

*Amtrak and Henry Hudson Bridges over the Harlem River, Spuyten Duyvil*



# HARLEM RIVER WATERFRONT

Linking a River's  
Renaissance to its  
Upland Neighborhoods



Brownfield Opportunity Area Pre-Nomination Study prepared for the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, the New York State Department of State and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation with state funds provided through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program.

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## Acknowledgements

### Steering Committee

Dart Westphal, *Bronx Council for Environmental Quality – Project Chair*  
Colleen Alderson, *NYC Department of Parks and Recreation*  
Karen Argenti, *Bronx Council for Environmental Quality*  
Justin Bloom, Esq., *Brownfield Attorney*  
Paula Luria Caplan, *Office of the Bronx Borough President*  
Maria Luisa Cipriano, *Partnership for Parks (Bronx)*  
Curtis Cravens, *NYS Department of State*  
Jane Jackson, *New York Restoration Project*  
Rita Kessler, *Bronx Community Board 7*  
Paul S. Mankiewicz, PhD, *New York City Soil & Water Conservation District*  
Walter Matystik, M.E., J.D., *Manhattan College*  
Matt Mason, *NYC Department of City Planning*  
David Mojica, *Bronx Community Board 4*  
Xavier Rodriguez, *Bronx Community Board 5*  
Brian Sahd, *New York Restoration Project*  
Joseph Sanchez, *Partnership for Parks*  
James Sciales, *Empire State Rowing Association*  
Basil B. Seggos, *Riverkeeper*  
Michael Seliger, PhD, *Bronx Community College*  
Jane Sokolow LMNOP, *Metro Forest Council*  
Shino Tanikawa, *New York City Soil and Water Conservation District*  
Brad Trebach, *Bronx Community Board 8*  
Daniel Walsh, *NYS Department of Environmental Conservation*

### Project Sponsor

Bronx Council for Environmental Quality

### Municipal Partner

Office of Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión, Jr.

### Fiscal Administrator

Manhattan College

### Consultants

Hilary Hinds Kitasei, *Project Manager*  
Karen Argenti, *Community Participation Specialist*  
Justin Bloom, Esq., *Brownfield Attorney*  
Paul S. Mankiewicz, PhD, *The Gaia Institute, Environmental Analysis*  
Luke Mitchell, *Office of the Bronx Borough President, Maps*  
Wilhelm Ronda, *Office of the Bronx Borough President, Director of Planning & Development*

### Contributors

Cy Adler, *Shorewalkers*  
Harry Bubbins, *Friends of Brook Park*  
Nestor Danyluk, *NYC Department of City Planning (Bronx)*  
Lee Illan, *NYC Office of Environmental Coordination*  
Mary Ellen Kris, *New York State Office of Parks and Historic Preservation*  
Tom Lunke, *Empire State Development Corporation*  
Barbara R. Michaels, *Bronx resident since 1924*  
Robert F. Rothschild, *Bronx resident from 1918 - 1985*  
Josslyn Shapiro, *NYS Department of Environmental Conservation*  
Matt Shurtleff, *Trust for Public Land*  
Matty Stanislaus, *New Partners for Community Revitalization*  
Teresa Toro, *Tri-State Transportation Campaign*  
Eric Wilson, *NYC Economic Development Corporation*  
Wilbur Woods, *NYC Department of City Planning*  
Jeffrey Zupan, *Regional Plan Association*

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Brownfields Opportunity Area (BOA) Program is the planning arm of the New York State Brownfields/Superfund Law. Its purpose is to promote area-wide planning in communities with multiple Brownfields. This study analyzes the potential of seven miles of the Bronx waterfront of the Harlem River to catalyze the revitalization of the river and waterfront for the benefit of its upland neighborhoods, the City of New York, and the Harlem River itself.

The proposed BOA is a seven-mile sliver of land wedged between the Harlem River and the Major Deegan Expressway at the foot of a steep slope in the Bronx. More than half is owned by a railroad. Four characteristics make this waterfront an exceptional resource of New York City and the metropolitan region. Unfortunately, these assets are of no benefit to its upland neighborhoods.

- **A rare and valuable urban landscape: a river flanked by sheer cliffs and forested slopes coupled with monumental and historic infrastructure (five bridges, an aqueduct and a viaduct)**
- **One of the last tidal wetlands in New York City and the potential to rehabilitate others, restoring the river's ecological and recreational value**
- **The opportunity to create a Harlem River Park district encompassing both the Bronx and Manhattan shores of this protected waterway highly suitable for recreation**
- **A multi-modal transportation corridor used by more than one million passengers and slated for expansion**

**Section I.A** describes the four Bronx neighborhoods fronting on the Bronx River: Morris Heights, Highbridge, University Heights, and Spuyten Duyvil. For 150 years each has been denied easy physical access to the waterfront by steep terrain and the railroad that lies along the edge. All but Spuyten Duyvil are burdened with the additional barrier of the expressway. As a result they have benefited less from their proximity to the waterfront, and suffered more ill effects.

Each of these communities includes many members with limited mobility, raising the importance of disability access.

The proposed BOA is a major transportation corridor for the region, and figures importantly in several plans now being developed independently. Railroads (passenger and freight) are preparing for expansion that holds the promise of reducing highway traffic now burdening the area. At the same time the highways and bridges are in the process of being reconfigured to expand capacity and reduce congestion. The Harlem River Greenway and the Harlem River are important links in the city and regional networks being developed to encourage these two emerging modes. All of this dynamism presents the BOA with many opportunities.

**Section I.B** describes the project: why connecting the upland and waterfront is integral to the revitalization of both. The most obvious opportunities are the valleys cut in the ridge (Depot Place, University Heights, Kingsbridge), where pedestrian-accessible bridges meet at-grade local streets. Less obvious opportunities exist around the four train stations that now exist on the waterfront. Finally, but potentially boldest, are opportunities to couple development with decking infrastructure, as was done by the City and State in the 1970's to create the 27-acre Robert Clemente State Park, affordable housing for 4,000 people, two access roads, and a school. This solution has produced the only true integration between the community and the waterfront.

Twenty-five years of community-based planning have produced a consensus that the Harlem River should be a public waterfront that is recreation-oriented and hosts a continuous greenway. City and State parks

now account for 26.3% of the total acreage. Even if all sites that have been identified for potential acquisition are included, however, parkland will still be less than a third. The railroad is a permanent and dominant partner.

**Section I.C** describes the evolution of a strong consensus on the future of the waterfront. While the emphasis has shifted over 25 years from esplanades that were part of the upland neighborhoods to greenways and parks at the river's edge, the overarching vision has endured -- a waterfront park that is contiguous, linear, and public.

**Section II.A** is a preliminary analysis of the 45 sites along the waterfront presumed to be brownfields and/or underutilized, and their potential for reuse and redevelopment. Maps and a table showing the patterns of land use, ownership, and zoning reveal the most salient characteristics of the waterfront as:

- High degree of public ownership. Two thirds of the sites (30) and 82.6% of the total acreage are owned by City or State agencies or public authorities.
- Active railroads (public and private) as dominant land use. Tracks, yards, and maintenance facilities occupy 16 sites (55.2% of the acreage) and are barriers to physical and visual access of the waterfront.
- New York City's primary ownership and interests are in completing a waterfront greenway and park (currently 42.3 acres, or 26.3% of the total)

**Section II.C** describes the environmental and other factors that have limited the optimum development of the waterfront for the public benefit.

**Section II.D** describes the area's principal natural resources as the river, the soil profile, and open space.

**Section II.E** shows how these assets can work together to create a waterfront park linked to the upland, by:

- Restoring wetlands and natural shoreline to improve the river for fishing and swimming
- Using bioremediation as an effective long-term, low-cost strategy for cleaning the waterfront sites
- Using landscaping and green infrastructure to capture stormwater, reduce combined sewer overflows to the river and clean waterfront sites
- Using transportation infrastructure to create bold new access across the barriers to the waterfront
- Combining all of the above tools to stitch the waterfront to the upland – visually, functionally, and economically – by extending the waterfront park, the transportation infrastructure, and their economic vitality into the adjacent communities.

**Section III** includes profiles of each of the 45 sites in the proposed BOA, grouped by common points of existing access.

### **Springboard to Community Revitalization**

Based on the findings and community outreach reported in this Pre-Nomination Study, the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality, with the approval of the Harlem River BOA Steering Committee, submits this report as part of its application for funding to advance to Step Two of the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program (Nomination).

Hilary Hinds Kitasei  
Project Manager, Harlem River Brownfields Opportunity Area  
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## Introduction

The Harlem River Valley is a stunning remnant of wilderness in the midst of New York City: a river detour through a forested gorge. This arcadian setting is home to a collection of public works marking the city's ascendance to global metropolis – from the Roman-style aqueduct that brought water from the Catskills to the gravity-defying helix of viaducts and ramps built to tie the urban expressways. Skimming the river and soaring hundreds of feet above it are no less than fifteen bridges that transformed Manhattan into Greater New York. Hugging the narrow shoreline is the railroad, the mode that fueled the city's growth by linking it to its suburbs and the country's interior. All of this makes the Harlem River Valley one of the world's great urban landscapes.

