SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On Tuesday, December 6, 2011, more than 200 people gathered at Public School 11 on West 21st Street to participate in the first community input meeting for the final section of the High Line at the West Side Rail Yards. Following an introduction by Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe and Corey Johnson, Chair of Manhattan Community Board 4, participants listened to a project update from Robert Hammond, Co-Founder of Friends of the High Line. Participants were then invited to ask questions and give feedback to Friends of the High Line and the High Line design team of James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

Below is a summary of participant comments, and the recurring themes and unique ideas that emerged from the evening’s dialogue and in feedback provided via mail, email, and social media before and after the meeting. There are also answers to frequently-asked-questions about the High Line at the rail yards.

Overall, participants appreciated the opportunity to once again take part in the planning process for what they say has become a beloved public space for New Yorkers. Participants agree that the third and final section should extend and expand upon the design of the first two sections of the High Line.

• “[I would like to see] more of the same as on Sections 1 and 2. Love them!”
• “The High Line at the rail yards should be as gritty as the first two sections.”
• “Let us remember why this project started in the first place. It should be an experience of marveling nature, remembering the history of the city, and forgetting yourself there.”

Participants are eager to obtain access to the third and final section. To this end, participants responded positively to the concept of phasing the construction of the High Line at the rail yards, with the Eastern Rail Yards fully built out, and a temporary walkway built over the existing, self-seeded landscape on the Western Rail Yards in the short term.

• “Please open the High Line at the rail yards as soon as possible.”
• “I applaud the idea of temporary walkway in more or less wild condition. BRAVO.”
• “I would like the High Line at the rail yards to be accessible as soon as possible. The value of being able to walk from one end to the other is substantial for the community.”

REOCCURRING THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The design should respect the wild landscape and industrial aesthetic that currently exists.

• “More wild-ness wherever possible!”
• “Please leave a very small section exactly the way it is now, perhaps 20 feet at the end to contrast how you’ve changed it.”
• “Preserve the visual drama of the rails, and retain something of the authentic wildness that has always been elemental to the High Line’s intrigue and inspiration.”

There should be strong visual reminders of the High Line’s industrial past and rail history.

• “The design should demonstrate that the High Line was built as a railroad freight line.”
• “Use the railroad and its equipment as the historical ‘glue’ for the design concept.”
• “I love that there are still railroad tracks in Sections 1 and 2. It adds to the historical and ‘gritty’ feel of the High Line.”
• “The tracks are such an essential part that I think they could be used even more.”
• “Keep the original tracks remain in situ, while allowing safe access.”
• “My son, like many little boys, loves trains. We often visit railway museums. He loves the High Line because of the idea that it was a working elevated railroad track in the past, and he loves seeing the sections of track that are preserved in the park.”

People love the trains, and they would like to see one on the High Line.

• “Adding a locomotive is a great historical reference to what this used to be like in the ‘old days.’ It would connect the past to today.”
• “Putting a rail car up there would be fabulous.”
• “Have some old freight train cars renovated and set on tracks as food carts, entertainment venues, or exhibit spaces.”
• “I would like to see an old fashioned freight train caboose. It could serve as a mini-museum to tell a little of the history of the High Line, and be a place where people could get brochures.”

The design should take advantage of the sweeping views of the Hudson River.

• “The High Line at the rail yards is the only section to promise fabulous river views.”
• “The river views are the design essence.”
• “A terrific opportunity to provide water views.”

More seating is a must.

• “Use the bench design from Sections 1 and 2. The benches are great.”
• “Install as much seating as possible to view the river.”
• “Incorporate more rolling deck chairs into the design.”

Some would like to see more art, a performance area, and/or a connection to the Culture Shed.

• “The project is an amazing opportunity to have artists engage with the surroundings – the tracks, the trains, the views, the buildings.”
• “I would like to see performance venues.”
• “The thing that is missing is performance space.”
• “Connect the Culture Shed in the Hudson Yards to the High Line.”

The High Line needs a designated area for children to play.

