Greenpoint/Williamsburg Waterfront

Re-Green. Re-Connect. Rejoice

Waterfront & Parks Workshop
November 15, 2003

Trust for Public Land • Greenpoint Waterfront Association for Parks & Planning Inc.
Phillips Preiss Shapiro Associates • Fox & Fowle Architects • R.G. Roesch Landscape Architects
GREENPOINT/WILLIAMSBURG
WATERFRONT & PARKS WORKSHOP
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Sponsored by:

Greenpoint Waterfront Association for Parks and Planning, Inc.
Trust for Public Land

With technical support from:

Fox & Fowle Architects
R.G. Roesch, Landscape Architects

For more information:
info@gwapp.org
718-383-1278
Common Goals

- Create a lush, healthful environment that is brimming with greenery and wildlife. Re-Green
- Maximize physical and visual connections between the neighborhoods and the waterfront; as well as a scenic shore walk along the waterfront. Re-Connect
- Make the waterfront a common ground for all ethnicities and income groups, new-comers and old-time residents, young and old; feature active recreation parks in both Greenpoint and Williamsburg. Rejoice

Unique Qualities (and Implications)

- **Extreme Park Needs.**
  In terms of parks and recreation, Greenpoint/Williamsburg (G/W) is one of the most under-served communities in the city. At present, there is roughly 89 acres of park for 160,000 people in the Community District; and This yields a ratio of 0.56 acres per 1,000 people - well below the Department of City Planning (DCP) guideline of 2.5 acres per 1,000, and the borough average of 1.5 acres per 1,000 people.
  Opportunities to provide active recreation need to be optimized.

- **A Growing Population.**
  Based on current DCP plans, in Greenpoint, population will go up far more than park space; while the reverse is the case in Williamsburg.
  This argues for an additional active recreational park at the far north end of Greenpoint, furthest from the proposed Olympic Park where the open space acreage is concentrated. Adding the B&H photo site to the park inventory is a further option. Greenways, bicycle routes, and the promenade are essential to strengthen the accessibility of Williamsburg’s parks and open space to Greenpoint residents.

- **A Shifting Population.**
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- **Stable and Diverse Neighborhoods.**
  These are traditional Brooklyn neighborhoods -- but with a dynamic mixing of people: old and new waves of Polish immigrants; artists and students; Chassids and Latinos; long-time residents and bargain hunters from Manhattan.
  Each of these communities will have idiosyncratic design and image preferences, and should be engaged in the design process for parks.

- **Multiple Ownership.**
  Other waterfront park systems usually reused rights-of-way (e.g., Hudson River Park), shipping or rail yards (Brooklyn Piers 1-5), or landfill (Battery Park City). G/W's waterfront has multiple owners, over a stretch of several miles, with varying site conditions.
  Need to have a pragmatic plan, since each site is likely to develop differently, with different developer and designer capabilities and intentions. A one-size-fits-all approach to design (even for the promenade) is not likely to work.

- **Private Ownership.**
  With some notable exceptions (Olympic Park, Grand Ferry Park), the park and open space will be set aside and built by developers.
  Design guidelines should prevent the natural but unacceptable tendency of developers to try to create private-looking or private-functioning open space.

- **Unpredictable Timing.**
  Given these conditions and ownership patterns, it is unreasonable to assume that a continuous waterfront promenade and park can be created in a timely manner, though pieces of it will of course.
  Unifying concepts and elements are needed if the sum is to be greater than the parts. The waterfront promenade will eventually provide this element. In the meanwhile, a West/River Streets connection takes on greater importance.

- **Historic Fabric.**
  Most other waterfronts are isolated by rail lines or highways. G/W's industrial neighborhoods extend to the water's edge; indeed, historically, they moved inland from the water's edge.
  G/W provides unusual opportunity to have the waterfront parks be local neighborhood parks, featuring innumerable access points-more like Riverside Park than Hudson River Park.
Historic Artifacts.
The Monitor and Continental Iron Works, Tales of Captain Kidd, the big Domino Sugar sign, place names like India and Java, etc. The waterfront is a treasure trove of historical associations.

One unifying element could be interpreting the waterfront's history. This could involve informative panels, place names, urban archaeology (like preserving building remains), and public art.

Extremes.
The immediate context of the waterfront sites is (or will be) marked by significant contrasts and transitions: hard/soft, water/land, tall/low, old/new, industry/housing, polished/raw, completed/under construction, greenfields/brownfields, and buildings/ruins.

Design solutions should be flexible and funky, to recognize the waterfront's mixed-use character and industrial legacy.

Design in Flux.
New Yorkers are now embracing two very different design outlooks-contextual design, respectful of traditional patterns (even for new neighborhoods, like Battery Park City); monumental design, where sculptural statements become more important (such as at the World Trade Center).

The City and community would do well to arrive at a park network that allows either design outlook to work toward the community's goals.

Balance.
This planning and design effort focuses on the park amenities that should be created no matter what, and that can be created in light of the City's Olympics 2012 and rezoning proposals. But other priorities loom as large as parks: affordable housing, neighborhood preservation, and economic development.

