



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**JOHN WEIS**  
Chair

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

January 19, 2011

Rafael Cestero  
Commissioner  
Department of Housing Preservation and Development  
100 Gold Street  
New York, NY 10038

**Re: Clinton Commons, 533-543 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street**  
*(Former Women's Interart Center Project, 543-551 West 52nd Street)*

Dear Mr. Cestero:

Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) is writing to clarify its position in support of the Clinton Commons project at 533-543 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street with respect to a previously issued CB4 resolution dated June 10, 1994 regarding development of an adjacent site at 543-551 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. At that time, CB4 expressed its conditional support for the Women's Interart Center's (WIC) then proposed project at 549 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street. **While CB4 expressed its support for WIC's planned project at that time, the project did not proceed and CB4 no longer supports WIC's project.**

**PROPOSED WOMEN'S INTERART CENTER**

WIC originally proposed to buy the building at 549 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street (in which they currently rent space on a month-to-month basis) and the adjacent structure at 543-551 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street in order to build a community facility with artist and theater space (the "Proposed WIC Project"). The Proposed WIC Project included a full renovation of the existing 549 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street building and a large addition across the balance of the site to create a 75,000 square foot facility. The Proposed WIC Project was part of a larger master plan for the Clinton Urban Renewal Area (CURA) which was developed by the Clinton Preservation Local Development Corporation (CPLDC). The Proposed WIC Project moved ahead, sought CB4 approval, and had ULURPs (C 940648 HUM, C 940649 ZSM, C 940650 HDM) approved in 1994. Having secured City approval to purchase and renovate the building, the project was then stalled pending WIC securing financing. In 1999, the local community formed the CURA Coordinating Committee (CCC) to plan for the development of the remaining sites on the CURA. CCC continued to support the Proposed WIC Project while laying out its plan for the CURA. However, WIC's contract with the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC) was

terminated by EDC in 2005. Since that time WIC has pursued various means of litigation and no development has taken place at the site.

## **CLINTON URBAN RENEWAL AREA**

The CURA was designated by the City in 1969. Between 1970 and 1980, Clinton Housing Association (CHA) served as the sponsor for the construction of Clinton Towers, Harborview Houses, Hudsonview Terrace, and Clinton Manor. After HPD's Site 8 & 9C proposal was withdrawn from the City's Board of Estimate in 1982, only one development project was completed on the CURA. In 1999, the CCC mapped out uses for the remaining sites. Since that time, the following developments have been completed:

- 501 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street
- the Clinton Parkview
- the Old School and the Flats
- Encore West Senior Housing
- 501 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street
- the North and South Towers of the Archstone Clinton
- the Clinton Green Theatre Center

Development has fully resumed on the CURA and the next project slated to move ahead is Clinton Commons.

## **CLINTON COMMONS**

Clinton Commons is a 103 unit affordable housing condominium to be developed at 533-543 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street by West 52<sup>nd</sup> St. Developers, LLC, a partnership between CHA and Monadnock Construction ("Developer"). Over the last several years, Developer has presented their plans to build affordable housing on this site to the Board on multiple occasions. Developer began discussing its plans with the Board in 2006. It was originally planned as a rental project, and due to financing needs, eventually was reconfigured to be a condominium project. The Developer also reached an agreement with McKinney Welding, the vested site tenant who decided to permanently relocate off site. The ULURP process began in December 2010 to develop 103 permanently affordable condominium units at 533-543 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street ("Clinton Commons") (December 1, 2010 approval letter attached)

Clinton Commons encompasses a 150 feet of frontage on West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street which includes the 25 foot wide lot of land that the Board had originally supported as part of the Proposed WIC Project in 1994. That lot was once contemplated as part of the WIC project for a side yard. However it is integral to the viability of Clinton Commons. The Board would like to reiterate its support for the Developer's construction of 103 permanently affordable condominium units on this site and specifically for the use by the Developer of the 25 foot lot, 543 West 52<sup>nd</sup> Street, currently used as surface parking for McKinney Welding.

## BOARD'S CURRENT POSITION

*The Board no longer supports the WIC Project. The WIC Project has not moved forward and is no longer appropriate for the site.*

*However, the Board continues to support the use of 545-551 West 51<sup>st</sup> Street as a community facility for not-for-profit theater space and artist studios.*

The Board looks forward to working with HPD on development of such a community facility at the site.

Sincerely,



John Weis, Chair  
Manhattan Community Board 4



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



Sarah Desmond, Co-Chair  
Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

Cc: Holly Leicht – HPD  
Meilan Chiu – HPD  
Sara Levenson – HPD  
NYC Council Speaker Christine Quinn  
NYS Senator Thomas K. Duane  
NYS Assemblyman Richard Gottfried  
Congressman Jerrold Nadler  
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer