



CITY OF NEW YORK

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**Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use
Responses to Hudson Yards**

Chair's remarks at CUNY's 2003 Development Conference (Feb 2003)

**Remarks by Simone Sindin, Chair of Manhattan Community Board No. 4
The New York Real Estate Forum: 2003 Development Conference
Part I: Midtown West: Manhattan's Future
Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute
Baruch College - CUNY
February 28, 2003**

Good morning, I am very pleased to be among the invited speakers.

I've been asked to speak here today because all the proposals, the plans and exhibits presented earlier this morning - and those you will hear about later today and as part of subsequent sessions of this conference - lie within the boundaries of Community Board No. 4.

Our community district stretches along the entire West Side from 14th Street to 59th Street. I think everyone in the real estate industry has looked to our neighborhoods at one time or another for development opportunities. In fact, I recognize many faces in this audience...

100,000 people live in the thriving neighborhoods of Chelsea and Clinton / Hell's Kitchen. Development of all types in our area is considerable, but housing production has been most prolific. In tabulating development projects considered by the Board since the last Census count just three years ago, we estimate that an additional 10,000 new residents already occupy or are expected to move into housing that has been recently completed or currently under construction.

These points are important because it is necessary for you to understand that the rail yards themselves - and the area immediately adjacent to them - may in fact be sparsely populated and under-developed, but the larger area referred to as a whole as "Far West Midtown" or "Hudson Yards" is part of an existing, solid residential community... a community that persists, a community that continues to grow, a community that has historically been known as Clinton/Hell's Kitchen.

As a matter of fact, many of you will take a bus trip later this afternoon.

On Ninth Avenue above 42nd Street, you will see a thriving shopping corridor with many popular and ethnically varied restaurants... you will also see unique shops and boutiques like those featured yesterday in the New York Times. Below 42nd Street, you will see an array of international food markets famous for their prices and quality...

East of Ninth Avenue and south of the Port Authority Bus Terminal, the Garment District is still at the center of the City's apparel industry. A special zoning district exists here to protect the special business relationships and physical conditions that make the Garment Center a unique place.

We must not overlook the obvious necessity for movement within and throughout our community. The regional infrastructure of the Lincoln Tunnel, the Port Authority Bus Terminal and Penn Station exerts the greatest impact locally as it channels hundreds of thousands of commuters and visitors through our community every day.

West of Eighth Avenue, between 42nd to 57th streets, and on many blocks as far west as Eleventh Avenue, is the core of the Clinton residential community comprised of renovated tenements and apartment buildings.

Often overlooked, however, are the thousands of people who live south of 42nd street in the stretch of residential buildings along Ninth Avenue and south of 38th street over to Tenth Avenue. East of Ninth Avenue is a string of loft conversions that date from the early 1980s. 34th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues is lined with pre-war doorman buildings.

The population of the entire area is a diverse mix of long-term community residents and relative newcomers, of renters and owners, of luxury and affordable housing, and of all income groups and social and ethnic backgrounds.

In short, this is a New York neighborhood that works.

The speakers today have concentrated their remarks on the area south of 42nd Street. I invite you to extend your travels throughout Clinton/Hell's Kitchen where you will see an incredible amount of new development in progress:

- Residential towers now line 42nd Street, stretching from Eighth Avenue to the River. There are some gaps, but we are certain they will be filled in.
- In the West 40s and 50s, from Eighth to Eleventh avenues, are new 7-story residential developments which have replaced parking lots and one-story garages.

- The Durst Organization will anchor the westernmost end of the 57th Street corridor with a project containing commercial and residential components that will occupy an entire city block.
- At the northernmost reaches of our Board on Columbus Circle, the two towers of the AOL-Time Warner Center - the largest development project in construction in the City of New York - is visible south to 34th street.
- Media groups, large and small, find the area attractive. Studio City, for example, is a media production facility planned for a parking lot at 44th Street and 11th Avenue.
- Culturally speaking, the Alvin Ailey Dance Company is developing studio and performance space on Ninth Avenue and 55th Street, while Mikhail Baryshnikov is making a new home in Hell's Kitchen on 37th Street, near Tenth Avenue.

Simply put - a lot is going on.

The Board believes it is important to look at the shape and condition of the area north of 42nd Street. These blocks are full of renovated buildings, old and new residents, and vibrant commercial streetscape of restaurants and bars, markets, specialty shops and all types of services needed to support a residential community.

Please remember, 30 years ago Clinton/Hell's Kitchen was a community in decline plagued by disinvestments, abandonment, and drug activity. The City's solution was to extend the Central Business District west and demolish most of the west 40s and 50s.

Obviously, the neighborhood did not think this was a good idea.

After long discussion, and after long negotiation, and a lot of arm-twisting, an alternative plan was agreed upon - development would be balanced serving both the needs of the city and the community.

The City of New York agreed to establish the Clinton special zoning district with the stated goals of preserving and strengthening the residential character of the community through preservation and new development.

The core of the Clinton Special District, which is designated the "Preservation Area," is, roughly speaking, between 8th and 11th Avenues, 43rd to 56th Streets, and is characterized by 5 and 6 story residential buildings.

The "Perimeter Area" allows for dense high-rise residential and commercial buildings on Eighth Avenue and along 42nd Street.

Far from styming development, or turning the area into a Colonial Williamsburg, as some have feared it would, the Preservation Area worked. Stimulating rehabilitation and new investment and residential and commercial properties over the past 30 years. Clinton/Hell's Kitchen is now considered a good address. And people are knocking down doors to get in. Not bad for a community in decline.

