



Sunlight and Neighborhood: A Revised Plan for Riverside Center

August 2009

Paul Willen – Dan Gutman

RIVERSIDE CENTER

Riverside Center, the last phase of Riverside South, is in a neighborhood of dynamic change.

To the immediate east, some 1500 new apartments have altered the character of the neighborhood. With the completion of Riverside Center, there will be a new community of 4600 to 5000 apartments, with its own requirements.

To the south, the imminent landmarking of the historic Con Edison building highlights its potential as a major cultural center in the future.

To the west, the waterfront section of Riverside Park South has been completed.



Extell / Portzamparc

Riverside South

Riverside
Center

Riverside South and Riverside Center

RIVERSIDE CENTER PLAN

The bold plan for Riverside Center plan has many strengths as well as weaknesses in its open space design.

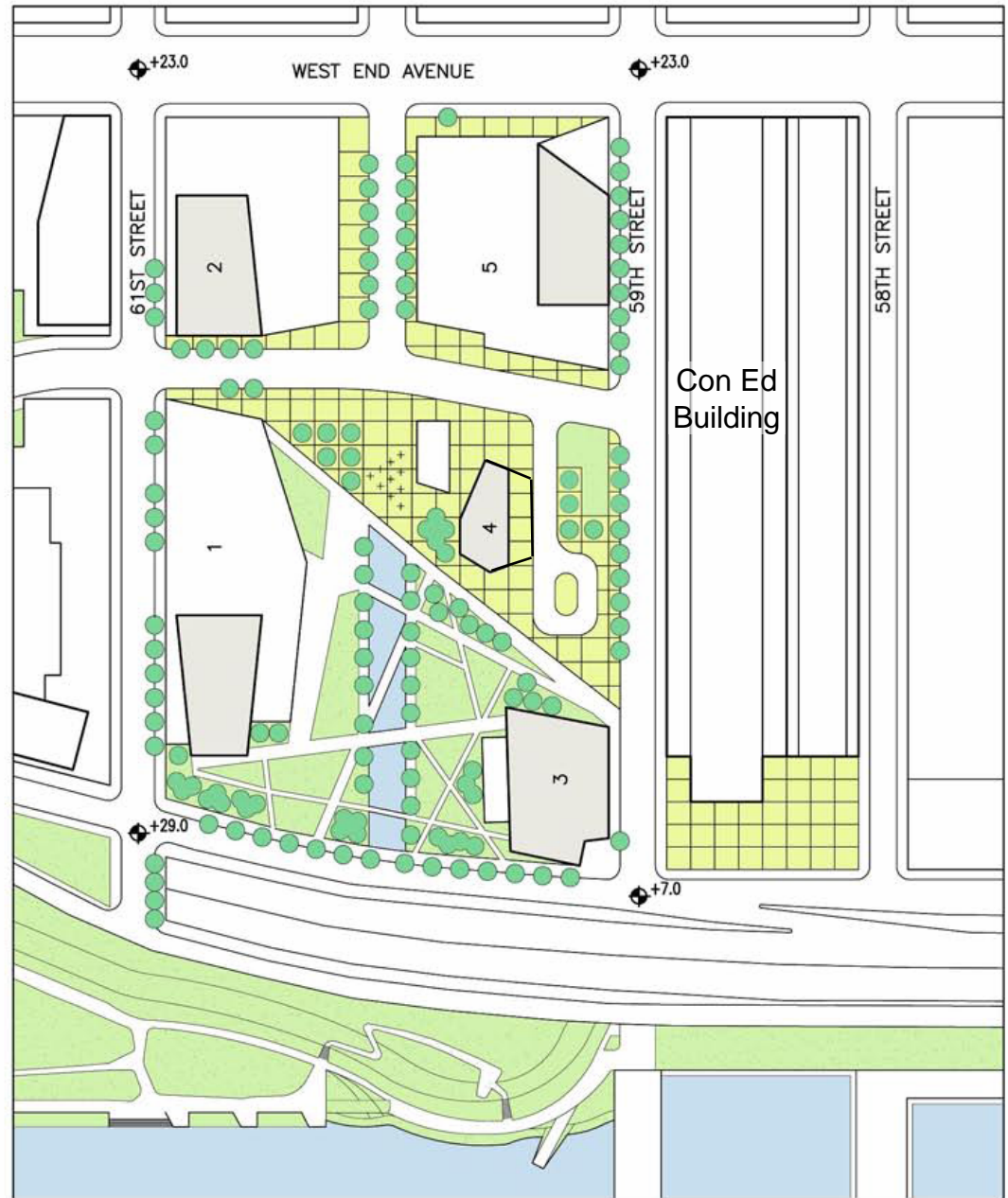
A major strength is a strong east-west path that widens as it heads west toward the river.

