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Hudson River Park Board Weighs Proposals for 15th Street Pier Development

By CHARLES V. BAGLI

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Three developers are vying for the right to transform a dilapidated 880-foot pier at the end of 15th Street in Chelsea into a three-level complex of museums, shops, film centers, food markets and public space intended to attract tourists and local residents.

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Youngwoo & Associates

Youngwoo & Associates envisions an auction house, a cultural center, a marketplace and a home for the Tribeca Film Festival.

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The proposals by the developers — Related Companies, Youngwoo & Associates and the [Durst Organization](#) — will be unveiled on Thursday in the second attempt in five years to create a commercial operation that would generate revenue to maintain Hudson River Park, the five miles of waterfront running from the Battery to 59th Street.

A developer selected in 2005 to create a museum, cultural center and banquet hall withdrew this year, after costs soared and the principals became embroiled in scandal. The Hudson River Park Trust, which controls the park,

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Durst Organization

The Durst Organization plan calls for a live-music venue, restaurants, a marketplace, boutiques, miniature golf and docking.

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Related Companies

The Related Companies proposal includes a theater, education center, marketplace, rooftop pool and cafe, and 91-slip marina.

who favor recreational and cultural activities and worry about traffic.

Now the trust, and any developer it selects, must also contend with a sagging economy, tens of thousands of layoffs and a drop in tourism. Still, trust officials say they are excited by the latest batch of proposals.

“We’re trying to achieve a world-class project that everybody would love and use, one that also pays us a lot of rent,” said Diana Taylor, chairwoman of the Hudson River Park Trust’s board. “We’re looking for a project that satisfies the community and the needs of the park. It’s a delicate balance, but I’m really excited.”

Pier 57 extends the length of nearly three football fields into the Hudson. The original wooden pier was destroyed by fire in 1947 and was rebuilt, with a two-story building,

five years later atop three hollow concrete chambers, or caissons. The Grace Lines operated the pier for 12 years, until most of New York’s shipping industry moved to New Jersey and the pier became a garage.

Hudson River Park, established in 1998, has been built with state and city funds, but it must raise its own budget for operations and maintenance. The pier is on the National Register of Historic Places, meaning that developers could qualify for special tax credits.

The Durst Organization, with its partner C&K Properties, is proposing a \$330 million project built around a live-music venue and restaurant and a separate marketplace with small shops, restaurants, cafes, food stalls and boutiques. The organization likens its proposed public spaces to the Greenmarket at Union Square and to Rockefeller Center.

The organization says that the Children’s Museum of Manhattan has expressed interest

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educational boats or barges. There would be a rooftop “pleasure garden,” featuring miniature golf and other amusements, and parking space in the caissons via ramps from above.

“I always thought this should be the Central Park of the 21st century,” said Helena Durst, an assistant vice president at the Durst Organization who once worked as an intern at the Hudson River Park Trust. “We’re creating a truly public pier that has strong cultural and entertainment components.”

Youngwoo & Associates, developers active in Chelsea, are proposing three “anchors” for their \$191 million pier project, including a new home for the Phillips de Pury & Company auction house and a contemporary cultural center consisting of art galleries and concert space. Like all the proposals, it provides public access to the waterfront.

The firm is also proposing a large public market akin to Pike Place near the Seattle waterfront, with restaurants, food stalls, craft importers and dress and jewelry designers. The third fixture, a large rooftop hall, would serve as a theater for the [Tribeca Film Festival](#), which would also present events year-round. There would also be a parking garage in one of the caissons and an underwater discovery center with interactive exhibits about the Hudson River estuary.

“This project will distinguish itself as perhaps the most high-quality cultural, historical and innovative adaptive reuse of the pier, which is both tied to a great park and one of New York’s great neighborhoods,” said James Lima, a consultant for Youngwoo.

The \$353 million proposal from the Related Companies also calls for a Pike Place-like market, as well as a large theater about which company officials say Sundance Films has expressed interest. The company, a major residential developer in New York, plans a rooftop pool and cafe, restaurants, a 91-slip marina, a public park, an education center, a 75,000-square-foot event space that includes a ballroom, and parking for 520 cars in two of the caissons.



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The trust is now reviewing its plans and suggesting changes to the legislation governing the Hudson River Park, which would make it easier to finance a project at Pier 40.

A version of this article appeared in print on November 20, 2008, on page A38 of the New York edition.

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