



COMMUNITY INPUT FORUM SUMMARY OCTOBER 19, 2004

On the evening of October 19, 2004, over 300 participants from the greater High Line community gathered at Metropolitan Pavilion to meet the design team of Field Operations with Diller Scofidio + Renfro and learn about the team's preliminary design concepts for the conversion of the High Line to public open space.

James Corner, of Field Operations, and Elizabeth Diller, of Diller Scofidio + Renfro, began the evening with a brief presentation. The preliminary ideas they shared included the development of a surfacing system that integrated hard walkways with planted areas; "hot-spots" for concentrated cultural activities and/or entertainment uses; and a major access point at the High Line's southern terminus at Gansevoort Street.

Following the presentation and a short question-and-answer session, participants broke into smaller discussion groups to discuss the team's preliminary ideas and to formulate responses. At the conclusion of the evening, a representative from each group presented its comments and recommendations to the assembled forum.

Following is a summary of the principal questions and comments that emerged. We thought that a selection of direct quotes from community members would be most illustrative of the questions and issues that grew out of the dialogue. For clarity, we've roughly organized the quotes by theme. In addition, we have included a transcript of the question-and-answer session.

Community input is an integral part of the design process for the High Line, and there will be opportunity for public participation at regular intervals. We thank all the participants who attended the October 19 forum. We hope all interested members of the public will attend future community events. For updates and invitations, please subscribe to FHL's E-Mail Newsletter at www.thehighline.org.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The High Line should have a unique and consistent identity.

- "The High Line should have its own identity and be continuous from north to south. You should be able to do things on the High Line that you can't do somewhere else."
- "Focus on a few things rather than too many."
- "Less is more."
- "Keep it simple."
- "Avoid having too many transitions along the length of the Line."
- "It's only 1.5 miles long. It's not that big. It doesn't need many different things"
- "We'd like to see less interruption of the structure's linearity."
- "Do not have 'something' every block."

The High Line should have a slow, quiet, and contemplative character.

- “The High Line should be an escape from the city and maintain a meditative quality.”
- “Activities should include walking, loafing, meditating, and strolling – SLOW.”
- “High Line should be the ‘Slow Line’ in comparison to the Hudson River Park as the ‘Fast Line’.”
- “How can we manage the transition between hot spots and quiet spots?”
- “In this neighborhood there is a lack of contemplative spaces that the High Line could fill.”
- “Keep it passive and natural.”

The High Line should respect the natural landscape and wild aesthetic that currently exists.

- “Wherever possible, we encourage the preservation of what’s there now. Where that’s not possible, respect the current spirit of the High Line.”
- “Maintain the wildness of the High Line.”
- “More horticulture, less architecture.”
- “How will plantings be protected from trampling?”

Commercial activity on the High Line should be carefully controlled.

- “Create a firewall between the High Line and adjacent properties. Avoid commercialism.”
- “No billboards. No advertising.”
- “The High Line should not be a street or a mall.”
- “Don’t force-feed entertainment.”
- “The High Line should be an escape from the City.”

The High Line’s history and original use should be an integral part of the design.

- “Respect that it was a railroad line and a connector. Build upon the railroad theme and keep it a connector.”
- “Preservation should be the primary goal, including ‘found’ art and graffiti.”
- “There should be interpretive signage.”
- “The attraction is the High Line itself.”
- “The history of railroads should be more representational. There should be historical markers.”
- “Keep the rails.”

Programs, activities, and events should be diverse and relate to their context.

- “Events should be unique to the area in which they are located.”
- “Use building walls as art surfaces and eliminate billboards and advertising.”
- “Take advantage of the proximity of Hudson River Park and provide linkages if possible.”
- “A waterfall or a water-wall might be a good use of adjacent building walls.”
- “Find places to put movable chairs.”
- “The entrance at Gansevoort Street should fit in with the surrounding neighborhood and not be too grand or too cold.”
- “Focus on families and family programs.”
- “Allow for educational programming.”
- “No rock concerts and no rallies.”
- “Involve local housing projects and schools.”

The High Line should evolve over time and with the needs of the community.

- “We like that the gardening elements, wildflowers, and plantings can grow and evolve in ways that reflect the evolving context of the community.”
- “The community must always be involved.”
- “The proposal should accommodate different user groups. Certain groups cannot be ‘forgotten’.”

- “Seasonal change and changing exhibits will keep people coming back.”
- “Keep it small scale! Cater to the neighborhood, favor the small. At the same time, be prepared to deal with large numbers.”
- “Keep artwork movable and changing.”
- “Do not insist on a strong boundary between the park and what is around it. Allow for more fluidity.”

The High Line design must address all maintenance, operational, and safety needs.

- “How will the design be informed by the maintenance program for the site: access, trash disposal, etc.?”
- “Design with safety in mind.”
- “Make something practical, timeless, and as self-maintaining as possible.”
- “Where are the bathrooms?”
- “What are the park closing times?”
- “We’re concerned about safety at the railings.”

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: How do you resolve the pressures for commerce versus providing a place for strolling?

James Corner: We feel strongly that the High Line should be a contemplative, meditative place, not for commerce, and that commerce belongs on the street and in adjacent buildings.

Q: How does the design take into consideration the proposed tall buildings and inevitable new development?

James Corner: There are existing situations (such as the wooded area between 25th and 26th Streets) where the High Line is wedged between tall buildings. The important thing is to maintain variety along the length of the Line, to avoid situations where you would have a long line of tall buildings. This notion echoes the kind of mix that you have there today, a mixture of shade and shadow, high and low. We are enthusiastic about the zoning plan that the Department of City Planning is putting forward because it promotes this kind of variety.

Q: What will happen to the existing commerce, buildings, businesses and owners below the High Line?

Robert Hammond: The proposal for the High Line includes the surface of the High Line, the 20-foot easement above the High Line, and the underside only where it crosses public streets and sidewalks. All existing private commerce under the High Line will remain in the control of private property owners.

Q: How will you resolve situations regarding security and privacy for people who live and work around and in buildings adjacent to the High Line?

James Corner: The design team believes that ‘eyes on the High Line’ are a good thing and will advocate that new development face towards the High Line. We will continue to investigate this issue.

Robert Hammond: No public space is successful if people don’t feel safe. This is a primary issue that the design will deal with.

Q: What happens to the High Line above 30th Street? Has this portion of the High Line been cut off the plan in response to the proposed stadium designs? Will this remain open space?

Robert Hammond: The scope for this design team is from Gansevoort to 30th Street. The portion of the High Line between 30th and 34th Street will be incorporated into plans by the Jets for a stadium. They will probably have to remove a part of the High Line but will reconstruct it as part of their proposal and preserve its rail easement. This reconstructed portion will remain as open space and act as a connector between the Javits Center, Hudson River Park, and the High Line.

Q: I didn't see much seating in the design. How will this be addressed? And why are there no connections shown to the river?

James Corner: It was an oversight of the design team to not show seating in the images presented, but of course it is important, part of the vision, and will be incorporated.

Elizabeth Diller: A few images show the design intent for seating, including how the paving system could peel up to form a bench, or become a depression (such as 'the pit') to sit.

James Corner: Connections to Hudson River Park and the river would be fantastic, but due to funding constraints, are currently outside of the design scope.