A century ago, this improbable pairing of natural and manmade wonders drew crowds of pleasure-seekers to the waterfront. The river was a center for regattas and small boating, for which its flow and depth were ideally suited. And pleasure being a powerful multiplier (a lone rower giving vicarious pleasure to many more), a vibrant economy was built upon the waterfront and its views. On the Bronx side, New York University chose the high bluff for its Promenade of Famous Americans, the focal point of its campus. The spectacle was shared by motorists, train and subway passengers alike, who streamed over and beside the river. Even then, the waterfront was more of a city attraction than a local one.

The corridor continued to fill these high recreation and transportation demands until the arrival of the expressways in the 1950's. It didn't matter that Robert Moses used stone facing and landscaping to make them parkway-like. The Major Deegan Expressway continued to deprive the Bronx waterfront of its natural public—the residents of University Heights, Morris Heights and High Bridge. On the Manhattan side, the Harlem River Drive cut off those residents from their waterfront, which had been inextricably linked to the Bronx side by water and bridges. The parks on both sides were abandoned. The piers and docks rotted. The famous promenade over the Aqueduct was closed.

The vacuum left by the withdrawal of the public recreational uses was filled by utility and transportation industries, often for temporary uses, many of which polluted the land and the river. This section of the Bronx waterfront was never suited to heavy industry and recent attempts to introduce it have been firmly rejected. Yet the large-scale but piecemeal residential, commercial, and park developments to date have failed to revitalize and clean-up the brownfields that have come to be known as the public waterfront.

Today the upland communities host a transportation corridor used by almost one million people a day, for which they pay a heavy price in public health, reduced property values, quality of life, and loss of the use and view of their waterfront. They reap virtually no economic benefit in return. No signs on the highway direct motorists to the gas stations or amenities available. Billboards, lucrative for the railroads, only degrade the value of local property. The highway has created an envelope of visual blight through which the rest of the world perceives their neighborhood, and through which their residents must pass to get to their waterfront.

This report analyzes the conditions and opportunities presented by the brownfields concentrated on this waterfront. It has been prepared to assist the State in fulfilling its purpose of using the Brownfield Program as a tool for community revitalization as well as environmental remediation. It offers a strategy for transforming this Bronx waterfront from a dead zone, exerting an economic drag on the river and upland communities and contributing nothing to the health or quality of life of either, to the engine of their recovery.

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## **I. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT AND BOUNDARY**



Map 1 Harlem River BOA Community Context





Map 2 Harlem River BOA Study Area



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## A. Community Overview and Description

The proposed Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) is a narrow swath of land stretching seven miles from the Macombs Dam Bridge to the Hudson River in the Bronx County of New York City. It is virtually depopulated. The “BOA communities” therefore include the densely populated neighborhoods in the immediate upland and ridge. They are parts of Spuyten Duyvil, Kingsbridge, University Heights, Morris Heights, and Highbridge. Altogether they include approximately 120,000 residents of 26 census districts spanning four Bronx Community Board Districts (4, 5, 7 and 8). They span two congressional districts (16 and 17), three New York State Senate districts (28, 31, and 33), five New York State assembly districts (77, 78, 81, 84, and 86), and three city council districts (11, 14, and 16). (See *Appendix: Legislative Boundaries and Representatives*.)

The Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) has two focus areas: the Central Focus Area (from Highbridge to Kingsbridge) and the Spuyten Duyvil Focus Area. A combined macro and micro-analysis (community district and census tract-level data) is used to understand how some of these neighborhoods have benefited while others have suffered from their proximity to the same waterfront.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Demographic Profile

(See **Table 1: Demographic Indicators of Harlem River BOA Communities**, p. 12.)

Fewer than four percent of the BOA population live on the waterfront itself. The residents of River Park Towers, who constitute a single census tract (53.02), provide the most detailed level of information about life on the Harlem River waterfront.

All four of the community districts grew in population from 1990-2000, but at very different rates. At the southern end, Community District 4 grew at nearly twice the 9.4% city-wide average, with the census tracts in the BOA now the densest. At the northern end, semi-suburban CD8 grew at less than half the city’s rate, and the single census tract that is the Spuyten Duyvil Focus Area declined by 6.7 percent. Zoning and demographics are sure to increase their divergence in density.

The Central Focus Area includes many children and few elderly. In CD5, which includes the waterfront affordable housing complex (River Park Towers), 38.8% of the population are younger than 18 and only 5.5% older than 65. This is 1.6 times the city-wide average for children and one third the city-wide average for seniors. On a weekday morning in the CD4 neighborhood of Highbridge, just up the hill from the Depot Place entrance to the waterfront, mothers with strollers and small children in tow were ubiquitous.

On the same morning in Spuyten Duyvil, seniors filled the sidewalks, shops and benches: 28.8% of its population is over 65. If the apartment buildings in Knolls Crescent, just over the border of the census tract, are included, that number jumps to nearly half. (Many of Spuyten Duyvil’s apartment buildings and neighborhoods could qualify as “Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities” (NORC’s) if their management and residents chose to do so.) With seniors in Spuyten Duyvil electing to “age in place,” while new immigrants and young families flock to Morris Heights and Highbridge in search of affordable housing, these communities show no signs of convergence in their age profiles.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: 2000 U.S. Census and NYC Department of City Planning Population Division

The racial/ethnic compositions of the BOA communities are the product of multiple displacements since the arrival of Europeans and Africans in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Morris Heights was a German enclave in the 1800s and Kingsbridge was home to Anglo-Saxon, French Huguenot and Dutch. All absorbed the next great wave of Irish. In the 1930's the Bronx had the highest concentration of Jews in the city.

Today, the Central Focus Area BOA communities are majority Hispanic, with non-Hispanic whites a negligible minority. In the Spuyten Duyvil BOA community, non-Hispanic whites constitute a large majority (77.7%).

Ethnicity is one area in which the BOA communities do show a sign of convergence and it is a significant one. Each experienced an out-migration of whites and African-Americans and an in-migration of Hispanics. Even in CD8, with its much lower growth rate, Hispanics accounted for more than one third of the population by the end of the decade. The Dominican Republic was by far the largest source of these new immigrants in all four districts, creating a strong cultural affinity between these neighborhoods and their counterparts on the Manhattan side of the river (Inwood and Washington Heights). Haitians, from the other side of the island of Hispaniola, were the second largest immigrant group in CD 7 and 8.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Socio-Economic Profile**

(See **Table 2: Economic and Housing Indicators of Harlem River BOA Communities**, p. 13.)

**Spuyten Duyvil** is built into the bluff leading down to the confluence of the Hudson and Harlem Rivers. While cut off from direct access to the waterfront by the railroad, residents enjoy spectacular views of the Harlem River and bridges from their windows and between buildings, from an overlook with seating on the promontory, and from the shorefront park down below. The view is what makes their neighborhood one of the most desirable places to live in the community and the entire city.

Spuyten Duyvil is wealthy even by the standards of Community District 8, which is the wealthiest in the Bronx and among the wealthiest in the city. The median income of its residents in 2000 was \$62,727. Conversely, its poverty level (4.9%) was not only among the lowest for the district, but also the borough and the city.

Spuyten Duyvil has benefited from the ongoing restoration of the Hudson and Harlem Rivers. Its parks and shoreline have benefited from special zoning protection and investment in habitat restoration. The proximity of the river, even more than the convenience of its transportation, is what makes this neighborhood so desirable, say local realtors. High home ownership is one measure of the large equity stake that residents have in their waterfront.

By contrast, **Kingsbridge, Morris Heights, High Bridge** and **University Heights** have realized far fewer benefits from the city's economic revival.. More than half of the residents of each of these communities are low or moderate income; and within these communities, poverty and unemployment rates are higher in the waterfront areas. In short, where physical and visual proximity to the waterfront in Spuyten Duyvil translated into economic value, it has not been nearly as true for the other three neighborhoods. Cut off from the waterfront not only by the railroad, but two expressways and their tangles of ramps, these neighborhoods were left beyond by the modest economic improvement of the rest of their communities. The "waterfront drag effect" was most pronounced in Highbridge, which has the additional barrier of billboards.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census 2000; NYC Department of City Planning



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**Table 1 Demographic Indicators of Harlem River BOA Communities**

