

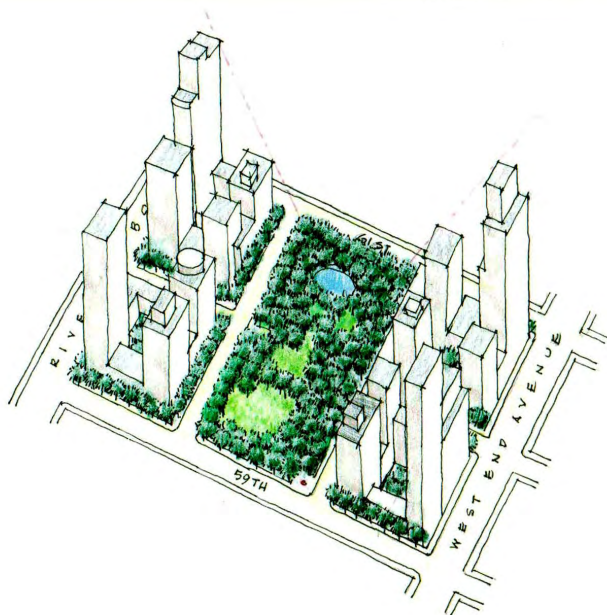


## RIVERSIDE CENTER

*An Alternative Plan*

Coalition For a Livable West Side

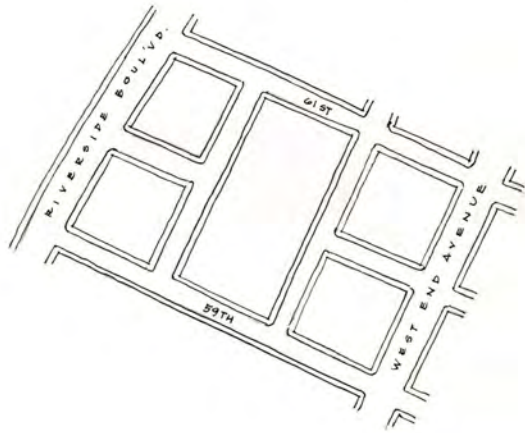
May 3, 2010



This document is in response to the Extell Corporation's proposal to build some 3,100,000 square feet of residential and commercial uses on a site between Riverside Boulevard and West End Avenue, between 59th and 61st Streets on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

The development would consist of five tall towers set on the roof of a three story parking garage. The spaces between the buildings have been characterized as "plaza" and "open space." As planned these areas would not be public and they would not be accessible to the public until the project is completed some ten years hence. *Much of the plaza would be in permanent shadow.* The streets leading to this "plaza" would be private, and the retail uses, if built as shown, would be inaccessible to the public. *In short the development would become a private enclave diminishing the vibrant character of the neighborhood rather than enhancing it.*

The Coalition believes there is a better way, one in which the streets are planned and mapped as public, one in which the open space becomes a public park accessible to the public at the initial stages of the project. The park would be planned and used by the public, its maintenance secured by funds from the developer.

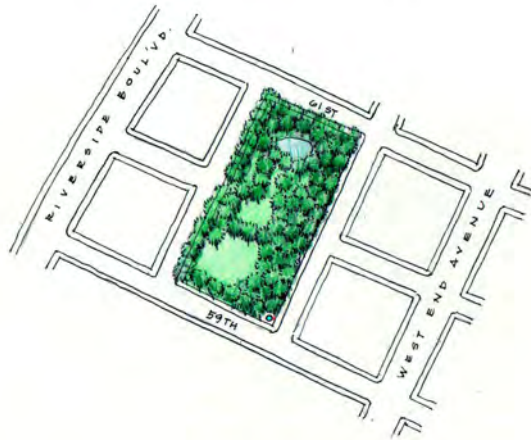


The typical first step in any large-scale project is to map streets, blocks and lots.

The resulting map, or “plat” describes where utilities will be laid, where streets and sidewalks will run, which areas are private, and most importantly, which areas are public.

The Coalition has shaped its plat also to reflect the realities of the New York City Zoning Resolution and Building Code, which are based on a history of 100’ by 25’ lots. This will make any future actions by the City Planning Commission fit more easily within an existing regulatory context.

Finally, this plat also reflects the tenet first enunciated by Jane Jacobs in *Death and Life of Great American Cities* that shorter blocks make for more interesting neighborhoods. Rockefeller Center and Greenwich Village are excellent examples of this.



A vital ingredient of the Coalition plan is the center block, which will become a public park. This park can be programmed, designed and built at *the project's inception*.

