the feasibility of a mixed use residential/commercial building at Site I (West 30th Street between 9th and 10th Avenues) should be evaluated.

Parks/Green Spaces

Include in the plan:

- A large functional open park-like space. This comment was the strongest and most frequent request from the community. The Board acknowledges that the Coalition is committed to revising the plan to include such a park space.
- Suggested frequently: Using all of Site D (part of the block bounded by Ninth and Tenth Avenues, West 37th and West 38th Streets) as a larger, central park for the neighborhood that would provide the most amount of continuous sunlight and less shadows. It was also noted that Site D is largely on grade rather than on decked-over space, which would support growth of large trees.
- Another suggestion: Platforming over Site G1 to create a park space that expands the public open space “necklace” along Dyer Avenue from West 35 to West 40th Streets.
- Measures to provide more continuity for the proposed open spaces. If not physically continuous park spaces, then deploy greening strategies to connect disparate open spaces and articulate a connection.
- Measures that clearly address accessibility for all users of the “necklace of parks”
Some suggestions include:
 - For intersections at grade, add a description/illustration of street crossing treatments that might include bulb-outs, midblock crossings, planters, and/or stop signs.

- For intersections where there are different grades (West 36th and West 39th Streets), add a description/illustration of how continuity and accessibility to all will be provided.
- Ensure that the elevated park (on Site A, above proposed bus garage) on West 39th Street is visibly accessible to the public.

Street Activation

The community liked the many ways HKSC Plan proposes to activate the side streets. However it was noted that an entire street with community facilities, may not be the best way to achieve that goal.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's)

As it will be necessary to transfer development rights from new open spaces (“sending sites”) to generate funds for the bus terminal replacement and other community improvements, and to generate the maximum return on such properties, HKSC should explore other possible “receiving sites”.

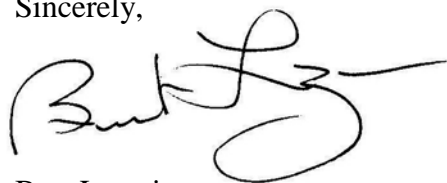
Lead Agency

Suggestions were made to manage the construction for the new proposed development as well as the replacement bus terminal including coordination with existing residents, businesses, and other agencies (Con Ed, Sanitation, Parks, CB4, etc.) by designating the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey as the lead agency.

Conclusion

The work to date by the Hell’s Kitchen South Coalition is extraordinary for a team of dedicated volunteers. MCB4 is grateful for the time and effort of the Coalition members and salutes the accomplishments of the Coalition. The Board is very supportive of the concepts put forth in the Neighborhood Plan and looks forward to reviewing the next revised Neighborhood Plan.

Sincerely,



Burt Lazarin
MCB4 Chair

cc: Hon Jerrold Nadler, U.S. Congress
Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senator
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Port Authority of New York and New Jersey