Its main weakness is its inward orientation, turning its back on the neighborhood and the Con Edison building, creating an elegant park that does not invite you to stay.

The weaknesses, recognized by Community Board 7, have a simple solution which forms the basis for our proposal.

Riverside Center Current Plan

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A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD

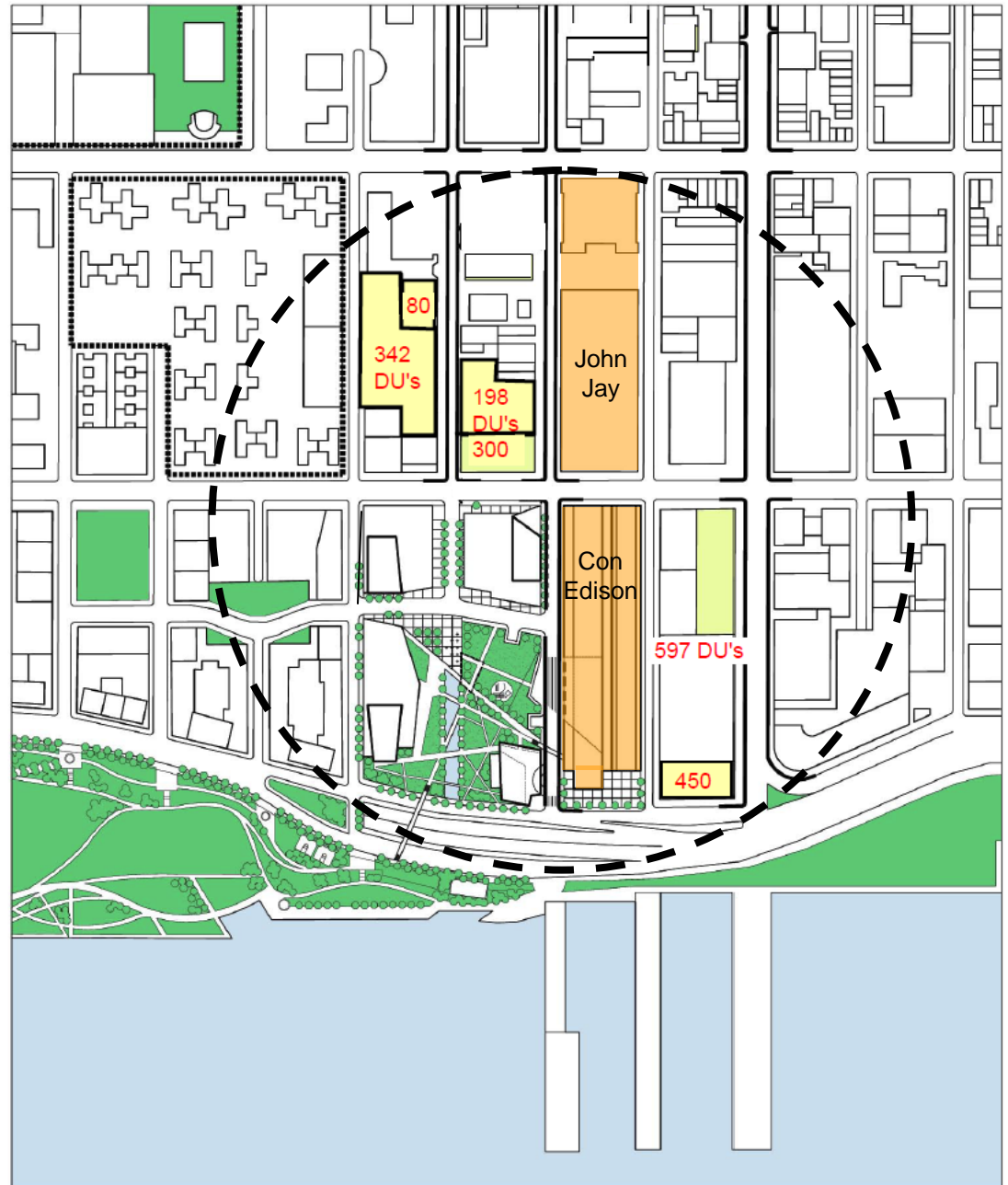
The 1992 Riverside South plan called for 572 apartments and a TV studio complex between 59th and 61st streets. The area to the east and south was largely commercial.

The success of Manhattan West and Riverside South has changed the area. Over 1500 new units have been constructed and 450 more are planned within a three-block radius. Riverside Center will have an additional 2100 to 2500 units. The total is between 4600 and 5000 new apartments, in contrast to the 572 units planned in 1992.

