



**Report to Hudson River Park Advisory Council  
August 28, 2020**

**Environmental Initiatives:**

As you know, we have been working on the Tribeca Habitat Enhancements project in the area between Pier 26 and Pier 34. At the July meeting, the Trust's Board of Directors approved a Negative Declaration for the project under the State Environmental Quality Review Act. The Trust submitted a permit application for the project on June 26 and has since received Coastal Zone Consistency determinations from the New York Department of State and NYC Department of City Planning. The project still awaits regulatory approvals from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Army Corps of Engineers. DEC determined the application was complete and held a public comment period from July 31-August 20. The Trust is awaiting any next steps. The Army Corps is still reviewing the application. In the meantime, the Trust commenced a public procurement process for the installation, and proposals are due on September 11. The State has provided \$1.5 million of this project. Staff has structured the procurement and permit application to allow us to scale up the enhancements if other sources of funds become available. The Trust and DEC also have monitoring and research goals for this project, and we anticipate monitoring obligations to be part of the permit conditions as well. As a reminder, this project was developed in close coordination with the Research & Habitat Enhancement Subcommittee of our Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and DEC, and we provided an update on its progress to the Subcommittee earlier this week as part of a broader discussion.

We have made good progress on the Estuarine Sanctuary Management Plan (ESMP) draft since we last met. Staff met with all three TAC subcommittees (Research & Habitat Enhancement, Education and Public Access & Resource Management) and also participated in a joint meeting of the Trust's Board's Sanctuary and Design committees during the week of August 24 to provide updates and discuss several particular topics, such as the Tribeca Habitat Enhancements project, Estuarium planning progress, observations about the Water Access map and how COVID affects certain of the proposed Action Agenda items. We expect that our Board Sanctuary Committee and DEC will be reviewing the draft document shortly, and hope to go to public review of it this fall.

In March, our Board approved a contract with a firm called Cambridge Seven. The goal of the contract was to prepare a conceptual study that will allow us to better understand the scale and special needs of the mechanicals and life support systems needed to support the live fish that are an essential part of the future estuarium planned for the upland area near Pier 26. At the last AC meeting, we reported that we were beginning work with Cambridge Seven. That work recently concluded and NYSDEC, which funded the study, and the Sanctuary Committee of our Board of Directors are reviewing the Conceptual Report that they prepared. We're pleased

to report that Cambridge Seven did excellent work, including helping us understand the planned aquaria exhibit and tanks, classroom space, microlab, and back-of house needs within the approximately 10,000 square foot footprint of the future building. One member of their team is the Director of Life Support for the National Aquarium, and we learned a great deal from him about flow through and hybrid water systems in particular. Cambridge Seven and our team worked collaboratively to identify a preliminary list of fish species and river habitats that could be showcased for educational and stewardship purposes, and Cambridge Seven then developed preliminary cost and sizing information for the building's mechanical, structural and spatial needs given the assumptions regarding tanks. Cambridge Seven also helped the Trust better understand operational requirements and costs related to fish care. The Trust has secured nearly \$15 million towards this project to date from public and private sources, and we estimate that the final cost will be approximately \$30 million, inclusive of fit-out. We would be happy to devote a future AC discussion to the Cambridge Seven's key recommendations and discussion points if that is of interest.

We announced this previously, but it is worth reiterating that the Trust's environmental team has expanded over the last year due partially to the strategic alliance that the Trust and The River Project have created but also to other staff increases in the science realm in recent years. The team now includes 9 members, making it one of the Trust's larger departments. We do so much exciting work and collaborate with so many wonderful science and education partners including members of the AC. We think it would be great for the AC to have a fuller understanding of all the ways our work advances scientific research, habitat restoration and education goals, but also how embedded it is within overall Hudson River Park planning including for Pier 57/Pier26/Gansevoort planning, as well as sustainability, composting and other operations initiatives. The Park's River Project does far more than environmental education, though that of course remains a core part of our mission.

