



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**COREY JOHNSON**  
Chair

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District Manager

August 6, 2013

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

**Re: District Plan for the Hudson Yards Business Improvement District (N140038BDM)**

Dear Chair Burden:

On July 31, 2013, at its full board meeting, Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) held a public hearing on the District Plan for the proposed Hudson Yards Business Improvement District (BID).

The proposed BID District is located in Manhattan Community District 4 and bounded by West 42nd Street to the north, Eleventh Avenue to the west, West 30<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, and Ninth Avenue to the east. MCB4 has long identified this portion of the neighborhood as the southern part of Hell's Kitchen.

The specific aim of the proposed BID is "to provide maintenance for the Hudson Park and Boulevard and district-wide services and improvements that enhance the quality of life of an exceptionally diverse population who live, work and visit within the district."

The Board unanimously recommended **approving** the proposed District Plan **with the following conditions**:

1. The proposed Hudson Yards BID is renamed the Hudson Yards/Hell's Kitchen Alliance;
2. The HY/HK Alliance work with MCB4, local elected officials, and City government to secure the development of Blocks Five and Six of Hudson Park and advocate for more open space in the neighborhood;
3. The sanitation and traffic safety issues, outside of the Hudson Park and Boulevard, are targeted to Ninth Avenue and to the West 34<sup>th</sup> and West 42<sup>nd</sup> Streets corridors;
4. The HY/HK Alliance works closely with MCB4 and that regular consultations, meetings and reporting between the Alliance and MCB4 take place to ensure cooperation among the various community groups, business enterprises, and non-profits in the district; and in the first two years

of operation the HK/HY Alliance agrees, if requested, to meet quarterly with MCB4's Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee (C/HKLU) to report and present its proposals for services and district improvements;

5. The Alliance's Board of Directors reflects the diversity of the neighborhood;

6. That no street flags, banners, billboards, zipper illuminated displays, or other forms of promotional marketing or advertising be permitted on the residential streets in south Hell's Kitchen and the proposed Alliance agree to limit such promotions to west of Tenth Avenue and the commercial corridors below West 34<sup>th</sup> Street;

7. That the HY/HK Alliance work with existing stakeholders to incorporate diversity into any proposed streetscape improvement plans and agree not to promote homogenized, unvaried landscaping and work with the community to help maintain tree pits and green spaces and advocate for more open space;

8. That the HY/KY Alliance work hand-in-glove with the residential component of the district — with especial attention paid to the long term, historic residential community of south Hell's Kitchen;

9. That the HY/HK Alliance will incorporate in its mission the values of MCB4 in promoting affordable housing, protecting its older housing stock, and preserving a mixed-income, diverse neighborhood;

10. The Board of the proposed HK/HY Alliance have at least four residential tenant representatives and two of whom live in affordable housing units in the district. At least one Board seat shall also be designated for a not for profit organization.

#### **WHAT'S IN A NAME? EVERYTHING.**

The proposed BID would be part of the southern portion of Hell's Kitchen, a fabled neighborhood with a strong sense of identity. Nearly all the participants in the planning process found the name "Hudson Yards BID" to be lacking in historical resonance, precision, or distinctiveness. Or, frankly, sizzle.

At the C/HKLU meeting on July 24, 2013, it was proposed and unanimously endorsed that **as a condition of the committee approving the proposed plan, the Hudson Yards Business Improvement District be renamed the Hudson Yards/Hell's Kitchen Alliance. MCB4 agrees.** Heretofore, the proposed district area and plan will be referred to in this response as the HY/HK Alliance ("Alliance").

The juxtaposition of the two district names is important. It illustrates the partnership between the established community in the existing district and the new development in the new district. It preserves the integrity of the low-rise, community's identity along its main street, Ninth Avenue, and in the mid-blocks toward Tenth Avenue and broadens to include the developing high rise district along Tenth and Eleventh Avenues and in the West 34<sup>th</sup> Street corridor.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

A wide range of participants participated in the Planning Committee of the proposed BID, including members of MCB4, community organizations, and non-profits as well as residents, businesses and developers. Two community outreach meetings to describe the BID and seek feedback from residents and businesses were held. At the July 24th, 2013, C/HKLU meeting, the BID proposal was presented. Speakers overwhelmingly supported the plan; many felt the name should be revised to include “Hell’s Kitchen” to reflect the vibrant, historic area that the BID is located in. Similarly, at MCB4's July 31, 2013, full Board meeting, many people testified in favor of the proposal.

The proposed BID plans to be up and running by the spring of 2014, in conjunction with the planned opening of the Hudson Park and Boulevard.

### **Growth of South Hell's Kitchen**

The area covered by the proposed HY/HK Alliance district includes a diverse landscape. It is part of southern Hell's Kitchen and generally recognized as part of the larger fabric of Hell's Kitchen/Clinton to the north of West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. An area in transition, its existing character is being broadened by new development and will be further impacted by development planned for the future. The key elements driving this evolution from mostly manufacturing and commercial with an historic residential tenement component into a mixed-use district are:

- re-zoning for mixed-use with the establishment of the Special Hudson Yards District;
- enhanced access to mass-transit with the expansion of the Number 7 Subway line;
- availability of large commercial and residential sites; and
- creation of new public open space with the Hudson Park and Boulevard, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues from West 33rd to West 36th Streets.