<b>CENTRAL FOCUS AREA</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Under 18</b>	<b>Hisp. any race</b>	<b>Afr.Am. Non Hisp.</b>	<b>White Non Hisp.</b>
<b>Community District 4</b>	139,563	33%	58.4%	36.1%	1.4%
<b>BOA community area</b>					
Census tract 005301*	34	0%	50.4%	44.1%	5.8%
0189	7,264	32.8%	59.2%	36.3%	1.6%
0193	5,248	37.2%	55.6%	41.7%	0.8%
0199	7,880	36.6%	61.7%	34.6%	0.7%
0201*	3,629	36.7%	57.1%	44.9%	1.5%
0211	4,532	36.7%	59.8%	36.8%	0.9%
021702	467	40.9%	68.3%	30.1%	1.6%
0219	1,307	33.3%	72.4%	21.3%	1.5%
<b>Community District 5</b>	128,313	38.8%	61.6%	32.4%	1.5%
<b>BOA Community Area</b>					
Census tract 005302	4,161	37.5%	35.7%	61.2%	0.7%
0205	9,309		49.3%	46.2%	1.3%
021301	1,464		74.2%	22.8%	0.5%
021501	3,690		62.8%	32.1%	0.1%
021502	6,726	40.1%	61.6%	35.1%	1.1%
0243	5,415	35.8%	65.3%	32.2%	0.6%
0245	8,540	36.4%	64.7%	31.3%	1.5%
0247	1,807	30.7%	37.9%	55.8%	1.9%
0251	6,639	34.9%	60.09%	30.5%	1.4%
<b>Community District 7</b>	141,411	31.2%	59.2%	20.0%	10.7%
<b>BOA Community Area</b>					
Census tract 0239*	8,094	36.9%	70.7%	24.5%	1.4%
0253	6,402	35.8%	70.4%	20.4%	2.1%
0255	6,567	34.2%	70.5%	19.9%	3.7%
0257	1,635	32.6%	21.4%	30.8%	2.8%
0261	1,517	15.1%	59.0%	59.9%	13.6%
0263	7,978	28.5%	66.0%	24.3%	9.6%
0265	6,724	31.3%	66.0%	15.4%	6.9%
0269	4,083	31.4%	63.7%	25.0%	5.6%
<b>Community District 8</b>	101,332	22.0%	36.5%	12.0%	44.0%
<b>BOA Community Area</b>					
Census tract 0273	7,943	31.2%	67.4%	19.4%	7.9%
<b>SPUYTEN DUYVIL FOCUS AREA</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Under 18</b>	<b>Hisp. any race</b>	<b>Afr.Am. Non Hisp.</b>	<b>White Non Hisp.</b>
<b>Community Board 8</b>					
Census tract 0293	7,196	14.3%	9.5%	8.6%	75.7%
<b>Bronx County</b>	1,332,650	28.8%	48.4%	31.2%	14.5%
<b>New York City</b>	8,008,278	24.5%	27%	24.5%	35%

\*Census tract is within two or more community districts. Data are for entire tract.

**Table 2 Economic & Housing Indicators of Harlem River BOA Communities**

CENTRAL FOCUS AREA Geographic Area	Population	Median Household Income	% of labor force unem- ployed	% housing renter- occupied	***% over- crowded
<b>Community District 4</b>	139,563	\$21,275	9.2%	93.2	28.8%
<b>BOA community area</b>					
Census tract 05301*	34	\$0	-	-	-
0189	7,264	\$25,163	15.1	93.7	22.7
0193	5,248	\$13,609	26.3	97.0	21.2
0199	7,880	\$22,231	15.5	94.4	30.4
0201*	3,629	\$21,398	24.3	97.7	36.6
0211	4,532	\$19,109	18.5	93.6	34.7
021702	467	\$20,833	24.1	100.0	34.2
0219	1,307	\$18,750	9.6	100.0	34.2
<b>Community District 5</b>	128,313	\$20,620	20.0%	95.4	18.9
<b>BOA Community Area</b>					
Census tract 005302	4,161				
0205	9,309				
021301	1,464				
021501	3,690	\$18,207	18.1	99.3	36.4
021502	6,726	\$16,768	23.3	96.6	34.0
0243	5,415	\$21,029	21.5	91.6	26.2
0245	8,540	\$22,261	18.2	92.8	34.1
0247	1,807	\$37,950	4.7	97.7	31.4
0251	6,639	\$23,841	12.8	86.7	37.6
<b>Community District 7</b>	141,411	\$27,740	12.0%	2.4%	26.9%
<b>BOA Community Area</b>					
Census tract 0239*	8,094	\$17,548	23.9	97.4	35.3
0253	6,402	\$20,956	20.3	95.7	31.6
0255	6,567	\$21,135	11.5	97.0	27.3
0257	1,635	\$29,570	11.5	91.7	32.7
0261	1,517	\$55,438	11.1	36.0	6.5
0263	7,978	\$26,343	13.6	77.8	24.8
0265	6,724	\$21,306	20.5	93.9	38.8
0269	4,083	\$31,832	14.3	86.9	29.3
<b>Community District 8</b>	101,332	\$42,370	18.0%	72.0%	12.8%
<b>BOA Community Area</b>					
Census tract 0273	7,196	\$62,727	3.3	43.9	2.1
SPUYTEN DUYVIL FOCUS AREA	Population	Median Household Income	% of labor force unem- ployed	% housing renter- occupied	***% over- crowded
BOA Community Area					
<b>Community District 8</b>					
Census tract 0293					
<b>Bronx County</b>	1,332,650	\$27,611	7.3%	80.4%	19.7%
<b>New York City</b>	8,008,278	\$38,293	5.9%	69.8%	27.2%

\*Census tract is within two or more community districts. Data are for entire tract.

\*\*\*"Overcrowded" units are those with more than one person per room.

### **3. Employment and Economic Opportunity**

In 2000, despite a decade of economic expansion and targeted development initiatives, the Bronx saw its unemployment rate rise by 20% (from 11.9% to 14.3%) against the city's rise of 1.7% (from 9.0% to 9.6%). The BOA Central Focus Area communities tracked the Bronx while Spuyten Duyvil followed Manhattan. (The Bronx unemployment rate as of this report is 6.7 % according to the NYS Department of Labor, still the highest in the city.)

In 2005 River Plaza (a shopping center in Kingsbridge that includes Target's, Marshall's, and Applebee's) added a significant source of employment to the waterfront area: 1,100 new jobs, almost all of them for local residents. Target is the waterfront's first major new employer since the 1970's, when the supermarket and school were built in conjunction with the River Towers complex. These two areas now constitute the two major nodes of economic activity in the Harlem River BOA.

A few small businesses on the waterfront provide some on-site employment and also provide a service to a larger local industry (e.g., Perimeter Bridge and Scaffolding Company, which employs 30 on and off-site). Roberto Clemente State Park offers some seasonal employment. Otherwise, the predominant uses of the waterfront are negligible employers (storage facilities, utilities, etc.). There are no vendors or other entrepreneurs. Based on a nighttime tour and reports from police, the area has not even attracted the underground economy one might expect to thrive on an urban waterfront in the shadow of highways.

The commercial areas at the entry points to the BOA (e.g. Fordham Landing and Depot Place) include gas stations, motels, storage facilities and other businesses which are generally not large employers. These businesses do not seem to be capitalizing on their proximity to the expressway, probably because there are no signs on the roadway indicating gas/food/lodging.

Two new developments are coming to the waterfront just south of the BOA promise to create significant new employment opportunities.

- The Bronx Terminal Market will be a retail and hotel development (450,000 square ft. of retail) just south of the BOA, connected to a park and esplanade along the river. It is projected to create 2,300 permanent (mostly service) jobs.
- The proposed new Yankee Stadium is also just east of the BOA. As part of the plan, the Gateway Center development would include a connection through the site to new waterfront parks.

### **4. Public Health**

The entire New York metropolitan area was ranked 9th worst for ozone pollution, moving up from 13th in 2004. Ozone levels in the Bronx slipped from a D grade in 2004 to an F in 2005. And for the sixth year in a row, the Bronx failed clean air tests graded in the *American Lung Association State of the Air: 2005* report<sup>3</sup> which detailed where and why high levels of particle pollution and ozone increase the risk of premature death for millions of people, especially those with lung disease. According to the report, 2.9 million residents in Bronx and New York counties are at risk from year-round exposure to particle pollution levels.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.lungusa2.org/newyork/news\\_042805.html](http://www.lungusa2.org/newyork/news_042805.html)

Spuyten Duyvil is adjacent to the toll plaza of the Henry Hudson Parkway, a bottleneck for 70,000 cars a day. Residents of the Central Focus Area neighborhoods live in the ambient pollution of two of the most heavily trafficked and congested interstate highways in the United States – the Major Deegan (I 87) and the Cross Bronx Expressway (I 95), which come together in an aerial interchange above the Highbridge neighborhood. An estimated 70% of all of the freight that enters New York City by truck across the George Washington Bridge and is funneled onto these routes bound for New England, Long Island, and upstate New York. Commuters and patrons of Yankee Stadium add to the congestion, resulting in relentless and prodigious pollution. (A study of the air quality at a number of locations along the Major Deegan Expressway can be found through Congressman Jose Serrano's website.<sup>4</sup>)

The toll on the BOA communities is manifest. The hospital admission rate for asthma for Morris Heights and Highbridge is 3.5 times that of the city. They also bear one of the city's heaviest burdens of chronic diseases (heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease), according to the 2002 New York City Community Health Survey.<sup>5</sup>

As noted above, these neighborhoods are disproportionately young. Children living near heavy traffic areas are at increased risk compared with adults. Their exposure is greater because they spend more time outside, and their physical susceptibility is higher because of their developing lungs and higher minute ventilation (passing more air through their lungs per minute). The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) summarized findings of numerous studies on traffic and other sources of ambient air pollution in its policy statement on Ambient Air Pollution. Increased respiratory tract complications in children (wheezing, chronic productive cough, and asthma hospitalizations) have been associated with residence near areas of high traffic density (particularly truck traffic). Other investigators have linked various childhood cancers to proximity to traffic.

