



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

424 West West 33 Street, Suite #580
New York, NY 10001
tel: 212-736-4536
www.nyc.gov/mcb4

JEFFREY LEFRANCOIS
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

February 17, 2023

Hope Knight
President and CEO
Empire State Development
633 Third Avenue, Floor 37
New York, NY 10017

Re: Bayview Chelsea, 550 West 20th Street, Proposed Supportive Housing Development by NYS Empire State Development RFP

Dear President Knight,

Empire State Development (ESD), New York State's economic development agency, made presentations regarding the proposed Bayview Chelsea supportive housing development, at 550 West 20th Street to the Chelsea Land Use (CLU) and Housing, Health, & Human Services (HHHS) Committees of Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4), on December 14th and December 15th, 2022, respectively. Committee members reviewed and discussed the proposal at the December committee meetings. Then as part of its January 4th monthly meeting, MCB4 held a Public Hearing on the proposal. The CLU and HHHS committees then discussed the proposed development at its public meetings on January 17th and January 19th, 2023, respectively.

At its regularly scheduled Full Board meeting on February 1, 2023, the Board voted 40 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote to support the proposed Bayview Chelsea supportive housing development subject to the conditions and provisions noted below:

MCB4 Positions

MCB4's Bayview Chelsea presentation and this letter should be included, by reference, in an attachment to the RFP.

- **Affordable Housing Program**
 - 100% permanently affordable supportive housing.
 - Housing to include up to 115 permanently affordable supportive housing units for low income homeless and community resident population, with a standard program of 60% homeless units and 40% community units.

- Program space for up to 30 residential beds in supervised housing for a mentally ill homeless population needing 24/7 care, social and mental health services, and ongoing daily living assistance, to a more intensive degree than standard supportive housing.
- **Historic Preservation**
 - Preservation and Restoration of Façade including:
 - Brick Patterns & Detailing
 - Terracotta Medallions & Panels
 - Main Entry Surround and Detailing
 - Preservation and Restoration of Pool Mosaics
 - Preservation and Restoration of the Chapel’s stained-glass windows
 - Preservation and reuse of the Chapel’s light fixtures, commemorative plaques, and Sailor’s Mural
- **Community Facility Use**

Require approximately 33,000 SF of the proposed development¹ be used as community services facility by retaining and renovating the existing pool and gym utilizing infrastructure remaining from the building’s original use as the Seamen’s House YMCA. Further, relocating the large industrial kitchen from the ground floor², to another location in the building, as training kitchen for neighborhood workforce development for restaurant workers. Lastly, the western roof of west wing, should be programmed as a community space for events and activities for building and community residents.
- **Community Service, Social Service and Mental Health Provider Partnerships**

MCB4 requests that ESD require that the development, ownership, and service team include a not-for-profit developer, a not-for-profit social service provider, and a hospital as partners to collaborate to create a housing and service model to serve homeless social service needy populations with multiple degrees of need.
- **Zoning & Building**
 - Comply with all existing provisions of the Special West Chelsea District, especially height and setback requirements.
 - Comply with the overall bulk requirements.
 - Override requirement for Highline or West Chelsea Affordable Housing Bonuses to increase bulk from 6 FAR to 7.5 FAR.
 - No additions on, through, or over the west wing of the building.

¹ Existing square footage is approximately 101,500 GSF

² For compliance with NYC Zoning Resolution, Resiliency Zoning requirements

- No additions in the center courtyard between the west and east wings.
 - Only consider a modest addition to the east wing, (aka the Laundry Building), of no more than one or two stories. Any addition should be deeply set back from the street.
- **Community Advisory Board**
Establish Community Advisory Board, 6 months prior to opening.
 - **Proposed Development is Independent of Penn Station Redevelopment**
Provide an affirmative statement that the Proposed Bayview Chelsea supportive housing development is independent of the Empire Station Redevelopment General Project Plan (GPP).

Background

History

Designed by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon, the architects of the Empire State Building, Bayview housed the Seamen's YMCA from its opening in 1931 until it closed in 1966. The west wing consisted of four floors of dormitory-style rooms for 225 men above four floors of social spaces, including a gymnasium, pool, cafeteria, and chapel.

In 1967, New York State appropriated the YMCA property as the Bayview Rehabilitation Facility, run by the State's Narcotics Addiction Control Commission (NACC), as a residential drug treatment center. In 1974, after the NACC program was terminated statewide, the facility was transferred to the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. It was then reclassified in 1978 as a women's correctional facility, for a maximum of 323 women. A Community Advisory Committee was also established to mediate any impacts to the surrounding neighborhood.

Bayview closed permanently in 2012 after Superstorm Sandy caused extensive damage to the neighborhood and the building. Before the storm made landfall, Bayview's 153 prisoners were evacuated to other facilities and the building has since remained empty. After meeting with ESD in July 2013, MCB4 passed a resolution encompassing affordable housing, community recreation, social services, and historic preservation considerations. to provide input and comment on the State's proposed land disposition plan and RFP.