### **Property Mix**

At present, the area contains a mix of many types of properties. There are underutilized properties devoted to parking, one-story warehouse buildings and a large amount of land consumed by transportation and infrastructure systems for the Penn Station trains, the Lincoln Tunnel’s access (Dyer Avenue both above and below grade), and the Port Authority Bus Terminal operations.

Low-rise industrial buildings containing auto-repair and other semi-industrial warehouse uses are throughout the district. Commercial buildings containing over six million square feet of space include older loft-type buildings that have been adaptively reused for design and technology-based industries along with low rise, more contemporary buildings.

Cultural and educational organizations are also an integral part of the Hell's Kitchen neighborhood with the Baryshnikov Arts Center, Signature Theatre, Theatre Row, Playwrights Horizons, and Fashion Institute of Technology (over one thousand FIT students reside at Kaufman Hall at West 31st between Ninth Avenue and Dyer Avenue).

## **6,000 Residential Units in 100 Buildings**

Residential buildings range from large, early 20<sup>th</sup>-Century apartment blocks to clusters of four and five story tenement buildings, to newly constructed residential tower and commercial base type buildings with large number of rental and condominium apartment units. The proposed Alliance area contains approximately 6,250 residential rental and condominium units in over 100 buildings.

## **Potential Development**

As a result of recent re-zonings (Special Hudson Yards District) and public sector investment in the area's infrastructure, the district is positioned to experience large scale commercial and residential development. More specifically, the rezoning provides for high density commercial development along West 33<sup>rd</sup> Street from Pennsylvania Station to the Eastern Rail yard site, and north between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues from West 33<sup>rd</sup> to West 41<sup>st</sup> Streets. Residential and low rise commercial uses are provided for to the north and east towards Ninth Avenue where much of the existing residential properties are located.

The entire Special Hudson Yards District, an area slightly larger than the proposed Alliance district, has a development potential of approximately 28 million square feet of commercial and residential development, which is expected to be achieved in future years.

The increased development makes it crucial that the commercial, institutional, and residential components of the neighborhood work together.

## **MCB4 ISSUES AND CONDITIONS FOR APPROVAL**

### **HY/HK Alliance**

As stated earlier, the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use and Zoning Committee meeting on July 24, 2013, voted unanimously to approve the proposed Hudson Yards Business Improvement District on the condition it was renamed the **Hudson Yards/Hell's Kitchen Alliance**. The Board affirms that condition.

### **Hudson Park and Boulevard**

The primary objective of the HY/HK Alliance is to maintain the Hudson Park and Boulevard (West 33<sup>rd</sup> to West 39<sup>th</sup> Streets, Tenth to Eleventh Avenues). Four blocks of the promised six-block park have been planned. Acquiring the remaining two blocks and developing them as park space must remain a priority of the Alliance.

As well, the Alliance should be an advocate for more green space in the district and an active partner in maintaining street trees and open spaces that have been created or will be created

The Alliance must push energetically for construction of Blocks Five and Six of Hudson Park as well as advocate for more public space in the district.

### **Sanitation and Traffic Safety Issues**

The proposed plan also promises "district-wide efforts will also play a key role in enhancing the pedestrian environment, supporting local business, and addressing specific issues associated with

the major transportation structures and conduits for large volumes of traffic in the form of cars, trucks and buses."

The Alliance should also advocate for a subway stop on the proposed extension of the #7 subway line through the district.

CB4 requests the sanitation and traffic safety issues outside of the Hudson Park and Boulevard to be targeted explicitly to Ninth Avenue and to the West 34<sup>th</sup> Street and West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street corridors. These efforts must be coordinated with MCB4 and with local community groups.

### **No Banners, Please. We're In Hell's Kitchen**

This Board is adamant that the residential integrity of the residential streets in Hell's Kitchen not be compromised by street flags, banners, billboards, zipper illuminated displays or other forms of promotional advertising.

The BID must agree to limit such promotions to west of Tenth and Eleventh Avenues and the commercial corridors below West 34th Street.

### **Diversity Not Homogeneity**

We look forward to the large publicly-accessible multi-block Hudson Park being well-maintained, with continual funding. And we feel the proposed Alliance will enhance the Hell's Kitchen area with greening, increased sanitation clean-ups and pedestrian safety measures. But any streetscape improvements — tree plantings, planters, sidewalk treatments — must be varied and diverse.

Over the past 20 years, the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association, Clinton Housing Development Company, CHEKPEDS, Condominium Associations, HDFC Cooperatives, private building owners and Tenant Associations have planted trees, planted sidewalk gardens and improved the streetscape. The goal of future neighborhood improvements must build upon this diversity.

The HY/HK Alliance must work with existing stakeholders to incorporate such diversity into any proposed streetscape improvement plans and work with the community to maintain all green spaces and tree pits in the district and advocate for more open space.

