

CITY OF NEW YORK  
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**LESLIE BOGHOSIAN MURPHY**  
Chair

**JESSE R. BODINE**  
District Manager

March 26, 2026

Amanda Lefton  
Commissioner  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
625 Broadway  
Albany, New York 12233

Lisa Bova-Hiatt  
Chief Executive Officer  
New York City Housing Authority  
90 Church St., New York NY, 10007

Jamar Adams  
Managing Principal  
Essence Development  
6 Greene Street Suite 600  
New York, New York 10013

Greg Gushee  
Executive Vice President  
The Related Companies  
30 Hudson Yards  
New York, New York 10001

**RE: Brownfield Cleanup Program Application — Chelsea Elliott Site (RBEC1), 441 W. 26th Street**

Dear Commissioner Lefton, Ms. Bova-Hiatt, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Gushee,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) Executive Committee, at its regularly scheduled meeting on March 23rd, 2026, unanimously voted to request that the Related/Essence/Langan team go above and beyond what is required by law in the remediation of contaminated soil at the Elliot-Chelsea site (RBEC1) located at 441 W. 26th Street. The proximity of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residential buildings housing seniors and families, two schools classified as “sensitive receptors”

serving young children, and the 16 to 31 year duration of the proposed project make this an urgent public health matter that demands the highest priority of attention.<sup>1</sup>

## **PRIMARY CONCERNS**

The NYCHA residents and school communities have raised serious concerns about the migration of contaminants through dust, soil vapor, and groundwater into adjacent buildings and the surrounding community when soil is disturbed.

Two NYCHA residential buildings sit approximately 30 feet from RBEC1 on the eastern and western sides of the site. The Elliott-Chelsea NYCHA buildings are over 60 years old with cracks and gaps around windows, doorways, and basements, making them particularly vulnerable to contamination infiltration. NYCHA residents, including seniors, face not only the health risks of a 16 to 31 year remediation and reconstruction project but the profound disruption of displacement from their homes during demolition and reconstruction.

Two schools in the immediate vicinity are classified as **sensitive receptors**:

- **P.S. 33 Chelsea Prep**, serving 600 Pre-K through fifth grade students, located approximately 0.04 miles east of the site, co-located with P.S. 226, a District 75 school serving students with significant challenges.
- **Avenues: The World School**, serving 1,900 students from age one through 12th grade, located approximately 0.08 miles from the site.

The P.S. 33 building is also over 60 years old with the same vulnerability to contamination infiltration through cracks and gaps around windows, doorways, and basements.

Community concerns include contaminated dust and soil vapor entering homes and classrooms, seepage of contaminated groundwater into basements, inadequate air monitoring and real-time notification, lack of emergency protocols when air quality is deemed unsafe, elimination of outdoor spaces due to air and soil contaminants, rodent and insect infestation, truck routing, idling and vibration, traffic congestion given the number of large trucks needed to transport soil and that a significant portion of P.S. 33 and P.S. 226 students are bused in, noise during school hours, the lack of consistent and clear communication with NYCHA officials and the Related Companies and Essence Development (the Development Team), lack of public engagement, and declining enrollment at P.S. 33 due to parent concerns about the project.

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<sup>1</sup> This letter will be ratified by the full board on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

MCB4 is also deeply concerned about the cumulative health effects of multiple cleanups over 16 to 31 years on a community that has already shouldered a significant environmental burden.

## **BACKGROUND**

As part of the proposed NYCHA Fulton Elliott-Chelsea redevelopment plan, a Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP) application and draft Remedial Investigation Work Plan (RIWP) was submitted to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) by the Development Team and Langan Engineering & Environmental Services on December 30, 2025. The BCP is a voluntary program that offers tax benefits and liability protections in exchange for soil remediation. The investigation will determine the nature and extent of contamination in soil, groundwater, soil vapor, and any other affected elements of the environment. If accepted, the investigation phase is expected to take 12 to 18 months.

There are currently two BCP applications for the NYCHA FEC proposed redevelopment. This letter focuses on the Chelsea Elliott site (RBEC1) at 441 W. 26th Street, for which the public comment deadline is March 29, 2026. MCB4 submitted a separate letter for the Fulton property (RBF1) at 401 W. 19th Street during its comment period last month.

