



FRIENDS OF THE HIGH LINE



City of New York

## **HIGH LINE DESIGN-IN-PROGRESS PRESENTATION PUBLIC QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION FEBRUARY 13, 2006**

On February 13, 2006 FHL and the City of New York sponsored a public presentation with the design team of Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro. More than 300 people attended the event, which was held at the Cedar Lake Theater in West Chelsea. After the presentation, the designers held an open question-and-answer session with the audience. Attendees were also encouraged to submit questions in writing. FHL has compiled these questions and answered them in collaboration with the City of New York and the design team.

### **Site Preparation and Construction**

#### **What is involved in pigeon-proofing the High Line?**

Pigeons roosting in the girders on the underside of the High Line currently cause negative conditions on the streets and sidewalks under the structure. We (the City of New York, the Design Team and Friends of the High Line) are currently considering and researching several safe pigeon deterrent options to be installed over streets and sidewalks under the Line. The criteria for these deterrents are that they be humane, unobtrusive to the design and maintenance of the structure, and cost-effective.

#### **What is the timeline for Phase II (20<sup>th</sup> Street-30<sup>th</sup> Street)?**

Our goal is to begin design for Phase II during the construction of Phase I (2006-2008). This will minimize the delay between the opening of Phases I and II. An exact timeline for the construction of Phase II is dependent on project funding, both public and private.

#### **Why is lead paint removal necessary?**

The High Line will undergo a lead paint abatement process consistent with City and State requirements for the removal of hazardous lead paint. In addition to health and safety requirements, the paint must be stripped in order to extend the capital lifespan of the steel structure. The City is prioritizing the long-term maintenance of the High Line structure, so the entire structure must be stripped down to the bare steel, treated and repainted.

### **Programming/ Design**

#### **What's the ratio of plantings to paving?**

The preliminary design attempts to integrate the planting beds with the concrete-plank pathways as much as possible, while still allowing adequate area for movement and small-scale congregation. Ratios of concrete and gravel areas to planting beds will vary widely along the length of the line, depending on the projected volume of use and the line's width in each area.

For example, the southern end of the Line, in the Meatpacking District, is an area of heavy pedestrian traffic, and will likely be a heavily-used section of the High Line. There will be a higher degree of pathway and gathering space in this area- the design team is estimating 40% planting to 60% paving. By contrast, the northern end of the Line runs through the more residential West Chelsea neighborhood and is narrower in width. Because of a less intensive programming in this area, the amount of paving can be minimized and the plantings more abundant- with 50%-60% planting.

### **What is the concrete like that will be used for the planks?**

The specific color and finish of the concrete planking is currently being studied. One of the benefits of using pre-cast concrete for the planking system is that a high degree of control and specificity of texture and color can be achieved. The concrete will be cast into molds producing a modular system of straight and tapered planks. All planking surfaces are consistent with ADA guidelines and suitable for wheelchair access. Color will be a natural concrete gray, but the exact shade is still under consideration.

### **Will any of the original tracks remain in place?**

Tracks atop the High Line structure serve as reminders of the Line's original purpose, and are important historical artifacts. It is the design team's intent to incorporate some of the original tracks, ties and switches into the new High Line landscape. The planking system is designed to allow for easy integration of tracks and the path choreography is arranged to bring people close to interesting track intersections and found conditions, while preserving full ADA access on primary paths. Each section of track has been tagged to mark its location, and will be removed and safely stored while the High Line undergoes the site preparation phase of construction. Then selected sections of track will be returned to their original locations.

### **What will be done to discourage graffiti?**

The single most effective way to prevent graffiti –and maintain a safe, secure public space- is to encourage consistent use -- “eyes on the park.” This means creating a place that is welcoming to a diverse array of visitors during all open hours. In addition, measures will include a full-time security staff and the possibility of a closed-circuit camera system. Other precautions are being taken in the design itself, with the use of scratch-proof materials and the minimization of glass, to prevent spray-painting and scratching. When graffiti does occur, it will be removed as quickly as possible to further discourage additional graffiti on the High Line and adjacent properties.

### **Why use suspended mesh instead of glass for street crossings?**

As a solution to the City's required 8-foot safety fence above street crossings, the initial designs called for the use of glass at crossings over streets. Suspended mesh has replaced glass in the most recent design iteration for a number of reasons. Mesh is graffiti-proof (see above) and promotes better air flow. Additionally, the design team wanted to maintain the expansive feeling of the High Line over the street, with dramatic views east across town and west over the Hudson. Mesh meets the fencing requirement without compromising the feeling of openness that characterizes the High Line. In addition, using the same mesh material over the length of the line at both street-crossings and mid-block railings is important to maintain consistency and keep the overall material palette for the line simple.

### **Will there be tables in the seating areas for eating lunch?**

Yes. Chairs and tables in the gathering areas of the High Line will be movable, and it is the designers' intention to create flexible seating options for a variety of uses, including eating. As

there will most likely be food vendors in select locations on the Line, an informal eating area is crucial.

