



CITY OF NEW YORK

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

**Comments on Deputy Mayor Daniel Doctoroff's presentation on Hudson Yards financing plan to the Times Square Alliance - Feb 2004**

### **MEMORANDUM**

**To: Members of the Times Square Alliance**

**From: Walter Mankoff, Chair of Manhattan Community Board No. 4**

**Date: February 17, 2004**

**Re: February 13th presentation by Deputy Mayor Doctoroff**

On February 13, Deputy Mayor Doctoroff presented the City's plan to rezone and develop the Hudson Yards at a Times Square Alliance meeting. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time for Manhattan Community Board No. 4 to present its position. Tim Tompkins was kind enough to suggest a reasonable solution. If I provided my comments or other material in writing, he would arrange for it to be distributed to the Alliance.

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 has been working on the Hudson Yards issue for several years. We have studied it as carefully as possible given that we are a volunteer group without funding. We have also been handicapped by the City's delay in releasing information. For example, the RFP and the Cushman & Wakefield data given to the 9 financial institutions in December were withheld until the entire plan was made public on February 11th. CB4 has made a number of lengthy, technical submissions to the Department of City Planning. Should you wish to read them, and I hope you do, they are all posted on the Board's [web site](#).

This brief memorandum focuses on the broad areas of agreement and disagreement with the City's proposal, particularly in the light of last Friday's presentation. It is what I would have said at the theater if I had an opportunity to do so. CB4's position on the Hudson Yards is not unique. Similar viewpoints have been expressed by the area's elected officials - Senator Duane, Assembly Member Gottfried, Council Member Quinn - and by Borough President Fields. We also have the support of many neighborhood groups. Our alternate proposals have actually been modeled by the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association and shown to the City.

Surprisingly, perhaps, we agree with many of the City's points. We agree that the far West Side of Manhattan is underdeveloped. Its proper development can help insure the economic future of the City and, in the process, attract businesses and provide jobs and

homes for a growing population. However, we disagree strongly with the City on the inclusion of a stadium in the overall plan for the area.

- A stadium, by any other name - multi-use facility or New York Sports and Convention Center - is the wrong development tool for the West Side. It will discourage rather than enhance the development of the entire area. If you saw the Deputy Mayor's presentation Friday you must surely have been impressed with the series of photographs showing the transformation of the NY Central rail yards into the elegant Park Avenue we know. Use your imagination. Assume that before anything else was put on that platform, the best 4 blocks were taken for a stadium - Yankee Stadium or the Polo Grounds. What do you think that area would look like today? Would the Waldorf-Astoria have been built across the street or St Bart's around the corner? Would Lever House or the Seagram Building be up the block? I doubt it.
- A stadium seating 75,000 or 80,000 people will be an environmental and traffic nightmare with impacts far beyond the few blocks surrounding the stadium. That size facility needs to be at the junction of Interstates and Expressways and not dependent on already overcrowded City streets, the West Side Highway and the Lincoln Tunnel. The assumption that the crowds will come and go by the extended # 7 line is not realistic if one relies on Madison Square Garden data that shows over 40 percent of fans arrive by private car even though it is located over the most ideal public transit network anywhere. The traffic jam will discourage theater and restaurant goers from driving in from the suburbs and the negative impact will far exceed any gain from the stadium. Why would office workers, or the businesses that employ them, want to locate in the stadium vicinity?
- The City insistence on the stadium has forced it to skew the entire project to fit. The stadium requires the # 7 line long before it might be needed for office and residential development and therefore requires early borrowing of far more funds than would otherwise be needed. The use of so much superb development space for the stadium forces unreasonable density in the remaining areas.

Although we disagree on the stadium, we find much in the City's plan to agree with. Specifically, we support:

- A major expansion of the Javits Convention Center as rapidly as possible. Our City needs not only the construction jobs it will provide but even more important is the economic boost it will give our hotels, restaurants, theaters and other tourist oriented businesses. We give genuine expansion to the existing Javits Center not tied to a football stadium even higher priority than the City, which pushes a football stadium tie-in as if it were the real expansion the Convention Center needs and is seeking.
- A rezoning of the area to encourage the construction of office buildings and residences balanced with generous amounts of open space and greenery. We differ

with the City largely on scale and design. The City's swollen financing plan depends on having a huge demand for Class A office space in the Hudson Yards area and the resulting PILOT revenue. Their projections seem overly optimistic not only to CB4 but to such authorities as the Federal Reserve Bank and the Independent Budget Office. The rosy forecasts are linked more to the rapid growth of the dot.coms in the 90's than to the keynotes of the current office market - increased outsourcing of white-collar jobs, reductions in space per worker as technology improves and the penchant for working from home.

- CB4 supports a more flexible plan with developers able to opt more readily for residential or commercial development as demand arises.
- CB4 supports a greater supply of affordable housing in the area than contemplated by the City. In his remarks, the Deputy Mayor said that the profits from the City plan could be used to build affordable housing in the Bronx and Brooklyn. We believe the profits from Hudson Yards should primarily be used in our area. Clinton, Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea are wonderful areas because of their ethnic and economic diversity. The area also serves as a bedroom community for employees of the theater, restaurant and entertainment industries. It must remain so even while undergoing drastic change. It would be wrong to create an area that cannot house the people who work there or cannot house civil servants - police, fire, librarians
- CB4 is concerned about the impact on existing businesses and their employees as well as the some 20,000 residents in the study zone as the area changes its character.

Leave out the stadium, build it elsewhere if needed, and Hudson Yards becomes open to rational development. This means buildings of human scale, less cost, less injury to residents and businesses. Last Friday the Deputy Mayor asked who would build near the open rail yard if there were no stadium. The CB4 plan, however, calls for covering the yards and building a southward expansion of the Javits Center as well as other commercial and/or residential development. We have made this point clear from Day 1.

This brief memorandum can only cover a handful of the key issues involved in this massive redevelopment project. For example, not covered are the specific details of the rezoning and the financing plan for the rezoned areas as well as for the stadium and convention center expansion. If you would like additional information on our position, please feel free to contact us.