On this note, at the last meeting, we were prepared to talk about current research and other initiatives that we are working on, but we ran out of time. We would be happy to devote time to this at a future meeting if requested by the Chair; in the meantime, members may want to check out some of these links:

- <https://hudsonriverpark.org/the-park/parks-river-project/current-research/>
- <https://hudsonriverpark.org/the-park/parks-river-project/wetlab/>
- <https://hudsonriverpark.org/the-park/parks-river-project/program-recaps/ask-a-scientist/>
- <https://hudsonriverpark.org/the-park/parks-river-project/environmental-education/stem-activity-of-the-week/>

### **Design and Construction:**

Pier 26 is nearing completion despite a few COVID-19 related supplier issues. HRPT is working with the funders to try to figure out plans for a pier opening date within the COVID environment. You will all be invited to tour the new pier during opening week even if we do

not have a typical ribbon cutting. The ecological get down, now referred to as the “Tide Deck,” is particularly wonderful, and we are very pleased to see that the wetland plants are growing and that it is not collecting marine debris or trash. The Park’s River Project will be monitoring the tide pools, marsh plants and other features.

James Corner Field Operations has completed 60% construction documents for Gansevoort Peninsula, which are under review by Trust staff and the Construction Manager. Because of the beach on the south and the salt marsh on the north, the project needs regulatory permits from the Army Corps and DEC. We expect to be submitting these shortly, and to complete construction documents before the end of the year on schedule. Construction would commence in 2021. COVID has greatly impacted State and City capital construction budgets and there are freezes on many projects around the State and City. The Trust is working with the City’s Office of Management and Budget and we hope to start construction in the beginning of 2021.

At Pier 97, design for both the pier and comfort station building has moved into the Construction Document phase now that the Public Design Commission has conditionally approved the design for the Comfort Station. Working with the design team and our construction manager, the design has been refined to meet our construction budget. In response to both staff and CB4 comments, Toshiko Mori Architects refined their design to improve the pedestrian experience along the east facade of the building. A strategy for dry-flood proofing the building was developed utilizing design best-practices to withstand anticipated flood elevations. We also asked the designer to address other comments raised by Community Board 4. With respect to funding, the Trust is hopeful that State funding will be available for this project once needed next year.

We’ve previously reported that the design concept for Chelsea Waterside Phase 2 reconstruction was well received by CB4 when we presented the design in July. At that time, the design concept for the expanded dog run was not as far advanced as it was for the picnic area, comfort station and ballfield improvements. We expect to be returning to CB4 and the Chelsea Waterside Park Association in September or October to get additional input on the dog run. Construction funding for Chelsea Waterside Phase 2 is from air rights sales to the properties on Block 675 so it has not been affected by State and City budget freezes due to COVID.

In other areas:

- Covid has created some delays in fabrication of certain components needed for the Day’s End sculpture being funded and installed by the Whitney Museum. Rather than the originally planned October, we expect construction to continue through the end of the year. That delay does not affect the Gansevoort schedule.
- Pile work, façade work and roof work are all under way at Pier 40. Funding is entirely through the St. John’s air right’s sale and fortunately has not been affected by State and City budget freezes. At present, we have approximately \$33.2 million in contracts under way.

- Pier 55 and Pier 57 continue their construction processes. At present, we still believe both piers will open in 2021, though it is possible that City Winery alone at Pier 57 may open in a very limited capacity this fall for streamed music and food if permitted to do so. COVID has definitely slowed progress on the market and restaurants in Pier 57 given the particular difficulties for the food industry.

### **Public Programming and Outreach:**

The summer is normally a very busy time for public park programming, and this year is no exception. We have continued to offer our slate of public recreational and environmental programming, though as announced at the last AC meeting, this year it is being done virtually to maintain public safety. The Park's first ever virtual *Summer of Fun* has been bringing all of the music, movement, learning and laughter of summer in the Park to our communities remotely. The 2020 program series has featured a dynamic roster of activities, from jazz performances and Sunset Salsa lessons to STEM expert lectures, field science exposés, virtual summer camps, Park walks and Healthy on the Hudson fitness classes.