### **Partnering With MCB4**

MCB4 has had a keen interest in the proposed formation of the HY/HK Alliance and participated in the early planning stages and in the 12 Steering Committee meetings held over the last two years. The Board sent the chair of C/HKLU, co-chairs of its Transportation Planning Committee, Chelsea Preservation Committee, and Housing, Health, and Human Services Committee as well as its District Manager to the meetings. MCB4's participation in the planning process has been sustained and productive. The collaboration must continue.

The language of the proposal reflects MCB4's input: "The Hudson Yards BID will work with the Community Board and others to achieve a level of balance and compatibility between the existing neighborhood and the new development that the "Special Hudson Yards District" re-

zoning is bringing to this area."

The Board also welcomes HY/HK Alliance's overarching goal of "improving the attractiveness of the location and quality of life for all, while retaining neighborhood character (emphasis added) within the Hudson Yards district, is an important element to this evolving mixed-use neighborhood."

CB4's paramount concern and goal is to insure that a business improvement district work hand-in-glove with the residential component of the district — with especial attention paid to the long-term historic residential community of south Hell's Kitchen.

### **The Larger Community**

Decisions by the future board of directors must take into consideration the fact that the proposed HY/HK Alliance is part of the larger Hell's Kitchen community.

The values of MCB4 in promoting affordable housing, protecting its older housing stock, preserving a mixed-income, diverse neighborhood must be part of the Alliance's mission.

Regular consultations, meetings, and reporting between the Alliance and CB4 must take place to insure cooperation among the various community groups, business enterprises, and non-profits in the district. To ensure cooperation and communication, especially during its first two years of operation, the HK/HY Alliance agrees, if requested, to meet quarterly with CB4's Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use and Zoning Committee to report and present its proposals for services and district improvements.

### **Governance: HY/HK Board of Directors**

The Board welcomes the Department of City Planning's recommendation that the governing board of the proposed HY/HK Alliance have at least four residential tenant representatives. The Board further proposes that at least two of those residential tenants represent tenants in affordable apartment in the district.

The Board also proposes that some of the seats going to property owners must go to pre-2005 building owners. There must also be a seat at the table for a non-profit organization.

Given the mix of residential, business enterprises, and non-profit arts organizations in the district, a diverse makeup of the Board's directorship is imperative.

### **Conclusion**

Integrating an older, established community with a strong identity and sense of purpose into a proposed new Business Improvement District presents a challenge and an opportunity. At both the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use and Zoning Committee meeting on July 24, 2013, and at the Full Board Meeting of CB4 on July 31, 2013, residents and business owners from the proposed district expressed support for the HY/HK Alliance with the proviso that it help improve the area without diminishing the distinctive character and flavor of a diverse and vibrant New York neighborhood. The Board echoes that support and affirms that proviso.

As this proposed BID moves through the public approval process, the Board requests the support and assistance of the City Planning Commission, the Manhattan Borough President, and City Council in incorporating MCB4's conditions in approval to reconcile these competing and worthwhile goals.

## **SUMMARY — CONDITIONS FOR APPROVAL**

**Now therefore let it be resolved that MCB4 recommends support of the draft plan for the proposed HY BID provided that it:**

1. **Is renamed** the Hudson Yards/Hell's Kitchen Alliance;
2. **Works with MCB4**, local elected officials, and City government to secure the development of Blocks Five and Six of Hudson Park and advocate for more open space in the neighborhood;
3. **Target sanitation and traffic safety issues** (outside of the Hudson Park and Boulevard) to Ninth Avenue and the West 34<sup>th</sup> and West 42<sup>nd</sup> Streets corridors; and advocates for a subway stop on the proposed extension of the #7 subway line.
4. **Consults regularly with MCB4** and that regular consultations, meetings and reporting between the HY/HK Alliance and CB4 take place to ensure cooperation among the various community groups, business enterprises, and non-profits in the district; and in the first two years of operation the HK/HY Alliance agrees, if requested, to meet quarterly with CB4's C/HKLU to report and present its proposals for services and district improvements;
5. **Reflects the diversity** of the neighborhood in the makeup of the Board of Directors;
6. **Does not permit banners**, billboards, street flags, zipper displays or other forms of promotional marketing on the residential streets in southern Hell's Kitchen and agrees to limit such promotions to west of Tenth Avenue and the commercial corridors below West 34<sup>th</sup> Street;
7. **Works with existing stakeholders to incorporate diversity** into any proposed streetscape improvement plans and agrees not to promote homogenized, unvaried landscaping and work with the community to help maintain tree pits and green spaces and advocate for more open space;
8. **Cooperates with the residential component of the district** — with especial attention paid to the long term historic residential community of south Hell's Kitchen;
9. **Incorporates the values of MCB4** in promoting affordable housing, protecting its older housing stock, and preserving a mixed-income, diverse neighborhood;
10. **Appoints to its Board** at least four residential tenant representatives with two of those tenants residing in affordable housing units in the district and at least one representative from a not-for-profit organization.

Sincerely,



Corey Johnson  
Chair



Jean-Daniel Noland, Co-Chair  
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

cc: Barry Dinerstein, Edith Hsu-Chen, Karolina Hall – Department of City Planning  
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