



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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JEAN-DANIEL NOLAND
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

February 9, 2009

Sharon Greenberger
President and Chief Executive Officer
NYC School Construction Authority
IDCNY Center 1
30-30 Thomson Avenue
Long Island City, NY 11101-3045

Kathleen Grimm
Deputy Chancellor
NYC Department of Education
Infrastructure and Planning
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Proposed New School for PS 51

Dear Ms. Greenberger and Ms. Grimm:

We are grateful to the School Construction Authority's Director of Real Estate, Kenrick Ou, for making himself available to participate in our public meeting on January 13, 2009 about the proposed West 44th Street and Eleventh Avenue Rezoning project, which includes, as you well know, a new and expanded 630-seat school for PS 51 on 44th Street between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues. (The project also includes development by a private developer of up to 1350 residential units. The project site is owned by the City and comprises most of the block bounded by West 44th Street, Tenth Avenue, West 45th Street and Eleventh Avenue.)

Mr. Ou effectively explained the planning and development process for the new school, and graciously listened to numerous questions and comments. Our community is energized by the prospect of a new and expanded school to relieve overcrowding and the lack of up-to-date facilities in the existing PS 51 building, and to serve our expanding community. We write to provide a summary of the community's comments, so that they can be taken into account as this important project moves forward.

- **Community Consultation.** SCA and DOE must commit to a process for designing and programming the new school that includes consultation with our local school community, CB4, the local Council Member and other local elected officials.
- **Build it Now.** The new school should be built as soon as possible, so that existing overcrowding is immediately relieved and the school is available to the families in the new residential buildings. To expedite construction, consider engaging the Gotham Organization, the developer of the residential buildings on the project site, to build the school at the same time, through the Education Construction Fund. (The site is an ECF site.)

- Safeguard Funds. The developer's financial contribution to the cost of construction must be held in a segregated account and used only for construction of the new school.
- Elementary Grades Only. The school should be for grades pre-K through 5, not pre-K through 8. Expanding the school to intermediate grades will mean that no additional students will be accommodated – it will just mean that students in the existing 300-plus seat school can stay longer. PS 51 now has 325 students, 112% of its programmed capacity. Recent development proposals forecast the need for even more elementary school seats.
- Great Facilities. In addition to new classrooms, the new school must provide state-of-the art facilities to serve the community through the 21st century, including:
 - Cafeteria, kitchen and small office for food service personnel
 - Auditorium, with stage
 - Gymnasium
 - Multi-sensory room for occupational and physical therapists
 - Media Center/Library
 - Computer lab
 - Science lab
 - Art room
 - Music room
 - Special education classroom
 - Main office, and offices for principal, assistant principal, literacy/math coach, parent coordinator, custodian, IEP team (social worker, psychologist and clerical aide), and guidance staff
 - Parent room
 - Teacher/Staff room
 - Bellevue/NYU health clinic (part of PS 51 now)
 - Speech therapist/reading recovery room
 - ESL classroom
 - Greenhouse and garden (part of PS 51 now)
 - Operable windows
- Traffic and Safety. 44th Street between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues now is heavily trafficked with cross-town traffic, taxis going to the gas station at Tenth Avenue and 44th Street, and vehicles associated with other businesses on the block (the New York Public Library Storage Warehouse, several taxi garages and a heavy equipment rental lot). The block is also used, legally and illegally, for tour bus and taxi standing. We are therefore quite concerned about safety issues for students, staff and parents as they approach the new school entrance. This will require careful planning. The tour buses and taxis must be relocated. In addition, we urge you and the developers to consider whether an additional approach to the school might be created, with a passageway to 45th Street.
- School Yard. The proposed school yard at 12,500 square feet will be smaller than the existing school yard (14,000 square feet), and shadowed by the new school building. This represents one of the many compromises that have been made to accommodate the proposed development program, and many in the community

are concerned about its safety and workability. The school yard requires careful planning.

- Additional Playspace. As noted above, the new school must include a separate indoor gymnasium to compensate for this smaller outdoor space. Supplemental use of the roof areas for additional outdoor playspace should also be considered. Rooftop playspace should be at the western side of the building, for maximum sun.
- PlaNYC Public Playground. The school yard must be opened to the public as a public playground, consistent with PlaNYC's top open space initiative. CD4 has less publicly-accessible open space than all but one other community district in the City. This project presents a unique opportunity to address that shortcoming by designing a school yard that could do "double duty" as a school yard and a neighborhood playground.
- Protections During Construction. Because PS 51 must remain in operation in the existing building throughout the period of construction, it must therefore be protected from the dust and noise that will inevitably be created during construction. The existing building has no air conditioning, and now depends on open windows for fresh air. The protections that were agreed to in November 2001 in connection with the previous Studio City proposal must also be implemented for this project. They included "installation of an insulated window system on all windows at PS 51" and "installation of an air conditioning system to serve all classrooms at PS 51".

Thank you for considering these comments. We look forward to working with you to plan and build a great new school in Hell's Kitchen.

Sincerely,



Jean-Daniel Noland, Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Anna Hayes Levin, Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

[signed 2/9/09]

Elisa Gerontianos, Co-Chair
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

Cc: HPD – Holly Leicht, Shampa Chanda, Ruth Anne Viznauskas
44th and 11th LLC – David Pickett, Ron Pickett, Melissa Pianko
City Council Land Use Division – Danielle DeCerbo
MBPO – Anthony Borelli, Mike Kent
Speaker Quinn's District Office – Kate Seely-Kirk, Melanie Larocca
State Senator Tom Duane
Assembly Member Richard Gottfried