



CITY OF NEW YORK

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**Transcript of the City Planning Commission meeting on the development plan for the
NYC Convention and Exhibition Center**

March 29, 1973 / Calendar No. 1

**Development Plan (Stage I) for the New York City Convention and Exhibition Center
pursuant to Section 8 of Chapter 1011 of the Laws of New York, 1971.**

This Plan was submitted to the City Planning Commission by the New York City Convention and Exhibition Center Corporation on February 5, 1973.

The Plan provides for the development of a major convention center for the City between West 43rd and West 47th Streets outshore of 12th Avenue and the acquisition of the following property:

Block bounded by West 47th Street, 11th Avenue, West 46th Street and 12th Avenue (Block 1094, All Lots).

Block bounded by West. 46th Street., 11th Avenue, West 45th Street and. 12th Avenue (Block 1093, All Lots).

Part of the block bounded by West 45th Street, 11th Avenue, West: 44th Street and! 12th Avenue (Block 1092, Major portion of Lot 16).

Part of the area bounded by the westerly prolongation of West 47th Street, the United States Pierhead Line, the westerly prolongation of West 42nd Street and 12th Avenue (Block 1107, Parts of Lots 14, 21 and 30).

The bed of West 46th Street, between 11th and 12th Avenues.

The New York City Convention and Exhibition Center Corporation was established by the State of New York. (Chapter 1011 of the Laws of the State of New York, 1971) for the purpose of planning, constructing, operating and maintaining a convention and exhibition center within the project area.

In order to permit development of the proposed convention center, the City Planning Commission is considering the following Zoning Resolution Amendments:

Amendments, pursuant to Section 200 of the New York City Charter, of the Zoning Resolution of the City of New York, relating to various sections concerning the establishment of a Special New York City Convention and Exhibition Center Development District (CP-22264).

Zoning change, pursuant to Section 200 of the New York City Charter, involving an amendment of the Zoning Map, Section Nos, 8a and 8c, establishing a new "CC" District bounded by the northerly street line of West 47th Street and its westerly prolongation, the easterly street line of Eleventh Avenue, the southerly street line of West 45th Street, a line 100 feet west of Eleventh Avenue, the southerly street line of West 44th Street, a line at right angles to West 45th Street at a point 150 feet east of Twelfth Avenue, West. 45th Street, Twelfth Avenue, the westerly prolongation of the southerly street line of West 42nd Street, the United States Bulkhead line of the Hudson River, a line 80 feet north of the north side of Pier 83, the United States Pierhead Line of the Hudson River, a line 150 feet north of the north side of Pier P6 and the United States Bulkhead Line of the Hudson River, Borough of Manhattan (CP-22265).

These matters are the subject of separate reports dated March 29, 1973.

The development of the Project Area is to be planned and implemented in two or more stages, as follows:

1. Stage 1 will encompass the development of the convention and exhibition center itself together with approach roadways and access structures.
2. Stage 2 and subsequent stages, if any, will encompass development in the Project Area other than that carried out in Stage 1.

The Development Plan for Stage 1 is considered by the Commission for approval at this time. A comprehensive Development Plan covering development in Stage 2 and any subsequent stages is to be submitted to the Commission at a later date.

The improvements to be constructed in the Project Area pursuant to this Development Plan for Stage 1 are to include:

1. In that part of the Project Area lying west of the westerly side of Twelfth Avenue, a Center for conventions, trade exhibitions and public shows, together with related facilities for visitors to and occupants of the Center, and a berthing place for ocean-going vessels.

The Center will include parking for 2000 automobiles; space, exclusive of loading berths, for the temporary parking of 100 trucks and a roadway for buses, taxicabs and other vehicles.

2. In that part of the Project Area lying east of the easterly side of Twelfth Avenue, the following:
 - a. An access structure, including pedestrian passageways, a loading zone fronting on

Twelfth Avenue for buses, taxicabs and other vehicles and space to accommodate a future mass transit facility.

b. Ramps and roadways serving the Center and the access structure.

