

Carter Booth, *Chair*
Daniel Miller, *First Vice Chair*
Susan Kent, *Second Vice Chair*
Bob Gormley, *District Manager*



Antony Wong, *Treasurer*
Keen Berger, *Secretary*
Erik Coler, *Assistant Secretary*

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

3 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE
NEW YORK, NY 10012-1899

www.cb2manhattan.org

P: 212-979-2272 F: 212-254-5102 E: info@cb2manhattan.org

Greenwich Village ✦ Little Italy ✦ SoHo ✦ NoHo ✦ Hudson Square ✦ Chinatown ✦ Gansevoort Market

April 22, 2019

Dear Elected Officials:

At its Full Board meeting on April 18, 2019, CB#2, Manhattan (CB2, Man.), adopted the following resolution:

A resolution responding to a letter dated March 19, 2019, from local elected officials to Community Board 2 asking questions about CB2's positions regarding possible legislation to allow development of commercial offices at Pier 40 and specifically with respect to limits on building height, length of leases, how much square footage to allow, and minimum park space requirements.

Whereas

1. Community Board 2 Manhattan received a letter dated March 19, 2019, from our local elected officials requesting clarification of our board's positions regarding possible changes to the Hudson River Park Act to allow development of currently prohibited commercial offices at Pier 40.
2. It is difficult for Community Board 2 to recommend parameters for a large office building in Hudson River Park but we are cognizant of the importance of responding in a timely and direct way to the questions asked by our elected officials who must balance citywide and statewide considerations.
3. Community Board 2 has over twenty years of involvement with the park project and Pier 40, including resolutions in 1998 first opposing and then supporting the Act, lengthy participation in two failed RFP projects, leadership of a seven-month long public discussion in 2017, and most recently two public hearings regarding our response to the letter.
4. The Hudson River Park Act was crafted in the aftermath of the defeat of Westway as a compromise between those who advocated for a traditional public park with minimal allowances for water-related commercial access and those who saw more value in opening the waterfront to commercial and residential development opportunities. The Act would declare that park uses in the public interest and "encourage park uses and allow limited park/commercial uses" such that the costs of maintenance and operations of the park would "*to the extent practicable and consistent with the purposes of the park*" be paid by revenues generated within the park with all such revenues being used exclusively for that purpose and with the caveat that "additional funding by the state and the city may be allocated as necessary to meet those costs". "Park uses" would be public park uses; outdoor and indoor public recreation and entertainment; small scale boating for recreation and education; environmental education and research; historic and cultural preservation; wildlife and habitat protection; and facilities incidental to public access. "Park/commercial uses" would have to be compatible with park use and not among prohibited uses. Prohibited uses would be residential;

commercial office and warehousing; hotel; incompatible governmental uses; casino and riverboat gambling; and airports.

5. Commercial office use is therefore contrary not only to the words of the act; it upsets the balanced compromise that the Act provides.
6. In April 1998, CB2 passed a resolution supporting adoption of the Hudson River Park Act. This CB2 resolution in support was essential at the time for adoption of the legislation which did not have the full support of our legislative delegation, and the resolution documents that our support would not have been forthcoming had the Act allowed for a commercial office building with a 90+ year lease at Pier 40. Among the key reasons for CB2 support was a promise that at least 80% of the pier would be for park uses. By the time it was signed by Governor Pataki only the “equivalent of 50% of the footprint would be active and passive public open space”, thereby taking back promised space and causing the open space to be part of a commercial development instead of the park.
7. Nothing has changed over the past 20+ years to make a commercial office building more compatible with the park. It remains contrary to the legislated purposes of the creation of the park because those purposes have not changed. It will still cast a privatized aura over the park. A large private tenant will still powerfully seek to impose restrictions that support its needs. With the bike path more popular now than could have been imagined a generation ago, thousands of workers arriving and departing in high concentrations, including during hours when the bike path is busiest, will more than ever disrupt the flow of park users and detriment their safety and their sense of ease essential to quiet, safe, and active enjoyment of a park.
8. The impact on adjacent communities of an office building at Pier 40 is now worse than it would have been when the Act was adopted. The balance of uses in the adjacent mixed-use areas has shifted substantially in the past decade. Night life and retail have exploded in the Meatpacking District. In Hudson Square multiple new luxury residential towers have been built and more will open soon; more than 3 million square feet of offices are under construction and more than 3 million more are in design, including almost one million right across the street at 550 Washington Street. Meanwhile, the promise of a more diverse residential community has fallen short with only a small percentage of anticipated affordable housing being built.
9. The only justification given for allowing commercial offices is to increase the funding that can be achieved for operating and maintaining the park. The Trust explains this need by stating that early projections for the costs of maintaining and operating the park did not consider the added cost of maintaining a waterfront park. Some of these costs are for “capital maintenance” of infrastructure such as the historic bulkhead that is essential for the habitation, commerce, and resiliency of the city. These needs that should not be the responsibility of the park especially because they were turned over to the park in poor condition and because this infrastructure is more essential than ever to resiliency as seas rise.
10. The balance that was struck by the core language of the Act is contrary to allowance of incompatible uses solely because full funding of maintenance and operations is not “practicable”. Rather the Act anticipates a possible shortfall of revenue to cover maintenance and operations and specifically states in such case the City and State may provide additional funding.
11. Further, as the anticipated cost of operating the park has increased, many of the political and financial considerations that justified allowing even park/commercial uses in the park have changed. The creation of the park was the most significant essential condition encouraging massive development on the west side of Manhattan thereby providing substantial new vitality to a large area and billions of dollars of new revenue to the City and State. A part of these funds should now contribute to maintaining the park that brought the boom.
12. Building a park on the dilapidated old piers, once a vision of a few, is now an intensively enjoyed public resource with universal support of public officials and populace. Where decay and dilapidation pervaded when the Act was passed, now a string of pearls along the waterfront connect