Residents here are significantly more sedentary, more obese, and more likely to have diabetes than the rest of the city. In addition to children, the elderly, and those with asthma or other lung diseases, the *State of the Air: 2005* report added diabetics to the list of groups most at risk from particle pollution. To the extent that recreational facilities and greenways on the waterfront encourage physical exertion in an area of high ozone, they may even be more hazardous than beneficial to health.

The BOA communities are home to disproportionate populations of mentally ill, homeless and highly stressed.<sup>6</sup> They are also disproportionately exposed to one of the greatest environmental stress factors – highway noise. Generally noise along expressways measures around 70 decibels at fifty feet; this is the distance from the Deegan to the apartments on Sedgwick Avenue by the High Bridge. Fifty-five decibels is enough to make 20% of people become mentally disturbed, according to the EPA.<sup>7</sup> Federal regulations say that the state must bring about a “substantial” reduction in the sound level of new or expanded roads if the noise level will approach 67 decibels – the sound so loud that people have to be within three to five feet of each other to speak without raising their voices. Newer studies have shown that seeing the source of sound – i.e. trucks barreling by or traffic backed up, aggravates people's reaction to noise. The correlation now guides the design of sound barriers. Redevelopment of the waterfront is an opportunity to ameliorate the worst effects of the uncovered highways on these communities and their waterfront parks.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.house.gov/serrano/pdf/NIEM\\_SB%20Paper\\_2004.pdf](http://www.house.gov/serrano/pdf/NIEM_SB%20Paper_2004.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Community Health Profiles, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

<sup>6</sup> “In a Resurgent Community, the Word is Nimby,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 2006.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/14/nyregion/thecity/14nimb.html>

<sup>7</sup> Philip Langdon, “Noisy Highways” in the *Atlantic*, 1997.



**Then and now..**

*“Horse-drawn milk trucks persisted long after trucks came into use, because they could be left “idling” without making noise at 5 am. The horses even wore rubber-soled shoes.(Unfortunately rubber soles didn’t keep them from slipping on the ice in the winter and sliding down the steep hills.)” – Barbara Michaels, recollecting her childhood growing up on Sedgwick Avenue.*

### ***Access and the Limited Mobility Population***

The Americans with Disability Act mandates that public spaces, including parks, be made accessible to people with disabilities. Numerous court rulings have upheld this to mean all people with limited mobility.

**Table 3 Health and Age Indicators Associated with Limited Ability in BOA Populations**

Communities	% reporting heath fair or poor	% sedentary	% obese	% diabetes	% over 65
Morris Hts & Highbridge	31%	36%	23%	10%	5.1%
Kingsbridge & Riverdale	15%	26%	8%	8%	17.7% (37.7% in BOA area)

After fifteen years of experience with the implementation of its guidelines, the Access Board has recently revised its recommendations for providing disability access. Recognizing that long ramps were unusable by the majority of people with limited mobility (even straining the capacity of power wheelchairs), it now recommends elevators wherever the total rise in elevation exceeds 5 feet. The Harlem River waterfront is 150 feet below the upland communities.

While elevators may not be the most viable solution in this area, the BOA project is an opportunity to encourage more creative and effective ways to provide access to this population.

## **5. Transportation**

The Harlem River waterfront is dominated by two transportation modes, neither of which serves the needs of local residents -- expressways and railroads. Residents’ car ownership is low and getting lower. In 2000, 77.4% of CB4 residents did not own cars, 14.2% less than in 1990; 78.5% in CB5 owned no car, a 6.1% drop; 70% in CB7 did not own cars, a 2.5% drop. Even in the most suburban CB8, 47% owned no car, and that was 6.4% less than the decade before. In latest statistics released by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, all registered vehicles in the Bronx (cars, taxis, vans, trucks) declined by 11% between 1993 and 2004. Nevertheless use of private vehicles and taxis still increased, likely as a result of the changing employment patterns noted above. The implication is that residents are being forced to rely on costly private livery and taxi services to get to work.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> NYMTC Regional Transportation Statistical Report 2003 and 2000 US Census figures for journeys to work

MetroNorth trains stop at Spuyten Duyvil, Marble Hill, University Heights and Morris Heights. All of the stations in the BOA are lightly used; University Heights Station is the most underused in the MetroNorth system. The high cost of a short ride -- especially since the elimination of the two-fare bus and subway zone in the Bronx -- discourages the use of commuter rail by local residents. The local benefit of a new station as part of the Yankee Stadium development may be less traffic on the highway, but not likely a new transportation option for BOA residents.

Subways and buses (express and local) here are considered excellent for the outer boroughs. Still, Bronx workers had the third highest average commute in the country of any county with a population over 250,000 (40.8 minutes). In any case, public transportation (buses, subways; and Metro North commuter rail) declined between 1990 and 2000.

The brightest spot in the transportation picture may be the increase in walking and bicycling to work. From 1990-2000, walking increased by 45.9% in CB4. Bicycle use rose 33% in CB 7. The return of walking is likely due to increased safety. Since the city's great push to create bike lanes and the Tour de Bronx (a highly popular annual bike ride through the borough) and the Borough President's "Bike to Work Days" have all taken place since the last census, bike riding is likely to see even larger jumps in the next survey.

If the waterfront greenway and connections recommended in this project are carried out, they will be accessible to many residents of the BOA communities on foot or bicycle. Completion of the Putnam link of the Greenway will open further bike-to-work opportunities in the Bronx and Westchester.

Currently pedestrians and bicyclists make use of four bridges in the BOA to travel between the Bronx and Manhattan for employment and recreation opportunities: Macomb's Dam, Washington, University Heights, and Broadway. The Henry Hudson Bridge is open to pedestrians, but little used because of local access problems on both sides.<sup>9</sup> The high bridges bring people to the upland area, so do not help people get to the waterfront. Manhattan residents use the University Heights Bridge to reach the Bronx waterfront, but often resort to a dangerous shortcut along the tracks to get to Roberto Clemente State Park.

### ***Transportation to the Waterfront***

The highways, train tracks, and topography all conspire against waterfront access. Going down to the river (never mind getting back home) by foot or bicycle requires athletic stamina. Steep step streets -- some of them over 200 steps long -- are built into the steep slopes throughout the area as shortcuts to circuitous, steep streets. Narrow sidewalks pass alongside and under the highway and through desolate areas. In Spuyten Duyvil, the steps near the bridge at the top of the hill have been closed by MTA for several years. The steep street leading down to the train station and the park has no sidewalk.

Public transportation to the waterfront is limited. Only three places along the seven mile waterfront can be reached by bus: Target in Kingsbridge, Fordham Landing, and Roberto Clemente State Park. A line running along Sedgwick Avenue stops several blocks from Depot Place and requires crossing the Deegan. In Spuyten Duyvil, a bus stops at the top of the steep hill and on the wrong side of the parkway from Shorefront Park.

MetroNorth's stations at Spuyten Duyvil, Marble Hill, University Heights, and Morris Heights offer outsiders transportation to waterfront destinations as surely as their promised new station will bring

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<sup>9</sup> In 2004 the Riverdale Nature Preservancy commissioned a study and recommendations for a greenway link from the Henry Hudson Bridge north along the service roads and overpasses of the Henry Hudson Parkway. As of 2006 the route was still waiting for DOT to address a minor design issue at the bridge egress. See Putting Park in Parkway: *Landscape Recommendations and Design for a Greenway along the Henry Hudson Parkway in the Bronx* by Philippa Brashear, NY4P. Based on a feasibility study by John Benfatti funded by the NYC Environmental Fund in 2003.

Westchesterites to Yankees games. Inaccessibility and cost discourage local residents from using the railroad. Spuyten Duyvil Station does have a rail link bus.

Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión wants to explore the potential for waterborne transit as an alternative to automobiles. While water transport to the Bronx is currently limited to ferries to Yankee Stadium on game days, he and community groups are advocating increased ferry service to this destination. Plans for ferry service to Sherman's Creek on the Manhattan side have not materialized, but may if redevelopment leads to greater demand. Wake disturbances like those now caused by the Circle Line may discourage ferries in favor of smaller water taxis. Ferry service from Spuyten Duyvil may be viable, because it can use the Hudson River and provide service to Manhattan's west side, which is currently not provided by rail. It could also offer a faster, one-ticket ride to Wall Street than the train and subway now do.

### ***Transportation Plans for the Region – the truck crisis and the future of railroads***

This already heavy transportation corridor is poised for expansion of every one its modes.

New York City faces a congestion crisis, and in particular a trucking crisis.<sup>10</sup> The BOA communities bear the brunt of its impact. The Major Deegan Expressway is used by 125,000 vehicles a day, heavily by trucks.<sup>11</sup> The Cross Bronx Expressway (I95) is used by 175,000 vehicles a day, about one quarter of them trucks. They are the largest trucks because the George Washington Bridge is the only Hudson River crossing capable of accommodating 53 foot tractor trailers. The trend in freight is for increased tonnage.