• “The High Line is missing a playground for children to explore.”
• “I would like to see a train be used as a playground or play space for children.”
• “A playground would mean a lot to the locals and tourists alike.”
• “You could add swings to the arches under the High Line at West 30th Street, where the walkway turns and runs east and west. As kids in NYC, we’ve spent more time waiting in lines for swings than any other thing in the city!”
• “We’d love to have a place for our children to play on a daily basis. With a low wall or benches nearby for adults to be nearby. Maybe some clever way to have swings or some climbing available.”
People would like to opportunities to grab a bite to eat and enjoy a drink.

- “Convert an old rail cart into an organic cafe.”
- “Add a beer garden or café.”
- “The Lot on Tap was fabulous. It would be great to have something like that more permanent in the summer.”

The design should carefully consider new and existing connections between the High Line and places in the neighborhood.

- “I love the High Line as a way to get to places on the west side of Manhattan. As a New Yorker, the design could prioritize that based on newly discovered foot traffic patterns.”
- “The possibility of connecting to the Hudson River Park is another example of how to increase the value of connectivity in the neighborhood.”

The design should identify new ways to accommodate crowds during busy times.

- “I fear for the saturation of the High Line with people once the No. 7 subway line is finished.”
- “More cozy spaces and benches to get away from crowds, at least for a second. Another lawn or expanse of space you can sit on and have a picnic or lie down.”
- “Please add fewer plants and more walking space.”
- “The narrowness of pathway gets frustrating.”
- “I love to walk to work on the High Line, but it becomes so very narrow in the second section that traffic has actually stopped. Recently I saw two baby strollers cause a foot traffic jam. I would like to see just a bit more width of the path.”
- “Consider a bigger, greener area for picnicking and the like.”
- “Build a park below the High Line. It could be a gathering place that’s nicer than hanging out on the street while waiting to get on the High Line, or after walking on it.”

More public bathrooms are needed to accommodate the visitors.

- “One word: bathrooms.”
- “More bathrooms as soon as possible.”
- “I would like to see more bathrooms.”

People would like to open an urban farm on the High Line at the rail yards.

- “I’d like to grow vegetables there.”
- “Grow food, community, and knowledge. Create a community garden, urban farm, fruit trees, fruit bushes, you name it!”
- “Create a community growing food area and beehives for honey.”

The story of the High Line should be strongly communicated.

- “High Line visitors who do not live in New York City have no idea what the City of New York and Friends of the High Line went through to save the High Line and transform it into a public park. It would be great to have a permanent exhibit of photos and historical information.”
- “Design a historical educational piece that tells the story of the High Line.”
UNIQUE IDEAS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- “Add a Ferris Wheel.”
- “Plant a lot of milkweed and other butterfly host plants.”
- “Consider water storage barrels for use in the summer to water the plants.”
- “Would love a no talking hour(s) on the High Line.”
- “Have ramps that travel from the street to the High Line, possibly at the spur over 10th Avenue.”
- “It would be great to have a ‘Higher Line’ that connects the roofs of all the high-rise buildings being built as part of the development of the Hudson Yards.”
- “Installing a “linear” highly-stylized, contemporary, wonderfully landscaped miniature golf course on the next section to open of the Highline. Windmills & lighthouses - is not what I have in mind.”

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: Will the design of the first two sections carry over into the High Line at the rail yards?
The City of New York and Friends of the High Line aim to design the third and final section in a way that is consistent with the rest of the High Line. That is why we are working with the same team of architects and landscape designers who envisioned the first two sections of the High Line: James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and Piet Oudolf. The design team is now working to create renderings, and we will hold another community input meeting in 2012 to share their concepts.

Q: How much will the project cost?
Friends of the High Line estimates the capital costs to fully rehabilitate and landscape the entire rail yards to be between $70 and $90 million, depending on the scope of the design, the timeline for completion, and other critical factors. Friends of the High Line estimates the cost of the first phase of construction, including the temporary walkway on the Western Rail Yards, will be significantly less. The cost estimate will be determined once design concepts are more fully realized. Once the High Line at the rail yards is open to the public, the ongoing maintenance and operations will be funded with private funding raised by Friends of the High Line, just like it is for the first two sections of the High Line.

