



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**CHRISTINE BERTHET**  
Chair

**Jesse R. Bodine**  
District Manager

July 30, 2015

Maria Torres-Springer  
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: Covenant House – Hunter College Site  
Block 1050, Lots 1, 6, 13  
Request for Proposal (RFP)

Dear Ms. Torres-Springer and Commissioner Been:

On July 8, 2015 at the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use (CHKLU) Committee of Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4), New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) along with Covenant House presented an update for the Request for Proposal (RFP) being prepared for Covenant House (including the former West 40<sup>th</sup> Street Carnegie Library), former Hunter College Voorhees Campus and Port Authority sites (the Site) between Tenth and Dyer Avenues and West 40<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> street, New York.

The lead up to this presentation at the CHKLU meeting was preceded by two months of ongoing discussions among City administration, EDC, New York Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), Covenant House and MCB4, engaging in conversations to determine the best uses for the Site, assessing both community needs as well as feasibility.

**DEVELOPMENT SITE**

The Site on block 1050 is located between West 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and Dyer Avenues, and comprises the following sites:

- Covenant House along 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue between West 40<sup>th</sup> - 41<sup>st</sup> Streets (including former West 40<sup>th</sup> Street Carnegie Library adjacent to Covenant House)

- Former Hunter College Voorhees Campus in the mid-block along West 41<sup>st</sup> Street
- Port Authority bus parking on the corner of Dwyer Avenue and West 40<sup>th</sup> Street

All the above mentioned properties on the Site are owned by different entities and have been present on the block for extended periods of time. Covenant House first began operating out of the site in 1976 and continues to help homeless youth in need today with shelter, social services opportunities for schooling and training for future employment. Part of the Covenant Housing site is the former West 40<sup>th</sup> Street Carnegie Library now used by Covenant House as a health clinic and gym. The Hunter College Voorhees Campus Annex was vacated in 2014 and now remains vacant with ownership reverting to the City of New York. The Port Authority site is an at grade lot and bus ramp leading to the Port Authority Bus terminal and is used for bus parking.

## **THE PLAN**

The Site was first identified by CB4's Affordable Housing Plan and presented to the Deputy Mayor, Alicia Glen in 2014. The Deputy Mayor then charged EDC and HPD to develop a plan leading to an RFP for the Site. The objective of the plan would be a new facility for Covenant House and affordable housing.

The initial plan proposed for the Site by EDC included up-zoning the current C6-3 zoning (with an FAR of 7.5) by extending to C2-8 (with an FAR of 9-15) into the mid-block of the Site. Then the majority would be used on the 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue portion of the Site.

This plan would have created an approximate 900 foot tower on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 30 story's higher than the Extell construction to the west of the Site. This proposed plan was not considered strategy for the community. Following that presentation, MCB4, the City administration, EDC, Covenant House and MCB4 began working together to develop a plan which would look at the entire Site and integrate all proposed, existing and surrounding neighborhood uses and encompass the current and future needs of the community and City. The objective of a proposed plan would be to maximize affordable housing and provide a new facility for Covenant House on the Site.

In order to achieve this, a general large scale development plan (the Plan) was considered the best approach given regulations for large-scale developments allow for modification to various zoning regulations, such as the distribution of floor area, without regard to zoning lot lines and setback requirements. Such a plan allows for modifications and for flexibility to achieve a superior site plan.

Working together the group developed a Plan for the Site including the following:

- A state of the art facility for Covenant House which would include not only current program needs but provide for the relocation for the organization's national headquarters.
- Preserve and restore the existing West 40<sup>th</sup> Street Carnegie Library building for the use of a community facility and future use as Hell's Kitchen's public library.
- Provide approximately 40% affordable housing on the entire site with approximately 100 units of which will be supportive housing
- Provide public open space on the Port Authority parking lot.

- Provide an easement for a ventilation building for the future Number 7 line West 41<sup>st</sup> station extension.

## **COMMUNITY REQUESTS FOR RFP**

Following the revised presentation of the RFP by EDC along with Covenant House, MCB4 members along with community members present at the meeting made specific recommendations for parameters to be included within the RFP for the Site:

### **Residential Housing**

- All affordable housing units will be *permanently* affordable
- 60% of the total apartments within the entire development Site are affordable with 100 supportive housing units for youth, accommodated with standard city capital subsidies
- Height limit on 10<sup>th</sup> avenue be a maximum of 450 feet and on the mid-block is 250 feet within the C2-8 zone<sup>1</sup> and 250 feet within the C6-3 zone.
- Street wall and setback provisions should adhere to the current zoning requirements in sub-district D2 of Special Hudson Yards District
- To sustain economic diversity in the District, a range of income bands for the affordable housing units in both buildings should range between 80/100/125/165% Average Median Income
- 50 % of the units must be 2-bedroom or larger
- The building's design should include façade articulation with strong masonry base and avoid looking like a dystopian glass box.

### **MTA—Number 7 line, future West 41<sup>st</sup> Station ventilation building easement:**

- The easement volume of 100 by 100 sq. ft. to be built within the base of the residential tower on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue within Hudson Yards Special District sub-district D2 in C2-8 zone.
- The FAR used for the West 41<sup>st</sup> MTA vent should be exempt FAR through a text change within the Hudson Yards Special District.
- The location of the Number 7 line entrance has not been determined by the MTA however the entrance should be located to the east or west of the site, possibly emerging from the open space in a similar fashion to Block 1 of Hudson Yards Park.

### **West 40<sup>th</sup> Street Carnegie Library Building**

- Preserve the Carnegie library building on West 40<sup>th</sup> Street and restore its façade and entrance
- Carnegie library building should be reserved for a community facility with a goal to its eventual use as a branch library once capital and operating budget funds commit
- Install new ADA elevator in an existing shaft on western side of building
- Install new systems including HVAC, electricity, water and plumbing services to serve future use as a community facility and library, including two ADA accessible bathrooms

### **Port Authority Development Rights and Open Space**

- Include the development of 74,260 sq. ft. for use in the large scale plan, providing income to the Port Authority
- Provide full landscaping and improvements for use as a public open space
- Have Port Authority continue to use site for bus parking during development phase of project

**Further Conditions**

- The project is built entirely by a single developer
- The Covenant House and the mid-block affordable housing units to be completed prior to construction of the tower on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- Encourage the developers who intend to respond to the RFP to meet with MCB4 for on-going community input
- Encourage creativity to design a large scale plan to foster and preserve residential and neighborhood ambience

**CONCLUSION**

MCB4 recognizes that Covenant House is an important part of the Hell’s Kitchen community, and supports the development of a state-of-the-art facility that places priority in ensuring high-quality, comprehensive programs for the young people it serves.

MCB4 would like to thank the City Administration, EDC and HPD for working with the Hell’s Kitchen/Chelsea community to arrive at parameters for an RFP for such an important site within the district. The Board looks forward to continuing to work with EDC 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: Creighton Drury, Executive Director, Covenant House  
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate  
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, New York State Senate  
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly  
Hon. Corey Johnson, City Council  
Hon. Helen Rosenthal, City Council

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<sup>i</sup> 150 feet from 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue