



COMMUNITY INPUT FORUM Q&A

OCTOBER 23, 2007

On October 23, 2007, Friends of the High Line and the City of New York sponsored a public presentation with the design team of Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro. More than 200 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. 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.

GENERAL

What hours will the High Line be open?

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 City intends to take into account the level of nighttime activity in each of the areas surrounding the High Line.

Will dogs be allowed?

While a final decision on this issue has not yet been reached, Friends of the High Line's hope is to make the vibrant community of responsible dog-owners part of the larger constituency of High Line users. That said, the design of the park, which has a blurred boundary between walkways and plantings, presents some challenges in this regard. We believe that a set of rules, specific to the High Line, must be formed to ensure that dogs do not unduly stress the health of the plantings. Friends of the High Line is also exploring education and outreach to dog owners around opening to ensure responsible oversight by dog owners.

Will there be public restrooms?

Yes. There will be public restrooms in two locations in Section 1, at 16th Street and in the future at Gansevoort Street, at the Whitney Museum site. Locations for public restrooms in Section 2 have not yet been identified.

Will there be street performers or music?

Friends of the High Line will continue to plan a full roster of public programming and events, which may include musical events and other types of performances.

Can you bike or rollerblade on the High Line or is it pedestrian only?

Due to community input and to the narrow width of the High Line, we have decided to make the High Line a space marked by slow uses, with pathways meant for walking slowly, relaxing, and gathering with friends to enjoy the views and relative quiet that the High Line provides. Thus, bikes and rollerblades will not be allowed. However, efforts will be made to plan for people biking to the High Line – there will be bike racks at major entrances, for example.

Has thought been given to overcrowding?

Structurally, the High Line was built to support two loaded freight trains, so the weight of pedestrian traffic will not pose a structural problem. We will be looking at strategies to mitigate crowds on the High Line, particularly at the opening of the park, in case they occur.

What are the plans for underneath the High Line?

The City owns and will maintain the entire structure, including the steel columns at street level, as well as the future access points. The area underneath the High Line is privately owned, however, and will be developed privately. The lighting scheme planned for the underside of the High Line is intended to illuminate the sidewalk and street below. This will increase pedestrian safety around the structure.

PARK OPERATION**How will the High Line park be managed?**

The High Line will be managed by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, in conjunction with Friends of the High Line. The park will have a maintenance and operations team, who will be on hand to help with horticulture, clean up, and general upkeep. The High Line will also continue to offer year-round public programming, which will be managed by Friends of the High Line.

Who will occupy the concession spaces? How will it be decided?

The process for selecting concessionaries is still being worked out.

How will graffiti be managed?

The single most effective way to prevent graffiti and maintain a safe, secure public space is to encourage consistent use, or “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.

HIGH LINE DESIGN**At what point will landscape construction on Section 2 begin?**

We hope to complete the site preparation work on Section 2 by fall 2008 (when Section 1 will open to the public), and at that point landscape construction work would begin. It is our intention to open Section 2 to the public by 2009.

What kind of seating will be on the High Line?

There will be a variety of fixed benches made from peel-up planks of the pathways along the length of the High Line. Additional moveable chairs and tables will be provided at gathering areas, and it is the designers’ intention to create flexible seating options for a variety of uses, including eating.

What will lighting be like on the High Line?

Lighting on the High Line will be designed by lighting designers L'Observatoire International. The light sources will be mounted below eye level, either at the railing or along the path, in order to provide even, low-contrast, lighting on the pathways. This is designed primarily for safety on the High Line, but will also allow High Line users to see the lights of the cityscape beyond. The comprehensive lighting plan will ensure that all areas on and underneath the High Line are made safe and attractive.

What mechanisms have been put in place to control building density and heights along the High Line?

To a great extent, the future of the High Line district will be shaped by the Special West Chelsea District, a rezoning which was approved unanimously by the City Council in June 2005. The Special District, which stretches from West 16th Street to West 30th Street between 10th and 11th 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 High Line. These provisions are an effort to maintain the broad vistas and open feel of the High Line, while encouraging new residential and commercial developments to revitalize the district itself. More information is available online at www.nyc.gov/dcp.