This is a new community — centered around Freedom Place South and West End Avenue — with needs for both open space and community facilities that could not have been anticipated 17 years ago. Riverside Center must be thought of as part of this larger community.

Riverside Center Area Plan

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A NEW CIVIC CENTER

In addition to the new community of about 4800 units, there will be new cultural forces at work here as well. John Jay College is expanding to West End Avenue. And the giant Con Edison building (known as the IRT Power House when built in 1904) may be converted in whole or in part to cultural or public market purposes.

These two developments will bring many new people into the area, transforming it, and adding to the pressures for public facilities.

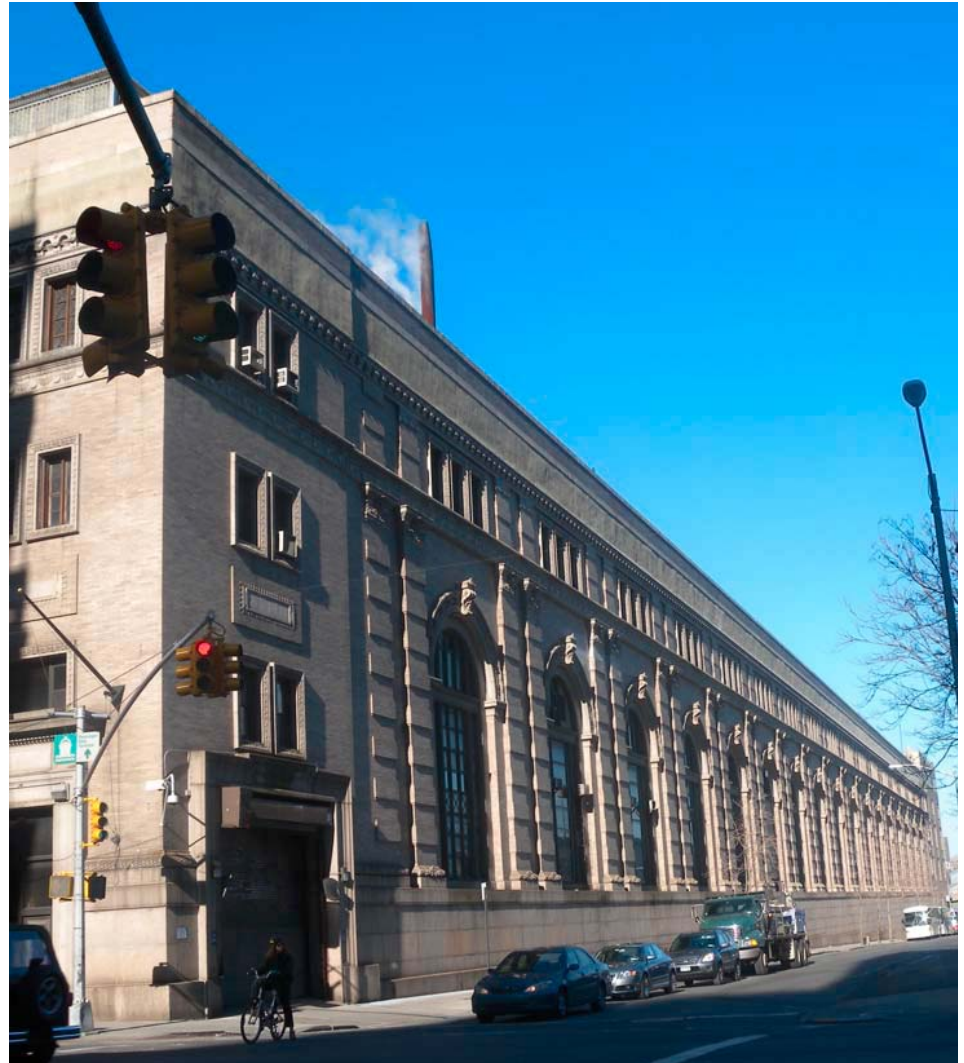
Also the MTA is considering a Metro-North stop near 60th Street and West End Avenue.

The completion of the Riverside Park South will further add to the magnetic quality of this new neighborhood in the city.

Riverside Center

Civic facilities

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Con Ed Power Plant
McKim, Mead & White (1904)

From CB7 letter on EIS scope, 1/14/09:

OPEN SPACE THAT IS USABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND PUBLIC

The Extell proposal for sites L, M and N includes a 3.8-acre privately owned, publicly accessible open space to be built among five mixed-use buildings of approximately 3.3 million sq. ft. CB7 notes that the goal of the Riverside South Master Plan and its park was that the development become an **integrated part of the city**. This proposed open space appears **more private than public** in its present design and raises questions about its relation and accessibility to the waterfront park to the west and north. Though we have great respect for the distinguished architects and designers of the space, they have described the open space as a “**parvis**”, a word usually denoting an open space in front of a church, a sanctuary, or a temple, rather than a **park** (“**parc**”). We provide detailed comments on analysis of the open space in the SEIS in the sections below — including requesting that the SEIS study the impact of the requested Riverside Center on Riverside South Park **if the Miller Highway were buried**, as contemplated by the 1992 Restrictive Declaration.

