

JESSICA CHAIT
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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April 23, 2025

Jeffrey D. Roth
NYC Deputy Mayor for Operations
City Hall
New York, New York 10007

James S. Oddo
Commissioner
NYC Department of Buildings
280 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Dan Garodnick
Chair
New York City Planning Commission
120 Broadway, 31st Floor
New York, NY 10271

Re: Addressing Illegal Demolition in Manhattan Community District 4

Dear Deputy Mayor Roth, Commissioner Oddo, and Chair Garodnick,

At Manhattan Community Board 4's (MCB4) Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use (CHKLU) Committee meeting on March 12, 2025, the committee discussed measures for addressing illegal demolition in MCD4.

At its regularly scheduled Full Board meeting on April 2, 2025, MCB4 voted 43 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstaining, and 1 present but not eligible, to request a meeting with officials from the NYC Department of Buildings (DOB) to discuss the following requests:

- NYC DOB adds an electronic tag on DOB NOW on all buildings protected from demolition in Special Zoning Districts with anti-demolition protections, which include the Special Clinton District (SCD), Special Hudson Yards District (SHYD), Special Garment Center District (SGCD), and Special West Chelsea District (SWCD).
- NYC DOB alerts the District Manager at the MCB4 if there is an application submitted for demolition, full or partial, of a protected building, including any plans that will impact 20% or greater of the floor area.
- Add to the 311 database the data for buildings protected from demolition so complaints about illegal demolition can be effectively and promptly addressed.

Background

Special Purpose Districts contain zoning text language that is tailored to distinctive qualities of an area that may not lend themselves to general zoning and standard development practices. Seventy-five percent of the geography of MCD4 are Special Districts¹. Many of MCD4's Special Purpose Districts have distinct provisions that protect residential buildings from demolition.

These districts include:

- Special Clinton District: Preservation Area
- Special Garment Center District: Subdistrict A-2
- Special Hudson Yards District: Hell's Kitchen Subdistrict (D4 and D5)
- Special West Chelsea District

In these areas, residential buildings with 3 or more units are protected from demolition. In total, there are 1,167 residential buildings that are protected².

Special District	Number of Buildings	Number of Units
Special Clinton District	1,116	~18,000-29,000 ³

¹ Including both Special Purpose Districts and Special Historic Districts.

² See Appendix A for Maps of Special District Anti-Demolition Protections

³ Number of units in Special Clinton District is an approximation based on a sample collected from the north side of W 47th to the south side of W 49th yielded an average of 12 units per building, and a sample of the north side of W 54th to the south side of W 56th yielded an average of 45 units per building. Assuming 50% of buildings at each of these unit average yields 29,288 units. The correct number of units is currently being verified by Clinton Housing Development Company.

Special Hudson Yards District	100	889
Special Garment Center District	24	389
Special West Chelsea District	27	321
TOTAL	1,167	~19,599-30,599

While residential buildings have been protected since 1973 per the Special Clinton District Zoning text, MCD4 has recorded illegal demolitions that have occurred in all four Special Districts. MCB4 has requested since the beginning of the DeBlasio administration that DOB implement an electronic system to flag all residential buildings protected from demolition, most recently on December 3rd, 2024⁴. This request is also included in MCD4's Affordable Housing Plan⁵. MCB4 reiterates this request because a lack of enforcement and coordinated regulation by DOB has led to the illegal demolition of multiple buildings and a significant loss in affordable housing units.

Illegally Demolished Buildings as of March 2025

Building Address	Buildings	Units Lost	Special District
485-491, 497 9 th Avenue	5	20	Hudson Yards
319-321 West 38 th Street	2	18	Garment Center
559 West 22 nd Street AKA 162 11 th Ave	1	21	West Chelsea
500 West 22 nd Street AKA 197 10 th Ave	3	12	West Chelsea
821 9 th Ave	1	6	Clinton
317-319 West 35 th Street	2	28	Garment Center
500 West 28 th Street	1	6	West Chelsea
355-357 West 39 th Street	3	8	Hudson Yards

⁴ [12.3.24 Letter to DOB re 435 W 48th Street Illegal Demolition](#)

⁵ [Manhattan Community Board 4 Affordable Housing Plan](#)

253 10 th Avenue ⁶	1	6	Chelsea
335-337 West 55 th Street	2	28	Clinton
412 West 46 th Street	1	15	Clinton
435 West 48 th Street	1	4	Clinton
Total	24	170	

Functionality

DOB NOW, launched in August of 2016, has improved capabilities over its predecessor, DOB BIS. It was continually represented to MCB4 that the technological limitations of DOB BIS prevented DOB from adding the electronic tag on protected buildings. However, since DOB upgraded to DOB NOW, those technological limitations no longer exist. A building's profile provides land use regulations on the front page, which increases accessibility to the information. A few examples of information include a building's Landmark status and if there are any environmental restrictions on the site. Buildings on DOB NOW are constantly updated with information about job filings and violations, and the site is well-maintained.