adjacent neighborhoods (which nevertheless remain among the most park-starved in New York City).

13. Offices can be developed anywhere but when they are built on public land its potential public value is lost forever so it is short-sighted to permanently dispose of scarce opportunities for new open space while ongoing massive office and residential development on available private land continues to increase the need and demand for public open space. The Trust and its partners inside and outside government should no longer be reticent to fight to secure the public funding needed to assure the fullest achievement of the goals and opportunities of the park and should commit to protecting its irreplaceable resources from incompatible private development in keeping with the compromise hammered out when the Act was passed.
14. Pier 40 is a completely unique extraordinary and irreplaceable 15+ acre public open space resource. It is time to celebrate the good fortune of the past failures of bad plans to develop Pier 40. It is time to recognize that building a massive new office building at Pier 40 may be regretted for generations to come.
15. Demolition of the old building may allow development of commercial uses on a smaller footprint but adaptive reuse of the existing building is more consistent with community preferences for preservation and reuse. The courtyard ball field, the result of a massive community effort supported by CB2, is a wondrous wind-shielded space enjoyed year-round by thousands of young ball players. While the existing building is not beautiful, as an old maritime building it is more place-appropriate than would be a modern 800-foot long 6-story office building. Development of adaptive reuse would be less disruptive of current uses and less wasteful. Including the roofs it would provide substantially more opportunity for open space and indoor park uses than a six-story building. While providing less opportunity to create new openness to the river, it should allow for attractive and creative architectural solutions more consistent with neighborhood scale and character and possibly more attractive for many of the tech companies most likely to be interested in locating at Pier 40. It is therefore more likely to generate proposals that can win community support.
16. To resolve the future of pier 40, park users and the community will need to be brought together. A radical change to the Act that will allow a new building on the pier housing corporate headquarters with more than 6000 workers on the pier is not the way to start.
17. Such development will have grave, unforeseen, and irreversible impacts on the pier and the park and does not present a viable compromise as would a development with a mix including more sports, arts, and water related uses.
18. The Hudson River Park Act requires the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure for city-owned sites but unreasonably denies appropriate public oversight on State-owned properties such as Pier 40, leaving the details of any future subject to the vote of the Trust's board which includes no representatives appointed by our council members.
19. Community Board 2 has long-standing opposition to private control of public open space.
20. Limiting zoning floor area will reduce the negative impacts of any project and is the only way to support opportunities to redevelop the existing building.
21. Exposure to high winds on the waterfront severely reduces the real availability of ball fields, especially for young children.
22. The existing building also shields the south cove from winds and currents, making it the best place in the park for launching small human-powered boats. A building 500 feet away on the north edge of the pier may not offer this important protection that allows thousands of New Yorkers of all ages to enjoy the experience of being actually on the river.
23. The importance of indoor space for sports, whether public or private, has been emphasized by CB2 over a period of many years without success, and in fact availability of indoor sports was greatly reduced with the loss to the park of Basketball City.

24. Car parking has provided substantial income to the Trust for over 20 years and serves a popular community use. Changing patterns of car use may decrease demand or at least in the short-term increase demand for example if Pier 40 is not inside the congestion pricing fee zone so its continued value to the park as a source of needed revenue is hard to predict.
25. Prior RFPs for Pier 40 have failed largely because they were implemented without sufficient engagement of adjacent communities.
26. The likely alternative to adaptive reuse presented by the Trust would be a taller more traditional office building structure forming a four-block long wall along the north side of the pier and exposing the park uses to high and unpredictable waterfront winds.

