



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD No. 4

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**Statement of Position
on the MSG land use plan for property above
MTA's Caemmerer West Side Yards**

At its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on May 4, 2005, Manhattan Community Board No. 4 adopted the following resolutions (30 in favor, 1 opposed, 1 abstention, and 1 present but not eligible to vote).

WHEREAS, the western portion of the John D. Caemmerer West Side Yard (the western rail yard) represents a prime 13 acre waterfront development site, located just to the south of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, and just to the west of the area recently rezoned to accommodate 40 million square feet of new commercial and residential development; and

WHEREAS, this Board's positions concerning the development of the western rail yard have been stated most completely in its letter to the City Planning Commission dated August 23, 2004, which sets forth the Board's reasoning for opposing any plan that includes a stadium on the rail yards and its preference for mixed use development on the site within the context of redevelopment of the entire Hell's Kitchen/Hudson Yards area (the "Board's Positions"); and

WHEREAS, as part of its response to the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) Request for Proposals for the disposition of real property interests above the western rail yard, Madison Square Garden (MSG) has proposed a development plan that envisions a new residential community surrounding a five-acre public park and a promenade overlooking the Hudson River, connected to the waterfront by a pedestrian bridge, with a range of other uses included in the plan to support the new residences and development in the surrounding area; and

WHEREAS, the MSG plan calls for ten high-rise buildings set within five acres of newly created open space and would provide approximately 5,800 units of housing, including more than 800 units of affordable housing; 50,000 square feet of commercial space mostly located near Eleventh Avenue for retail stores and a variety of spaces to be devoted to support services for theaters; a moderately priced hotel across from the Convention Center; a new 10,000 square foot public library and a 600-seat public elementary school to serve the expanded community; a 400-space below-grade accessory parking garage; and a replacement facility for the MTA's Quill bus parking garage; and

WHEREAS, on April 13, 2005, MSG presented its land use plan for the western rail yard to the Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee; and

WHEREAS, the proposed density of development of 10 FAR, bonusable to 12 FAR through the creation of inclusionary housing, is consistent with the Board's Positions (although that density was accepted as an alternative to the establishment of high density corridors along Eleventh and Tenth Avenues as proposed in the Hudson Yards rezoning; zoning for the high density corridors was approved by the City Council and is now in place); and

WHEREAS, the MSG plan would result in towers ranging in height from 40 to 70-stories; the height of the towers would "step up" from the waterfront and meet the bigger office towers contemplated on the eastern rail yard and along Eleventh Avenue to the north of the site, and would emphasize the east-west orientation of high-density development that this Board has consistently supported; and

WHEREAS, the MSG plan, which preserves the High Line easement, includes 7.4 acres of open space (approximately 57 percent of the Site), provides a connection to the Hudson River Park, and includes an waterfront esplanade overhanging the eastern sidewalk of Twelfth Avenue, encourages public access to new parks, and maximizes river views; and

WHEREAS, the MSG Plan would create 800 units of low income housing, 60% of which would be permanent affordable housing created through the Inclusionary Housing program, and 40% of which would be created through the 80-20 tax-exempt financing program; the requirements of the RFP did not allow use of other programs to support the creation of affordable housing, but MSG has stated a commitment to making special efforts to attract, and to accommodate the needs of, families with middle and moderate incomes; and

WHEREAS, new residential uses on the western rail yard would not compete with, but rather complement, commercial development to the east; a modestly-priced hotel would not compete with the anchor hotel planned as part of the Javits expansion and would actually serve convention-goers well by providing convenient affordable accommodations; and

WHEREAS, building and design guidelines will assure sustainable urban development, including the innovations and technologies associated with "green" building development.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that Manhattan Community Board No. 4 wishes to encourage further consideration of the MSG land use plan as a preferred arrangement of uses and densities that meets this Board's goals for the site and provides one possible visual representation of the Board's Positions; and further

RESOLVED, that this Board's support of the MSG land use plan is subject to the following conditions and concerns:

- Development must be consistent with this Board's position concerning affordable housing, which is that 30% of the units must be permanent affordable housing, and that 20% of the affordable units should be available to people with incomes up to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), 50% should be available to people with incomes up to 125% of AMI and 30% should be available to people with incomes up to 165% of AMI.
- Suitable efforts must be made to ensure a lively, safe and quality street-level environment at the perimeter of the site where the grade of the street and sidewalk is significantly lower than the surface of the platform (along 30th Street, Twelfth Avenue and 33rd Street); similar efforts must be made to maximize connectivity to City streets and pedestrian access from all sides to the development's roadways, walkways and open spaces.
- Because the development's open space will be approximately 30-40 feet above street level and across the West Side Highway from Hudson River Park, a stronger direct physical connection between these two much needed parks is needed to increase accessibility and safety.
- This Board expects that the MSG plan will continue to evolve as the public discussion of the best use for the western rail yard continues, and MSG has committed to return to the Board and its land use committees to keep the Board informed of any proposed changes, so that the Board can participate in the plan's evolution and evaluate, consider and restate the Board's positions as the need arises.
- This Statement of Position concerns only the MSG land use plan; this Board takes no position on any other aspect of MSG's proposal to the MTA.

RESOLVED, that this Board commends MSG for its unsolicited bid to the MTA on February 4, 2005 that compelled the City and the MTA to issue the RFP, for its willingness to take on the challenge of the RFP by submitting a compliant bid in the face of the barriers to success that were inherent in the process, and for the detailed planning that underlies the MSG plan.