

# Pier 76 Task Force

## Statement of Principles for Future Planning at Pier 76

December 8, 2023

The Trust formed the Pier 76 Task Force to begin discussions with key stakeholders on the future redevelopment of Pier 76 and to collectively develop some actionable ideas that can advance the dual goals of creating significant new, high quality public open space and generating revenue to help support the overall care of Hudson River Park. The Task Force met 6 times between July and November 2023 to discuss open space and revenue generating opportunities at the pier, engineering and cost assumptions, and Hudson River Park's long-term projected financial needs. The Task Force effort was facilitated by expert consultants from Field Operations and HR&A who helped the group explore these topics within both the context of the surrounding public realm and the current economic reality of New York State and New York City. Manhattan Community Board 4's representatives presented the Board's Affordable Housing Plan and nearby uses and developments to provide neighborhood context.

While no votes have been taken during the Pier 76 Task Force process, this document is an effort to synthesize and memorialize the key principles that have resulted from the group's collective discussions. It is intended to be the basis for Trust staff, elected officials, Community Board 4 and other stakeholders to pursue next steps related to advancing solutions for Pier 76, including broader public engagement and potentially future legislative solutions.

### **Problem Statement**

What can we do to shape a future for Pier 76 that best serves the needs of the Park and its neighboring residential communities?

### **Statement of Principles for Future Planning at Pier 76**

#### ***Overall Principles***

**Continued community consultation is the bedrock for both planning the future of Pier 76 and eventually successfully implementing those plans.**

Above all, and as is true with all of Hudson River Park's projects, active and ongoing engagement is key to developing a successful project that serves the community's needs.

**Pier 76 must create new, high quality open space.**

Pier 76 is a uniquely large pier within a portion of Hudson River Park that otherwise offers less opportunity for public open space than in other park areas given the number of surrounding municipal and commercial uses. Additionally, the neighborhood in which Pier 76 is located, Hell’s Kitchen, offers very little open space and, inclusive of Pier 76, is within a state environmentally disadvantaged area. While recognizing the need to generate revenue to support the park, the goal should be to increase the amount of public open space beyond the minimum threshold required under the Hudson River Park Act. The open space must be designed and function at the high-quality standard established at other portions of Hudson River Park and must not be an afterthought to commercial use on the pier.

**Pier 76 must generate needed revenue at a significant scale to support the care and maintenance of the overall Park.**

Pier 76 is designated as a “park/commercial” pier by Hudson River Park’s enabling statute, and ongoing revenue is vital to the Trust’s ability to maintain the Park to the high standards it does today. Pier 76 alone cannot and should not be used to fill the Park’s full projected financial gap, but without it, Hudson River Park cannot hope to continue supporting the park’s care and maintenance. A preliminary review of Park financial projections suggests a target for initial revenue generation of at least \$6.8 million (measured in 2023 dollars).

**Obtaining commitments for sufficient public or private monies support to fund pier infrastructure replacement is essential.**

The existing physical structure will continue to deteriorate over time and will ultimately require a complete rebuild. Relying on development to finance the entirety of a reconstruction would require outsized development that would be detrimental to the open space goals, and therefore an outside infusion of funding for public portions of the site, before or in tandem with, planning for new park and commercial use is necessary. To the extent the Hudson River Park Trust can sell some of its remaining development rights (“air rights”) to eligible properties inland to the extent permitted by both the Hudson River Park Act and local zoning, such sales could significantly advance the goal of rebuilding the pier as it has in other areas of the park. The Trust is currently limited to selling its air rights within one block inland, and such opportunities are limited.

**Commercial or revenue-generating uses should be compatible with public open space.**

It is important that commercial or revenue-generating uses on the pier work well with the public open space. Commercial and revenue-generating uses should provide additional community benefits and not detract from the public’s experience to the maximum extent possible.