Park Design and Waterfront/Park Access. The Draft Scope does not address Park Design or Waterfront/Park Access directly. The plan for the overall development project was to integrate the new buildings **with the existing neighborhood**, and not to create a secluded “enclave” feel. The degree to which the open space on sites L, M and N are **welcoming and inviting**, both visually and aesthetically, will likely play a large role in determining whether this private open space adequately performs any of the functions of **successful public park space**, or whether it will be viewed as a **private plaza** welcoming only of those who reside in the developed area. The impact of the proposed plantings and built structures and fixtures planned for the open space between buildings on sites L, M and N should be qualitatively evaluated to consider the strength of the tie-in promised between the **neighborhood and the Park**.

Community Board 7

Open Space Concerns

OPEN SPACE ISSUES

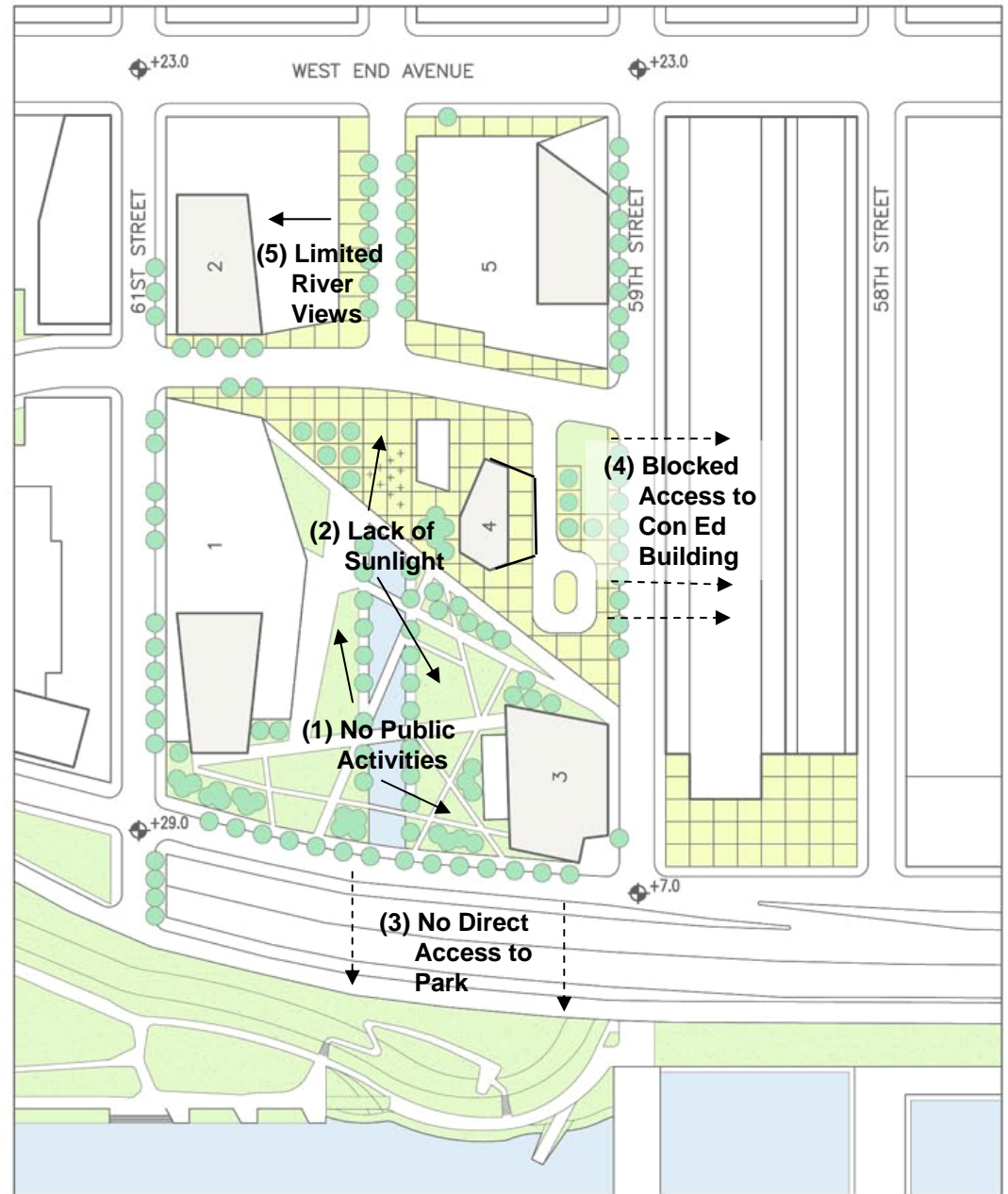
Issue #1: The interior space is semi-private, inward-looking; no public activities for 4800 new apartments in the area