MCB4 Requests

MCB4 requests that the building profile page is updated to include a tag for buildings protected from demolition. Adding this information would strengthen the enforcement of the zoning provisions and make it easier for relevant parties, including plan examiners, to see if filed plans conflict with the protected status of a building. MCB4 is working with Clinton Housing Development Company to map and verify the full inventory of protected buildings in the district.

Following the implementation of the electronic tag, MCB4 requests that DOB alert the District Manager at MCB4 if there is an application submitted for demolition, full or partial of a protected building, and that the database for buildings protected from demolition is added to the 311 database so complaints about illegal demolition can be effectively and promptly addressed. Increasing the accessibility of information will help to mitigate the problem of illegal demolition by ensuring that protected buildings are properly marked, and the proper parties are aware of any potential demolition of a protected building.

Sincerely,



Jessica Chait
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Jean Daniel Noland
Co-Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

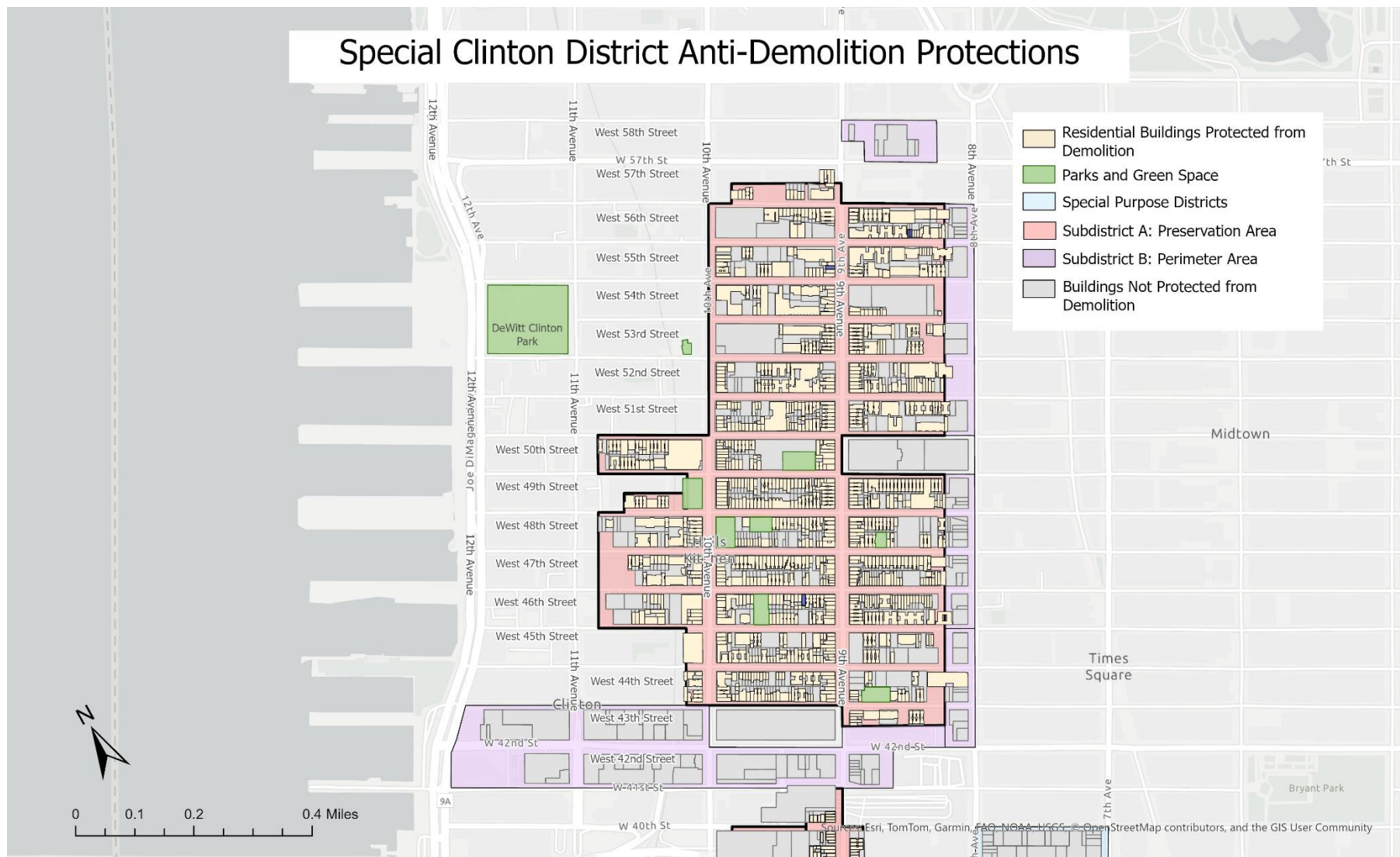


Paul Devlin
Co-Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

Cc: Hon. Erik Bottcher, NYC Council Member
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President