In June 2004 the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) completed the Bronx Arterial Needs Major Investment Study,<sup>12</sup> which focused on the Cross Bronx Expressway and the Major Deegan Expressway. Its purpose was to “develop multi-modal solutions that will improve the mobility of the Bronx and those who travel there.” Most of its recommendations focused on highway modification. Several will have an impact on the BOA study area:

- A new Harlem River bridge at the Highbridge Interchange (will require major funding and a multi-year EIS)
- Continuous Cross-Bronx connector road (now being coordinated with the current rehabilitation of the Harlem River bridges)
- N/B auxiliary lane for West 179<sup>th</sup> Street (making use of abandoned water tunnels to route traffic onto Alexander Hamilton Bridge)
- Reconstruction of Major Deegan S/B Service Road from Highbridge Interchange to Yankee Stadium and Bronx Terminal Market
- Entrance ramp to Fordham Road Exit Ramp
- Reconstruction of West Fordham Road Interchange to Single Point Interchange
- Reconstruction of ramp at W. 230<sup>th</sup> Street to service Target Mall

Recommendations in the study relating to other modes affecting the BOA study area included:

- Reopening the Highbridge for pedestrian use and scenic views
- Ferry service from Riverdale to Manhattan

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<sup>10</sup> A 2006 study commissioned by NYC DOT projects a doubling of the volume of trucks entering the city by 2020

<sup>11</sup> Truck volumes in NYC are expected to double by 2020 according to a 2006 study commissioned by NYC DOT.

<sup>12</sup> Bronx Arterial Needs Major Investment Study (BAN MIS): <http://www.dot.state.ny.us/reg/r11/bxmis/index.html>

These projects are in various stages of design and development (some, like the new bridge, only conceptual), each which will need to be monitored closely for their impact on physical and visual access to the waterfront. While trucking is the dominant mode, as the container revolution has spread to intermodal rail, freight rail is increasingly competitive.<sup>13</sup>

Freight and passenger rail lines are generally separately owned and managed east of the Hudson. Freight rail in the Bronx has always been provided by private railroads, and continues to be. Passenger service was taken over by public agencies in the 1980's: Long Island Railroad, Metro-North, and Amtrak. All three have interests in the BOA corridor. (Highbridge Yards will be used to run LIRR trains into Grand Central Terminal as part of the East Side Access project.)

The simultaneous revitalization of rail transport and public interest in the waterfront presents challenges and opportunities for the BOA. Planning for the waterfront park and greenways is counting on acquisition of right-of-ways and dormant switching yards from the railroads. Both will have to coexist in this narrow corridor, half of which is owned by railroads (55.2%). A bold and synergistic partnership with the railroad could well be the most useful product of the Harlem River BOA project.

BOA communities will benefit if highway congestion is actually diverted to rail. If not, they will simply be hosts to greater overall traffic. Congestion pricing that includes the Harlem River highways and bridges is the best way to insure that this does not happen. The Harlem River bridges have been left out of most discussions about tolling the East River bridges, only because there was not enough space to put a toll plaza on the crossing that mattered most— the Alexander Hamilton Bridge, which carries the Cross Bronx Expressway.<sup>14</sup> New tolling technology has rendered that question moot, however, making it reasonable to revisit the issue. The technology that enables London to charge vehicles entering the central district could be used to toll vehicles entering the city on the Major Deegan or using the Harlem River crossings. The same technology could also be used to give local residents a free pass for using bridges that are for them local streets.

**Table 4 Increase in Average Daily Traffic on Harlem River Bridges in the BOA<sup>15</sup>**

Bridge	1993	2003	increase	% trucks
Macombs Dam	39,261	42,254	7.6%	4.2%
Hamilton	180,507	182,704	1.2%	14.0%
Washington	52,795	63,154	19.6%	3.0%
Univ. Hts.	38,895	50,126	28.9%	2.7%
Broadway	33,752	36,888	9.3%	0.5%
Henry Hudson	51,665	67,612	30.9%	n/a
Total	396,875	442,738	16.25%	

The city's future tolling strategy could have a major impact on the Harlem River waterfront, and will be a decision in which the BOA communities have a very large stake. At the same time, a financially viable, growing rail industry will be a negotiating partner with far greater capacity. It may be the partner needed to finance the kind of infrastructure that can make the waterfront public.

<sup>13</sup> "Investing in Mobility: Freight Transportation in the Hudson Region," Environmental Defense East-of-Hudson Rail Freight Operations Task Force (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Jeffrey Zupan, Senior Transportation Planner, Regional Plan Association

<sup>15</sup> NYMTC *Regional Transportation Statistical Report 2003*

## 6. Housing

Historically the west Bronx has been characterized by diverse housing stock, the legacy of the rapid development of its transportation. With the railroad in the 1840's came settlements of frame houses and cottages clustered around each station. The extension of elevated trains fifty years later brought a great migration to the area. Most of the old estates were broken up for developments, often of multi-family houses and apartment buildings, that eventually infilled the open space among the station-centered suburbs. The result is that the highest density developments are often the greatest distance from transit centers.

The finest examples of the Corbusian towers-in-the-park that swept the whole city in the postwar era can be found in this part of the Bronx. High-rises that usually cover no more than 20 percent of their lots, they are exemplary conservers of open space. Aesthetically, they contribute to the monumentality that characterizes the Bronx – parks, infrastructure, and architecture on a scale unsurpassed by any of the boroughs, including Manhattan. Whether rectilinear slabs or the more costly cross or asterisk designs, they were designed to maximize river views and park-like settings. Fordham Hill Apartments, a complex of 16-story towers on the grounds of the former Webb Academy on Sedgwick Avenue in CB7, were built as middle-class housing by Metropolitan Life in 1949, in the same era as Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village in Manhattan. Like their Manhattan counterparts, they were converted to cooperative ownership in the 1980's. They own the wooded slope on the other side of the avenue, which has preserved their spectacular views of the river. It remains a stable community and highly desirable place to live.

High rise towers also sprang up along the bluff overlooking the river in Spuyten Duyvil. While many were built as moderately priced rentals, they too are now mostly cooperatives and among the most desirable and high-end housing available in the district.

### ***Towers in the Park – Poor Design or Poor Management?***

But the same tower-in-the-park design has been blamed for concentrating low-income tenants in communities without the social character of streets. The Sedgwick Houses in CB5, a complex of seven 14-story towers managed by NYCHA, was built in 1951 on the ridge north of the Washington Bridge with views of the river. Highbridge Houses, in CB4 and managed by NYCHA, is a complex of six 14-story buildings at 165<sup>th</sup> Street and Sedgwick Avenue. Unfortunately, its water views are marred by the forest of billboards rising from railroad property downslope.

The pathologies assumed to be inherent in the tower-in-the-park design were well studied by 1975, when River Park Towers was built by the City and the State as a Mitchell-Lama (middle income) residential complex of four very high (42 and 44-story) towers right on the waterfront in the middle of a new state park, Roberto Clemente. Perhaps it was thought that if the architecture and setting were good enough, the concept would succeed. And while River Park Towers was in many ways magnificent, it also fit Richard Plunz's description of housing doomed to fail: towers "floating randomly on their sites, without connection to the surrounding environment" with their open space "unaccountable."<sup>16</sup> The relationship between the River Park Towers tenants and the private management has been hostile. The park is often underutilized by tenants and non-tenants alike, who find it isolated and unsafe.

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<sup>16</sup> Plunz, Richard, *A History of Housing*, Columbia University Press, NY 1990.



**Map 3 Major Public Housing Sites in BOA Area**



New York City as a whole continues to face high pressure on its housing, indicated by extremely low rental vacancy rates. While vacancy rates in the Bronx declined from 3.9 percent in 2000 (the highest in New York City) to 2.63 percent in 2005 (the lowest), the borough still has the highest rates in the city of overcrowding, dilapidation, and the cost of rent as a percentage of household income. The demand for affordable housing can only be described as acute.<sup>17</sup>

The historical diversity of housing stock in the Bronx is being carried on in the BOA communities, with new construction occurring at all densities. This eclectic assortment of housing is the product of rehabs, rebuilds, small-scale infill projects, and large-scale developments with and without subsidies. New construction in suburban CD8 has been dominated by high-density, market-rate housing, but contextual down-zoning and tighter restrictions on the Special Natural Area District are likely to curtail the trend.

By contrast, targeted economic development strategies have encouraged the building of owner-occupied, smaller multi-family structures in CD4 and CD5. Highbridge is characterized by 6-8 story buildings mixed with the largest scale housing complexes on superblocks. Today a new six-story apartment building is being built next to Highbridge Gardens, a low-income housing complex of six 13-14 story towers on a park setting uphill from Depot Place in CD4. Private developers have also taken advantage of subsidies to fuel a boom in high-rise rental apartments advertised as “moderately priced” in CD4 and CD5. Riverview Towers is the newest example of those springing up along Sedgwick Avenue, directly overlooking the expressway. Their residents are cut off from direct access to the waterfront by long and desolate walks under ramps and underpasses, yet their apartments boast some of the best views of the river from balconies and picture windows.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002 and 2005 and NYC Housing Vacancy Surveys (contains Marble Hill in the Bronx)

The building boom – and premium for water views – has not reached the Harlem River waterfront itself, however. Fordham Landing remains undeveloped since its rezoning from manufacturing to residential designation in 1989, indicating a difficult landscape and expensive construction. On the other hand, a high-rise building is going up along the Major Deegan in CD 7, just upland of Fordham Landing.