Issue #2: The interior is largely in shadow; needs more sunlight, openness to the neighborhood

Issue #3: No direct access to the waterfront park; no planning for park access over the future relocated highway

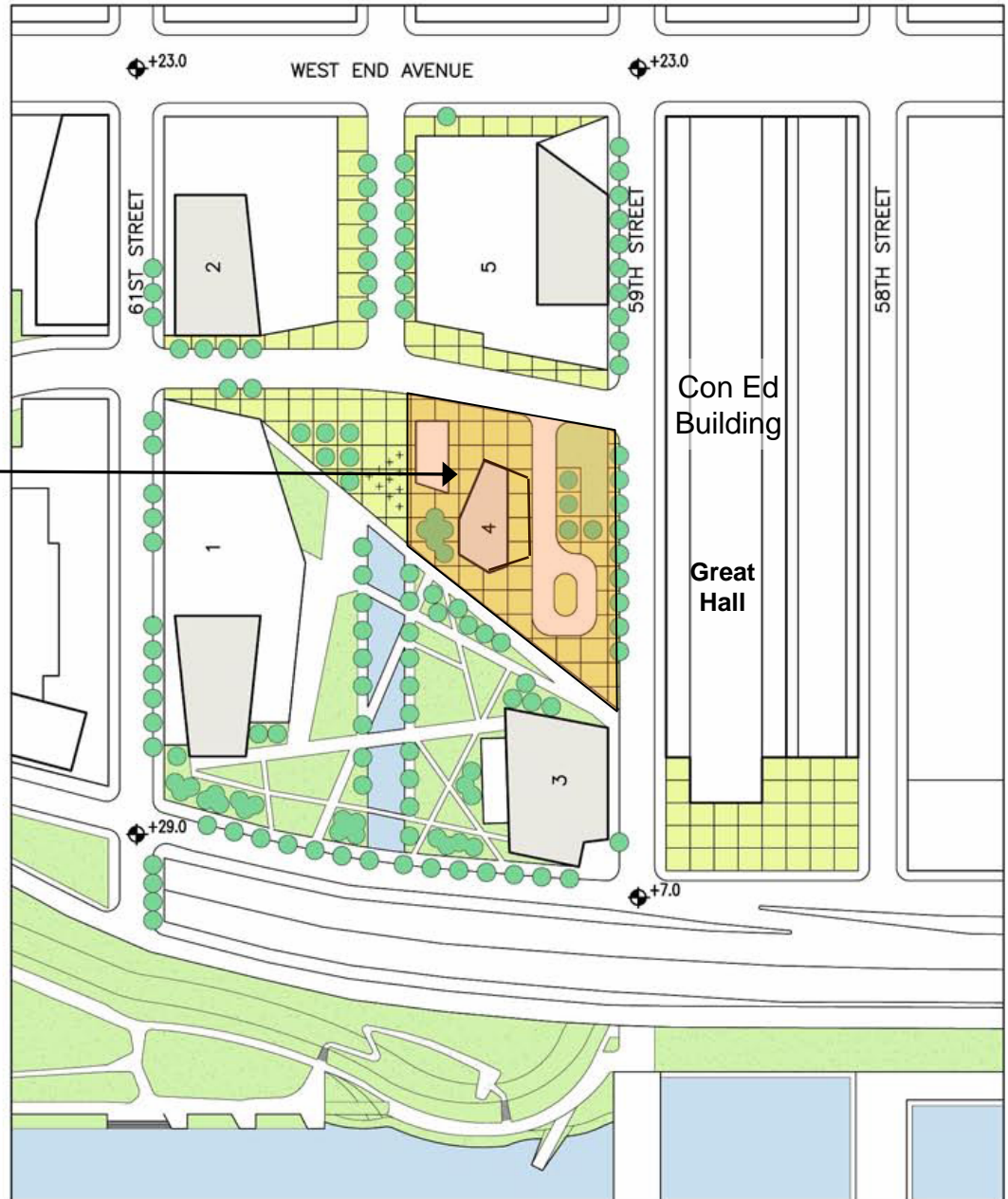
Issue #4: No direct access to or broad view of the historic Con Edison building to the south

Riverside Center Current Plan



ONE ACRE

This one acre parcel is well situated to solve the identified open space problems. The solution entails the elimination of Building 4 (350,000 sq. ft.) as well as the adjacent service road.