This year, we launched the STEM Activity of the Week series and to date have published 18 virtual lessons which are among the heaviest trafficked pages on the Park's website. Public recreational programs are being streamed live on the Park's social channels and are also hosted on our website afterwards for viewing.

The Summer of Fun programs have drawn 5,500 viewers online weekly on average. The Park is looking forward to bringing together an even larger community for the SUBMERGE Marine Science Festival. This event will be held virtually on September 24 from 11:00AM to 4:30PM and will showcase the diversity of research and science taking place in the Park and local waterways. Be sure to tune in to learn more about local wildlife, fascinating field science work, plastic pollution and more, and we would greatly appreciate your spreading the word on this event including to any schools or teachers you may know. This year, students will also be able to participate in the Student Vision Challenge, a design competition to share innovative ideas about how to have a positive impact on our waterways. Visit [hudsonriverpark.org](http://hudsonriverpark.org) for more details.

The Park's River Project and Public Programs departments continue to provide avenues to engage our community, while also providing opportunities for companies to sponsor these digital offerings and engage in sustainability-focused initiatives. While the pandemic has shifted the nature of programming, we deeply value the opportunity to expand our education, research, and entertainment offerings to a digital platform and look to continue these methods in the future.

The new Hudson River Park website which launched just after the last AC meeting has received a great deal of positive feedback for being more user friendly and visually appealing including on mobile devices. Our staff has reached out to all of our park tenants and permittees to ask

them to vet/confirm their information. We also have plans to add more content as time permits. For example a project for fall and winter is to start combing through old photo archives to add more visuals about the incredible transformation that continues to occur. We are also very happy to consider ideas from all of you. With respect to the Advisory Council section, we have made some basic updates, including providing a chart with member organizations and elected officials, and I have flagged for the Chair that he may wish to ask Advisory Council members whether they want to add organizational contact information or other details; the Trust feels that this is a matter for the Advisory Council to decide directly. The Advisory Council section is easily expandable to provide links or other content provided to us by the Advisory Council Chair or his designee.

The Trust expects to begin the significant action process of the proposed renewal of the 30-year lease agreement with the Intrepid Museum Foundation sometime this fall. The Trust will inform the Advisory Council when the public process commences.

### **Operations:**

The Trust's COVID-19 reopening plan has gone relatively smoothly to date. At this time, in addition to our operations and facilities staff working at the Park full time, almost all of the Trust's administrative staff are working in the Pier 40 office at least part-time, typically approximately 40-60 percent of the time. Trust staff have been following social distancing rules in the office and are wearing face coverings when in common areas.

Park facilities are now open, including Park playgrounds, skate parks, basketball, active recreation fields, minigolf and volleyball. The newly renovated Pier 40 courtyard fields and Chelsea Waterside's field opened in August with limitations on the numbers of people and certain other requirements in accordance with guidelines from Governor Cuomo. We are currently expecting to issue permits for the fall season, again following guidelines from Governor Cuomo about which sports and activities are permitted. Limitations on the number of people on the fields will remain.

Outside dining is also available at the Grand Banks on Pier 25, City Vineyard at Pier 26, the new Drift-In at Pier 45, The Frying Pan at Pier 66 and at Pier 84's Hook'd. The Trust's Property Management team has worked with each of the concessionaires to set up tables and chairs that provide more than six feet of separation per the Department of Health guidelines.

At the May AC meeting, our General Counsel, Christine Fazio reported that a public comment period was under way as part of a process to amend the Park's Rules and Regulations. After receiving 3 comments, the Trust's Board of Directors adopted the amendments at the July meeting. The revised rules will take effect on October 1 and will be posted on the Trust's website at that time.

The Park has been host to a number of protests over the past couple of months. All but one have been uneventful. Unfortunately, one resulted in significant graffiti on Pier 46 which required pavers to be replaced on the western zone given permanent damage to some of them.