### **Will people be able to walk and sit on the plantings?**

The goal of the High Line's preliminary design is to create a setting where the distinction between plantings and path is not strictly defined and instead, one is immersed in the landscape itself. However, the diverse mixture of plantings atop the High Line is not designed to withstand people walking or sitting directly on them. Because of this, visitors will be asked to stick to the paths, seating areas and gathering spaces on the Line.

### **Why not do double railings instead of mesh?**

The design team has considered a number of options for fulfilling the City's 8-foot safety railing requirement. Before settling on the suspended mesh, they considered glass (see above) and additional railings. The priority was to minimize the presence of additional infrastructure near the High Line's historic decorative railings, while fulfilling the height and minimum-opening requirements given by the City. Of all the potential options, the mesh best fulfilled these criteria.

### **What form will the children's feature take?**

The children's feature, possibly located on the southern spur over 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, has not yet been designed. The design team will focus on making the feature site-specific, giving it artistic value consistent with the rest of the High Line's design, creating an active, interactive, safe, accessible and educational use, and reflecting on the history of the High Line. One possible concept is a train-themed play feature.

### **Will concessions be made for the hearing/sight impaired?**

The public space atop the High Line, and all access points, will be fully ADA-compliant. The designers intend a visit to the High Line to be a unique, enjoyable and safe experience for everyone, including the mobility, hearing and sight impaired. While the details of the plan are in progress, it is the design team's intention to be fully inclusive. In terms of safety, a curbing feature on the edges of the planked pathways will serve as a tactile barrier between the pathways and the plantings. Ongoing consultation with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities is facilitating this effort.

## **Relationship of the High Line to the Surrounding Area**

### **Will you reopen the areas where the "spurs" connect to adjacent buildings?**

The easement of the High Line only includes the structure itself and the airspace immediately above it. The adjoining buildings are privately owned, and many buildings into which the High Line spurs used to run are now closed. There are currently no plans on the parts of these building owners to reopen the interiors as part of the High Line.

The High Line's spurs over 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue are themselves being incorporated into the design as part of the public open space. The southern spur is likely to be open to the public, while the northern spur will most likely be developed as a planting preserve or viewing garden, physically inaccessible to the public.

### **What mechanisms have been put in place to control building density and heights in the rezoned West Chelsea Special District?**

To a great extent, the future of the High Line district will be shaped by the newly created Special West Chelsea District, which was approved unanimously by the City Council in June

2005. The Special District, which stretches from West 16<sup>th</sup> Street to West 30<sup>th</sup> Street between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues, is intended to “provide opportunities for new residential and commercial development, facilitate the reuse of the High Line elevated rail line as a unique linear open space, and enhance the neighborhood’s thriving art gallery district.” The provisions of the Special District include mechanisms that permit the transfer of floor area away from the High Line and specific regulations including setbacks for developments constructed adjacent to the Line. These provisions are an effort to maintain the broad vistas and open feel of the Line, while encouraging new residential and commercial developments to revitalize the district itself. More information is available online at [www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/home.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/home.html).

### **Will connections be provided to the Hudson River Park and future developments at the rail yards?**

Although there is no current plan for a physical connection, such as a pedestrian overpass linking the High Line to the nearby Hudson River Park, such a connection has been mentioned as a long-term goal. Meanwhile, the Park will be easily accessible from all of the High Line’s access points at street level. While the two have much in common, the High Line’s design team emphasizes the Line’s distinction as a “slow space,” a more contemplative, meandering experience fulfilling a different public need than the larger, faster Hudson River Park. The nature of the development at the northern rail yards is currently being discussed. The City is committed to creating a connection from the High Line to a central public space at the center of the rail yards.

### **Will property owners under the High Line be responsible for any of the construction or maintenance of the structure?**

The City owns and will maintain the entire structure, including the steel columns at street level, as well as the future access points. In the cases of three property owners adjacent to the High Line, the recent rezoning of West Chelsea included an option for these property owners, whose sites are affected in unique ways, to be involved in the site preparation phase of construction on the High Line as it passes through their property. The details of these property owners’ involvement in the High Line’s maintenance is still being worked out but is outlined in the West Chelsea Rezoning. The City will also coordinate with property owners with developments under the High Line to ensure that the structure can be accessed for ongoing maintenance.

### **Will adjacent buildings have direct access to the High Line?**

The City is considering this issue carefully to ensure the public nature of the space is preserved. We believe that a limited number of connections to the High Line from adjacent private developments have the potential to make a positive contribution to the overall experience of the High Line open space. For example, public commercial venues adjacent to the High Line – cafes, galleries, etc. – have the capacity to provide amenities to High Line users, and free up the High Line for more plantings. In addition, the increase in pedestrian traffic resulting from these connections – particularly with residential developments - can serve to build a core constituency of High Line users who will become the everyday stewards of the High Line. We will continue to study these connections and their policy, operations, and design impacts to ensure that they will provide maximum benefit to High Line users.