Generate plans and designs that work regardless of adjoining mix of incomes, scale of development or mix of uses.
SUMMARY BY SITE

AREA 1 -- NEWTOWN CREEK + LUMBER YARD/BARGE PARK SITES

Top of Greenpoint
- Manhattan Avenue is retail/transportation spine of Greenpoint
- Cobblestoned urban space fronting historic buildings, now used for parking
- Once the site of the Penny Bridge. Kayak launch at its footing.
- Subway stop located across the Creek in Queens
- History: Indian settlement followed by high-volume shipping lane

Preliminary Concept: Meeting place
- Create urban plaza with waterfront access
- Build pedestrian bridge across creek (here or at Barge Park)
- Housing development on east, with retail fronting plaza; requires rezoning
- On west: narrow walkway between buildings and water, with cafes/restaurants extending to Commercial
- Historical interpretation: shipping and Indian history

Lumber Exchange/Barge Park
- Furthest point from proposed Olympic Park and existing McCarren Park
- Two small existing playgrounds
- Potential for ship docking at finger and bulkhead piers
- DEP wants to retain bulkhead dock for emergency use
- Lumberyard once the busiest in the city
- Sludge container is distinctive but controversial relic of industrial past

Preliminary Concept: Barge Park
- 8+ acre public park, to feature soccer and baseball; involves land swap
- Shorefront promenade
- Public recreation on finger pier; Conflict between DEP use and water taxi stop
- Extend all east-west streets to the waterfront park; never mind about Box and Commercial view corridors
- Extend West Street to intersect with Commercial; make portion through park only for pedestrians
- Historical interpretation: stack, lumber, transfer
AREA 2 -- GREENPOINT

Greenpoint Piers
- Multiple private ownership; mixed vacant land and warehouses; development will take place gradually
- City owns 1.2-acre Transmitter site
- Adjoins a calm West Street
- Once used for shipping (India, Java, etc. were destinations); but none of the piers are left; without piers, how can fishing be accommodated?

Preliminary Concept: River Street (north)
- Greenpoint Park-see Greenpoint Terminal Market below
- Shore path weaving in and out of promenade and River (West) Street
- Public access on all streets leading to the waterfront
- Shorefront park/promenade
- Very specific design criteria for a redesigned River (West) Street
- Water taxi stop
- Historical interpretation: shipping and trade

Greenpoint Terminal Market
- Single, private owner, with industrial and vacant buildings
- Proximate to heart of the community and its historic district
- Greenpoint Avenue-a wide, increasingly retail street that connects to G-line subway
- Once one of the nation's largest rope manufacturers

Preliminary Concept: Greenpoint Park + promenade
- Active recreation in enlarged park at Transmitter site
- Shore path to south of Greenpoint Park
- Greenpoint Avenue plaza and shops, overlooking park and linking to River (West) Street
- Greenway connecting waterfront to nearby American Playground
- Public access on all east/west streets leading to the waterfront
- Very specific design criteria for a redesigned River (West) Street
- Historical interpretation: shipping and rope manufacture

Monitor Site
- Parts industry; parts vacant
- Site of Continental Shipyard, where Monitor was built; neighborhood supports Monitor museum

Preliminary Concept: Monitor Trail and Park
- New 8 acre park
- Shore path weaving in and out of promenade and River (West) Street
- Public access on all streets leading to the waterfront
- Shorefront promenade
- Very specific design criteria for a re-designed River (West) Street
- Historic interpretation: Monitor

Bushwick Inlet
- Natural estuary with plenty of bird life; but also a good place for small craft boats
- Close to proposed Olympic and existing McCarren Park; adjoins industrial area-no need for active recreation
- Dividing point between Greenpoint and Williamsburg
Preliminary Concept: Boats + birds
- North and east portions: bird refuge possibly in wetland setting, with viewing places from Franklin/Kent
- Northwest part: Monitor Museum overlook
- Southwest part: boat launch, with parking
- Footbridge, connecting River Street north and south of the inlet; designed to not interfere with habitat with alternate for path around the inlet
- Make 14th Street one-way; with improved pedestrian path to McCarren
- Historical interpretation: Greenpoint's original landscape

AREA 3 -- WILLIAMSBURG

Bushwick Inlet
- See above

Oil Tank Farm
- Privately owned; active pier
- Contaminated: designated toxic release site
- Oldest established and once the largest oil tank farm on the waterfront
- Possible landing spot for Captain Kidd
Preliminary Concept: Olympic Park (north)
- Active recreation park setback from inlet
- Fishing pier; boat launching and tie up
- Shore path and River Street path at eastern edge, both connecting to footbridge
- Water-dependent use: boat mooring, water taxi stop
- Historical interpretation: Captain Kidd; Astral/Standard Oil; pirates and robber barons

