



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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BURT LAZARIN
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

February 5th, 2018

Marisa Lago, Chair
New York City Planning Commission
120 Broadway
31st Floor
New York, NY 10271

re: 180150 ZMM; N 180151 ZRM; 180152 ZSM – 606 West 30th Street – Block 675 Lot 39

Dear Chair Lago:

On the recommendation of its Chelsea Land Use Committee, the Executive Committee of Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) voted to recommend denial of the cited applications for a proposed development at 606 West 30th Street – Block 675 Lot 39 - unless the conditions and recommendations in Section XI below are met. This letter is subject to ratification by the full board at its February 7, 2018 meeting.

I. Background

Block 675 lies in the northwest corner of Chelsea, bounded by West 29th and 30th Streets and by Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues. Over the years, proposals for Block 675 have evolved from a park with an underground Department of Sanitation facility to being a gateway for an Olympic/Jets stadium to a coveted development site adjacent to the Hudson River, the High Line and the Western Rail Yards.

In 2013 CB4 prepared a study of Block 675 and the five blocks to the south, recommending to the Department of City Planning (DCP) that these blocks be studied for inclusion in an expanded Special West Chelsea District (SWCD). We specifically recommended that Block 675 be rezoned from M1-6 and M2-3 to C6-4 with building height and bulk regulations similar to those in SWCD Subarea A.

Later in 2013 DCP released “Study for the Potential Expansion of the Special West Chelsea District.” The study recommended that a planning framework to guide zoning decisions should be prepared for Block 675 when future uses were clearer. In 2017 the City Planning Commission (CPC) approved a Planning Framework for Block 675 that recommended C-6 districts with an “appropriate massing response to a transitioning context.” The Framework also recommended “active uses on frontages facing the High Line and transparency at and above the High Line level.”

II. Description of Project

The applicant proposes to build a 520 foot tall, 36 story, 177,750 square foot mixed use building at 606 West 30th Street, Block 675 Lot 39. The development site is on the south side of the street between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues and faces the High Line. The building would have three commercial/retail stories and 33 residential stories with approximately 218 dwelling units, an undetermined number of which would be affordable pursuant to one of the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing options, and 47 as-of-right accessory parking spaces. The site would be rezoned from the current M2-3 to C4-6X, increasing the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) from two to ten. The applicant will purchase an additional two FAR, 29,625 sf of floor area, at \$323.04/sf from the Hudson River Park Trust pursuant to ZR 89-00 *et seq.*

III. Proposed Actions

The application includes the following proposed actions:

- A Text Amendment to ZR 89-00, *et seq.* to modify the provisions of Special Hudson River Park District (SHRPD), designating Piers 59, 60 and 61, and the Headhouse, Block 662 Lots 11, 16 and 19 as the granting site and the development site as the receiving site for the transfer of development rights;
- A Text Amendment to ZR Appendix F to designate the development site as a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) area;
- A Map Amendment to Zoning Map 8b to rezone the development site from M2-3 to C6-4X and to establish the SHRPD at the project area; and
- A Special Permit pursuant to ZR 89-21, as amended by the SHRPD Text Amendment, to permit the transfer of 29,625 sf of floor area from the granting site to the development site; to grant a base height waiver to permit a base height of 45 feet rather than the required minimum of 60 feet; to grant a front setback waiver to permit a balcony/structure to project ten feet into an area where a 15-foot setback would be required; and grant a rear yard waiver to permit the second floor to occupy an area where a 20-foot rear yard would be required and to permit a balcony/structure to project ten feet into an area where a 30-foot rear yard would be required; and grant a tower lot coverage waiver to permit a maximum proposed envelope to exceed 45% of the lot area.

IV. Building Height

The proposed height of 520' for the building is excessive. The proposed project should be constrained by, and step down from, the 450' height of Special West Chelsea District Subarea A to the east and the 642' heights of Hudson Yards Sites 6A and 6B (residential buildings flanking a school on the north side of West 30th Street on the eastern end of the block between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues) of the Western Rail Yards immediately to the north.

