



Lowell D. Kern
Chair

Jesse Bodine
District Manager

CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

424 West 33 Street, Suite #580
New York, NY 10001

tel: 212-736-4536
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

November 23, 2021

Signe Nielsen
President, Landscape Architect
Public Design Commission
City Hall, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10007

Re: LinkNYC 5G Towers

Dear President Nielsen,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) urges the Public Design Commission to deny approval of the new LinkNYC 5G towers' design, which, if allowed, will disfigure neighborhood streets without providing commensurate public benefit.

This summer, New York City's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DOITT) and the Franchise Board amended the LinkNYC contract to allow new installations of 32-foot-tall towers on the sidewalks instead of the 9.5-foot high LinkNYC kiosks allowed in the original contract. We wonder whether such installations with their massive impact on public space should have required an Environmental Impact Study. MCB4 at its November 3rd Full Board meeting and by a vote of 42 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, voted to object to the City's less-than-completely-transparent contract amendment approach and strenuously object to the addition of these massive towers on our neighborhood streets for many reasons, articulated below.

Inappropriate, Highway-Scale Design:

From a streetscape standpoint, the proposed towers are not human scale and do not belong on our neighborhood city sidewalks. In many residential districts, with low scale architecture, 32-ft towers will be completely disproportionate. In districts with tenements and brick facades, they

will clash with the character of the neighborhood. The Public Design Commission has already approved the installation of 5G cell relays on streetlight poles. That is a judicious optimization of sidewalk space. There is no reason to burden the public space of disadvantaged neighborhoods with a network of dystopian towers. Robert Moses made this mistake with vehicular highways; let's not repeat his mistake with digital highways.

The streetscape in our district would be disfigured by such towers.

Failure to Meaningfully Address Digital Divide:

Our understanding based on the presentation is that the tower above the LinkNYC screen is solely for the purpose of housing 5G equipment for the benefit of cell carriers. It is thus disingenuous for anyone to claim that the towers are necessary to bring broadband access to underserved areas; the towers instead seem to be privatizing public space for the benefit of the franchisee and private cell carriers.

Ultrafast 5G requires a more expensive contract with a carrier and a recent phone. Ultrafast also does not penetrate walls. How will NYSHA residents on the 15th floor benefit from this offering? Children in underserved neighborhoods will not be served unless they stand outside to do their homework.

Bridging the digital divide involves offering wired and wireless solutions to residents at very low cost or free, just as we would for water. No such bridge is provided by monstrosities on the sidewalk that do not serve residents' apartments.

Questionable Business Model & Partnership:

The franchisee, Citybridge, is a division of Intersection, a venture capital backed company. During their previous contract, they collected millions of dollars in advertising revenue but failed to pay the City. Should we now trust that they have a better business plan or that they will honor their agreement? And should we trust that DoiTT will be a better partner? Should the contract fail again these towers will be abandoned on the sidewalk and the City will have to pay to remove them.

Instead of proceeding with these towers, the City should be installing proper digital infrastructure in underserved communities and make it available at low cost - not taking away already-limited public space.

Need to Honor Local Commitments:

Borough President Gale Brewer has signed an agreement with DoiTT to permanently remove certain LinkNYC installations in Community District 4. Further, after years of delays, Council Speaker Corey Johnson obtained that DoiTT remove the old phone booth installations that had

not yet been converted and restore the sidewalk. MCB4 expects that DoiTT's agreements with Borough President Gale Brewer and Speaker Johnson will be honored. We certainly do not want all the 2014 phone booth locations in our district to be populated with these new towers.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Christine Berthet
Co-chair
Transportation Planning Committee



Dale Corvino
Co-chair
Transportation Planning Committee

cc: Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Corey Johnson, NYC Council Speaker
Jessica Tisch, Commissioner, DoiTT

^[1] <https://www.theverge.com/22194419/5g-phone-plans-us-carriers-guide>