This park for the community is an important consideration when compared with the Extell proposal, which would necessitate a wait of at least a decade before private open space could be installed on the roof of a parking garage. A park, in which the public sets the regulations, is also a park which reflects local concerns, rather than those of a private developer.

There are simple regulatory mechanisms for insuring that this park be built first, probably most effective of which is withholding certificates of occupancy to the developer for the abutting buildings until the park is finished. This park should also be maintained by the developer through charges levied on the residents of the new buildings. Bryant Park, Madison Park and Riverside South Park are excellent examples of this practice.



The four new blocks should be subdivided into lots. The developer can, of course, build on any combination of these lots at any time, but multiple lots create flexibility for the developer and the possibility of variety and a more human scale for the neighborhood.

Hypothetically for example, in a slow market the developer may sell or lease a lot or two to another developer or institution. Say a small museum wished to build on several lots. The developer need not wait until his next building, but can allow the museum to proceed (after of course taking back any residual air rights so as not to reduce his own allowable density).





Multiple lots also give the City Planning Commission the ability to differentiate among uses.

For example, West End Avenue is the most appropriate street for any of the proposed larger commercial uses. The side streets are not. Putting retail on larger avenues is consistent with City policy.

Multiple lots also allow a finer gradation of “commercial” use. Smaller restaurants and other neighborhood retail would enliven the borders of the park. The lots facing the park can be zoned to encourage these uses.

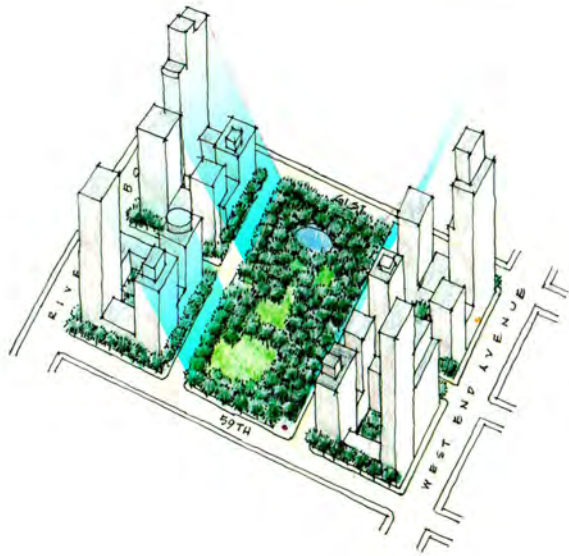


A map and plat also allows the City to describe a “sky exposure plane.”

The plane which describes the maximum height of the buildings abutting it insures that all portions of the park will receive sunlight at some hours of the day.

Sky exposure planes are used extensively in high density areas of Manhattan to allow sunlight on streets and parks, which would otherwise be in permanent shadow.

It is worth noting that large portions of the proposed open space in the Extell proposal would be in permanent shadow.



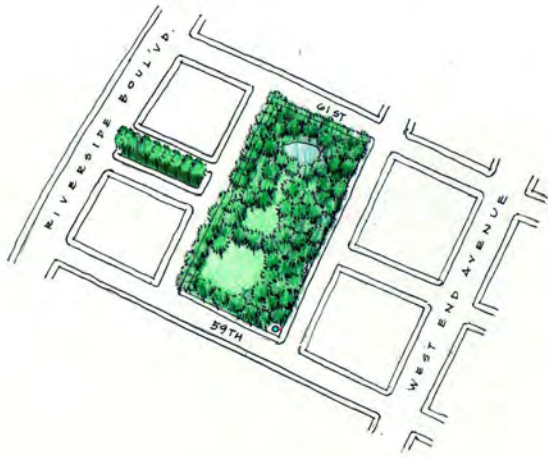
The sky exposure plane shown in the previous drawing would limit the height of the buildings fronting the park to fifteen or sixteen stories.

This height is consistent with the height of the buildings surrounding Gramercy and Washington Square Parks.

The taller buildings are relegated to the West End Avenue and Riverside Boulevard.

Putting higher buildings on the avenues and lower buildings in the mid-blocks is consistent with City policy.

