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Dear Elected Officials and Community Board Members,

Having carefully reviewed the alternative concepts for resiliency measures at Wagner Park presented last week, we wanted to draw your attention to previous public discussions on these concepts that took place through our thorough design process, and also reiterate why we are not advancing these concepts in favor of the final designs that we will implement in the weeks ahead to ensure a safer, more resilient Battery Park City community.

As maintaining the design legacy of the project area has been one of the [five design principles](#) for the South Battery Park City Resiliency Project, it is important to note that the final designs for the newly-resilient Wagner Park, created in years-long consultation with the local community, incorporate the original design elements that we all love. Whether you're reviewing renderings, maps and diagrams, or detailed construction drawings for the project — all of which are available on our [website](#) — you will see a beautiful framing of the Statue of Liberty and New York Harbor, expansive lawn space, a welcoming park entrance formed by allees of trees, and luxuriant gardens. The newly-resilient park will also include critical components that will not be visible to the everyday park user, such as a buried floodwall integrated into the park design, a 63,000 gallon cistern for stormwater filtration and reuse, certified state-of-the-art sustainability features incorporated into the park and the new Wagner Park Pavilion, and universal access — which means the newly-resilient park will be navigable equitably.

The alternative concept's components were considered early in the design development process and, due to key engineering, logistical, and design considerations, as well as feedback from community members, they were not pursued further as the project advanced. In summary, the alternative concept relies on three main elements:

- (1) Adapting and using the existing Wagner Park Pavilion as a component of the project's flood barrier, which is not feasible given the condition and design of the building, absent a full-scale demolition, redesign, and reconstruction. This was [discussed in detail](#) at the June 2017 meeting of the then-Waterfronts, Parks & Resiliency Committee of Manhattan Community Board 1. Though community input prompted the Authority to move past the concepts developed as part of that discussion, the underlying engineering assessment — that the Pavilion could not serve as a flood barrier — still stands;
- (2) Installation of fixed flood walls bordering Battery Place, ranging from 7' – 8' in height. This idea was roundly rejected previously due to sightline, safety, and urban planning implications, namely the walling off of the park and waterfront rather than keeping it integrated with the surrounding Battery Park City community. Even if the proposed solution were significantly altered to become functionally feasible, constructing these walls also would cause significant disruption to the park and its gardens and effectively divide the park into two separate pieces. In order to construct the proposed alternative and meet the 15' FEMA standoff requirements for trees and other plant material, significant portions of the gardens and tree allees (an estimated 60+ trees in total) would be decimated, undermining critical design elements of the park, with no clear means of compensating for this loss; and



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- (3) Sacrificing Wagner Park and the Pavilion to the more frequent and severe storms scientists predict are on the horizon, which runs counter to the design principles of the project and would cause significant ongoing cost and disruption. If our collective goal truly is to save Wagner Park — and Battery Park City — for future generations, our resiliency designs should not guarantee the park’s eventual destruction by severe weather, as the BPCNA’s new recommendation proposes. The New York City Panel on Climate Change and peer-reviewed coastal modeling predict that in decades — if not years — rising seas and recurring severe weather will inundate the existing Wagner Park and Pavilion with ever-increasing frequency. This would dislocate parks users for years while the damage is remediated and the park repaired after each storm, pending the development and implementation of a more holistic, forward-thinking design like the final plans our team has developed. The time to act is now.

Notably, in addition to its engineering, logistical, and design flaws, the proposed concept also does not appear to significantly reduce the duration of construction or provide greater public access while construction is underway. It would also leave the park vulnerable for additional years while we reopen the environmental review process, receive approval by relevant agencies, engage the community in the development of new detailed designs, complete construction drawings and specifications, and complete new procurements — all in pursuit of concepts that have already been reviewed, discussed publicly, and determined to be infeasible and imprudent.

As a final point, we thought it important to address the Community Board resolutions mentioned in the BPCNA’s October 31 email, all of which date back several years. Our team has been in constant contact with Community Board 1 over the six-year development of the designs for this project, as well as the years of community engagement when developing the City, State, and Federal reports leading up to design commencement. We have incorporated their feedback where practicable. We also have shared our reasoning when, as in the aforementioned example of “leav[ing] the Wagner Park Pavilion and water-side landscape intact,” it was not possible, prudent, or advisable to do so. We have shared in [prior correspondence](#) with the BPCNA, also available on our website, numerous examples of the community feedback that has been incorporated in the final designs.

Our community engagement — and our work to protect Battery Park City and Lower Manhattan — continues.

Sincerely,



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