The context for the development of Block 675 has been set by the two major westside rezonings approved in 2005. The West Chelsea rezoning creating the SWCD established a broad U-shaped profile, with a relatively low central area stepping up to greater building heights in the north and in the south. The Hudson Yards rezoning creating the Special Hudson Yards District established a building height profile that decreases from Tenth Avenue west to the Hudson River, as well as from West 33rd Street south to West 30th Street. Each of these rezonings was designed in part specifically to protect

the Hudson Riverfront from overdevelopment, recognizing it as a valuable feature to be preserved for the enjoyment of all rather than only for those fortunate enough to live next to it.

In our 2013 study, we recommended that building bulk regulations for Block 675 should be similar to those of the adjacent SWCD Subarea A, and CPC’s 2017 Planning Framework for Block 675 recommended C-6 districts with an “appropriate massing response to a transitioning context.” However, the inclusion of the development site within the area designated to receive development rights from the Hudson River Park (HRP) has led us to revisit our analysis. The addition of 2 FAR from the park to the 10 FAR in the proposed C6-4X district is a 20 percent increase. Our long-standing preference for lower heights in the mid-blocks, as well as our agreement with the decrease in height moving westward towards the Hudson River, means that this building should step down from the 550’ height we are recommending for an adjacent development on Eleventh Avenue. We have concluded that a height of 450’ is appropriate for a mid-block building.

V. Affordable Housing

The proposed project will be mapped within a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) designated area and is subject to the requirements of the MIH program which has two options. The applicant has chosen Option #1 which requires 25 percent of the total residential floor area be devoted to affordable housing. The income eligibility bands for Option #1 are as follows:

Percent of residential floor area	Percent of AMI* residents must have	Example of income for two-person family	Example of income for four-person family
10%	40%	\$30,560	\$38,160
10%	60%	\$45,840	\$57,240
5%	100%	\$76,400	\$95,400

*AMI: Area Median Income. The AMI for the greater New York area for 2017 is \$85,900 for a three-person family; \$95,400 for a four-person family. Each development may have specific income requirements.

The proposed project would have 55 units of permanently affordable housing.

CB4 believes that socioeconomic diversity and integration are essential to keeping our neighborhoods vital and thriving, and has a long-standing policy for mixed income buildings designed to ensure equality between affordable and market rate apartments:

- CB4 recommends that the affordable apartments should be distributed throughout the entire building. We have found that developers have successfully located affordable apartments on 80 percent of the floors, exceeding the 65 percent requirement of MIH program.
- All apartment finishes, flooring, tile, plumbing and light fixtures, kitchen cabinets, countertops and appliances should be the same for affordable and market-rate apartments.
- Building amenities such as courtyards should be equally available to all building residents regardless of income. Amenities with fees for residents’ use such as fitness facilities should be available to Inclusionary Housing tenants at a reduced fee. We prefer a sliding scale amenity fee such as a reduction of 25 percent for middle-income tenants and 50 percent for low-income tenants.

VI. Building Design, Services and Other Concerns

CB4 requests that the proposed project include building design elements that ensure a high quality of life for new residents, those who live and work nearby, and for people who frequent the neighborhood.

Building Design and Services

- Sidewalks adjacent to the proposed project should be kept clean and free of garbage. Building garbage compactors and dumpsters should be kept inside until time for curbside pickup. Commercial tenants in both developments should use the same carting company. Loading docks should also be inside buildings. Interior space for unloading of the many residential deliveries (such as Amazon, USPS packages) should be provided.
- Parking garages should accommodate environmentally-friendly cars such as Zip cars and electric vehicles which help to decrease traffic and emissions.
- Exterior lighting should be modest and not intrusive.
- CD4 is fortunate to have a whole host of artists in Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen. CB4 encourages both applicants to display local art in building lobbies.

