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**City of New York  
Parks & Recreation**

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TO: Nilda Mesa, Director  
New York City Mayor's Office of Sustainability

FROM: Alyssa Cobb Konon, Assistant Commissioner for Planning and Parklands 

DATE: March 2, 2016

RE: **Notice of Lead Agency Designation; Positive Declaration; Notice of Scoping**  
**American Museum of Natural History**  
**Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation**  
CEQR No. 16DPR004M  
Project area: Upper West Side, Manhattan  
Community District #7

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In accordance with Executive Order 91 of 1977, as amended, and the Rules of Procedure for City Environmental Quality Review, found at Title 62, Chapter 5 (CEQR) and the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and its implementing regulations as set forth in 6 NYCRR Part 617, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR) proposes to assume the role of lead agency for the environmental review of the project as described below.

The assumption of lead agency status is consistent with the underlying mandate of CEQR that the appropriate lead agency should be the agency "primarily responsible for carrying out, funding or approving an action," as well as with the criteria listed in Sections 5-03 (h) and 5-05 of the Rules of Procedure for CEQR. The affected property is park land under the control and jurisdiction of NYCDPR.

NYCDPR is conducting a coordinated environmental review for the proposed project. Your agency has been identified as a potentially involved or interested agency for the review and approval of the proposed action. If you have questions or issues concerning this agency's assuming lead agency status for this project, please contact us by **Friday, March 18, 2016**. If we do not hear from you by this time, we will assume that you have no objections.

Project Description:

The Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation, proposed by the American Museum of Natural History (the Museum), would be a five-story, approximately 180,000 gsf addition to the Museum, which is located on the superblock bounded by West 81st Street, West 77th Street, Central Park West, and Columbus Avenue, in the Upper West Side neighborhood of Manhattan (Block 1130, Lot 1). The Museum is located within Theodore Roosevelt Park, which is City-owned parkland under the jurisdiction of NYCDPR. The proposed project would also include approximately 38,000 gsf of renovations to existing space (for a total of 218,000 gsf of new construction and renovation)

and alterations to an approximately 31,100 square-foot adjacent area of Theodore Roosevelt Park.

The proposed project would integrate the Museum's scientific research, collections, and exhibitions with its educational programming, and would also upgrade and revitalize the Museum's facilities to address critical needs. Collection storage spaces, the research library, and laboratories for gene mapping, 3D imaging, and big data assimilation would be located adjacent to immersive exhibition galleries and interactive education spaces for children and adults in family and school groups. The Gilder Center would be designed to reveal the behind-the-scenes work of the Museum and integrate it into the visitor experience, to serve as a platform for the partnership between scientists and educators, and to offer spaces where students of all levels and ages can engage in the process of scientific research and discovery. Functionally, the proposed project would improve the connectivity, spatial logic, and function of the Museum's interior spaces and service areas.

The Gilder Center would largely be set within the area currently occupied by the Museum; three existing buildings within the Museum complex would be removed to minimize the footprint on land that is now open space in Theodore Roosevelt Park, to about 11,600 square feet at grade. In the adjacent area of Theodore Roosevelt Park, paths, trees and other landscaping would be modified, removed or relocated to accommodate the proposed project. The character of the park along Columbus Avenue is anticipated to be similar to the existing paths and landscaped areas, primarily designed for walking and quiet activities. The area in front of the new entrance would (as it currently does), provide an entrance point to the Museum, although with the project it would at times be more populated and active with Museum visitors. *The New York Times Capsule* would be relocated as part of the proposed project.

Further details about the proposed project are set forth in the attached Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS).

#### Positive Declaration and Notice of Scoping

Based on the preliminary review of the EAS and its supporting analysis, NYCDPR, as lead agency, has determined that implementation of the above action may have a potential for significant adverse impacts on the environment and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) must be prepared. Accordingly, NYCDPR has issued a Positive Declaration for CEQR No. 16DPR004M. A copy of the Positive Declaration is attached to this Notice.

This Positive Declaration is accompanied by the EAS and a Draft Scope of Work for the preparation of a DEIS, which are also attached to this Notice. Copies of the Positive Declaration, EAS and Draft Scope of Work are available for public inspection at the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, The Arsenal in Central Park, and at St. Agnes Library, 444 Amsterdam Avenue; and can be obtained online at <http://nyc.gov/parks/amnh-gilder> or by contacting NYCDPR at the address below.

Questions or comments regarding the lead agency designation, the Positive Declaration or the proposed project should be directed to:

Owen Wells, Director of Environmental Review  
New York City Department of Parks and Recreation  
The Arsenal, Central Park  
830 Fifth Avenue, Room 401  
New York, New York 10065  
Telephone: 212-360-3492  
Fax: 212-360-3453  
Email: owen.wells@parks.nyc.gov

A Public Scoping Meeting will be held on **Wednesday, April 6, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.** at:

American Museum of Natural History  
LeFrak Theater  
Enter at Weston Pavilion entrance  
Columbus Avenue and West 79th Street  
New York, New York 10024

NYCDPR requests public comments on the Draft Scope of Work, including issues and analysis topics to be included in the scope of work; methodologies for analysis (such as the size of a study area, the type of data to be gathered, or the type of analysis to be conducted); alternatives to the proposed project; and special conditions or concerns that the NYCDPR should consider.

Oral and written comments on the Draft Scope of Work can be submitted at the Public Scoping Meeting. Guidelines for public participation will be available at the meeting. Written comments will also be accepted by NYCDPR at the above address, fax number, or email address until 5:00 PM on **Wednesday, April 20, 2016**.

Attachments:

Distribution List  
Positive Declaration  
Environmental Assessment Statement  
Draft Scope of Work

AMNH Gilder CEQR Distribution List

Notice of Determination (Positive Declaration) and  
Notice of Scoping, with EAS and Draft Scope

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Beth Cumming, Senior Historic Site Restoration Coordinator, Division for Historic Preservation



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New York Public Library, St. Agnes Library

DPR files and DPR Website