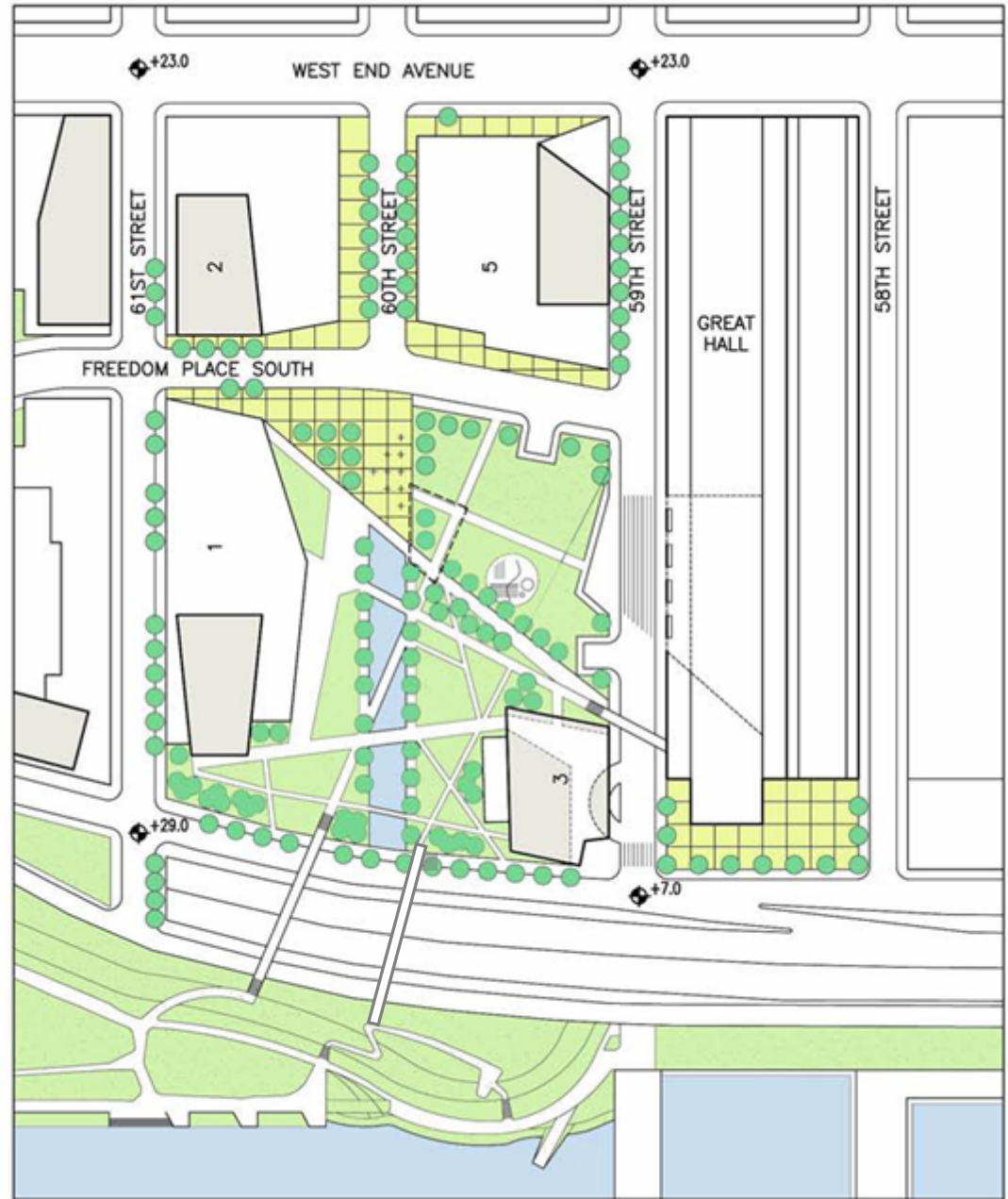
Riverside Center Current Plan

PROPOSED PLAN — “USABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND PUBLIC”