1 Appendix A: Maps of Special District Anti-Demolition Protections

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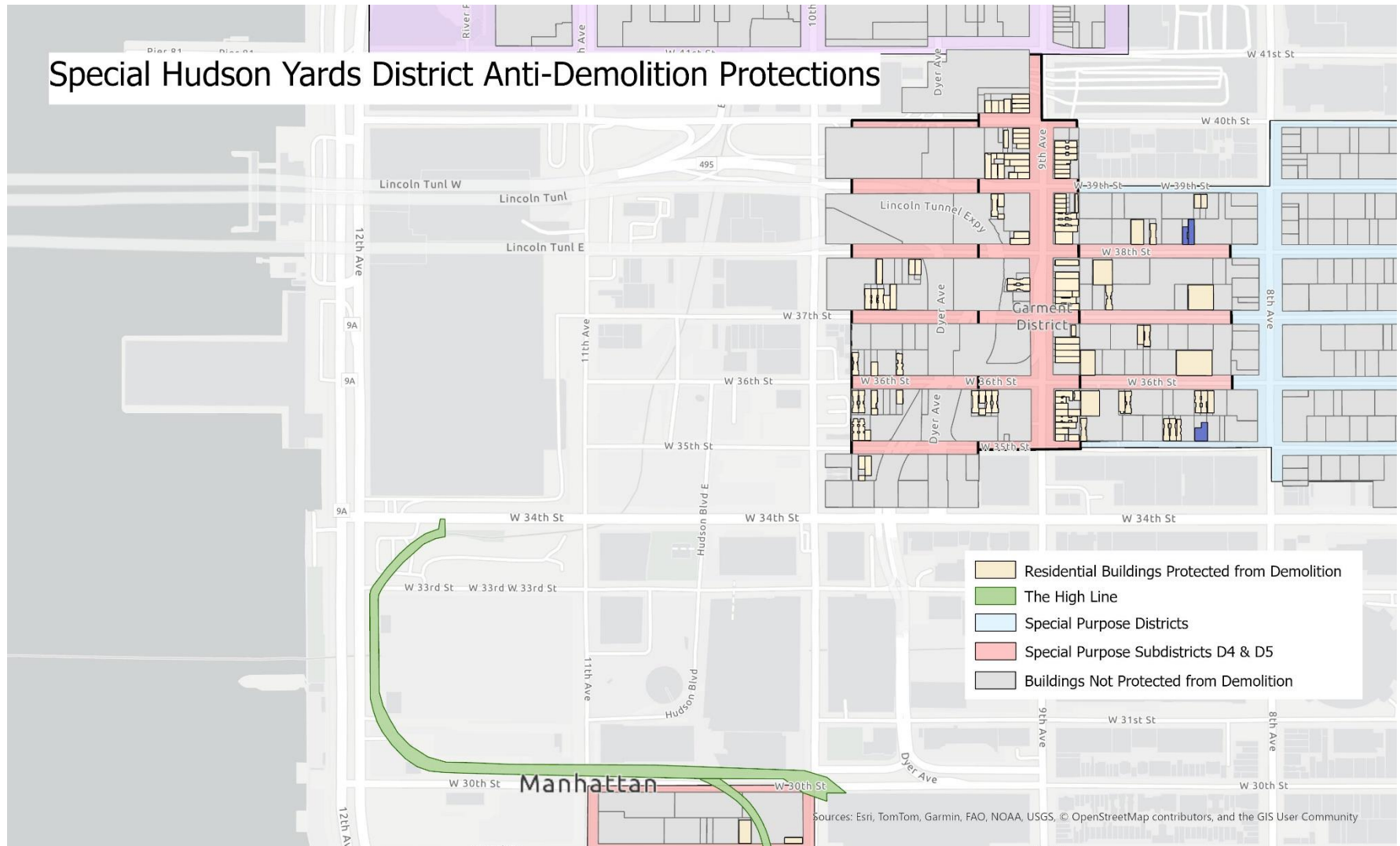
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Special Garment Center District Anti-Demolition Protections



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Special Hudson Yards District Anti-Demolition Protections



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Special West Chelsea District Anti-Demolition Protections