Brooklyn Eastern District Terminal
- State owns central part. Had been proposed New York University park. Rest multiple private owners (including Citi-Storage)
- Mix of: new industrial buildings (north), vacant (center), some historic industrial buildings (south)
- North corresponds to industrial interior, with agreement to keep industrial
- Center and south correspond to heart of the Northside neighborhood
- Originally resort with gardens; then Brooklyn Eastern District Terminal (BEDT)
Preliminary Concept: Olympic Park
- Olympic Park, with continuation of shorefront and River Street paths
- Series of active recreation elements, complementing McCarren Park
- Riprap/beach type of shoreline
- River Street extension to West Street: pedestrian route
- Park west of River Street extension; housing and commercial development east of River Street
- Opportunities for boat launching and tie-up in north and south
- Historical interpretation: BEDT: trains, boats, shipping, slaughterhouse, etc.
**River Street**
- Private ownership; multiple parcels
- Massive loft building at 184 Kent; has received variance for housing; hard to get around
- Oil storage tanks and Con Ed power plant to south
- Most likely heavily polluted (sugar processing as well as oil)
- DCP earmarks waterfront south of 184 Kent for industry
- Grand Ferry Park once major ferry landing; smokestack and cobblestones are artifacts of the original sugar mill and original streetbed

**Preliminary Concept: Park Passages**
- Share path weaving in and out of promenade and River Street
- Public access on all streets leading to the waterfront, as adjoining development goes forward
- Promenade in connection with redevelopment
- At 184 Kent: Two "connections" of River Street pedestrian/bicycle path, both with at least 8-foot public right-of-way, cafes, shops, galleries: one cantilevered out over the water or in colonnade at the water's edge, other through the building. Both enabled through commercial development on ground floor and adjacent housing development to immediate north.
- Very specific design criteria for a re-designed River Street and extension
- Historical interpretation: Industry, art and craft in Greenpoint/Williamsburg; ferries at Grand Ferry Park

**Domino Sugar**
- Domino downsizing
- Massive building; site likely heavily polluted
- DCP earmarks for industry
- First and last remaining sugar distillery/refinery in Williamsburg

**Preliminary Concept: Art Factory**
- Assuming industry: pedestrian/bicycle improvements along Kent, with connection to River Street
- Allow retail, offices, artist lofts and galleries, contingent on public viewing area and minimum 8-foot shore promenade
- If ever housing: wider shorefront promenade. Option for retail at water level or at street level with connections down
- Historical interpretation: sugar production

**At the Williamsburg Bridge**
- City owns northern part; and leases central part; for recently renovated NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) repair facility; historic buildings, in shadow of bridge
- Southern part: Girando restaurant and banquet hall; abuts the water's edge
- Aligns with both South 5th and Broadway, proximate to JMZ subway
- Neighborhood advocates public market, playgrounds, school, and historic district in the South 5th, Broadway, Franklin triangle

**Preliminary Concept: Bridge Market**
- Assuming DOT: pedestrian/bicycle improvements along Kent and minimum 8-foot shorefront promenade
- Eventual reuse for small festival market, featuring restaurants
- South 5th and Broadway; one-way pair with pedestrian/bicycle improvements
- Night lighting of Williamsburg Bridge-like that for George Washington Bridge
Historical interpretation: Williamsburg Bridge

Schaefer Brewery Area
- In design and development now, for housing with promenade
- Division Street: City-owned, once used for ferry, now used for parking
- Overlooks historic Brooklyn Navy Yard

Concept: Housing + promenade
- 40-foot pedestrian promenade along water’s edge
- Leading to small overlook park at Division
- Traffic signal at Division
- Historical interpretation: Schaefer Brewery and Brooklyn Navy Yard

BACKGROUND

The overall framework for the study was as follows. In April, the three team consultants, TPL and GWAPP, met with the Community Board #1 Rezoning Task Force, elected officials, agency officials, representatives from local community and neighborhood organizations to "launch" the project. The ensuing five months of work entailed research, stakeholder interviews, agency information sharing, design and visioning work. This is the second of two workshops staged with a working group of stakeholders and Brooklyn Community Board #1’s open space committee.

PROJECT SPONSORS

The Greenpoint Waterfront Association for Parks & Planning (GWAPP) is a community-based not-for-profit group comprised of community organizations, religious institutions, and concerned citizens from the Greenpoint/Williamsburg communities. Building upon its successful defeat of a power plant on the East River, GWAPP is dedicated to developing waterfront parks and public access, and to assisting the community in promoting and monitoring any development there.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL), established in 1972, is a national nonprofit land conservation organization specializing in conservation real estate, applying its expertise in negotiations, public finance, and law, to conserve land for people to enjoy as parks, gardens, and natural areas, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. Across the national, TPL has helped protect more than 1.6 million acres.
WORKSHOP BREAK-OUT GROUPS

WORKSHOP #1

WORKSHOP #2

WORKSHOP #3

Greenpoint

Williamsburg

EAST RIVER

HUNTER'S POINT

NEWTOWN CREEK

Brooklyn Queens Expy

Long Is