3. A bridge connecting the elements described in 1 and 2, above. The bridge at its lowest elevation will be a minimum of 38 feet above Twelfth Avenue.

In addition, the following public, semi-public, private and community facilities to be provided in the Project Area:

1. Outdoor ice skating and tennis facilities, together with a field house for users.
2. Landscaped open space, including active and passive recreation areas; and . A restaurant or restaurants open to the general public.

The City is to close in one or more stages on such date or dates as the Corporation may request (1) West 46th Street between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues, (2) that portion of the space over Twelfth Avenue, the parallel Marginal Street and the West Side Highway above a plane whose elevation is 38 feet above Twelfth Avenue for the bridge connecting the part of the project area lying west of the westerly side of Twelfth Avenue with the part east of the easterly side of Twelfth Avenue and (3) portions of the Marginal Street west of the westerly side of Twelfth Avenue, generally between the westerly prolongation of West 42nd and West 45th Streets.

The City is also to widen West 47th Street on the southerly side between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues as required by the appropriate City agencies.

PUBLIC HEARING

On February 13, 1973 the City Planning Commission scheduled February 28, 1973 as the date for a PUBLIC HEARING on the Development Plan and the related zoning changes (CP-22264 and CP-22265) for the proposed New York City Convention and Exhibition Center. The hearing was duly held on February 28, 1973 and continued to March 14, 1973.

Many speakers spoke against the proposed project including a representative of the Congresswomen for the 20th Congressional District, the State Senator from the 27th Senatorial District, the Councilman from the 3rd Councilmanic District and the Assemblyman from the 67th Assembly District. Also speaking in opposition to the proposed New York City Convention and Exhibition Center were residents of the area and representatives of the following organizations:

Community Planning Board #4
New York Coliseum Corporation
Clinton Planning Council
Hudson Guild
The Convention Center Committee Planning Board #4
Environment Mobilization

The major arguments presented in opposition to the Plan for the Convention Center were that the Clinton Community would be sacrificed if the Convention Center were to be constructed on the selected site. It was stated that the increased traffic generated by the Convention Center would overburden local streets and create hazards to the safety of area residents and increase air pollution in the community. Representatives of the Clinton Planning Council and Community Planning Board #4 stated that the construction of the Convention Center would increase the value of property in Clinton and thereby increase real estate speculation, It was felt that this would lead to the eventual destruction of the Community.

Speakers in opposition requested that there be a moratorium on all development in the Clinton community until a comprehensive plan for the area is developed. Other speakers requested a continuance of the hearing until complete environmental, traffic and design reports on the impact of the convention center were produced and evaluated.

Many speakers requested that the proposed site be moved to the Penn Central Railroad Yards between 33rd and 37th Streets and 11th and 12th Avenues. It was stated that construction costs would be less than at the present site over the Hudson River.

The Chairman of the Community Planning Board #4 suggested that the Convention Center be moved to Flushing Meadows in Queens. He also suggested that on a matter of such City-wide importance all sixty-two Community Planning Boards be consulted on the project.

A representative of the New York Coliseum suggested that there was no market for the Convention Center. He stated that although there were trade shows too large to be accommodated by the Coliseum, these shows were committed to other regions of the country. He stated that the current trend in trade shows was towards dispersion and that the Coliseum could handle present needs.

Many speakers spoke in favor of the proposed Plan for the New York City Convention and Exhibition Center and argued for City Planning approval. Speakers in favor of approval included representatives of the following organizations:

Office of Midtown Planning and Development
New York City Convention and Exhibition Center Corporation
Americana Hotels
Building and Construction Trades Council
New York Chapter of American Society of Travel Agents
Hotel and Motel Trades Council
Independent Theatre Owners
New York Convention and Visitors Bureau
Hotel Association of New York
Young Mens Real Estate Association of New York
"West Side Association of Commerce
Warren Travers Association
New York City Convention Center Corporation

Moving Picture Machine Operators
Industrial League of New York
Hotels, Hospitals, Nursing Homes and
Allied Service Employees Union
Hotel and Motel Council
Fifth Avenue Civic Association

Speakers in favor of the proposal noted that New York is the Financial and Cultural Capital of the world and that trade shows requiring large spaces can not presently be accommodated. Representatives of the Convention and Exhibition Center Corporation stated that construction of the convention center would generate \$21,000,000 in taxes and in excess of 12,000 new jobs. In addition approximately \$300,000,000 would be generated by trade and tourist spending in the City. Representatives of construction, hotel and motel, restaurant, and film theater unions spoke of the need for new jobs to be created by the proposed center.

