

January 13, 2022

Steven Brown, Chair  
Barbara Adler & Natasha Kazmi, Co-chairs  
Community Board 7 & CB7 Parks and Environment Committee

RE: Response to Community Board 7 Letter  
79<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Basin (EDC Contract No 735300001)

Dear Mr. Brown, Ms. Adler, and Ms. Kazmi:

We are pleased by your engagement in the 79<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Basin project and look forward to your continued feedback as the project further develops in its design stage. The project team would like to respond to the community board's comments that were outlined in the letter addressed to Ms. Julia Melzer dated November 29, 2021. Each of your factual questions will be addressed in the numerical order in which they were brought forth in your letter. We hope that our responses herein may clarify your questions, address your concerns, and continue to facilitate a cooperative atmosphere around this project.

- 1. The Dock House: At our committee meeting on June 21st, 2021, a number of concerns were expressed by our members and the community. We were hopeful that at our subsequent presentation by the EDC, made on November 15th, 2021 and concerning specifically the Dock House, many of these would have been addressed, but it appears that only very minimal changes have been made. Some concerns were originally expressed regarding the size, bulk and design of the new Dock House, in relation to the rest of the landmarked Riverside Park. Members and community members expressed thoughts that the design was too large, bulky, clumsy, and opaque, and also inconsistent with the surrounding architectural and other features of Riverside Park. There are concerns about blocking sight lines, supporting columns that are too thick, three opaque sides to the building, with only one side, that one seen only from the water, being made of glass. Although we are grateful that the Dock House is now set back marginally from the esplanade to give it a bit of breathing room, the slope to the roof has also been added, and the cladding has also been modified to simplify the material palette, these changes are too small to make a difference in bulk. It still remains a building that is opaque on three sides and mostly glass only on the water side, where very few will see it.**

In 1936, when the Dockhouse was originally constructed, the building was 402 square feet serving only 19 slips. As the marina expanded to 116 slips, the Dockhouse only expanded to a total square footage of 703 square feet. With the permitted slips and community programs, the Dockhouse sees more than 17,000 staff, customers, and community members every year. Additionally, the Dockhouse is subject to regulations NYC Comptroller directives, US Coast Guard, and I.C.E. for number of staff and maintenance of records on site. The size of the Dockhouse balances the functional requirements needed for the marina staff to operate the marina safely and provide the necessary space for marina users, while minimizing the overall footprint to the extent practical.

Due to resistance concerns and FEMA's classification of the flood hazard, the only option is to elevate the Dockhouse. We are working to on board a design architect to work with the current team architect to address concerns regarding the appearance and 'feel' of the building mass and materials placement, including the concern that the building does not present well to the esplanade. Please note that we have also received comments regarding concern for bird strikes should too much window glazing be deployed and will continue to address this concern as the design is developed in concert with Local Law 2020/015. We look forward to sharing design updates with CB7 once the design architect is integrated into the process.

As part of the resiliency design, the size and quantity of the columns are intentional. Unlike an upland building well out of the flood zone, the structural design considers structural integrity due to extreme impacts during flooding. Schemes that minimize the number of structural supports create non-redundant, critical elements that are essential to performance of the design. Failure of these critical elements would mean the building would be compromised as well. The current design allows for alternative load paths in the event of an impact, a column can be significantly damaged while maintaining the overall structural integrity of the building and its occupants.

- 2. Regarding those who live aboard their boats, including many who have lived aboard for years, we are glad that the planned infrastructure improvements will certainly help this community in numerous ways. However, although we heard the EDC state that the community of 'live-aboards' will be found alternative docking locations during the time the Boat Basin is closed, and they voiced that they will be offered the opportunity to return after completion of the work with the understanding that they will pay the same rent, etc., we would like some written assurance that this will be the case. Additionally, since no work has thus begun and does not to be starting for another year at least, it seems needless and unsympathetic that this community was required to vacate the boat basin so early.**



As consistent with agency policy on the administration of permits citywide, dockage permits will continue to be issued to all prior permittees in good standing. All permittees received written confirmation of this via mail and email.

The need to vacate the marina was simply a safety issue based on recent inspection reports. At the current state of deterioration of the marina structures, it was simply unsafe for both marina customers and Parks staff to occupy and operate the marina.

- 3. Our community in general has always been enthusiastic about the free kayaking program that was in operation around 72nd street until Hurricane Sandy. It is possible that some version of this program may be revived in the future. We believe that the most ideal location for it would be the renovated 79th Street Boat Basin, given that a new, better gangway with wave-protection and ADA-accessibility is already part of the proposed construction here. Hence, we are requesting that a safe structure to store equipment for the potentially revived kayaking program be included in the plans as well.**

The current design includes a human-powered vessel public dock where vessel owners can launch their vessels from within the marina. While this infrastructure will be constructed, 79<sup>th</sup> Street Boat Basin would not be the ideal location for a free kayaking program. The dock is located within an active marina and it would not be safe for novice kayakers to navigate through. There have been related marina and public kayaking program conflicts in this area of the park.

- 4. Widening the Esplanade around the Boat Basin: This area of the park, that north/south pathway adjacent to the Boat Basin is already often overcrowded. The new expansion of the basin will make this even more congested. Although it was stated that an expansion of the Esplanade could not be done without being environmentally destructive, we would ask that you revisit and take another look to see if something might be done.**

This is outside the scope and funding of the project. However, expansion of the Esplanade and the associated fill and/or shading of the Hudson River would be infeasible from a regulatory perspective (USACE and DEC) without extensive mitigation. Additionally, expansion of the esplanade towards the Hudson would take away space within the marina, as the waterward extents of the marina are limited by the U.S. Pierhead Line.

Regarding the congestion, the existing Dockhouse is located just in front of the Rotunda. However, the proposed Dockhouse is located further to the south by approximately 380 ft. While the Esplanade cannot be reasonably expanded with the current constraints of the site and funding, the relocation of the Dockhouse should improve circulation of traffic from the current conditions.



- 5. Lastly, we request, if at all possible, that a viable route be kept open along the north/south bicycle route for the duration of the construction period for both recreational and commuting cyclists, as well as along the Esplanade for recreational users in Riverside Park. Three plus years is a long time to close and shut off primary routes along the park.**

Disturbance to the esplanade will be kept at a minimum and will be limited to utility connections. These connections and associated upland disturbance will not occur over the entire construction period, but for a limited and minimized time frame. We are onboarding the Construction Manager to the project and will review the anticipated construction approach and schedule with CB7 once this information is further advanced.

We hope these responses address your questions and concerns and provide you with confidence that the design process is moving forward in a collaborative climate. We look forward to working with the Community Board 7 as the design progresses.

Sincerely,



Stephen Frech, PE  
Senior Project Manager