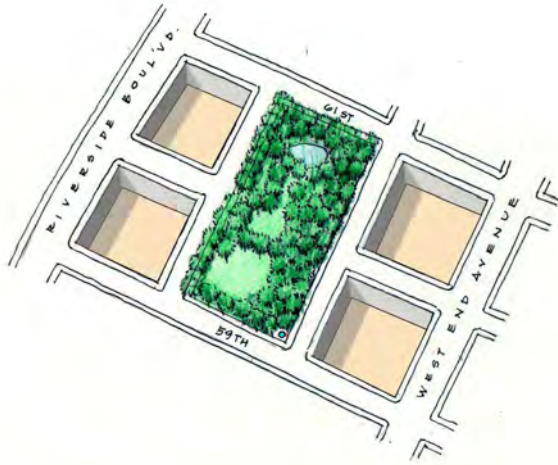




There has been much discussion about opening the park and streets to Riverside Park and the river. At present that access/view is blocked by the West Side Highway descending to grade at W. 59<sup>th</sup> Street.

The developer recognizes the problem by suggesting that pedestrian access would occur via W. 59<sup>th</sup> and W. 61<sup>st</sup> Streets.

Should the City desire some symbolic visual connection with river, lots can be removed in the Coalition plan to create an allee - a broad walk planted with trees on either side, usually at least twice as high as the width of the walk. Daniel Burnham used a similar tool often when he created much of Chicago's park system. The density deleted by this allee would have to be relocated elsewhere on the site.



The Extell proposal will create one of the largest, if not the largest, parking garage in Manhattan.

The Coalition proposal reduces the number of potential spaces by allowing parking only under the four blocks slated for development, but not under the park.

Using Extell's figure of allotting 340 square feet per space, four garages, three levels deep would yield 1,411 spaces. Yet, it Extell is requesting 1,800 parking spaces.

If Extell were to build an underground theater, for example, this number would be decreased.

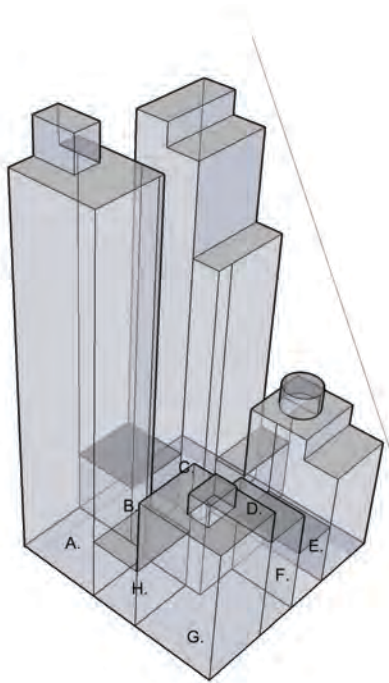
Extell is proposing valet parking, which at 200 square feet per space the number of possible spaces would increase substantially.



Four parking garages increase the number of possible entrances and exits to eight. (Red arrows)

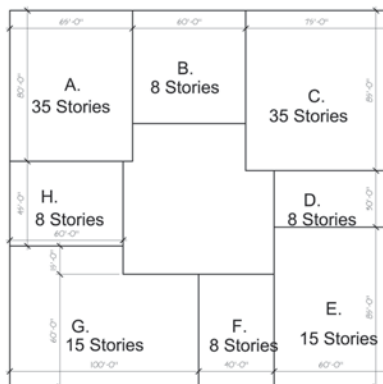
Each of them are potential entrances. This reduces the number of cars queuing to enter and leave each garage and it reduces the amount of vehicular traffic on each street.

Locating garage entrances at least fifty feet from a corner is also consistent with City policy.



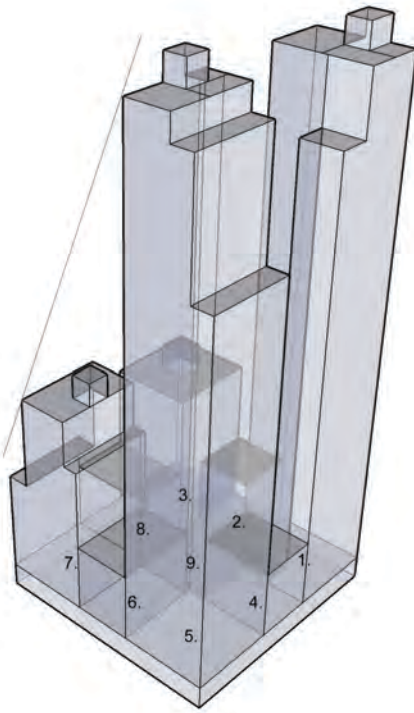
Community Board Seven (CB7) has strongly urged the City Planning Commission to restrict development on the sites (L, M and N) to the approximately 2,400,000 allowable square feet established in the 1992 Restrictive Declaration. The Coalition supports CB7's position .