While the diversity of housing structures going up in the BOA communities is being preserved, there is concern that the balance between renters and owners is not. Ownership rates in the three communities near the Deegan are all less than 10 percent, which is less than half that of the Bronx and far below the city's. It helped to pull down the ownership rate for the Bronx from 22.5% in 2000 to 22.1% in 2005, the only borough to drop. In addition to low ownership rates, there is concern about the high rate of turnover among renters, indicating displacement.

While ownership in CD8 is roughly the same as the citywide average, it is far higher in the Spuyten Duyvil waterfront area.

**Table 5 Portrait of Housing in the BOA Community Districts**

	% single family	% with 50+ units	% built before 1960	% built before 1970	Rental vacancy rate (2000)	New res. buildings (2000-03)	New units created
CD 4	1.2	48.0	66.6	80.2	3.3	20	1,465
CD 5	1.5	40.5	77.6	88.5	5.0	32	431
CD 7	2.4	39.8	88.8	96.5	3.9	9	98
CD 8	5.1	61.5	87.9	96.5	3.0	56	387
Bronx			80.2	92.7	4.4		
NYC			82.4	91.0	3.5		

## **7. Historical Economic and Land Use Development Trends**

The Harlem River was a stream flanked by high forested cliffs until the 1800's, when it became the object of radical interventions by transportation and civil engineers determined to make it viable for commercial navigation. Its tidal patterns and meandering course were the principal hurdles. Strong and variable currents in the upper river caused the river to silt up, leaving only a narrow channel between broad mud flats. The shoreline was cut and filled. The seven-foot channel was dredged to 18 feet and widened by 400 in Spuyten Duyvil. The river bent sharply around the peninsula jutting out from the Manhattan shore, so the soft marble rock was cut away to sever Marble Hill from Manhattan and re-attach it to the Bronx.

The Harlem Ship Canal, a 100-year project intended to make a shortcut from the Hudson to the Long Island Sound, manipulated the shoreline and the course of the river, but not its tides. The Harlem kept silting up, making it difficult for large ships – the kind that stood any chance of meeting the new competition from the railroad or that might have been developed in conjunction with it.

The first railroad came to the Bronx in 1840. In 1851 tracks were laid down along the Harlem shoreline, usurping about half of the available land on the waterfront fringe. Where the fringe was too narrow or even non-existent, trestles and tracks were installed on top of riprap. The railroad sealed off the waterfront

from both sides, restricting access from the inland to a handful of crossings spread out over seven miles. It also made building and reaching new piers or docks nearly impossible.<sup>18</sup>

This choked access to dwindling acreage restricted industrial development of the waterfront to small enterprises able to make use of small piers: boat building, coal storage and distribution, sand and gravel to supply the local building boom.<sup>19</sup> Spuyten Duyvil was an exception because of its proximity to the Hudson River and greater land. The Johnson Iron Works, a munitions factory, continued to operate there until the 1930's.

If heavy industry requiring acreage and access was precluded by the railroad, recreational development was left to thrive in response to the great recreational development on the Manhattan side. By the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the upper Harlem was a small boating mecca served by piers, boating clubs, and waterfront parks, joined by bridges used for promenades and viewing platforms. Kyle's Amusement Park south of the High Bridge and the motorcycle Velodrome in Kingsbridge were major attractions. A plethora of stone step streets, many of them grand, were built throughout the area between 1890 and 1920 to bring people down from the upland. Commercial activity developed around the breaks or valleys where residential neighborhoods came closest to the river: e.g., Kingsbridge, Fordham, Burnside, Tremont, Highbridge.

But the recreational uses of the waterfront survived only as long as there was sufficient public access from the upland Bronx neighborhoods, Manhattan, and the water. With the construction of the six-lane Major Deegan Expressway in 1956, the six-lane Cross Bronx Expressway in 1963, the Harlem River Drive in 1964, and the closing of the High Bridge in 1970, the waterfront's strangulation was completed.

With the advent of containers, highway trucking eventually drove the railroads to bankruptcy and reorganization, forcing them to sell off land and rights, and to seek other revenue. One of the more lucrative sources of revenue was billboards aimed at the new highway. While old time residents recall the billboards of the railroad era being six feet high, invisible from the neighborhoods, the new ones now shot up from the railroad yards along the waterfront hundreds of feet in the air, expanding to the size of the high-rise buildings whose views they now blocked.

Ironically, the first barrier to the waterfront -- the natural topography-- proved useful in dealing with the manmade railroad and highway. It forced the highways and the river crossings to intersect in aerial interchanges of spiraling ramps and viaducts instead of vast sprawl, as happened in Queens and Brooklyn. This left pockets of abandoned space on the ground but also preserved the possibility of connecting and even using those spaces. It also produced beautiful infrastructure that became part of the landscape and attractions to the area.

The steep slope is also what enabled the City and State in 1974 to create Roberto Clemente State Park and the first (and so far only) residential development on the waterfront. Using air rights over the railroad, the city was able to build a platform to provide the infrastructure required by the new uses: broad at-grade connections with the local street and a school. The park was built on former industrial land, heralding the recognition by the State and the City that the future of the upper Harlem waterfront would be park and residential.

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<sup>18</sup> Leslie's History of the Greater New York by Daniel Van Pelt.

<sup>19</sup> Preservation Plan for the Harlem River: Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture Studio project, 2004. Also recollections from Robert Rothschild: "Colonial Sand & Gravel was north of the University Heights Bridge. The material would be brought by sailboat from the Long Island Sound to the entrance of the harbor, then transferred to a tug that would bring it to [Fordham Landing]."

The park use had many antecedents. The residential use had few. With the exception of Highbridgeville and the far smaller company town that grew up around the Johnson Iron Works in Spuyten Duyvil, the Harlem waterfront had not historically been an area of dense human settlement. The construction of River Park Towers in 1974 – and on a part of the waterfront that was not one of its natural access points – made its 4300 residents pioneers. This experiment in large-scale residential development on the waterfront (believed the only kind that is economically viable) may turn out to be unique. There is only one site where its replication is contemplated --Fordham Landing, and for 500, not 4000 people -- but the challenges of providing infrastructure in this location have so far stymied proposals.

In 2005 River Plaza became the first development in thirty years to bring the public to the waterfront, this time as employers and customers of a shopping mall instead of residents of a housing complex.

### ***The Case of Target***

The two-year-old River Plaza Shopping Center may be the transportation nightmare that didn't happen and the dream that still can. Its Target is one of the highest-producing stores in the chain. The Starbucks is that company's seventh most profitable.<sup>20</sup> Yet the mall's generous parking area, which was required by zoning, is often empty because this Big Box development is served almost entirely by mass transit.<sup>21</sup> Rather than an inward-facing, self-contained mall, the entrances front directly on the local street, enlivening the Kingsbridge commercial district and bridging the communities on either side of the Deegan Expressway. The buildings have preserved a view corridor and passage to the river from the local street. Could it be that the underutilized parking area in the rear overlooking the waterfront is awaiting its higher use as the crossroads of the Harlem River Greenway and Putnam Trail – the catalyst for the revitalization of a far broader region?

With or without this development, the conversion of this waterfront to public uses confronts a limit. As long as there is a use for the railroad, the public and transportation uses will have to co-exist in this corridor. The ratio of park-to-railroad acreage in the BOA is now about 1:2. If every non-railroad parcel were converted to parkland, the ratio would still be less than 1:1. The challenge will therefore be to come to a creative accommodation. How might these two uses enhance each other? One alternative may be to create new space for public use by exploring every avenue for using underwater and air rights.<sup>22</sup>

The three parallel barriers laid by the ridge, the railroad, and the highway deprived three generations of local residents the use of their waterfront for all but the most marginal economic activity. The positive side of this is that it saved the upper Harlem waterfront from becoming either heavily industrial or one more wall of luxury-high-rises-with-riverfront-esplanade. The neglect has bought the community time to preserve and plan a unique and authentic waterfront.

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<sup>20</sup> Developer Paul Travis, managing partner of Kingsbridge Assoc., quoted in Manhattan Institute Jan. 2006

<sup>21</sup> Target built its Brooklyn store with no dedicated parking. (*New Urban News*, October 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Hudson River Park used underwater rights to extend the park into the river. Riverside Park, the Brooklyn Esplanade, and Sutton Place used air rights over highways and railroads to create parks. The TransManhattan apartment building is a high rise residential building built on top of the Cross Bronx Expressway in Washington Heights. The plan for Swindler's Cove makes use of development rights ("envelopes") and merged zoning to create opportunities

## 8. Parks and Open Space

(See **Appendices: NY4P Park Profiles for City Council Districts 11, 14, and 16.**)

The Bronx is 31.4% open space compared to 14% citywide, with the most parkland per resident in New York City. Because city-owned parkland is concentrated in a few very large parks in the northeastern part of the borough, park profiles depict the Harlem River communities as park-deprived. This is not the case if Roberto Clemente State Park is included. Access rather than acreage is therefore the greater issue.<sup>29</sup>

Morris Heights and Highbridge are part of City Council District 14, of which only 5 percent is parkland, most of it far from these neighborhoods. The neighborhood park is John Mullaly Park, which will be reduced by the Yankee Stadium re-development. In a deal that was bitterly opposed by Community Board 4 and local residents, the parkland was traded for scattered recreational facilities, some on top of parking garages.

