



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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CHRISTINE BERTHET
Chair

Jesse R. Bodine
District Manager

May 20, 2015

Kyle Kimball
President
New York City Economic Development Corporation
110 William Street
New York, NY 10038

Vicki Been
Commissioner
Department of Housing Preservation & Development
100 Gold Street 10038

Re: Slaughterhouse
493 Eleventh Avenue, New York, NY
Request For Proposal

Dear Mr. Kimball and Commissioner Been:

On March 11, 2015, the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use and Zoning Committee of Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) along with the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) completed a two month public process to discuss the Request for Proposal (RFP) to be prepared for the Old Slaughterhouse site (The Site) at 493 Eleventh Avenue (39th/40th).

At the forums EDC and HPD provided a presentation detailing the Slaughterhouse Site and the surrounding area, discussed possible development opportunities for the Site, and heard from community and Board members on what should be included in the RFP.

HISTORY OF THE SITE

The New York Butchers' Dressed Meat Company's "Slaughterhouse" was a block-long building and built in two sections – the 39th Street corner in 1903-1905 and the 40th Street corner in 1917-1919. The New York Butchers' Company was formed by local butchers and provisioners to break the monopoly held by the midwestern "beef trust" which dictated meat prices. At that time, with its close proximity to water transport as well as to the freight rail yards, the West Side was an important industrial center for the City.

The original six-story Neo-Renaissance style building of steel and masonry was designed by Horgan & Slattery with lower floors faced with limestone and upper floors with dark orange brick and white terra cotta. It looked like an imposing civic building. But there was no mistaking its purpose: six giant sculptures of rams and steers jutted from the exterior of the sixth floor. A "roof garden" for livestock was accessed by a seven-floor ramp visible only from the west. The killing floor was one floor down.

The Slaughterhouse remained in operation until the late 1950s. The City took title to the building in 1975

following a lengthy period of unpaid taxes by the owner. At that time, a private developer planned to erect an office building on the site but the vote to allow it was delayed by the Manhattan Borough President, David Dinkins.

MCB4 EFFORTS TO DEVELOP THE SITE

During the late 1980s MCB4 urged the Landmarks Preservation Commission to designate the property as a landmark. The Commission was unable to do so and the building deteriorated until it was considered structurally unsound and finally demolished. It took 18 months to complete the demolition.

Between the time of demolition until the late 1990s there was no plan put forth to develop the Site and the vacant lot was turned into car parking for the New York City Police Department.

The Site was again brought to the attention of the City by MCB4 as a possible affordable housing development site when the Western Railyards Points of Agreement was agreed upon by the City Council and Administration in December 2009. The Site was identified as a “Proposed Development” site in MCB4’s 2014 Affordable Housing Plan with preliminary analysis identifying the Site being able to provide 322 apartments, 100% of which would be affordable to a range of income bands. The Site could, in part, satisfy the City’s yet-to-be fulfilled affordable housing commitments in the District, including 150 units from Site M (Tenth Avenue between 40th and 41st Streets) and 75 units from another proposed site.

COMMUNITY REQUESTS FOR RFP

Following the March 11 presentation by EDC, community and MCB4 members made the following recommendations for the development of the Site to be included within the RFP.

1. 100% Permanently Affordable

There was unanimity from both community and MCB4 members that a 100% permanently affordable building should be developed on the Site. With rising rents in the Hell's Kitchen/Clinton neighborhood and the increase of high-end market rate residential units threatening the economic diversity of the District, the need for 100% affordability on a City-owned site is considered crucial.

2. Range of Incomes

To sustain economic diversity in the District, a range of income bands for the affordable housing units (80/100/125/165% Average Median Income) should be the goal.

3. Family-Size Units

MCB4 and the community recommend that a preponderance of the units be two-and three-bedroom apartments with 50% of the units to be two-bedroom units.

4. Commercial Space

The community suggested a number of options for a commercial space at the ground level including:

- an affordable supermarket or fresh market;
- a daycare facility;
- a senior center;
- a theater or dance and theater rehearsal studios;
- a community computer room.

The community and the MCB4 insisted that no commercial space requiring a liquor license should be considered.

4. Design Considerations

When it comes to design and bulk considerations, the community's and MCB4's desires are clear: the building should have a maximum height of 45 floors and a residential Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 12. The community also wants a "green" building with a roof top deck accessible to all tenants. The building's design should include façade articulation and avoid looking like a dystopian glass box.

The community and the Board also want pedestrian safety and traffic management initiatives on the streets around the development. An opportunity exists for creating a plaza or a playground by utilizing the eastern portion of 39th Street, which has been closed off between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues.

MCB4 would like to thank both EDC and HPD for its engagement with the community to discuss the RFP being prepared for such an important site within the district. The Board looks forward to continuing to work with EDC and HPD to prepare an RFP which reflects the current and future needs of the community.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet
Chair



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

cc: Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, New York State Senate
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council