### **Is the City looking to ensure pedestrian safety in this neighborhood as the new park creates an invigorated street life?**

Pedestrian safety on, under and surrounding the High Line is crucial to the success of the new public space. By creating a continuous pedestrian corridor above street traffic, pedestrian safety is improved as vehicle and pedestrian conflicts are minimized. Pedestrian safety atop the Line and at access points is a major priority in the design and the implementation of a security

strategy. The lighting scheme planned for the underside of the High Line is intended to gently illuminate the sidewalk and street below. This will increase pedestrian safety around the structure. Increased pedestrian traffic in the surrounding neighborhood as a result of the new public space is being considered and the City is investigating appropriate measures to ensure pedestrian safety. A coalition in the community is also analyzing means to enhance the pedestrian experience specifically in the Meatpacking District.

## Operations

### **What is the intended capacity of the High Line?**

Structurally, the High Line was built to support two loaded freight trains, so the weight of pedestrian traffic will not pose a structural problem. The pedestrian capacity of the High Line is not yet known, although there are obvious spatial constraints, and the City and Design Team are currently looking at the levels of use in other parks, such as Hudson River Park, for comparison.

### **When the park is operational, has the City considered employing and training local residents, especially those from NYCHA?**

The High Line will be a neighborhood amenity intended to benefit all of the diverse members of the High Line District. Employment of local residents is certainly a great opportunity to foster connections between the High Line and its neighbors, especially those in the nearby public housing developments. However, City employment requirements call for an open hiring process, preventing hiring based on factors other than job qualification. Friends of the High Line and the City intend to ensure that local NYCHA residents, and all members of the High Line community are fully informed about employment opportunities. FHL has done a great deal of outreach to the NYCHA residences in the area, and continues to work to create a dialogue between these residents and those involved in the High Line's planning. In addition, apprenticeships and internship opportunities may become available to area residents.

### **How will snow be removed in the winter?**

The City is considering several methods of snow removal and treating the cleared pathways for safety. We are taking into account the delicate nature of the planting beds on the Line, which will be sensitive to traditional salts and chemical snow removal systems. We are committed to keeping the High Line open in all seasons and weather conditions, and a visit to the High Line in the snow will be a unique and special experience. We are currently assessing options for how to make the High Line safe, accessible and inviting in the snow. The goal will be to clear the primary pathway, but secondary splinter paths and planting beds will most likely remain uncleared.

### **Will the park be open 24 hours?**

Most City parks close at 1 AM, and the High Line will most likely be closed overnight as well. The exact hours of operation are still being evaluated, and the design team intends to take into account the level of nighttime activity in each of the areas surrounding the High Line. Section 1, in the Meatpacking District, may stay open later as a complement to the area's lively nightlife. The neighborhoods further north in Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen are becoming more residential, so those sections of the High Line will likely close earlier. Other factors include community priorities, the operating hours of surrounding buildings and programming at the proposed event spaces on the Line, which would possibly stay open for late-night events.

### **Who will use the park, and what are the expected numbers of local vs. regional users?**

Because of the High Line's unique nature as a public open space, such an estimate is nearly impossible to figure. We hope and anticipate that the park will be used by neighborhood

residents and workers, visitors from across the City, and tourists alike. We expect that Park use will draw on the demographics of neighboring parks, as well as visitors to the Meatpacking District, West Chelsea, and the Jacob Javits Convention Center.

### **Community Outreach**

**How does FHL plan to reach out to a more diverse group of local residents to make sure they are represented in the design and planning process?**

FHL knows that community involvement in the planning process will lead to increased community involvement and use when the High Line opens to the public. Because of this, FHL makes special efforts to reach out to those members of the High Line community who are not typically represented in planning and development. FHL conducts a full program of outreach events catering to the communities in the public housing developments, as well as the Penn South complex. These events include public and private project updates, a program of hosted dinner-and-discussion evenings in the homes of NYCHA residents, a summer block party for families, an education program in alliance with the Hudson Guild, and many more free events. We are always looking to expand this list, and we welcome the opportunity to meet with any community groups as part of these efforts. To make an outreach suggestion, or to find out more about our current outreach programming, please email [community@thehighline.org](mailto:community@thehighline.org).

**Are attempts being made to encourage local businesses that provide affordable services to low-income residents?**

In order to ensure that the High Line becomes a place well loved by all members of the community, the City and design team are considering programming options that will appeal to a diverse group of visitors. However, the scope of the High Line open space project includes only the future open space and street level access points, and does not include the surrounding district.

### **Funding**

**What is the status of the funding for the first phase? What are the plans for additional funding?**

The City of New York has committed \$61.75 million in capital funds to the High Line project. An additional \$18 million was allocated by Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Rodham Clinton and Representative Jerrold Nadler in the multi-year federal transportation bill passed in August 2005. Developer contributions, a result of the rezoning of West Chelsea, will comprise up to an additional \$22.5 million. A private capital campaign in development by the Friends of the High Line is expected to raise significant additional private funds for both capital construction and ongoing maintenance of the open space.