Therefore, it is resolved that CB 2s opposes amendment to the Hudson River Park Act to allow a commercial office use or a lease exceeding 30 years and,

It is further resolved that CB2 considers the following to be the minimum mitigations needed to lessen the adverse impacts on the park and the community of such an amendment to the Act:

1. A New York City ULURP to be required for any project at Pier 40 that includes commercial offices and/or a lease exceeding 30 years.
2. The City and State to assume responsibility for certain maintenance and operations costs in Hudson River Park that were not anticipated when the Act was adopted and in particular assume full responsibility for costs of reconstruction, repair, and maintenance of the bulkhead and any other infrastructure in the park that serves other than just park related purposes.
3. All public open space on the pier to be designated for “park use” with assurance such space will not be privately controlled or operated.
4. The total allowed zoning floor area of all buildings on the pier to be equal to no more than two times the footprint of the existing building for a total of 848,000 square feet to include a mix of commercial offices and park/commercial uses.
5. Allowed zoning floor area to be reduced to the extent to which such uses do not include at least 50,000 square feet of net floor area for Trust offices and at least 50,000 square feet of net floor area for indoor sports (which may be park/commercial use with low fee time set aside for youth and school use).
6. The designed capacity of commercial offices to be no more than 3000 workers.
7. Any development that includes commercial offices will substantially reuse the existing structure with no portion of any building enlargement exceeding 88 feet height including mechanical equipment and bulkheads but not sports nets.
8. The existing courtyard fields and surrounding loading dock to be retained with the fields raised above grade only as minimally required to protect them from rising water or as needed for structural support of the pier.
9. In addition to the current courtyard fields and the perimeter docks, additional park space to be provided so that the equivalent of 80% of the footprint of the pier will be dedicated to park use 80% of which will be for active recreational uses (thus requiring the addition of approximately 250,000 square feet of park space which may be located at any level and may include indoor space for sports).
10. A community boathouse to be included in any project to be at least as big as the current boathouse in approximately the same location adjacent to the south dock.

11. Either separately or in connection with the boathouse a public dock to be provided for human powered craft including boat storage availability at a low fee.
12. First story uses that do not count as zoning square feet to prioritize Trust operations, sports courts, support space for human powered boating, practice areas, lockers, an indoor skate park, rehearsal space for performing arts, and car parking.
13. Retail space and other park/commercial to prioritize supporting park uses, water-related uses, and uses to support community needs such as space for sports and arts.
14. To the extent commercial use is allowed in the act such use is allowed by language such as “notwithstanding any other provision of this Act to the contrary commercial office use is allowed at Pier 40 but only to the extent found to be necessary to sustain maintenance and operations of the park as determined by the Trust and documented in a written report to the Trust board prior to its approval of any project including such use.”
15. Prior to adoption an agreement is reached with the Trust to assure any RFP encourages high participation and proposals that are responsive to community needs and concerns, for example by
 - a. Committing to any of the above that cannot be incorporated into legislation.
 - b. Encouraging RFP respondents to include park/commercial uses that offer special benefits to the community such as additional indoor and outdoor sports or arts uses;
 - c. Encouraging RFP respondents who propose office use to provide an alternative proposal replacing some of the office use with park/commercial uses, especially uses that provide special benefits to the community.
 - d. Including RFP targets for Trust revenues but no lower limit;
 - e. Engaging CB2 and the community in the RFP process including review of the draft scope, the draft RFP, and project proposals;
 - f. Requiring RFP project review based on overall benefits to the park and community including avoiding disruption to current uses during construction;
 - g. Requiring respondents to minimize disruption to current uses and requiring respondents to fully describe such disruptions and impacts on the park as a whole in the project description materials and timeline and describe how disruptions will be minimized;
 - h. Encouraging respondents to submit alternative project details and construction methods that will reduce such disruptions;
 - i. Requiring any RFP to facilitate access by respondents to information regarding positions of the community boards and other stakeholder groups;
 - j. Allowing CB2 representatives to attend site visits and Q&A sessions for RFP applicants and to share with CB2 all written Q&A.
 - k. Encouraging RFP applicants to address questions to CB2 at a public meeting sponsored by CB2 and by means of the Q&A process;
 - l. Requiring a full EIS and engaging CB2 and the community in the EIS process including public review of the draft scope and draft EIS.

Vote: Passed with 30 Board members in favor, 6 Board members opposed (R. Kessler, S. Smith, R. Sanz, T. Conner, S. Aaron, S. Russo), and one abstention (D. Diether)

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Carter Booth, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Tobi Bergman, Chair
Future of Pier 40 Working Group
Community Board #2, Manhattan

CB/jt

c: Madelyn Wils, Hudson River Park Trust President & CEO
Bob Gormley, CB 2 District Manager
Jesse Bodine, CB 4 District Manager