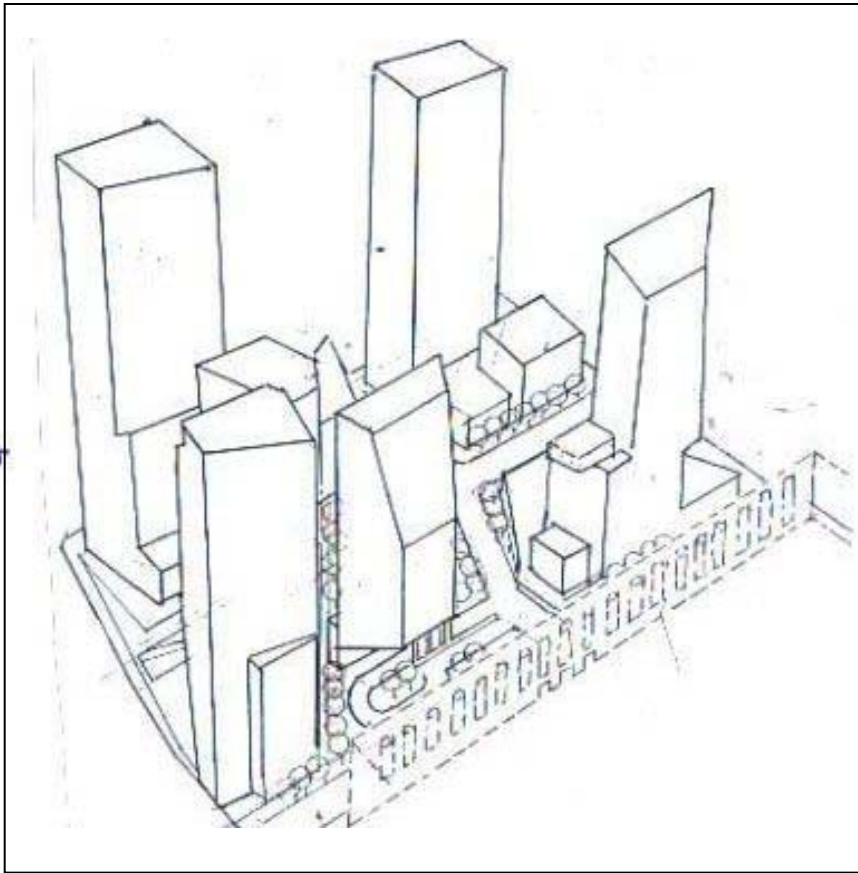
New One-Acre Open Space:

1. Opens up plan to neighborhood, brings in sunlight over broad swath.
2. Provides separate activity space for public use — recreation, play.
3. Brings Con Edison building into the plan for access and visibility — the “fourth wall.”
4. Provides for direct access to waterfront park via bridge over future highway.