However, when ESD issued the Bayview RFP in December 2013, housing use, let alone affordable housing was excluded. Despite interest by experienced NYC real estate companies in redeveloping Bayview (for example, the Brodsky Organization, Edison Properties, Jamestown LP, and The Related Companies, among others), ESD awarded development to the Novo Foundation, a non-profit organization affiliated with Warren Buffet's son, Peter. Novo proposed a women's center with offices, arts facilities, fitness, childcare, and retail/dining components. The Novo Foundation had no previous

experience developing such a development nor projects in New York City. In 2019, after multiple project versions, it withdrew after 6 years of effort.

Current Status

On November 3, 2021, along with Governor Hochul's [announcement](#) of the Empire Station Redevelopment GPP, was the announcement that Bayview Chelsea would be redeveloped as Supportive Housing. After that announcement, MCB4 requested to meet with ESD regarding Bayview Chelsea. In November 2022, ESD and NYS Homes & Community Renewal (HCR) met with the leadership of MCB4, City and State elected officials and their staff. At that meeting, ESD also stated that there would be no building acquisition cost and that NYS Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) would make a capital subsidy for renovation available to the selected developer.

ESD then presented an outline of the proposed RFP proposing issuance in late December 2022. After discussion with MCB4, ESD agreed to delay RFP issuance and broaden community input during December 2022 and January 2023 in collaboration with MCB4.

MCB4 Detailed Recommendations

In the context of neighborhood housing, community service needs, and Bayview's historic use, Manhattan Community Board 4 proposes the following program elements and requirements for an RFP to be issued by ESD:

Affordable Housing Program

Permanently Affordable Housing

MCB4 requests that ESD require 100% permanently affordable units at Bayview Chelsea.

Affordable Supportive Housing (approximately 50,000sf)

- Up to 115 apartments for low-income individuals, with a standard program of 60% available for formerly homeless and 40% reserved for residents of MCB4. Currently the RFP outline calls for 60 permanently affordable housing units, MCB4 requests the RFP consider both studios and shared apartments to maximize the number of affordable housing units.

Residential Supervised Housing (approximately 20,000sf)

- Program space for up to 30 residential beds in supervised housing for a mentally ill homeless population needing 24/7 care, social and mental health services, and ongoing daily living assistance, to a more intensive degree than standard supportive housing. A portion of those beds should be dedicated to those most in need, with court appointed Article 81 guardians.

Social Service Offices (approximately 5,000sf)

- Office space for case management staff, licensed social workers and program staff for the supportive housing component.

Building Staffing—Supportive Housing Component

- On site security 24/7
- Resident Manager
- Resident Superintendent

Social Service Staffing—Supportive Housing Component

- Case Management Supervisor, LSMW
- Case Managers, MSW’s & BSW’s

Social Service Staffing—Supervised Housing Component

For this model to succeed, there must be intensive staffing, with a higher degree of experience and training, to provide required social service support for those mentally ill individuals unable to live independently,

- 2 Case Managers, MSW’s with maximum 10 to 15-person caseload
- 1 case Manager on call 24/7
- 1 LPN/RN, on site, 1 shift 7 days per week
- 1 Psychiatrist, on site, 5 days a week
- 1 Psychiatrist, on call weekends

Historic Preservation

Bayview Chelsea is historically significant, both culturally and architecturally. In 2005, the building was deemed State and National Register Eligible in the Special West Chelsea District Rezoning Environmental Impact Statement³. Constructed together as complex in 1931, the art deco-style Seamen’s House YMCA and adjacent 6-story Laundry (a central laundry facility to service 16 YMCA locations in Manhattan and the Bronx) has been also requested by MCB4⁴ to be evaluated and designated as a NYC landmark by the NYC Landmarks Commission.

Currently the RFP calls for historic preservation “to the fullest extent possible.” Given its prior review in 2005, development of Bayview Chelsea will be subject to New York’s State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) review. To ensure a successful, non-contentious review, clear requirements for historic preservation, and to manage expectations for the future development team, the following items must be included in the

³ [Special West Chelsea District Rezoning and High Line Open Space Environmental Impact Statement, Chapter 7 Historic Resources, see pages 21 and 45 – Seamen’s House 118 Eleventh Ave](#)

⁴ [MCB4 Letter to Landmarks Preservation Commission Re: Request for Evaluation of 550 West 20th Street](#) (October 2022)

proposed RFP:

- Preservation, restoration, and maintenance of the brick and masonry façade.
- Preservation and restoration of multiple terracotta medallions and panels must be in kind, using terracotta, as approved by the State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO).
- Installation of historically appropriate windows and building entry doors.
- Restoration of building entry sconces and main entryway details.
- Preservation and restoration of the Chapel's stained-glass windows.
- Preservation and reuse of the Chapel's light fixtures, commemorative plaques, and Sailor's Mural.
- Preservation and restoration of Pool Mosaics.
- Preservation and reuse of the building's programmatic spaces, pool, gym, chapel, and kitchen representing the YMCA's cultural legacy of servicing merchant seamen and the Chelsea working waterfront.
- Additions should be modest, 1 to 2 stories only over the east wing, Laundry Building, as reviewed and approved by SHPO.