University Heights and Kingsbridge Heights are part of City Council District 14, which is 9% parkland. The largest swaths near the BOA neighborhoods are University Woods, which is a wooded hillside, Fordham Landing Playground, which is a recently renovated but little-used playground at the base of the hill, and the Major Deegan Expressway Triangle. University Woods Park was rated the worst in the city with a 6% score out of a possible 100% by NY4P.

For this reason, limited as its access is, Roberto Clemente State Park on the waterfront is a precious and crowded park resource.

Spuyten Duyvil is part of City Council District 11, which is 33% parkland. This is misleading as most of the parkland consists of two very large parks: Van Cortlandt and Bronx Park, which are far from Spuyten Duyvil. The railroad cuts off access to all of the Harlem and Hudson River waterfronts except for a small new park recently built at the Riverdale Train Station.

All of the BOA neighborhoods lack attractive parks that bring together all ages for a variety of purposes – the kind of public spaces that create “community.” Roberto Clemente State Park is the only place for large family gatherings or barbecues, which are highly popular in the summer.

### *Recreational use of the waterfront*

Empire State Rowing Association operates from a boat launch in Roberto Clemente Park. The only other boating activity on the Harlem River is on the Manhattan side. No fishing was observed.

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<sup>29</sup> Park profile information is from NY4P [www.ny4p.org](http://www.ny4p.org).

## **B. Project Overview and Description**

### **1. Brownfields, Vacant, and Underutilized Land**

This report is intended to qualify the Harlem River Waterfront to proceed to Stage 2 (the Nomination Phase) of the Brownfield Opportunity Area Program, which will enable property owners to take advantage of available Brownfields redevelopment incentives to revitalize both the waterfront and adjacent neighborhoods.

The Bronx waterfront of the Harlem River is presumed to be one continuous Brownfield because of its history of concentrated use for manufacturing and railroads. All 158.6 acres (45 sites) in the BOA are considered potentially contaminated.

The character of this waterfront is not easily defined: it has vestiges of working, natural, and public waterfronts. This section looks at three decades of thinking and planning for its future.

## **2. Brownfield Opportunity Area Boundary Description and Justification**

(See following page, Map 4: *BOA Boundaries*)

The Harlem River BOA is located within the New York City Coastal Zone Boundary, which defined the geographic scope of the Waterfront Revitalization Plan adopted in 1982. It corresponds to “Reach 6” in the follow-up 1993 *Plan for the Bronx Waterfront*. Macombs Dam Bridge has historically divided the industrial part of the river with the more pastoral section upland, a distinction that was created by the character of the river and reinforced by the bridges built over it.

Marble Hill is an anomalous section of Manhattan on the Bronx side of the Harlem River. It is excluded from the BOA, although it is referenced in this report for planning purposes.

The BOA is bounded by the pierhead line, which varies in distance from the bulkhead line. Historic photos show piers extending far into the river. The underwater areas are generally an extension of the property ending at the bulkhead, but all should be carefully mapped and their titles searched. Inland the BOA is bounded by the Major Deegan Expressway and 230<sup>th</sup> Street.

The community participation area has been drawn to capture people who live within a one-mile walk of the river (about 120,000). The area is included in the Harlem River watershed and sewershed. While this study is restricted to brownfields within the BOA, its approach has been to encourage the upland communities to think of themselves as sharing the watershed and sewershed. They have been asked to help identify potential brownfields contributing to the pollution of the waterfront sites and the Harlem River itself. Outlying sites may be added as sub-areas for future evaluation.



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Map 4 Boundaries of Harlem River BOA



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## C. Community Vision and Goals: Building on 25 Plans Over 25 Years

The overarching vision for the Bronx waterfront of the Harlem River is a contiguous waterfront park. This is a fundamental consensus embraced by several generations of city and state agencies, elected officials, and their constituents. It has been outlined in some 25 plans that have been developed, refined, and reissued, all with public participation over the same number of years.<sup>30</sup> It is understood today that this means future development of waterfront itself must be primarily recreational. (See **Appendices: Public Participation Documents.**)

### Where they agree:

- The value of the Harlem River and its Bronx shoreline is as a coherent scenic and recreational resource, which is best achieved with a continuous esplanade or greenway.
- The best use of the Harlem River is for water-dependent recreation and transportation, all accessed at multiple points on both sides of the river.
- The Harlem River's many bridges should be utilized to connect the Manhattan and Bronx waterfront parks and neighborhoods. The most important is the pedestrian High Bridge.
- Upland communities must be connected to the public waterfront, physically and visually.
- Any new developments near the waterfront – whether they generate jobs, revenue or housing opportunities -- should draw people to the waterfront.
- The natural shoreline habitat should be restored where possible, with the principal goal of restoring its ecological function and the secondary goal of restoring its recreational functions (e.g. fishing and swimming)

### Where the consensus has changed:

#### 1. Clustered Upland Housing

Housing, while critically needed, should be developed adjacent to rather than on the waterfront. Large lots like those on the Harlem waterfront represent rare opportunities to create new housing, critically

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<sup>30</sup> 1982: *New York City Waterfront Revitalization Program*, revised in 2002

1989: *The Bronx Harlem River Plan* (New York City Department of City Planning)

1990: *Waterfront Management Plan* (NYC Department of City Planning)

1992: *New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan* (New York City Department of City Planning)

1993: *Plan for the Bronx Waterfront* (New York City Department of City Planning)

1993: *Bronx Greenway Plan* (Bronx Borough Board)

1995: *New Parkland for New Yorkers: Opportunities to Protect Open Space in New York City* (Trust for Public Land)

1997: *Investing in the Waterfront: New York City's Waterfront Revitalization Program* (New York City Department of City Planning)

1997 New York City Bicycle Master Plan (New York City Departments of City Planning and Transportation)

1997 *The Old Croton Aqueduct* (The Parks Council, now New Yorkers for Parks)

2000 *Harlem River Greenway Master Plan* (Department of City Planning)

2002: *New Waterfront Revitalization Program* (New York City Department of City Planning)

2003: *Report of the Bronx Waterfront Task Force* (Borough President Adolfo Carrion)

2003: *CD8 2000: A River to Reservoir Strategy* (197a Plan)

2004: *Bronx Waterfront Plan* (Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion)

2004 *Bronx Arterial Needs Major Investment Study* (NYS Department of Transportation)

2004: *The Harlem River Waterfront*. (Bronx Council on Environmental Quality)

2005: *NYS Open Space Conservation Plan* (pending adoption)

2006: *Upper Harlem/Harlem River Comprehensive Waterfront Plan* (New York Restoration for Parks)

needed by the city and the borough. Housing has also been recognized as a way to bring people to the waterfront.

Fordham Landing is considered the most realistic site for new housing on the waterfront itself. In the decades since being rezoned for it, however, no developer has come forward with a proposal that would finance the utilities and infrastructure that would make it feasible. In the meantime, the community preference has shifted toward preserving the whole waterfront as open space, with development used to create amenities and activities that would draw people from beyond the neighborhood. The best opportunities for new housing are now seen as the area immediate upland of Depot Place and Fordham Landing. Both of these are at the foot of the slope and offer access to the waterfront.

In the 1990's, planners hoped that housing and waterfront access could be created by decking the Highbridge Yards. While that idea is no longer considered viable since the expansion of MTA/MetroNorth, nor in the current environment in which major infrastructure is expected to be paid for by private developers, a 2006 study by Alex Garvin commissioned by Mayor Bloomberg raises again the idea of developing air rights over the railroad (identified as the area north of Fordham Landing).

## **2. Esplanades to Greenway**

When it was built in the 1970's, the 23-acre Roberto Clemente State Park was intended to be the first phase of a 65-acre park running from Highbridge to the Broadway Bridge. Four residential towers in the middle of the park guaranteed a minimum number of users. The park included facilities (including parking) that made it a destination for others beyond the neighborhood. A school and two broad entrance roads to the park were built over a large section of the railroad. It was a bold, comprehensive model that was unfortunately never replicated. While Roberto Clemente was certainly the most accessible and well-used part of the Harlem River, it remained a relatively isolated outpost.

The 1989 Bronx Harlem River Plan by the NYC Department of City Planning saw pedestrian bridges and pedestrianized highway ramps as insufficient to overcome the barrier posed by the slope, the railroad, and the highway. It recommended a multi-level approach, by decking sections of the railroad and highway to create new land and bring the communities closer to the waterfront. It located the esplanade along the edge of an upper level or along the water's edge, depending on the topography.

The ascendance of the New York City Greenway Plan in the early 1990's shifted the emphasis away from overlooks and promenades that were part of the upland neighborhoods to a multi-use path along the water's edge.<sup>31</sup> The Harlem River Trail (a shared pedestrian and bicycle path) is the principal feature of the Parks Department plan for *Regatta Park*, from Macombs Dam to 225<sup>th</sup> Street. If deemed feasible, it will provide access to "Yankee Stadium, Roberto Clemente State Park, High Bridge, upland communities, local points of interest, and other designated trail systems."<sup>32</sup>

The High Bridge Aqueduct, now closed, is the centerpiece of the Harlem River Park and linking the Manhattan and Bronx greenways. Because it connects to the upland Highbridge neighborhood, the High Bridge is also one of the few remaining opportunities for an upland esplanade at the southern end of the

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<sup>31</sup> The Harlem-Hudson Waterfront Greenway was envisioned in the 1993 *Harlem-Hudson Greenway Plan* as a path along the Harlem River waterfront from Macombs Dam Bridge (where it connects with the Aqueduct) north, making an on-street link through Kingsbridge, accessing the water again at Spuyten Duyvil, and then proceeding north on either a river or inland route. Sections of this greenway are also part of important regional systems. In 2000 the Department of City Planning issued the *Harlem River Greenway Master Plan* (2000) for a multi-use path that runs the length of Harlem River. It recommended a multi-phase approach that could take decades to implement.