**Flexibility and a combination of uses could provide the best opportunity for a well-designed and commercially viable pier that maximizes open space.**

New York City, State and national economic and other conditions will shape the future of the pier. Having the flexibility to consider a wider range of uses and other potential changes to the pier than are currently permitted will improve the odds that the Trust can identify and realize opportunities that best serve agreed-upon Park goals when market conditions for redeveloping the pier are favorable. Mixing

and matching a combination of revenue-generating uses including some that engage with the Hudson River could be beneficial.

**Some uses should not occur at Pier 76.**

The following uses are not compatible with Park and community goals and should not be pursued:

- Housing (while affordable housing is a recognized policy and community priority, the Trust’s consultants have determined that the additional cost premium for building on a waterfront location make this financially infeasible);
- Casinos;
- Parking Garages (private or public);
- Uses that severely compromise or impede pedestrian access, safety or circulation.

***Design Principles***

**Pier 76 should be planned with a thoughtful, comprehensive approach.**

While the process of designing a high-quality pier space will come well down the road, Pier 76 is a unique pier whose location both within the Park and in the surrounding community suggests some specific site planning considerations. All options require high quality, thoughtful design with careful consideration for siting. The Pier should be planned as a holistic entity.

**The unique waterfront location and the Park’s environmental stewardship mission should be central to any design.**

The planning process and eventual design should capitalize on a unique waterfront location to provide access to, and engagement with, the river. The pier should be designed with sustainability and resiliency in mind.

The pier is in the floodplain. Opportunities to elevate the pier or at least certain uses should be considered carefully, as should connections to future resiliency planning or funding opportunities at the city, regional or federal levels. Ground floor uses in the building should be optimized to take advantage of such spaces, whether for commercial or park uses.

**Design to maximize useable space.**

Pier 76 is an extraordinarily large site. An amendment to the Hudson River Park Act could allow the pier to be reconfigured (but without an overall increase in size) to create better opportunities to separate public park uses from commercial uses, maximize public open space, create improved connections to the water, and have commercially preferable development areas that facilitate attracting a viable commercial use.

**Views, access and special site considerations should be a focus of design.**

Connections between Hudson River Park north and south of Pier 76 should be improved through the redevelopment of Pier 76. Views to the west of and access to Pier 76 from the in-land community are fully blocked by the Jacob Javits Convention Center, which puts an emphasis on designing strong north-south access connections for park visitors. Views to the south and west from the Pier should be

prioritized as views to the north are already somewhat obstructed by various existing uses. Long-time plans for Hudson River Park call for a habitat-enhancing soft edge on the south side of Pier 76 where there is no historic bulkhead. For this reason, any pier reconfiguration that might eventually be approved should not occur in that area, or generally on the south side.

**Prioritize safety for pedestrians and bikes, and minimize vehicular traffic.**

Despite the limited access due to Javits, pedestrians and bike safety should be prioritized in a design that should seek to increase access to the pier and improve public safety. Although any commercial use will need vehicles for servicing and deliveries, planning for the various uses must thoughtfully consider where and how laybys could be used to minimize bike/ped/vehicle conflicts. When driveways are needed, safety measures for pedestrians and bikeway crossings is vital in this congested area.

**Connectivity**

Enhancing the pier's connections to the inland community will require inviting, well-designed approaches from the north and south. Design should support links to the area immediately north and south, but also draw patrons from the east. It should prioritize access through a lens of safety first for pedestrians and cyclists.

**Use Considerations**

The attached Matrix summarizes uses that have been discussed with the Task Force, focusing on opportunities and constraints for both public open space and commercial uses for each. It does not reflect any designed solutions for Pier 76, nor any guidelines/parameters for individual uses that would eventually need to be established through the eventual RFP and public review processes that would be required. There are primary commercial uses – like hotel, office, or large-scale attraction - that generate the most revenue and can anchor revenue generation, and secondary uses – restaurants, concessions, a marina – that can supplement primary commercial ones. In most cases, HRPT believes it would be possible to mix and match complementary uses in combinations – for example, by including in-water uses as well as uses on the pier.

*This document was created by the Hudson River Park Trust in consultation with the Pier 76 Task Force and subsequently updated to reflect feedback. It does not represent the views of any individual member of the Task Force nor was it the subject of a vote.*