The Park has been developing a new system to improve the collection, dissemination, and analysis of criminal, emergency, quality of life, public welfare and maintenance issues within the Park. The system will allow data to be searched and reports to be generated by geographic location, incident type, resolution status and more. Information collected by the system will be utilized by Trust and PEP management to make informed decisions to improve the safety, security, and the everyday experience for park visitors and staff. The system is currently being tested by PEP officers, staff and NYC Parks Department personnel.

Camera installation continues to roll out. Dennis McCartney, our Senior Director of Public Safety, has been working closely with NYPD and PEP to identify current trends in crime and public safety issues. He has been spending a lot of time physically in the park and analyzing data to properly deploy PEP officers at needed locations. While we have always had good relationships with our four local precincts, Dennis is working to strengthen the bond to increase their presence inside the park. PEP has increased the number of bike patrols in the Park and more officers are being trained in bike use through NYC Parks. PEP is increasing education and enforcement about bikes on the esplanade and we are working with State Department of Transportation to get signage approved stating that e-bikes and e-scooters are prohibited on the bikeway.

### **Questions Received from the Advisory Council Between Meetings:**

#### **Pier 79:**

At the last meeting, I informed the Advisory Council that the Trust agrees with most of the key points raised by Tom Fox in his letter to EDC about Pier 79. The overnight bus issue is a longstanding concern – one that we have raised with the City repeatedly over the years and discussed with CB4 as well. Managing pedestrian and vehicular conflicts at the bikeway, and marine safety for kayakers and other small boaters are also clear longstanding concerns and we have flagged all of them for EDC as matters we wish to discuss further. We like Nancy Brous's idea of bringing ferry captains together with non-motorized boaters so that they can hear from the non-motorized boating community directly. We have told EDC that we would like to facilitate such a meeting, and we should collectively discuss whether this is best closer to when the expansion goes into operation since there is now, as we understand it, a delay in starting up the new service. With all of that said, in virtually every public forum the Trust has attended about waterfront planning over decades, there is consistent support for expanded ferry service throughout NYC. In fact, in certain public meetings, Trust staff have been somewhat of a lone voice reminding planners and advocates that there are land-side and water implications to consider as part of those expansion goals.

The ferry terminal is in park plans as the West Midtown Ferry Terminal, and as far back as the 1998 Park FEIS, ferry service was anticipated from Staten Island, and buses were expected to drop off passengers in front of Pier 79. The pier operates under a lease between NYC and NY Waterway that has existed since 2002 and we do not have authority to approve or disapprove expanded ferry service, but that does not mean that we will not continue to advocate from the park's perspective about operational and safety and design issues that need to be considered, and that is exactly what we are discussing with the City. We have told EDC that the AC is interested in Pier 79 and understand that CB4 expects to invite them to an upcoming meeting.

#### **CSOs:**

We could not agree more with Tom Fox's comment that CSOs are one of the most important issues for the Sanctuary. This is also a topic that is way larger than HRPT, though our staff has most certainly been involved in discussions, studies and advocacy with EPA, DEP and DEC. Tom mentioned effluent pipe extensions as a logical approach to dispersing CSO pollution into the river channel and away from the park. Despite working for over a year to try to get DEP to extend the CSO at Pier 40 – the busiest in terms of volume of discharge into the Sanctuary – we were unable to do so. We made CB2 and our elected officials aware of this at the time. That being said, it's important to be clear that addressing CSO pollution is a complicated regional issue and not everyone agrees with the idea that CSO pipe extensions are the most logical way to handle the problem. We just recently had this discussion with TAC members on this topic and it was clear that certain environmental organizations, like Riverkeeper, feel that pushing pollution into the river channel to avoid it from contaminating park waters just pushes the problem on to others including anadromous channel fish like sturgeon. For many years now, Hudson River Park's education team has hosted public programs and educated thousands of New Yorkers about CSO pollution. I have advised Chair LeFrancois that the Trust would be pleased to have the topic of CSOs be added to the agenda for an upcoming AC discussion. Hudson River Park would benefit from having others join the effort to have the City prioritize certain CSOs in the Sanctuary.

