



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4**

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**J. LEE COMPTON**  
Chair

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

February 12, 2007

Amanda M. Burden, AICP, Director  
Department of City Planning  
22 Reade Street  
New York, NY 10007-1216

**Re: Modified Design of the Major Public Open Space at River Place – Block 1089, Lots 1 and 3**

Dear Director Burden:

At the meeting of the Board's Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee on January 10, 2007, representatives of Silverstein Properties, including landscape architect Tom Balsley, made a preliminary presentation of the modified design of the Major Public Open Space that is required to be provided at River Place, on the block bounded by 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Streets and 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Avenues. We understand that the design is still in preliminary form, and is subject to change. We write to provide our own preliminary comments, for consideration by your office and the applicant as the design evolves.

The design was very well received by the committee. We are pleased with the guiding principles articulated by Mr. Balsley, that the space should be "taken to a higher level" as public space, with features designed to serve the growing residential population in the area. These features include a large open central lawn, plenty of seating in a large area shaded by trees, a mist fountain for visual enjoyment as well as water play, a tot lot and a dog run, the latter very appropriately located along 41<sup>st</sup> Street opposite the MTA bus garage. The space is designed to have a large degree of "visual permeability," which will draw visitors in from all directions and connect the space to the surrounding city.

We have the following suggestions:

- 1. Park, not Plaza.** We have encouraged the applicant to call this "River Place Park," not "River Place Plaza," as shown in the plans. This generous open space will function like a public park. In the tradition of the much smaller Balsley Park at Ninth Avenue and 57<sup>th</sup> Street, it should be called a park.
- 2. Maximize green.** We hope there will be lots of trees and plant materials throughout the park, and that walkways, benches and other hardscape elements will be designed to intrude as little as possible on the park-like nature of the space.

**3. Open space must not be privatized.** The design we were shown includes an outdoor café in the northeast corner of the park, to be served by a restaurant planned for the adjacent retail space. While an outdoor café can be an attractive amenity, this Board has had bad experience with private cafes that effectively take over public open spaces, as was the case recently at Worldwide Plaza. If this area counts toward the amount of public open space required as mitigation for River Place, it should not include a private café. If this area exceeds the amount of required public open space, the café should nonetheless be designed to prevent its intrusion into the rest of the park, and service should be moderately priced and accessible to all park visitors.

**4. Security must be planned for now.** The park must be able to be closed at night, and well lit to avoid creating a public safety hazard.

We are pleased that the applicant has committed to formally presenting the proposed design to us when its request for certification is complete. We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on the final plans. River Place Park will be a wonderful new amenity for the neighborhood, and we look forward to its certification and eventual completion.

Sincerely,



J. Lee Compton  
Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4



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

cc: City Planning Commission Calendar Information Office, 22 Reade Street Room 2E  
All addressees on attached memorandum  
Electeds