



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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CHRISTINE BERTHET
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District Manager

October 16, 2015

Ms. Madelyn Wils
President and Chief Executive Officer
Hudson River Park Trust
Pier 40, 2nd Floor
353 West Street
New York, NY 10014

Re: Pier 57 Rooftop Park Design

Dear Ms. Madelyn Wils,

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) recently submitted a letter to you regarding the restoration and development of Pier 57. Once again MCB4 would like to take this opportunity to thank the Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT) for continuing to keep the Board apprised of the progress of this project as well as listen to community input in regards to the overall plan and design. This third update since last fall included great detail of the proposed rooftop park design which will provide 1.8 acres of public space at Pier 57. The design presented by RXR Realty demonstrated the developers understanding of our community concerns and sensitivities.

Overall, Manhattan Community Board 4 was impressed with the thoughtfulness of the design, which will allow for flexibility of programming and unique experiences for park visitors. However, MCB4 can see the potential for the Superpier, Pier 57 becoming a popular destination for the community and visitors alike. Because of this MCB4 is concerned about the impact this project will have on our community in regards to noise and congestion, both vehicular and pedestrian. We urge HRPT to include in its lease the board recommendations enumerated below to prevent potential future quality of life and safety issues.

As highlighted in our previous letter, Pier 57, a historic pier that formerly housed the New York Department of Marine and Aviation, is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places and has been vacant for many years. Pier 57 is located west of Route 9A at the ends of 16th and 17th Streets, within Hudson River Park. To the north are Piers 59 through 62, the Chelsea Piers complex, and to the south is the site if the planned Pier 55, and the Gansevoort Peninsula. In 2012 HPRT awarded a Request for Proposal to redevelop Pier 57 to Young Woo & Associates. Young Woo envisioned a unique retail concept for the historic pier. The idea was

to house within the building “creative” retail vendors in container boxes referred to as “incuboxes.” Additionally, there would be public open space around the structure and the rooftop park which was described in great detail to MCB4’s Waterfront, Parks and Environment (WPE) Committee in the June 2015. In December 2012 MCB4 voted unanimously to approve the ULURP action to make the restoration and development of this pier possible. Changes to the HRPT Act in 2013, allowing for office space on commercial piers, gave rise to the re-imagined plan for Pier 57. Young Woo is now partnered with RXR Realty and together they envision creating both office and retail space at Pier 57. Google is the planned primary tenant of the office space. The new concept of both retail and office space on Pier 57 prompted a mandated update of the environmental assessment which included a new traffic analysis. The results of this new assessment and a general status report were presented to MCB4’s WPE committee this spring.

As recognized in our previous letter, Young Woo and RXR Realty have already filed with the Department of Buildings. Currently there is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in place between Young Woo/RXR Realty and HRPT to lease the pier for a period of 99 years. It is assumed the project will cost more than \$300 million, a significant increase from the original proposal which was priced around \$120 million. In order to finance this project, the developers must rely on historic tax credits offered for the historic preservation of the pier. To qualify for such credits and to be considered for financing, a long lease is deemed necessary. The lease period in the MOU triggers a Significant Action for HRPT and they will be required to hold public hearings on the matter before it can be approved by the HRPT Board.

The rooftop park design plans as shown to WPE indicate there will 13,399 square feet of new green space added to Hudson River Park. Pier 57’s total amount of square feet is approximately 468,000, approximately 2.74 FAR, well below 5 FAR that is permitted. The unenclosed roof park will have a total capacity of 2,600 people. The space will include active and passive areas with lawns, planters which serve as benches, green walls, stadium seating and a pavilion. The Stadium seating area can seat over 1,000 people and was designed with the Tribeca Film Festival in mind. The pavilion will have a glass façade that can be fully opened. Around the pavilion will be rest rooms, a space for lawn games and open passage and concession. RXR Realty is responsible for park operations and maintenance as well the entire Pier 57.