Other Concerns

- Street trees should be planted on sidewalks around new buildings wherever possible, with full size trees planted in tree pits with complete landscaping. If Con Ed vaults prevent in-ground planting, the applicants should obtain revocable consents for the use of tree planters.
- The applicant should coordinate construction schedules with the developer of 601-613 West 29th Street and maintain regular communication with them and with CB4 about construction progress and schedule changes.
- CB4 urges the applicant to rent retail spaces to local businesses.
- CB4 requests that the applicant support a Community Jobs Project that would include holding periodic job fairs, posting all job openings on the CB4 jobs website, reaching out to community-based organizations, and working with the Board to hire employees who are CD4 residents.
- CB4 also requests that the applicant pay its workers family-sustaining wages with affordable health care and retirement benefits to help create a strong community and a robust local economy. Training should be provided so workers have an opportunity to advance in their careers. The applicant should prioritize the safety of construction workers, particularly in light of recent deaths and injuries at construction sites.
- CB4 is seriously concerned about the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists crossing to and from Hudson River Park at intersections with vehicles. In the last seven years, there have been twelve fatalities in the park and its access streets. As the population increases near Hudson River Park with the construction of new developments such as the proposed Block 675 project, we fear that more pedestrian and bike accidents may occur unless additional safety

measures are provided at intersections. We urge that the New York State Department of Transportation (which has jurisdiction over these locations) work with city agencies and CB4 to implement critical safety measures. These enhancements certainly should be installed at the sections of Hudson River Park that are improved or constructed.

VII. Mitigation of Environmental Impacts

The applicants for the proposed project and for an adjacent one at 601-613 West 29th Street cooperated on a joint Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). We appreciate that the DEIS considered the cumulative impacts of these projects rather than separately as has been the norm. The DEIS identified potentially significant adverse impacts for several topics and recommended possible mitigations. Potential mitigation measures are being explored by CB4, the applicants, lead agencies and DCP, and will be refined between the DEIS and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Publicly Funded Child Care

The DEIS found that both projects together would result in low income families with approximately 29 children under the age of six who would be eligible for publicly funded child care programs. This increased demand cannot be accommodated by facilities in the two-mile study area. The required mitigation would be for 19 childcare seats, the number generated by the project that exceeds the five percent utilization rate.

The DEIS recommends as a mitigation suitable child care space affordable to ACS (Administration for Children's Services) providers on-site or within a reasonable distance or funding for program or physical improvements to support additional capacity at existing facilities.

Hudson Guild, located at West 26th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, is a highly valued member of our community serving a low/moderate income population. They are seeking to expand their Early Childhood Education Program and are looking for suitable space. The demand for services for under-three-year-old children is particularly high and has resulted in a long waiting list. CB4 is exploring with Hudson Guild opportunities in buildings in Chelsea that could provide space for this program. Potential options include:

1. The building at 429 West 18th Street/Fulton Houses, located between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, is currently under construction, scheduled to be completed in 2019. It will have 157 affordable units and approximately 4,000 square feet for a community facility use. Since a childcare center would not need all of this space another community facility could be accommodated as well. A working group comprised of representatives from the developer, CB4, the Fulton Tenants Association and local elected officials will develop recommended uses.
2. There may be churches in Chelsea that have underutilized space such as St. Columba Church on 343 West 25th Street (between Eighth and Ninth Avenues) or Manor Church on 350 West 26th Street (between Eighth and Ninth Avenues).

Open Space

The DEIS analysis showed that the proposed actions would result in a small adverse open space impact due to the increased user population. Although the decrease in the open space ratio due to the

proposed development is small, open space in the residential study area already is below the City's guideline ratios of 2.5 acres (total) and 2.0 acres (active) per 1,000 residents.

The DEIS lists potential mitigation measures for open space impacts, which include, but are not limited to, creating new open space with the study area; funding for improvements, renovation, or maintenance at existing local parks and/or playgrounds; or improving open spaces to increase their utility or capacity to meet open spaces needs in the area.