The Director of the Mayor's Office of Midtown Planning and Development explained the criteria utilized in the site selection process.

The reasons for selecting the proposed site are:

- (1) Easy access from Midtown Manhattan, at or near the center of gravity of the City's residential population and close to the major employment center.
- (2) Minimal traffic impact on midtown circulation.
- (3) No residential relocation. Alternative sites were considered but found to be unacceptable.

It was further noted that the proposed Convention Center and the Clinton Community could coexist. The creation of a 16 acre park atop the Convention Center would provide much needed recreational space for Clinton residents. Speakers noted that the park would contain tennis courts and an ice skating rink for Community and City-wide use.

It was also noted that the Convention Center design has provision for future rapid transit station which could connect the facility with the City subway system if a crosstown rapid transit line is built.

In addition to the statements made at the Public Hearing supporting the convention center we have received many communications from civic, business and union organizations supporting construction of this center. A petition from local residents, businessmen and property owners in support of this plan has also been received.

An editorial in the Chelsea Clinton News of March 22, 1973 urged a conciliatory attitude on the part of the Clinton community, but also noting that ".....a convention center of the size contemplated would be a healthy stimulus to the sagging New York economy."

CONSIDERATION

The City of New York needs a new convention center. Major new facilities are in planning

or in operation in Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, Dallas, Portland, New Orleans and Atlantic City. Unless the nation's largest city becomes competitive (the Coliseum ranks only eleventh in size and its space is inefficient) our share of the market will dwindle and our economy will be badly hurt. We will also lose out on the potential major gain generated by new businesses and jobs.

Eight separate reports since 1964 have documented the economic urgency for a new convention center. It is essential not only to sustain the City's \$1.25 billion convention and visitor industry -- the City's second most lucrative source of income. But, it is also vital to bolster the network of facilities and businesses that support central office and hotel and retail activities. The noted urban economist, Eli Ginzberg, in his recently published book, *New York City is Very Much Alive*, underscores the importance of these linkages. He writes: "Connected to both central office and retail and wholesale activity are a host of industries and establishments which furnish specialized business and consumer services, from advertising to entertainment. Indeed, for much of the core of the city one of the most important features of economic activity is the dependence of individual establishments upon an immense complex network of business and personal services.

The new convention center would provide a needed strong foundation for that complex economic structure.

It will also generate the kinds of entry level jobs that New Yorkers need. There will be major new employment opportunities in retail stores, hotels, restaurants and in the transportation and entertainment sectors. During construction, there will be an estimated 2,000 jobs created and there will be 2,500 jobs for workers in the completed structure and minority workers must have an equal chance for employment on them all. In addition, it is estimated that the center could generate as many as 20,000 new jobs.

The waterfront location has a number of distinctive advantages. It allows the center to spread out so it can contain the largest single expanse of floor exhibition space of any such facility. The site is dramatic, centrally located, and involves no residential relocation.

In addition to exhibition halls, there will be waterfront restaurants, meeting rooms, a 2000-car peripheral garage and a 16-acre rooftop space that can be used for tennis courts, ice skating and other recreational uses.

There is substantial agreement that a new convention center would serve the greater good of the city. However, residents of the nearby Clinton community objected to the center's location and felt that it could jeopardize their community's future.

We have carefully reviewed the prospective impact of the center because we too are concerned about protecting the Clinton community. The greater good cannot be served by the sacrifice of a viable community. We would not be prepared to trade off one for the other.