We have examined the effects of this on a sample block by assigning a height limit of 15 stories to those buildings facing the park and 35 stories to those buildings facing either Riverside Boulevard or West End Avenue. These heights create more than 600,000 potential square feet per block, which at four blocks is consistent with the CB7 request of 2,400,000 square feet total.



#### 350' Height Limit

Bldg.	Length(ft.)	Width(ft.)	Length(ft.)	Width(ft.)	Foot Print (sq. ft.)	Stories	Bldg. Area (sq. ft.)
A	65	80			5200	35	182000
B	60	60			3600	8	28800
C	75	85			6375	35	223125
D	60	30			1800	8	14400
E	60	85			5100	15	76500
F	40	60			2400	8	19200
G	100	60	60	15	6900	15	103500
H	45	60			2700	8	21600
<b>Total Floor Area (sq. ft.)</b>							<b>669125</b>



If the height of the buildings facing Riverside Boulevard is increased to 45 stories the total square footage on the block increases to over 800,000 square feet.

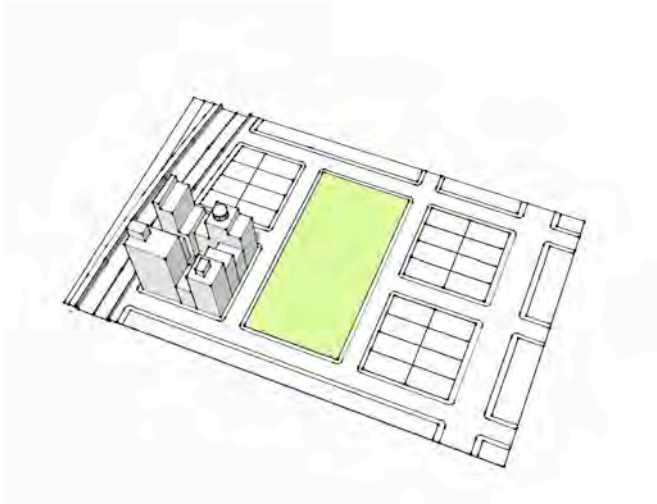
This in turn allows considerable flexibility to how the square feet are deployed while allowing the developer to build a sizable percentage of the allowable square footage at one time on one block.



#### 450' Height Limit

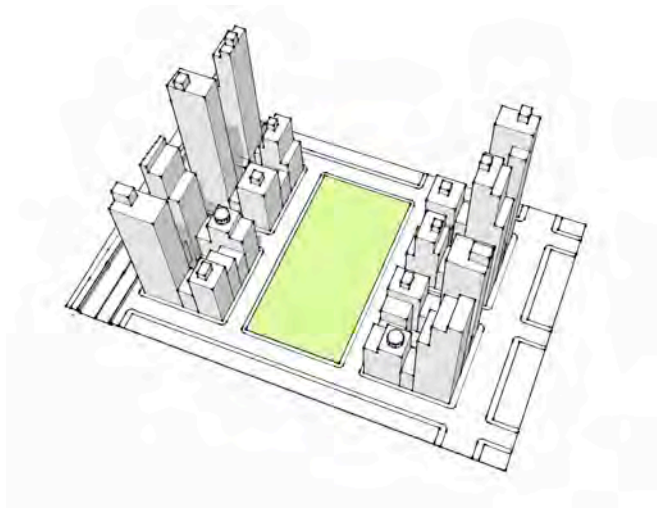
Bldg.	Length(ft.)	Width(ft.)	Length(ft.)	Width(ft.)	Foot Print (sq. ft.)	Stories	Bldg. Area (sq. ft.)
1	75	75			5625	43	241875
2	60	50			3000	43	129000
3	25	60	50	80	5500	43	236500
4	60	50			3000	6	18000
5	75	75			5625	13	73125
6	50	70			3500	6	21000
7	75	70			5250	13	68250
8	60	50			3000	6	18000
9	200	200			40000	2	80000
Total Floor Area (sq.ft.)							885750





More importantly it allows flexibility to the City Planning Commission to reduce the total height substantially in areas where views are important, and increase it in areas where views aren't blocked.

This particular example shows heights of only eighteen stories on the southeast corner of the site.



The Coalition plan is feasible, consistent with City large scale development policy, and consistent with the enunciated policies of Community Board Seven.

It gives the community a real park, not at the end of a long and disruptive construction process, but at the beginning.

It should be included in the alternatives to be studied during the Uniform Land Use Review Process.