MCB4 is grateful to the DEC for the extended public comment period. However, we are concerned that The Development Team declined our invitation to present the draft RIWP, which has exacerbated mistrust among NYCHA residents and school communities and limited our board's ability to fully evaluate the application. MCB4 cannot respond to the application in an informed way without a presentation from the Development Team.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

MCB4 urges DEC, The Department of Housing (DOH), NYCHA, the Development Team and Langan to adopt the following:

### **Contamination Control**

- Specify strategies to prevent soil contaminants from migrating offsite through dust, soil vapor, and groundwater.
- Specify effective remedies for contaminants that have already migrated offsite.
- Provide a clear map showing where contamination has been detected and at what levels across the entire site.
- Specify what percentage of the site's soil exceeds residential cleanup standards and the estimated volume of soil requiring removal.
- Specify whether all soil exceeding residential standards will be excavated and removed or whether some will remain on site under caps, pavement, or building slabs — and if so, who will be legally responsible for long term monitoring and maintenance of those controls.

- Given that chlorinated solvents were detected in soil vapor, include permanent vapor mitigation systems such as sub-slab depressurization in the new buildings.
- Specify where contaminated soil will be transported and disposed of and approximately how many truck trips will be required.
- Give an approximation of how many clean ups will be needed at the Elliott-Chelsea campus.

### **Air Monitoring**

- Specify dust control and air monitoring measures to prevent contaminated soil from becoming airborne during excavation.
- Specify the air monitoring thresholds that will trigger a stop-work order if dust or vapors exceed safe levels.
- Commit to making real-time and daily air monitoring results publicly available during excavation.

### **Building Protection — NYCHA Residential Buildings and Schools**

- Conduct a walkthrough and inspection of NYCHA residential buildings adjacent to RBEC1 and P.S. 33 to identify contamination infiltration points including but not limited to windows, doorways, and basements.
- Install filters on all air intakes in affected NYCHA residential buildings and school buildings.
- Provide third party indoor air quality monitoring for all affected buildings.
- Replace window AC units and increase filter changes to every two months in affected buildings.
- Provide direct AC replacement units for every P.S. 33 classroom and office.
- Pour concrete on the P.S. 33 outdoor garden area to prevent pest infiltration.
- Install a wall and sound barrier around the P.S. 33 outdoor schoolyard.
- Install additional lighting around affected buildings.
- Schedule all noisy work outside of school hours.
- Provide support for relocating the school if conditions warrant.

### **Community Engagement**

- Before the Remedial Action Work Plan is approved, it must be presented to the public by the Development Team allowing for the community to ask questions and have them answered.
- Develop a Community Participation Plan that includes ongoing public presentation and engagement throughout the life of the project.
- Provide a Technical Assistance Grant to cover the cost of a third party engineer for the community.
- Provide a Community Liaison

- Create a 24-hour hotline to report issues during off hours
- Conduct direct outreach to all schools designated as sensitive receptors in the application.

## CONCLUSION

The health and well-being of this community must be central to any redevelopment plan. The concerns raised by NYCHA residents, school communities, and other nearby stakeholders are justified and must be prioritized. Housing insecurity and environmental health are deeply connected — a redevelopment that displaces residents or compromises the health and safety of children, families, seniors, and the broader community is not a solution.

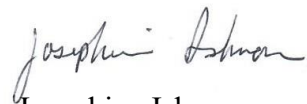
MCB4 raises a fundamental concern shared across the community: *When something goes wrong, who will be held responsible?* Clear, enforceable accountability must be established in advance—including identifying responsible parties, defining response protocols, outlining consequences if something goes wrong, and ensuring ongoing oversight and engagement with MCB4 and the community.

We urge the DEC, DOH, NYCHA, the Development Team, and Langan to carefully consider these comments and act with the urgency, transparency, and accountability this community deserves.

Sincerely,



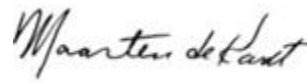
Leslie Boghosian Murphy  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4



Josephine Ishmon  
Chair  
Arts, Culture, Education, and  
Schools Committee



Greg Morris  
Chair  
Chelsea Land Use Committee



Maarten de Kadt  
Co-Chair  
Waterfront, Parks,  
Environment Committee



Catie Savage  
Co-Chair  
Waterfront, Parks,  
Environment Committee

cc: Hon. Jerrold Nadler, U.S. Congress Member  
Hon. Julie Menin, Speaker, City Council  
Hon. Brad Hoylman-Sigal, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Tony Simone, State Assembly Member  
Hon. Erik Bottcher, State Senate