The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has identified two parks in Chelsea that need renovation:

1. Penn South Park, located on West 26th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues, opened in 1961. This heavily used 0.60 acre neighborhood park was reconstructed in 1996. The elementary school age play equipment and basketball courts have deteriorated. DPR recommends reconstruction of the playground, including replacement of the play equipment, new paving, fencing, landscaping, lighting, seating and safety surfacing; and reconstruction of the basketball courts, including new fencing, back stops, paving and surface sealing.
2. Chelsea Park, located on West 28th Street between 9th and 10th Avenues, a large, widely used park, includes basketball courts, baseball diamonds, handball courts, a playground, and a fitness area. The western portion of the park has been reconstructed. DPR recommends the renovation of the eastern portion which includes the basketball courts, the fitness area and the asphalt multi-purpose play area.

Shadows – Portion of High Line in spring and fall

The area on the High Line opposite the Project Area would be impacted with new shadows in the spring and fall. The recommended mitigation would be to monitor and replace sunlight sensitive vegetation with shade tolerant vegetation.

Traffic, Pedestrians and Noise

The DEIS recommends standard measures to mitigate traffic impacts at two intersections; pedestrian flow issues at two crosswalks; temporary noise due to Hudson River Tunnel construction; construction traffic at one intersection; two crosswalks for pedestrians during construction; construction noise on nearby residential buildings and the High Line. Four measures would require New York City Department of Traffic (DOT) approval.

The standard mitigation measures such as signal timing changes, widened crosswalks, window-wall attenuation, quieter equipment and noise barriers are reasonable potential mitigation measures. CB4 also recommends that pedestrian safety enhancements be added at West 29th and West 30th Streets where vehicles enter the Hudson River Park. Locations where mitigations are needed such as West 33rd Street and Eleventh Avenue, neck downs should be installed to provide more space for pedestrians. If any of these mitigation measures are not successful, then the applicants will need to work with CB4 to find other solutions. Excellent communication between the developers and CB4 is essential.

VIII. Price of Special Hudson River Park District Development Rights

The proposed project includes the purchase of 29,625 sq. ft. of development rights from the Hudson River Park Trust. The Trust commissioned an independent entity, Appraisers and Planners, Inc. (API), to determine the value of the rights on the development site. Based on API's conclusion, the applicant has entered into a contract with the Trust to pay \$323/sq. ft., \$9.57 million, for the development rights. While the Trust accepted API's appraisal, CB4 and others have questioned whether \$323/sq. ft. is adequate compensation to the Trust.

API followed the following process in determining their valuation of the rights:

The proposed project includes the purchase of 29,625 sq. ft. of development rights from the Hudson River Park Trust. The Trust commissioned an independent entity, Appraisers and Planners, Inc. (API), to determine the value of the rights on the development site. Based on API's conclusion, the applicant has entered into a contract with the Trust to pay \$323/sq. ft., \$9.57 million, for the development rights. While the Trust accepted API's appraisal, others have questioned whether \$323/sq. ft. is adequate compensation to the Trust.

API followed the following process in determining their valuation of the rights:

Comparable Sales. API examined the sales of seven comparable properties. Sale prices ranged from \$408-549/sq. ft. with an average of \$491/sq. ft. API concluded that \$500/sq. ft. was the proper number and thus valued the proposed project at \$88.4 million.

Development Rights Ratio. API examined seven comparable sales of air rights. The ratio of the value of the air rights to the value of the underlying land ranged from 50-87%. They assigned the greatest weight to the two most similar sales and concluded that the appropriate ratio was 65%.

Final Valuation. API concluded that the appropriate value of the 29,625 sq. ft. to be purchased from the Trust was 65% of \$500/sq. ft., or \$323/sq. ft., a total of \$9.57 million.

The applicant is positioning the proposed development as benefiting from being across the street from the High Line and the vibrant Western Rail Yards. To the extent this is true the development rights from the park are more valuable than rights for other developments that do not benefit from this favorable location. We recommend that API should reevaluate their appraisal to reflect this by considering increasing the 65% development rights ratio.

The applicant has entered into a good faith contract with the Trust to buy development rights at a price determined by API, the Trust's independent appraiser. We recommend that DCP seek a review of API's report by someone with more relevant experience than we have. We specifically recommend the review of two fundamental assumptions, that regarding the value of the highest and best use being market rate rentals rather being than closer to condo sales, and the setting of the development rights ratio at 65% when the ratio for comparable sales ranges up to 87%.