Q: Where will the money come from?
At this time there has been no public funding allocated to the project. The City of New York stepped forward to fund the majority of the construction costs of the first two sections of the High Line, but this time the private sector is playing a leading role. Recent pledges by the Diller – von Furstenberg Family Foundation, The Tiffany & Co. Foundation, and long-time supporters Donald Pels and Wendy Keys will help fund part of the capital construction, but Friends of the High Line will need to raise much more in order to obtain complete public access to the High Line at the rail yards.

Q: When will the project be complete?
Friends of the High Line is working with the City of New York to create a project timeline. The goal is to open the High Line at the rail yards as soon as possible, but the first step is for the City of New York to finalize the acquisition of the High Line at the rail yards from the property owner, CSX Transportation, Inc.

Q: How will the Hudson Yards development affect the High Line at the rail yards?
All stakeholders involved in the development of the Hudson Yards have agreed, in principle, to preserve the entire High Line, and to work with the City of New York and Friends of the High Line to open it to the public. The High Line wraps around the West Side Rail Yards, home to a working train yard used for storing Long Island Rail Road trains on their way to and from Penn Station. The West Side Rail Yards
represents 26 acres, making it the largest undeveloped property in Manhattan. The property owner, the Metropolitan Transit Authority, has leased the development rights to the Related Companies, a private real estate development company that will build a platform over the yards, creating approximately 12 million square feet of commercial and residential space. The High Line’s design team is working to identify innovative ways to integrate the historic freight rail structure with the large-scale development planned for the Hudson Yards.

Q: Will the High Line at the rail yards connect with Hudson River Park?
It is a goal to connect the High Line to the City’s open space network, including Hudson River Park. We are exploring the possibility of installing a street-level connection at West 30th Street, with a stair to the High Line near the corner of 12th Avenue and West 30th Street. Historically, a pedestrian bridge over the West Side Highway/Route 9A has been discussed, but this structure is not included in the budget for the High Line.

Q: I’m worried that the success of the High Line might threaten the experience of neighborhood residents. How is it going to be when the High Line at the rail yards opens to the public?
The extension of the High Line to West 34th Street will provide a series of new experiences on the High Line. While we expect this will draw new visitors, it will also extend the use of the High Line over a larger area. Ensuring that the High Line is a neighborhood park for locals is a top priority for Friends of the High Line. That is why we curate a year-long calendar of free and low-cost public programs, education initiatives, performances, and members-only events to focus on New Yorkers.

The construction of Hudson Yards development represents the creation of a new neighborhood, with office space, residences, and cultural facilities. One of the goals of the High Line is to help knit these neighborhoods together into the overall New York City fabric. In the long term, we expect the High Line to be a connector between this new neighborhood and the neighborhoods to the south.

Q: Will dogs and baby strollers be allowed on the High Line at the rail yards?
Our goal is to make the High Line as inclusive as possible given its space constraints and design. Currently baby strollers are allowed on the first two sections of the High Line, but dogs are prohibited given space constraints and the destructive qualities of dog urine on plants. This was a tough decision, as many of us at Friends of the High Line are dog owners, and we wish we could bring our pets to the park. Our experience to date has demonstrated that this is the best policy for all park users, and it is likely that the same rules will apply to the High Line at the rail yards.

Q: I’m a runner and the idea of a mile and a half of open space sounds like the perfect distance for a run. However, I find it difficult to understand why anyone jogs up there. I think it’s wrong. Can you prohibit jogging on the High Line?
Our goal is to make the High Line as inclusive as possible given its space constraints and design. Many people tell us the High Line should be reserved for “slow” uses, like walking, sitting, reading, and people-watching, while others say the High Line presents a tremendous opportunity for “fast” uses like bicycling, roller-blading, and running. While bikes, roller-blades, and skateboards are prohibited, speedwalkers and joggers are allowed to use the High Line. Most come to the park to exercise during the morning and evening hours, when there are fewer visitors and their presence is less disturbing to other.