We have met on numerous occasions with the Community Board and other representatives of the area. We have been in close contact with various City agencies charged with reviewing different aspects of the proposal. We have had intensive discussions with representatives of the Convention Center Corporation and their plans have been modified.

As a result of these efforts, we have developed a series of action proposals to protect, upgrade and preserve the Clinton community.

The present convention center plan, and the related actions the City will take, were hammered out through intensive and responsible citizen participation in cooperation with the community board. We believe the convention center, the City and the community will be the better for the process and the result. While all issues may not yet have been resolved to everyone's satisfaction, in working together we have moved a long way in a short time toward a beneficial conclusion.

Community Concerns

The convention center was initially to be located between 10th and 11th Avenues, from West 44th to West 47th Streets. As a result of community opposition because of the adverse community impact and relocation, the site was changed to the present waterfront location described in the 1971 State enabling legislation. Subsequently, the Community Board voted for a reconsideration of the waterfront site, calling for the facility to be located elsewhere, preferably in the Penn Central Railroad yards in the West 30's.

We have reviewed the alternate sites suggested and find they would be inadequate for many reasons. The most frequently suggested alternative of the Penn Central yards poses many difficulties. It is too far from mid-town hotels and business and entertainment activities. Problems of access would be compounded because the facility would be cut off by the clogged streets of the garment center and the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Acquisition of the site would be costly and there would be added construction costs because of the necessity to keep the railyard active. While the location would be further from the Clinton residential community, it would be closer to the Chelsea neighborhood. Changing the location would solve very little; the delay would only create added construction, access and cost problems.

We are convinced the present location makes most sense. The germane issue is what steps are needed to preserve the Clinton community.

On February 7, the Convention Center Committee of Community Board 4 passed a resolution detailing their position. The resolution expressed concern about preservation of the community. It said that new commercial development could be spurred which would cause massive dislocation. The committee asked why there was no priority given to a school the community needed. They said that traffic proposals were inadequate and that the environmental impact would be damaging to the community. A copy of that resolution is attached.

A further series of meetings were held with representatives of the Board and the Convention Center Committee and other community groups. The Commission also met again with various City agencies and the Convention Center Corporation. On March 9, the Chairman,

of the Commission sent a letter to the Chairman of the Community Board Convention Center Committee specifying the Commission's -- and the City's -- response to the board resolution. A copy of that letter is attached.

The letter states that preservation of the Clinton neighborhood is essential to the future of West Midtown and that a six to nine month study of the area will be undertaken to develop a "residential-conservation plan for the Clinton area." The Housing and Development Administration is committed to spend up to \$15 million over a three year period to insure that the neighborhood conservation plan is carried out. The City is also committed to commence construction on a public housing project and to include a viable proportion of low and moderate income units in all future Mitchell-Lama projects in the Clinton community.

The letter responds point by point to the Board resolution.

---- A capital budget amendment is being advanced to fund. P.S. 51.

---- The Planning Commission has removed the 48th Street, commercial spine from the Master Plan.

---- The Planning Commission will also institute a moratorium on upzoning to increase density for luxury or commercial development in the area.

---- The Department of Traffic will study circulation and traffic problems.

The studies are to be undertaken in cooperation with the Community Board. To insure that the appropriate steps are taken to implement the proposals in the letter, an inter-agency committee with responsibility for getting the job done was established headed by the Chairman of the Planning Commission.

The Community Board, in essence, welcomed the letter as a positive response to their concerns. However, they stressed that two main problems remained, a position supported by elected officials of the area. It was felt that the proposed ramps at 46th and 47th Streets to provide bus and taxi access to the convention, center jutted out too far into the community and would attract traffic through, instead of around, the residential streets of Clinton. Concerns were also expressed about, the City's ability to make progress in implementing its commitments. We have made that progress.

These views were summarized by community representatives at the Public Hearing held on March 14 and in another resolution of the Community Board -- a copy of which is attached.

Since the Public Hearing, we have made significant progress in addressing both these matters. The ramps have been redesigned. Access will be provided by twin conical ramps, located on the Twelfth Avenue side of the inland site. Entering traffic will arrive primarily from Eleventh Avenue or 47th Street. Departing traffic will leave via a new internal roadway and then Twelfth Avenue. The new pattern is detailed in a letter from the Convention Center Corporation to the Chairman of the Commission dated March 23, 1973 which is attached.

The new circulation and ramp system has four advantages:

---- It greatly reduces the impact of convention center traffic on the residential community.

---- It draws the ramps back and away from Eleventh Avenue

---- It frees approximately three acres which will be developed initially as a community park and ultimately, according to the Corporation "with uses conducive to community Interaction (such as) a neighborhood center, shopping, plazas ... it is intended to be developed as a lively urban place and a focal point of neighborhood activity."

---- And finally, it will result in a more architecturally pleasing configuration. We have consulted with representatives of the Transportation Administration and the Traffic Department. They agree that the proposed modification will substantially reduce the traffic impact on the community.

Since the Public Hearing, the Office of Midtown Planning and Development also held several meetings with representatives of Community Board 4 to structure the studies called for and establish guidelines for actions needed to carry out the planning, traffic, land use, zoning and preservation recommendations. In a separate action today, we are passing the budget amendment needed to advance P.S. 51. We have a letter from the Board of Education stating their readiness to proceed with this project. That letter is attached.

Letters from other City agencies, including the Department of Traffic, the Department of Air Resources and the Housing and Development Administration, indicating their participation and cooperation in the efforts are also attached.

Any proposals for subsequent development of the inland Phase 2 area, generally between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, from 45th to 47th Streets and a parcel between 44th and 45th Streets -- as outlined in the March 23 letter from the Convention Center Corporation - - would require the approval of the Planning Commission and Board of Estimate. Similarly, contemplated public financing arrangements for the \$200 million project would also require further City approvals.

In sum, we believe the needs of the City for a new convention center and the necessity to preserve the Clinton community are reconcilable and -- in fact -- both objectives are being achieved. Our commitment to each is equal and firm; both the economic uplift provided by the Center and the retention of good neighborhoods are vital to the future of the City.

FINDINGS AND APPROVAL

(a) The Development Plan conforms to a comprehensive plan for the development of the municipality of the City of New York as a whole as required by Section 6(2) of Chapter 1011 of the Laws of the State of New York, 1971.

(b) The proposed Zoning Resolution Amendments including zoning map modification (CP-22264 and CP-22265) and changes in the City Map are in furtherance of the purposes of Chapter 1011 of the laws of the State of New York, 1971 as required by Section 6(2) thereof and conform to a comprehensive plan for the development of the municipality of the City of New York.

(c) Relocation benefits are to be provided to individuals and businesses displaced in the

course of redevelopment which are at least equal to those for which individuals and businesses would be eligible under Federal law- at the time of their relocation if the development plan were an urban renewal plan.

The City Planning Commission hereby certifies its qualified approval of the development Plan (Stage I) for the New York City Convention and Exhibition Center, pursuant to the New York City Convention and Exhibition Center Corporation Act, Chapter 1011 of the New York State Laws of 1971, with the following recommendations for modification:

1. The access ramp system shown in the proposed Development Plan on Sheets B1, B2, B3, B4, B5 and B6 and related exhibits be modified as shown on the attached Drawing A - Roof Plan dated March 26, 1973. This conical ramp system minimizes the traffic impact on the area east of Eleventh Avenue.
2. The reversal of traffic flows on West 46th and West 47th Streets between 9th and 10th Avenues be changed to substitute West 48th Street instead, of West 46th as a street to have a reversal. The resulting reversal on West 47th and 48th Streets between. 9th and 10th Avenues will provide further protection to the Clinton community.

JOHN E. ZUCCOTTI, Chairman;

MARTIN GALLENT, Vice-Chairman

GERALD R. COLEMAN, GORDON J. DAVIS, SYLVIA DEUTSCH,

CHESTER RAPKIN, JAQUELIN T. ROBERTSON, Commissioners