Because Pier 57 is a historic pier and Young Woo and RXR Realty are applying for historic tax credits as part of their funding plan, there are some restrictions to their design, including being prohibited to plant trees on the rooftop park. The green spaces will be carefully planned to have bloom throughout all the seasons. Bulkheads and other structures will be hidden behind green walls. The lawn will be designed with built-in irrigation systems and a blend is being developed that will be resilient and handle the expected conditions. Permanent shade structures are also restricted so the RXR design team came up with moveable micro shades that can be placed all throughout the park and come in 3 sizes, 36”, 48” and 60”. The shade itself can be tilted and manipulated. These round shades will be on poles that can be put in slots all along the roof. The pavilion will have a large shade structure that can be reshaped depending on the use. The shade is a white sail-like fabric that is slightly translucent.

Although the overall design is quite impressive, as mentioned at the onset of this letter MCB4 has some reservations around noise that may potentially disturb the surrounding neighborhood and park visitors. Our experience within our district is that amplified sound, recorded music or otherwise creates a disturbance in our community. We are pleased to know RXR Realty has hired a sound engineer and HRPT has included in the proposed lease a non-disturbance agreement with the proposed Pier 55 as well as language in the lease that Pier 57 is prohibited from making noise that would be a disturbance to their neighbors. RXR Realty did however disclose their concern was over the 2- 1,000 ton cooling towers on the eastern part of the pier which produce a good deal of sound, more so than any type of amplified sound from a restaurant or other vendor in the rooftop park. MCB4 appreciates the developer's concern about this noise problem and their assurance that it will be contained.

MCB4 would also like assurances that other than the Tribeca Film Festival the rooftop park will not be subject to excessive closures to the general public. Our Board understands Pier 57 is a commercial pier, but MCB4 would like to see as much public open green space as possible within Hudson River Park.

Another area for concern was the potential increase in traffic especially with the Pier 55 project in the same vicinity. As noted in our May letter, HRPT has assured MCB4 that Pier 55 and Pier 57 events will not be scheduled for the same day. The updated environmental assessment also included a new traffic analysis. According to the study conducted by HRPT the new project of office space and reduced retail indicated there would be no adverse vehicular traffic affects and expects the new plan will stagger the potential travel times to the pier which will be an improvement from the previous plan which had only retail. The proposed parking allowed at Pier 57 is another issue for MCB4. As part of the EIS we had received assurances that any parking is accessory only for the commercial tenants and not open to the public, which would increase vehicular traffic across the bikeway and the new esplanade currently under construction with the help of federal funds. We urge HRPT to include this clause in its lease.

Also with regards to Google being the anchor tenant and their New York Headquarters located four avenues away, there is the possibility Google may request to implement a shuttle service. In the event a shuttle service is planned MCB4 would strongly urge that HRPT and/or RXR Realty specify in the lease that the tenants will consult the local community board, Hudson River Park Trust and NYC DOT in the planning phase of the service and devise and implement a traffic mitigation and pedestrian safety plan. Furthermore the community would like reassurances from HRPT that any planned retail tenant will operate only during normal Park hours. We again urge HRPT to include this clause in its lease.

Finally MCB4 would like to see more sustainable infrastructure in the design of the Pier 57 rooftop park. We were pleased the plans call for using grey water for heating and cooling, but we would hope RXR Realty would consider finding a way to implement solar (consider replacing and expanding the roof-top awnings with solar voltaic materials) and reconsidering the LED lighting around the pavilion.

Overall, MCB4 is pleased with the rooftop park design for Pier 57. The design presented to our Board was very detailed and showed much thought has gone into considering the community

needs. As mentioned the timely and frequent updates from HRPT are very much appreciated. MCB4 looks forward to having access to public open green space within our district and continuing to be included in the public process as the Pier 57 project progresses.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet
Chair



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



Delores Rubin Co-Chair
Waterfront, Parks &
Environment Committee

cc: Brad Hoylman, NY State Senator
Richard Gottfried, NY State Assemblymember
Linda B. Rosenthal, NY State Assemblymember
Jerrold Nadler, Congressman
Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Corey Johnson, NYC Councilmember
Margaret Forgione, DOT