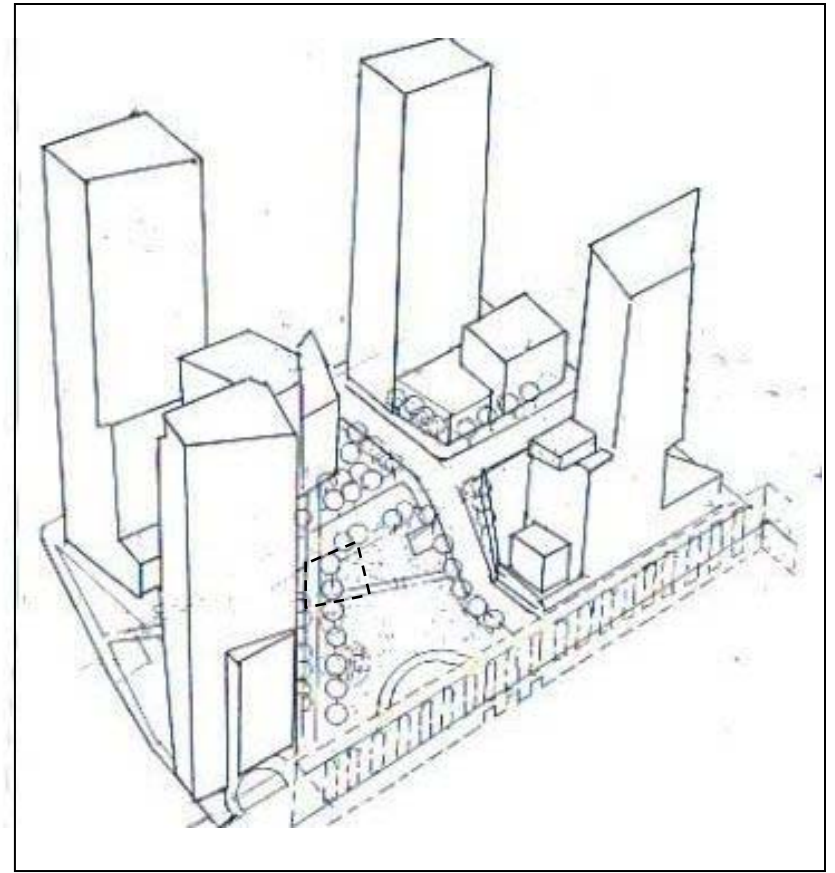
Riverside Center Revised Plan



Plan Comparison



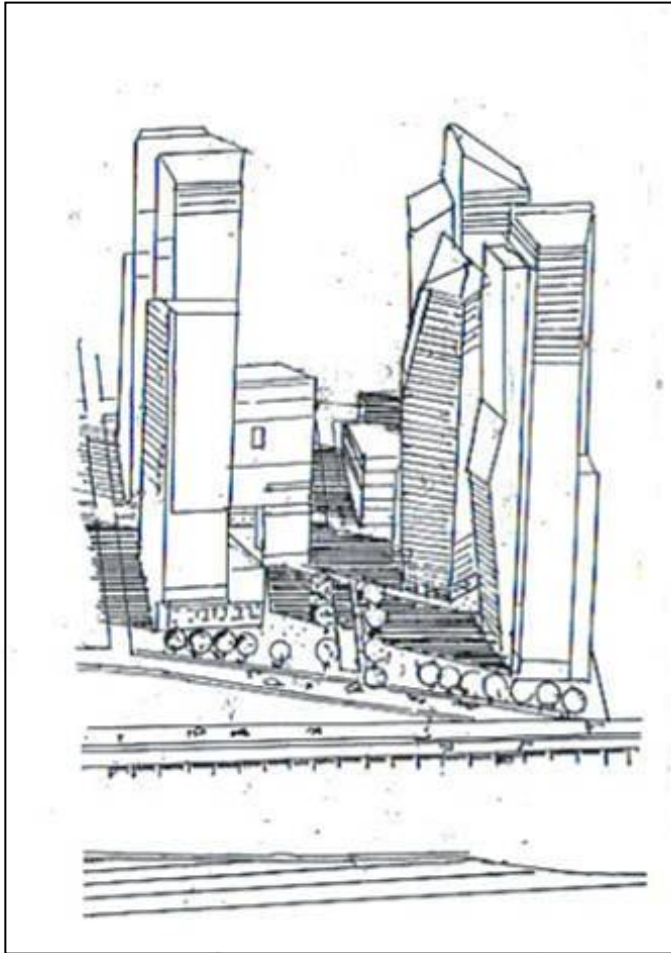
Current Plan



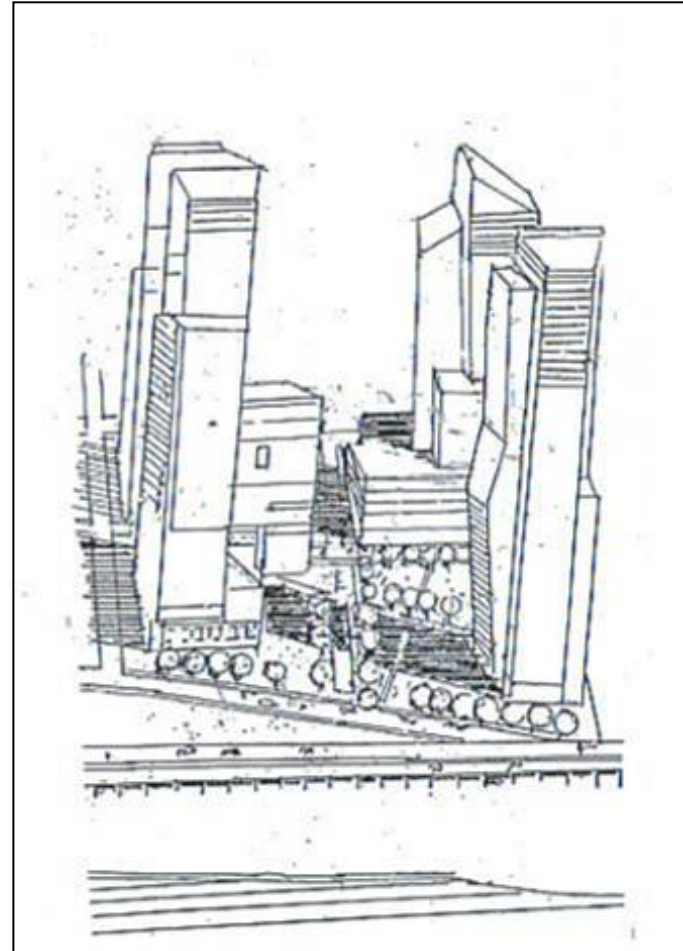
Proposed Plan

Riverside Center

Sunlight Comparison



Current Plan



Proposed Plan

Riverside Center