We also request that this review take into consideration the price paid to the Trust for the development rights from Pier 40, as well as the price CPC is considering for development rights to complete the build-out of the SWCD.

IX. CB4 Priorities for Hudson River Park Site Improvements

CB4 looks forward to improvements to a number of HRP sites within CD4 which will be funded by monies from the sale of development rights from the Chelsea Piers area (Piers 59, 60 and 61 and the headhouse) to the development site. Currently, the sale is expected to provide \$ 9.57 million, 80 percent of which will be allocated to capital improvements and 20 percent to capital maintenance for the HRP within CD4.

CB4 conducted a robust public discussion to select priorities for HRP sites, aided by the Hudson River Park Trust which provided information, preliminary design ideas, and cost estimates for eight sites in CD4 that need varying levels of improvement. The Board's Waterfront, Parks and Environment Committee led these deliberations and developed a priority list reflecting the committee's unanimous vote. The Board's Chelsea Land Use Committee and the full Board support these priorities. If State funding is committed to one or more sites on the list, then other sites will "rise" in priority.

1. **Pier 97 Recreation Pier.** Located at West 57th Street. Design and construction of pier landscape, playground, open space, utilities and finishes to create a public recreation pier.
2. **Chelsea Waterside Park.** Located at West 23rd Street. Redesign and reconstruction of south side of park, including addition of permanent picnic area, rest room facilities and expansion of dog run with separate areas for big and small dogs.
3. **Pier 97 Upland Area.** Located at West 57th Street. Construction of esplanade and bike path, bulkhead repairs, landscaping and utilities, and a small utility building/bathroom.
4. **Gateway/Hudson River Tunnel Project Area.** This site is closest to Block 675. The Hudson River Tunnel Project path runs across HRP between West 29th and West 30th Streets. Design funding for that area plus the section from West 30th Street to West 34th Street: new esplanade, bike path and landscaping. Short term and long term proposals.
5. **Pier 66a Float Bridge.** Located at West 26th Street. Restoration of historic Baltimore & Ohio Railroad transfer float bridge.
6. **Piers 98 to 99 Upland Area.** Located at between West 58th and West 59th Streets. Construction of over-water pedestrian platform, associated utilities, pavement and railings; and construction of bikeway and walkway connection to Riverside Park South to improve circulation and safety.
7. **Area South of Pier 76.** Located from West 34th Street to the southern edge of Pier 76. Construction of new esplanade, landscaping, and beach providing public access to the Hudson River.
8. **Piers 79 – 84 Upland Area.** Located between West 39th and West 43rd Streets. Redesign and construction of walkway, bikeway and driveway to improve pedestrian and cyclists' safety and traffic flow.

X. Inclusion in the Special West Chelsea District

Beginning in 2003, with the original planning for West Chelsea, CB4 has requested multiple times that Block 675 be included in the SWCD. Since the creation of the SWCD in 2005, it has been expanded

twice to include the Chelsea Market Block (between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, West 15th and 16th Streets – 2012) and the south side of West 15th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues (2015), but DCP has consistently declined to recommend the inclusion of Block 675 in the district.

One significant advantage to inclusion in the SWCD is the flexibility to address unique conditions and situations to improve the community. We propose the inclusion of the development site in the SWCD.

XI. Recommendations/Conditions

At the January 16, 2018 meeting of the Board's Chelsea Land Use Committee, and in a subsequent letter, the applicant agreed to some of the recommendations made by the committee; these points are noted in the appropriate sections below. The applicant will submit a final commitment letter to all stakeholders before the application is voted on by the City Council Land Use Committee.

CB4 appreciates the applicant's willing engagement to attempt to resolve numerous issues over an extended period. The application itself reflects several changes made by the applicant in response to our concerns, and the subsequent commitment letter reflects further discussions. CB4 nonetheless recommends denial of the application unless the following recommendations and conditions are met in the final approved application.

