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Thursday, April 19, 2018

## Hudson River Park Trust Plans Renovation of Pier 97

Added by **Scott Stiffler** on April 18, 2018.  
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L to R: Hudson River Park Trust Senior Vice President of Design & Construction Kevin Quinn and President & CEO Madelyn Wils discussed ideas for Pier 97 at the April 12 meeting of CB4's Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee. | Photo by Winnie McCroy

**BY WINNIE McCROY** | On April 12, nearly 50 community members gathered at the Hotel Trades Council building in Midtown for a meeting of the Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee (WPE) of Community Board 4 (CB4), to share their "wish list" of items for the renovation of Pier 97. On hand to discuss the project was Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT) President & CEO Madelyn Wils, and Senior Vice President of Design & Construction, Kevin Quinn.

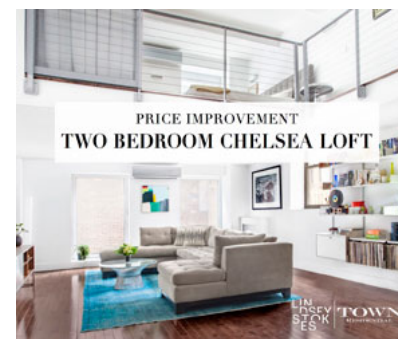
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“We have \$50 million each from the governor and the City for the Hudson River Park to develop the north end, Pier 97 at 57th Street, which is currently a big concrete slab,” Wils said. “We are here to figure out how to use our money.”

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HRPT plans on spending \$24M on renovating the pier for active recreation, with another \$6M dedicated to programming on the “upland” portion of the piers (the apron of piers), as well as installing necessary restrooms/maintenance building.

Beware the coarsening

After they determine the types of programming the community wants, negoti th ‘Bathtubs’ compels us to respect the art of industrial musicals

architects’ a design team and several other architects create renderings of th sl Tangible and social: Virtual reality at Tribeca Immersive

with this presentation, and work with them to define the project. To keep to l Tribeca’s rich offering of queer cinema

cc of Hotel project would be ‘devastating’ for historic Merchant’s House: Opponents

“This is the beginning of the process and we have no designs created yet,” Qu h DOWNTOWN EXPRESS we can put out our RFP. This is the very beginning

During the meeting, HRPT showed slides of plans created 10 years ago by D Beware the Coarsening

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“Tribeca’s Rich Offering of Queer Cinema

While the Historic Vessels project will remain, as they’ve already retrofitted the pier to accommodate the ships, the rest of the space is up for discussion. And the community had some

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Many ideas were discussed for the future of Pier 97, among them a skate park, a playground, basketball courts, lawn space, water features, a sculpture garden, a dog park, snack bars, and even mini-golf. Envious of Tribeca’s beach volleyball courts, WPE member Jeffrey LeFrancois suggested they build some of these uptown.

Safety was a big issue, with community members urging HRPT to be sure the bike lanes could accommodate the increased traffic. Wils said while they will rebuild the esplanade, the state Department of Transportation was responsible for expanding the bike path. She also hoped Con Edison could be persuaded to relocate some of their equipment further west, to allow for safe expansion. Bernadette Consigliere, of W. 54th St., said she would like to see a West Side Highway crossover bridge created for the safety of the many children who would likely use the new park’s amenities.



CB4’s Waterfront, Parks & Environment Committee at their April 12 meeting. | Photo by Winnie McCroy

Wils and Quinn helped the community visualize possibilities by pointing out successful programming on similar piers. They pointed to Pier 25, which Wils called, “the most densely-used pier we have,” and showed how the urban skate park there was valuable, as it reduced the wear and tear from street skaters on the rest of the park.

“Certain uses get repeated just because they are so popular,” Wils noted — among them, playgrounds and ball courts. Quinn assured that these items were high on the list for Pier 97, and agreed with WPE member Brett Firfer that breezes coming off the water impacted play on mid-pier basketball courts, saying this amenity might be better suited to the “upland” area. And although they want Pier 97 to be a place for recreation, they do intend to save space at the end for small bands to play, similar to Friday Night Salsa on Pier 45, which attracts nearly 1,000 people.

Designers say they are targeting Pier 97 for “active” recreation, rather than “passive” recreation like picnicking, sunbathing, or ecologically-based education, in places where neighboring piers or parks already provide these amenities. Nearby Clinton Cove provides lots of “passive” recreation spots for seniors and young families, as does Riverside Park South, right across the highway.

Notwithstanding, HRPT is still intent on showing how the style of new items could be meshed into existing elements (the science playground on Pier 26, for example, features large sturgeon sculptures; and the Chelsea Waterside Playground will get a large pike fish installed next week). Wils believes that the theme of local wildlife could carry over to some elements on Pier 97. “Different activities than the norm is what we should be looking for,” LeFrancois said. “The playground area is important, and we would hope they could bring some new sea creature to that.”

Some ideas were rejected, including a proposed satellite site of the New York Aquarium (once located at the southern tip of Battery Park), as Wils noted that building construction must be limited to 12,000 feet. WPE Co-Chair Maarten de Kadt suggested an alternative: an “eye” under the water, to allow passers-by to look in on marine life.

Kathleen Treat wondered if there was room for softball Little League, but Wils informed her that while T-Ball practice space was available, the footprint of the pier was just too narrow to accommodate a full-sized ball field.

And a suggested sculpture garden by David Holowka was panned, as it would take up a lot of room for “passive” recreation in an area intended for “active” community recreation. As LeFrancois put it, “a backyard park that meets the needs of our neighborhood.”

Innovative ideas abounded. Marc Hirschfeld of W. 53rd St. suggested they form an ersatz sundial, using a lamppost and markings on the ground. David Tillyer, longtime advocate for DeWitt Clinton Park, pointed out their capacity-filled baseball diamonds, half-basketball courts and water playground, saying designers should “make sure [the parks] complement each other.”

Isaac Astarchan, Second Vice President of the Downtown United Soccer Club, said. “If you build fields of any size or surface, kids will play.” And a representative for local block associations urged HRPT to “think outside the box rather than standard swing sets; find something innovative.”

Wils said that if they are able to get their RFP out this fall, it would take about a year for concept, design, schematics, and permits (including a minimum 60-day review from the Public Design Commission). If building starts by the end of 2019, weather permitting, Pier 97 could be open to the public by early 2021.

Said Allison Tupper of W. 43rd St., “It all sounds terrific!”

For more information, visit [hudsonriverpark.org/news-and-updates/pier-97-iconic-then-and-now](http://hudsonriverpark.org/news-and-updates/pier-97-iconic-then-and-now).

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