#### **Dredging and Pier 97:**

Staff alerted the Board members of our Sanctuary and Design Committees this week that the idea of dredging has been suggested as a means of accommodating more historic vessels in locations that are shallow. As discussed at the last meeting, the Act says that dredging is allowed only for navigational purposes. The minutes from the Board committee meeting are at [https://hudsonriverpark.org/app/uploads/2020/08/JointDesign\\_Sanctuary\\_Committee-08.21.20.pdf](https://hudsonriverpark.org/app/uploads/2020/08/JointDesign_Sanctuary_Committee-08.21.20.pdf) and are worth reviewing along the summary of the Historic Vessels RFEI. Regarding dredging, the committee members raised a number of concerns about the idea at this time. This does not mean that this can't be pursued in the future if the Board determines dredging is a priority. We are still in the first generation of building the park, and we imagine it will continue to evolve. It should!

Regarding Pier 97, the Trust does not question that vessels have operated historically between Piers 97 and 98, most of the time safely. With that said, the Trust has made the decision to shift the prospective location of the historic vessel berth from the north side of the pier to the

south side of the pier as previously discussed at the Advisory Council and at two meetings of CB4. The RFEI, which is still open for Pier 97 and Pier 26, allowed for flexibility at the Pier 97 location in particular. In fact, the main reason we included Pier 97 in the RFEI process for historic vessels even though the pier hasn't even begun construction is because we thought doing so might open opportunities and inform the design process. And it did. Of the three operators that expressed an interest in berthing their vessel at Pier 97, two proposed historic vessels with a commercial/restaurant use, and only one response contained a vessel with a draft small enough to accommodate *either* the north or south side of the pier.

The RFEI is still open at both Pier 97 as it is for 26. We selected two historic vessels for Pier 25 – the McKean and Lilac. Neither has a restaurant, nor would any vessel that may be approved for Pier 26. The RFEI prohibits it at both locations. It was included as a possibility at Pier 97 because CB4 liked the idea if it could be made to work. Whether it will or won't remains to be considered as we continue review for the RFEI and discussion with our Board committees.

The water taxi at Pier 97 location has not been determined. If at some point there is market for a water taxi landing in this area, a permit would need to be secured at that point. During the CB4 discussions, we stated that our placeholder thought for its location would be for the southwest side where it would not affect kayak activities as much as if it comes further east, but this is not "real" at this time since no one is talking to us about service in this area. We had also suggested to CB4 that they might want to speak with NYC about the possibility of it being at Pier 94 in the future, but again, that would be considered if an operator were to determine there is a market for it.

#### **Historic Consultant:**

It would be wonderful to have consultants for all the things we dream of, but money is not available for everything we dream of. This does not mean that we have not used paid historic consultants in the past, or when needed. For example, there is a historic architect working with us now to plan and oversee the restoration of the original Pier 54 arch. In the meantime, at the last AC meeting, we explained that we work with partners to offer maritime programming and to require it at all historic vessels as well. Part of our core education curriculum is a maritime history class that includes tours of either the Lilac (Pier 25) or the Frying Pan (Pier 66). We created and ran a digital program of the Frying Pan tour within the last few weeks as part of our effort to go virtual during COVID. In the past we've also hosted maritime history public programs aboard partner vessels, and have worked with historians on walking tours in various park locations. This tour of Greenwich Village is on our website:

<https://hudsonriverpark.org/app/uploads/2012/03/HRPK-Greenwich-Village-Walking-Tour-2020.pdf>. We would love to have a similar tour for each neighborhood in the future. If people have ideas about more historic walking tours, content for our website, tour guides, etc., we are all ears.

#### **Contacting the Trust Staff:**

Our organization chart has always been on our website and list all staff members:

<https://hudsonriverpark.org/app/uploads/2020/08/HRPT-Organizational-Chart-7.22.20.pdf>.



Staff members all have the same email address format as mine: [ndoyle@hrpt.ny.gov](mailto:ndoyle@hrpt.ny.gov). Our phone number is 212-627-2020.

**Advisory Council:**

I have asked our Graphics Department to prepare letterhead for the Advisory Council's future use. I will share with Chair LeFrancois when available.