

# MACHADO SILVETTI

Architecture and Urban Design

July 11, 2022

## ***A Series of One-Page Memo's Regarding Wagner Park***

### **MEMO #3 "Critique of South Battery Park City Resiliency Project Design, Focused Primarily on Architecture Elements"**

Prepared by Machado Silvetti

Contact: Jeffry Burchard, AIA, Managing Partner and Design Principal, Machado Silvetti

1. New Design Both Poorly Recycles/References Existing Park and Lacks Original Ideas
  - a. Dilution or destruction of design principles of original design
    - i. Vaulted "re-interpretation" of pavilions no longer focuses on primary axis in clear manner. There is a center "column" that denies the original axial relationship through the pavilions to the Statue of Liberty for the approaching visitor.
    - ii. The new design has two glazed pavilions that bend in toward the axis. Presuming that these will be restaurant space, visitors will now be entering the lawn through a retail space (i.e., food court). This substantially diminishes the emotional impact of emerging onto the lawn with the bay and Liberty beyond, disregards the potential for a monumental approach, and highlights the retail component above all others. The existing pavilion was planned so that retail/maintenance was to the side, with its own view of the water but one that did not disrupt the pedestrian's path and view.
    - iii. The new design has "social steps" that bend away from the water's edge, loosely following the geometry of the shore. This convex bending and the broken design of the benches diffuse the focus and purpose of the steps - to gaze at the statue of Liberty AND the informal stage that the lower esplanade currently creates. The seating arrangement will seriously impact the ability of the park to continue to host amazing local events and programming. This is theater, event, and performance space design 101. Also, the bending outward denies a sense of community, instead having each occupant face away from rather than at or together with others. The current design has simpler parallel benches that orient toward the Statue and toward the informal stage. When you sit there you are aware of your surroundings AND able to individually and collectively participate in the view or an event.

Machado and Silvetti Associates, Inc.

560 Harrison Avenue, Suite 301 Boston, Massachusetts 02118

T (617) 426.7070 F (617) 426.3604

[www.machado-silvetti.com](http://www.machado-silvetti.com)

# MACHADO SILVETTI

Architecture and Urban Design

- iv. The informal stage on the esplanade appears to be much smaller than the current design. That space is heavily used by so many different events. Its hard to imagine that the new design would effectively support the diversity of uses that park goers have come to expect, enjoy, and love.
    - b. Circulation approach to primary axis is now secondary.
  2. New Design does not solve the most pressing sea-level rise threats.
    - a. Wagner Park is not the path of inundation – no matter how high you raise it; other zones nearby are in more urgent need of transformation.
    - b. May be better to do a more limited project for Pier A.
  3. Lack of Contextuality
    - a. Thomas Phifer website shows the pavilion in a void
      - i. <https://www.thomasphifer.com/projects/wagner-park-pavilion>
    - b. This site IS contextual. The site is significant BECAUSE of its context.
    - c. New design cuts off visibility of axis to Statue of Liberty by raising grade at pavilion and placing service entrance on Battery Place.
    - d. Service entrance will be highly visible from any visitor’s approach from Battery Place. Today the approach from Battery Place presents a grand entrance with the Statue of Liberty visible from the street. With the new design the Battery Place approach will look and feel like back-of-house and most importantly **the grade changes will make the pavilion feel like a BARRIER rather than an INVITATION.**
    - e. New Pavilion appears to be taller than the original pavilion.
  4. Does not offer anything new for visitors to the park – restaurant, accessible viewing platform, green space, and seating already exist.
  5. Apparent Decrease in Accessibility
    - a. Large portions of public space are now up 1 story of ramping. Users can access but there is substantially more effort involved.
  6. Lack of unprogrammed public space
    - a. Reduction of lawn space – a major current draw of the park.
    - b. Shape of lawn space is undefined and without any distinction.
    - c. Less flexibility for future use – much more space devoted to circulation than enjoyment. There is plenty of circulation already in Battery Park City – walk up and down the shoreline. Wagner Park needs to be about activities and the view.
  7. Increase in leased space for for-profit business

# MACHADO SILVETTI

Architecture and Urban Design

- a. NYC should be expanding free space in public parks wherever it can, not the opposite.