



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4

330 West 42nd Street, 26th floor New York, NY 10036
tel: 212-736-4536 fax: 212-947-9512
www.ManhattanCB4.org

J. LEE COMPTON
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

January 5, 2007

Commissioner Amanda M. Burden, AICP
Chair, City Planning Commission
22 Reade Street
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Shaun Donovan
Department of Housing Preservation and
Development
100 Gold Street
New York, NY 10038

Re: Renaissance West at 517 West 51st Street and 522 West 52nd Street (portion of Clinton Urban Renewal Area Site 9B, Block 1080 Lot 10)

Dear Commissioners Burden and Donovan:

Manhattan Community Board No. 4 writes to express its preliminary and conditional conceptual support for the affordable housing development being considered by Renaissance West LLC for the undeveloped portion of Site 9B in the Clinton Urban Renewal Area (CURA) at 517 West 51st Street and 522 West 52nd Street. The site is now used as a parking lot and is part of Clinton Manor, a Section 8 housing development with two 8-story buildings completed in 1981 and acquired by Renaissance West in 2001. Immediately to the east of the site, the 24-story Clinton Green project is nearing completion.

The owner's preferred development scenario was presented at the December 14, 2006 meeting of the Board's Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use (C/HKLU) Committee, by Mr. Joe Kazarnovsky, Renaissance West's principal. The meeting was attended by more than 75 community members, most of them residents of Clinton Manor.

According to the owner, approximately 120,000 square feet of zoning floor area remain undeveloped on the lot, which has a zoning designation of R8. If it were to be developed according to the existing zoning requirements, the new building would be 24 stories tall on a footprint of approximately 5,600 square feet and set back approximately 35 feet from both 51st Street and 52nd Street. This tall, spindly building would block windows for the full height of the neighboring Clinton Green tower, would tower over the existing open space between the two Clinton Manor buildings, would create undesirable gaps in the streetscapes on 51st and 52nd Streets, and would integrate very poorly into its architectural surroundings. C/HKLU Committee members informally urged the owner to consider alternate development scenarios with modest deviations from the existing zoning requirements, to be accomplished through minor modifications of the Special Clinton District text of the Zoning Resolution.¹ This resulted in the preferred development scenario presented to the C/HKLU Committee.

¹ The development is subject to ULURP in any event because of changes in the original development agreement.

The preferred development scenario produces a 16-story building with much shallower setbacks from the streets, resulting in a much better transition between the Clinton Green tower and the Clinton Manor buildings, and a much-improved streetscape. Subject to the following conditions, we urge you to give this preferred development scenario careful consideration and to begin discussions with the owner about how it can be implemented.

1. Clinton Manor must remain in the Section 8 program. The current Section 8 contract for Clinton Manor is about to expire, and the owner is in discussions with HUD about a new contract in HUD's markup-to-market program. At the C/HKLU Committee meeting, the owner said he wanted to see Clinton Manor remain in the Section 8 program so long as HUD adequately subsidizes market rents. We share the Clinton Manor tenants' determination that the current negotiations **must** result in a markup-to-market agreement with a term of at least 20 years. Though the Section 8 contract is legally unrelated to the development matters discussed in this letter, it will be a prerequisite to our final acceptance of additional development on the Clinton Manor lot.
2. The new building must include permanent affordable housing for moderate- and middle-income residents. We urge the owner and HPD to consider how HPD's 50/30/20 program could be used at this site. Given the site history as an urban development site, acquired for affordable housing, the number of affordable units should be maximized, and all affordable units should remain affordable in perpetuity. This must not be just another 80/20 building.
3. Zoning modifications must be minimized and carefully planned. The most challenging zoning aspect of the preferred development scenario is that the new building would be separated from the Clinton Manor buildings by only 22 feet. The owner's architects have developed a thoughtful solution, orienting the windows in the new building so that bedrooms in Clinton Manor will not be visible from the new building, and bedrooms in the new building will not be visible from Clinton Manor. The 22 foot open spaces between the new building and Clinton Manor must be abundantly landscaped and maintained so they do not become dead alleys.

The alternate open space, now proposed to be provided on the roof of one of the Clinton Manor buildings, must also be carefully planned and maintained so that it is a real tenant amenity. The owner and its architects have recently completed a very nice renovation of the existing open space between the Clinton Manor buildings; we have every confidence that the rooftop open space can be made similarly attractive.

If the project moves forward, we understand that ULURP applications will be required, with ample opportunity for public consideration of the proposal in great detail.

At this point, we are pleased to support the preferred development scenario in concept, and encourage DCP and HPD to begin discussions with Renaissance West about this project.

Sincerely,



J. Lee Compton
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Anna Hayes Levin
Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use

cc: DCP – Erik Botsford
HPD – RuthAnne Visnauskas, Deborah van Amerongen
Renaissance West – Joe Kazarnovsky
Clinton Manor tenants c/o Bob Kalin, Housing Conservation Coordinators
Electeds