Is the height of the railings a safety issue?

The railings will all be modified or augmented to meet building code requirements and design standards for pedestrian spaces. In addition, in areas adjacent to areas where there is a higher volume of street traffic, such as 10th Avenue, the path and seating areas are set back from the edge to insure additional levels of safety to park users.

Are you considering any features for children?

We hope that the project as a whole will be of interest and delight to children. There will also be many programs on the High Line focused on families and children. In addition, a feature designed specifically for children is under consideration, yet to be designed, and possibly to be located on the southern spur over 10th Avenue. 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.

Did you consider having a silent area to retreat from New York noise?

One of the inherent aspects of the High Line is that it is insulated from much of the noise typically experienced on the street, and the design seeks to support that by creating a slow, contemplative environment. We have not considered creating additional regulations for a silent “area” on the High Line.

18th STREET PLAZA

The blocky plaza and concession plans seem to have little to no relationship to the subtle High Line design. How can the intricate patterns of the High Line better filter into these elements?

The design of the Plaza is intended to complement the experience of the High Line, but distinct from the High Line, as well. The High Line is a distinct urban artifact, which is reinforced the unique design vocabulary that has been created for it. In any location where adjacent buildings or landscapes approach or connect to the High Line, some separation is required. The Plaza is seen as one of these adjacent landscapes, which is why it has been treated somewhat differently. The larger elements are employed in order to give the Plaza a scale that is commensurate with its strategic location at the intersection of the High Line and 10th Avenue.

Why did you choose a snack bar as the concession in the plaza?

The kiosk under the stair is intended to provide light, casual refreshment to users of the High Line, in the same way that kiosks are an amenity to public spaces around the City. Similarly, the goal of the elevated snack bar is to serve High Line users and to provide a focal point within the High Line landscape. The enclosure will also allow the amenity to be used all year round.

What access will there be from the new developments around the 18th Street Plaza to the plaza?

The 18th Street Plaza will be public space. Since it is at-grade, and surrounded on two sides by City streets, it will be accessible similar to other plazas around the City. It is likely that the space under the High Line, which is privately owned, may be developed for retail or café use, but there are no specific plans for this at the current time.

ACCESS POINTS

Where are the major access points located in Section 2?

There will be stairs located at 23rd Street, 26th Street, 28th Street, and 30th Street, with a future stair to be built at 22nd Street. There will be elevators at the 23rd Street and the 30th Street entrances.

How do the access points allow for park closure at night?

There will be gates at each stair, and both stairs and elevators will be locked at night.

Will there be access points only from the street, or will future adjacent buildings be allowed to connect to the High Line?

All entrances to the High Line must be public, in accordance with rules stipulated by the New York City Parks department. If a building owner adjacent to the High Line would like an access point, they are required to make it completely accessible to the public. These points are akin to subway entrances and exits in many buildings in Midtown. The Parks Department will decide to allow these access points based on their public benefit and their compatibility with the park at that location. Additionally, any building proposing an access point of this sort will be required to make a financial contribution towards the maintenance of the park, in part to offset any additional maintenance burden created by the connection. These connections will be secured by the City of New York and will be open only when the High Line itself is open.

Will there be bike racks on street level at access points?

We recognize that many New Yorkers will bike to the High Line, and intend to encourage this by providing bicycle racks. The design team and Friends of the High Line will work together with the Department of Transportation to implement racks at each entry point.

SUSTAINABILITY

Will there be any recycled materials used in the construction of the High Line's built landscape?

All materials have been chosen for durability and permanence and reduce the life cycle costs to the City.

How is sustainable design implemented in the design?

The plant species are specifically selected for their adaptability and sustainability in the High Line environment, which is characterized by limited soil depth, windy conditions and salty air from the Hudson River. The design of the planking superstructure will allow runoff from the paths to recharge the soil in the adjacent planting beds and minimize the need for supplemental irrigation, particularly once the plantings are established. In addition, in Section 2, we are exploring the development of a rain water harvesting feature to use the runoff from the roof of an adjacent building to irrigate the High Line.