Please note MCB4 is communicating separately with ESD and New York State Office of General Services (OGS) to request the replacement of the terracotta medallions and plaques be done in kind and in advance to the completion of the RFP process.

Community Facility Use

MCB4 requests approximately 33,000 gross square feet, of Bayview Chelsea, to be developed as a community services center utilizing remaining infrastructure from the original Seamen's House YMCA, including:

- Pool
- Gym
- Large industrial kitchen
- Rooftop Community Space
- Classrooms

For a decade, MCB4 has consistently recommended these spaces be renovated and used for community recreation, education, health, social and community services. The western roof of the west wing should be programmed as a community space for events and activities for building and community residents.

Bayview Chelsea presents a unique opportunity for a NYS owned location to be developed to provide an affordable home for such needed services for lower and moderate-income New Yorkers.

Bayview Chelsea is one block west of Fulton Houses, a NYCHA development with 945 affordable apartments. Especially needed is workforce development for NYCHA youth and NYC Public Schools. Youth career development programming could be offered, in

conjunction with local partners like Fulton Tech, Google and Hudson Guild, to offer tech training and restaurant workforce development programs. Offering such programs in West Chelsea, currently one of the highest rent districts in the City, would demonstrate the New York State's commitment to inclusion and diversity on Manhattan's West Side.

MCB4 also recognizes the additional capital funding needs created by these requirements and will seek additional support from its State and City legislators to ensure full funding for this community facility element of Bayview Chelsea.

Community Service, Social Service and Mental Health Provider Partnerships

MCB4 requests that ESD require that the development, ownership, and service teams include a not-for-profit developer, a not-for-profit social service provider, and a hospital partner to collaborate to create a housing and service model to serve homeless social service needy populations with multiple degrees of need.

MCB4 also requests a preference for not-for-profit developers and social service partners.

Zoning & Building

Currently the ESD RFP outline states that if the RFP respondent furthers the development goals of the RFP, ESD may grant a zoning override to increase the site's FAR to 7.5.

MCB4 instead recommends the following RFP requirements:

- Only provide an override requirement for the Highline or West Chelsea Affordable Housing Bonuses to increase bulk from 6 FAR to 7.5 FAR.
- Comply with all other existing provisions of the Special West Chelsea District, especially height and setback requirements.
- No additions on, through or over the west wing of the building.
- No additions in the center courtyard between the west and east wings.
- Only consider a modest addition to the east wing, (aka the Laundry Building), of no more than one or two stories. Any addition should be deeply set back from the street.

Conclusion

MCB4 appreciates ESD's willingness to work together to ensure full community public input for the development of requirements and guidelines for the Bayview Chelsea Supportive Housing RFP. As evidenced by the MCB4's Affordable Housing Plan⁵, MCB4 is both an advocate of the production of affordable housing for New Yorkers of all income levels and an open public planning process. During our public meetings and hearing, many community members attending to speak or comment on other topics, unsolicited, spoke in favor of the proposed Bayview Chelsea plan. It must be noted, many members of the public especially referenced support for MCB4's proposed 30-bed

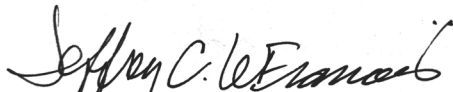
⁵ [MCB4 Affordable Housing Plan](#)

Supervised Housing component, citing a critical housing and service need for those severely needy New Yorkers.


MCB4 views Bayview Chelsea as a unique opportunity to serve the lowest income New Yorkers with the highest social service needs in one of the highest rent districts in the City. MCB4 is committed not only to affordable housing but also community services. Lastly, historic preservation must be a key component of this proposed development. MCB4 hopes the Bayview Chelsea RFP can provide a possible model for such a range of social service supported and supervised housing.


The Board looks forward to continuing the discussion to create a successful development model to serve multiple homeless populations, to bring robust community services to the area, and to preserve this landmark-eligible building by returning it to full and active community use.


Sincerely,


Jeffrey/LeFrancois
Chair
Manhattan
Community Board 4


Jessica Chait
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use
Committee


Kerry Keenan
Co-Chair
Chelsea Land Use
Committee


Joe Restuccia
Chair
Housing, Health, Human Services
Committee


Maria Ortiz
Chair
Housing, Health, Human Services
Comittee

cc: Hon. Brad Hoylman, NY State Senate
Hon. Tony Simone, NY Assembly
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council