- **Maximum Building Height.** We recommend that the maximum height of the proposed project be limited to 450 feet. This limit incorporates an increase in height, related to development rights purchased from the HRP, from the step down we would normally recommend from the 450 feet in the adjacent Subarea A of the SWCD to the east, a step down from the 550' we recommend for the adjacent project on Eleventh Avenue and is a reasonable step down from the 642' heights of Sites 6A and 6B in the Western Railyards to the north. **(Section IV)**
- **Mandatory Inclusionary Housing.**
 - We strongly recommend that affordable units be distributed throughout at least 80% of the proposed project's floors, that all finishes and fittings be the same in affordable and market-rate units, and that fee-based amenities be discounted for tenants in affordable units. **(Section V)**
 - The applicant has agreed that market rate and affordable units will be built with identical finishes and provided with identical appliances, including washers and dryers. They plan to offer certain amenities, such as a children's play room, without fee, and commit to discounting access fees for residents of the affordable units for other amenities by 33%.
- **Building Services and Other Issues. (Section VI)**
 - We recommend that loading docks, trash compactors and dumpsters be located inside buildings except during trash and recycling pickup. The applicant states that garbage will be compacted and stored internally until scheduled pick-up by the Department of Sanitation, and that they will explore the use of the garage for deliveries.
 - We recommend that the parking garage accommodate environmentally-friendly vehicles such as Zip cars or similar and electric vehicles. The applicant states that they will provide a car sharing service the opportunity to locate vehicles in the garage and will include an electric charging stations for electric vehicles.

- We recommend that to the extent possible full size trees and complete landscaping be planted in sidewalk tree pits, and in tree planters where precluded by ConEd vaults. The applicant states that they will plant street trees consistent with zoning and will apply for revocable consents to use planters in locations where street trees are precluded because ConEd vaults or other infrastructure.
- We recommend that the applicant pay workers living wages with benefits, support a Community Jobs Project and rent retail spaces to local businesses. The applicant states they will work with Building Skills NY and other local organizations to ensure that local residents are given opportunities for employment within the Proposed Development.
- **Mitigation of Adverse Environmental Impacts.** We recommend the following as mitigations for the adverse environmental impacts identified in the DEIS:
 - The provision of space for publicly-funded child care;
 - Reconstruction and renovation of a Chelsea recreation park;
 - And standard measures such as signal timing changes, widened crosswalks, window-wall attenuation, quieter equipment and noise barriers for traffic impacts at two intersections, pedestrian flow issues at two crosswalks and construction congestion and noise on nearby residential buildings. **(Section VII)**
- **Hudson River Park Development Rights Price.** We recommend that someone with more experience than we have review the conclusions of the HRPT’s appraisers, and in particular the highest and best use, the development rights ratio . **(Section VIII)**
- **HRP Project Priorities.** We recommend that capital funds provided to HRP through the sale of development rights be allocated to the following projects listed in their ranked order.
 1. **Pier 97 Recreation Pier.** Located at West 57th Street. Design and construction of pier landscape, playground, open space, utilities and finishes to create a public recreation pier.
 2. **Chelsea Waterside Park.** Located at West 23rd Street. Redesign and reconstruction of south side of park, including addition of permanent picnic area, rest room facilities and expansion of dog run with separate areas for big and small dogs.
 3. **Pier 97 Upland Area.** Located at West 57th Street. Construction of esplanade and bike path, bulkhead repairs, landscaping and utilities, and a small utility building/bathroom.
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 8. **Piers 79 – 84 Upland Area.** Located between West 39th and West 43rd Streets. Redesign and construction of walkway, bikeway and driveway to improve pedestrian and cyclists' safety and traffic flow.
- **Inclusion of the Development Site in the SWCD.** We recommend that the development site be included in the SWCD. (Section X)

We wish to conclude by reiterating our appreciation for the applicant's willingness to work with the Board towards a project that benefits both the applicant and the community, and that will be an important addition to West Chelsea. We look forward to further favorable revisions as the application proceeds through the approval process.

Sincerely,



Burt Lazarin
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



John Lee Compton, Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee



Betty Mackintosh, Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use Committee

cc: Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Maria Torres-Springer, Commissioner, HPD
Douglaston Development