



## HIGH LINE: SKY'S LIMIT

By TOM TOPOUSIS

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*July 15, 2004* -- New Yorkers will get their first glimpse today of dramatic proposals to convert a long-unused railroad trestle on Manhattan's West Side into a spectacular park in the sky, including calls for high-flying pools, wetlands and nature trails.

Four design teams have submitted their proposals in hopes of winning the prestigious job of transforming the High Line into a 1.5-mile public space that stretches from the Meatpacking District through the art galleries of Chelsea.

"They've met our expectations and exceeded them," said Joshua David, a co-founder with Robert Hammond of the group Friends of the High Line, which is coordinating the project with the city's Planning Department.

The Post obtained an exclusive look at the designs, which range from a modernistic overhaul of the viaduct into a series of outdoor art projects on one end of the spectrum, to rustic paths through fields of grasses and wild flowers on the other.

Beginning tomorrow, the proposals will be on public display at the American Institute of Architecture's gallery at 536 La Guardia Place in Greenwich Village. A finalist will be chosen in August and a master plan for the project is expected by next spring.

The High Line, once slated for demolition and now strictly off limits to the public, is on track to be fully opened by 2006, with some sections made accessible earlier as work on the viaduct goes along. The project will cost about \$65 million.

The design teams are:

\* Field Operations with Diller, Scofidio and Renfro:

James Corner, founder of Field Operations, envisions a "fantastic, mixed perennial landscape" punctuated by "event spaces" that would include a clear-bottomed pool and a grandstand rising off the trestle.

\* Steven Holl Architects:

Steven Holl calls the High Line "a suspended valley, a green strip" running through Chelsea. His plan includes a landscaped tower at the north end. "It's a piece of Zen poetry and I insist that it shouldn't be over-programmed."

\*TerraGram/Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates:

Team leader Michael Van Valkenburgh said the design will be "a celebration of the natural phenomenon" already taking root on the train trestle and will include plantings of mustard seed and sunflowers that eliminate toxins in the soil.

\* Zaha Hadid Architects:

Markus Dochantschi, who coordinated the team, described the High Line as a rare horizontal setting in a vertical city. "Our theme is movement and the dynamic of movement," he said of the plan that would include rotating public art shows.