So here we are today looking south of 42nd Street. Major development plans... new central business district... a convention center expansion... and a stadium. We recognize that change is coming to this area, and much of it will be positive change.

It would be easy to react to any one aspect of these plans - the stadium, the expansion of the Javits Center, or the extension of the No. 7 subway line - but we have no choice but to think of the broader implication of today's planning for the future of the City of New York.

We understand what it means to live at the center of the city and at the center of the region. We already know what it is to live in neighborhoods burdened by regional infrastructure that daily serves hundreds and thousand of people. So now, all we are being asked is to accommodate infrastructure to maintain New York's global competitiveness over the coming decades.

Any plans for this area will have to take into account the realities on the ground. While the current plans seem to indicate financing for the regional improvements, where is the financing for local infrastructure needs - schools, utilities, sanitation, enforcement, fire and police, security?

We strongly believe that investment in public infrastructure must include investment in the physical and social infrastructure of neighborhoods - most important of which is the preservation and creation of affordable housing. A partnership with the City must be created to devise and implement strategies that will result in affordable housing actually being built, not just talked about. Targeted appropriations over a series of budget years must be real part of any plan.

We also struggle to reconcile the competing goals in many of the plans. We've asked ourselves - how can liveable residential communities, viable business districts, and entertainment complexes co-exist successfully? A mixed use 24-hour / 7-day-a-week concept sounds attractive, but high quality of life standards must be enforced.

Lastly, there is one aspect of all the plans we must address - the 86,000 pound elephant sitting in the room. It is called by some a Multi-Use Facility but recog-

nized by the majority of New Yorkers as a football stadium. Simply put, Community Board 4 believes a permanent stadium is bad for a good West Side. I need not elaborate.

Instead, let us list what we do like about the Department of City Planning's "Hudson Yards" concept:

- We like the idea of extending and reinforcing the character and scale of our Ninth Avenue Main Street from 42nd street southward;
- We support a Javits Center expansion both to the north and to the south to keep it nationally competitive - as long as both 34th Street and 39th Street remain public ways open to the sky. No Stadium needed.
- We are surprised and delighted with the amount of green space proposed on the maps and we are thrilled with the idea of creating new parkland along Dyer Avenue by reclaiming concrete islands and adjacent parking lots. The construction of the Lincoln Tunnel and related infrastructure represents an old way of thinking about public improvement projects - done in piecemeal fashion with little concern for the human environment. Although the Port Authority still refers to Dyer Avenue as the New York Expressway - not that it operates in an express fashion - we recommend that all of the traffic approaches be reviewed and re-designed to meet the needs created by the proposed new developments. These improvements need to be realized in the near, not distant, future.
- Mass transit is very important and we think linking a new commercial district to Midtown is crucial. However, an extension of the No. 7 subway line is about more than just connecting the Hudson Yards to Times Square. We have questions: Can the line handle any more cars? Where will the additional cars be stored - the Corona Yards, Pelham Yards? Do these yards have the capacity? How will the rolling stock be paid for? How will the additional operating costs be covered? How are the Queens riders of the already over-crowded No. 7 subway line affected by all these changes?
- We like the idea of a new bus storage facility to handle Port Authority's buses. However, we still have questions about how charter buses and commuter vans will be accommodated.
- A new transit center at 34th and 11th is a very good idea. This center should link the area to regional transportation systems, and hopefully this will result in fewer vehicles on our streets. To date, traffic has done nothing but increase despite transit improvements... but, we can be hopeful.

- We agree that it is appropriate to extend the business district along the Hudson Yards corridor and possibly along 11th Avenue as well, but at a lesser density. Instead of a permanent stadium, we believe the rail yards would be better used to absorb some of the density now proposed for 11th Avenue.

Our positions are built on the platform of community input and study undertaken by the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association. Suffice it to say that CB4 has embraced many of HKNA's goals for the area.

The City's Preferred Direction already reflects many of the comments that we made in response to the 2001 Framework for Development:

- Ninth Avenue is to be recognized and reinforced as the Main Street, and a strong connector between Clinton and Chelsea;
- Infill residential use is to be permitted east of Ninth Avenue, and
- Building densities are to be lower in the Ninth Avenue core, medium along Tenth Avenue, and highest along the 42nd and 34th Street corridors.

However, we differ with City Planning as to what "low", "medium" and "high" mean - we think "high" should be no taller than a 10 to 12 FAR, for example - but I'm sure we'll get that sorted out, isn't that right City Planning?

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 would like to extend its compliments and thanks to the Department of City Planning - to Commissioner Amanda Burden, to Executive Director Richard Barth and to Manhattan Director Vishaan Chakrabarti, as well as to Alex Cooper of Cooper Robertson, for bringing us into an open and engaging dialogue and exchange of ideas. We also hope to engage other City and State agencies in a constructive dialogue.

In order to better understand the various components of the plan and the potential impacts on our community, the Community Board requests that Deputy Mayor Doctoroff assemble a working group composed of Community Board 4, community organizations and City and State agencies such as Department of Transportation, Economic Development Corporation, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the MTA and the Port Authority. This group could advance this concept proposal to a finely-tuned and balanced development plan.

Toward this end, Community Board 4 has taken the lead to form a broader based working alliance of local elected officials, community organizations, and civic groups. I am pleased to announce the formation of the Hell's Kitchen/Hudson

Yards Alliance, the purpose of which is to consider, respond and propose balanced alternatives to the plans - including the stadium - that have been presented for Hell's Kitchen/Hudson Yards.

The community - at the very least the 100,000 residents of Community Board 4 - must be an integral part of the planning process!

Thank you.