<sup>32</sup> NYC DPR Planning Division: *Work Program for Regatta Park – Harlem River Trail*

BOA. (The Promenade of Famous Americans at Bronx Community College and the Half Moon Overlook provide similar experiences in their neighborhoods.) Reopening the bridge thus remains a high priority.

In the 1980's and 90's, the prospect of an easement or walkway along the river as part of a residential development of Fordham Landing, the largest undeveloped parcel on the waterfront at the foot of University Heights Bridge, seemed attractive to the community. It is now understood that riverfront walkways do not make public waterfronts. The public benefit of a riverfront esplanade in this location will be realized only by tying it to some other public amenity (e.g., a marina or recreational facility, restaurant) and, more, by connecting it to Roberto Clemente State Park. Absent either or both of these, it will simply function as a private space for the development.

Trust for Public Land and the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation have held out hope for making the entire 3-acre site a waterfront park, recognizing the merits of the existing access from Fordham Road and the University Heights Bridge. Bronx Community College is also interested in the site's potential for new educational and recreational programming.

Like the area south of Roberto Clemente State Park ("Bridge Park"), the area north of the University Heights Bridge is a mixture of publicly and privately owned parcels, which, combined with the vestiges of Exterior Street, are being assembled as a greenway. (The Parks department has been given funding to develop the DCAS site into a 1-acre waterfront park.<sup>33</sup>) Gaining easements over railroad property, improving access from the streets (e.g., Depot Place and Fordham Road), and including attractive destinations will probably be minimum requirements to make these parks more than Greenways for long-distance cyclists.

River Plaza Shopping Center has complicated plans for the Greenway in the Kingbridge area (where it would connect to the Putnam Trail) but also presents opportunities for making the connection a more dynamic node. (See *The Case of Target*, p. 25.) The value of doing this is increased with progress on the Putnam Trail.<sup>34</sup>

Plans have assumed that an esplanade would stop at the Broadway Bridge, where the railroad runs along the pierhead line and sharp rock outcroppings make building it impossible unless permission were granted by the Army Corps of Engineers to build a riverwalk over the water, as will be done in Riverside Park where the parkway left insufficient space for the bikeway on the river. Plans for the Greenway instead use inland streets up steep slopes to connect to the Hudson River route at the top of the Riverdale ridge. The Broadway Bridge could be improved as a link to the Manhattan Greenways, and even the Hudson River Greenway if plans for a river route across the Amtrak Bridge are realized.

The question of how to bring the Hudson River Valley Greenway across the Harlem River has yet to be settled. Gaining access over the on-river Amtrak Bridge and the Spuyten Duyvil Triangle is key to developing an all-river route, the original vision for the Saratoga to Battery Park trail, and the subject of a new planning study about to begin under the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council.

### **3. The River as Park**

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<sup>33</sup> \$1.629 million comes from mitigation funds for the Croton Filtration Plant in Van Cortlandt Park.

<sup>34</sup> The city has been granted preferential rights to buy the right-of-way along the Major Deegan from CSX. Since the land belongs to a railroad, the state Department of Transportation must approve the transfer.

The Harlem River is part of the greater New York Harbor District, a vision that links all of New York City's waterfronts by new public and private water transportation. Each additional public waterfront has a synergistic affect on the entire district by adding new destinations, tie-ups, and landings. Every waterfront that is cleaned up adds value to its opposing shoreline and the experience of all who ply the waterway.

In its heyday at the turn of the century, the Harlem River was filled with sculls, yachts, and ferries and pedestrians on the bridges overhead. Today advocates on both sides of the river share a vision of recreating these connections and linking their parks and neighborhoods around a Harlem River Park, roughly framed by the High Bridge and University Heights Bridge or even the Amtrak Bridge, encompassing the Upper Harlem River as well. Re-opening the High Bridge adds a crucial second link and creates a pedestrian frame for the Harlem River Park. Its reopening for pedestrian use has been identified as a top priority by every plan, including the Bronx Arterial Transportation Study.<sup>35</sup>

The complementary development of the Bronx and Manhattan sides of the Harlem River offers opportunities for synergism beyond the waterfront itself. Fordham Landing at the terminus of the University Heights Bridge affords an opportunity to create a complement to the mixed-use development now being planned for the area of Sherman Creek.

#### **4. Preserving Historic Features**

Esplanades and greenways are enriched by the variety of destinations and experiences they offer. Transportation infrastructure commands the Harlem River Valley. These features are neither small nor scattered away; they are monumental in scale. The High Bridge and other bridges attracted tourists to the Harlem River one hundred years ago. Their historic interest has only increased in that time, while the viewing opportunities have greatly diminished

The bridges and aqueduct are outstanding historical and cultural resources not only of the city but the nation, representing the city's century of global preeminence in civil engineering. The Bronx side is further distinguished by the train that hugs its curving shoreline, the same line that knit Manhattan to the mainland. The Harlem River Ship Canal is the major public work of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the Major Deegan Expressway, Cross Bronx Expressway, Henry Hudson Bridge and Highbridge Interchange are all iconic (if currently despised) features of the 20<sup>th</sup>.

The bridges contribute functionally as well as visually to the recreational vision for the Harlem River by connecting the parks and neighborhoods on either side, and by providing vital links in the greater greenway system. In the 1950's the Washington Bridge was used as a viewing platform to watch collegiate sculling competitions.<sup>36</sup> They also afford opportunities for pedestrians to view these historic structures up close. Several studies of the area have urged interpretive signs and tours be developed.<sup>37</sup>

To capture the potential value of these assets will require:

- Rehabilitation and repair that is sensitive to historic and aesthetic values
- Restoration of full pedestrian access, particularly opening the High Bridge, which offers the greatest vantage point

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<sup>35</sup> Congressman Serrano has appropriate funding for this.

<sup>36</sup> James Renner, historian of Washington Heights/Inwood

<sup>37</sup> Hunter College and Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture



- Enhancement of both distant views (illumination; billboard control) and up-close views (details of engineering and architecture, with interpretive signs)
- Elimination of blight that detracts from the visual experience (For example, the railroad and yards could be experienced as interesting and educational features of the greenway if they are kept clean, fenced attractively, and explained.)
- New elements that harmonize with the historic setting – either as quality reproductions or as modern but aesthetically equivalent (New bridges should be exciting in design, for example, like additions that add to a valuable collection.)

### Historic Bridges in the Harlem River BOA

**Washington Bridge.** Stone and double arch bridge built in 1888 originally for carriages and pedestrians. National Register of Historic Places. First bridge constructed by riveting together arches composed of steel girders.

**Macombs Dam Bridge.** Steel swing bridge built in 1895. After the Washington and Brooklyn Bridges, the third oldest major vehicular bridge in the city.

**High Bridge Aqueduct.** Oldest bridge in New York City, built to carry fresh drinking water from the Croton to New York City. NYC Landmark. National Register of Historic Places.

**University Heights Bridge.** Caisson, swing and truss bridge built in 1895 as the Harlem River Ship Canal Bridge and then floated down the river in 1903 to its present location. NYC Landmark.

**Broadway Bridge.** Rebuilt in 1962 on the site of the original Kings Bridge, which carried the Albany Post Road.

**Henry Hudson Bridge.** Built in 1936, at the time the largest plate girder, fixed-arch bridge in the United States. Part of the Henry Hudson Parkway, nominated as New York State Scenic Byway.

The beauty and fascination of the Harlem River will be wasted if scenic views of them are not revealed and protected. The Harlem River Valley is a visual experience shared by more than 1 million people a day. On a typical summer day roughly one million people view it: from the highways and bridges, from the windows of the MetroNorth trains and the IRT subways, from the deck of the Circle Line, from upland overlooks, and from the windows of residences. It may be the most intensely-experienced corridor and gateway in all of New York City.

Borough President Adolfo Carrion decried the sight of the Bronx presented to tourists on riverboats like the Circle Line as “unkempt, discarded land.” And to upland residents, the waterfront is “almost invisible.” Commuters who travel by train or car on the 3-mile corridor between Kingsbridge Road and Yankee Stadium have only a “fleeting glimpse of the river.”

The visual experience is mixed. The river, bluffs, bridges, soaring viaducts and ramps are a spectacular vista. Redevelopment of the waterfront is an opportunity to enrich the visual experience and change the negative perception of the Bronx that millions of people now receive. The principal barriers to views of these features are billboards – mostly clustered in the railroad property south of Depot Place – and structures blocking view corridors at ends of streets.

### ***The Columbia “C” -- graffiti or cultural landmark?***

Long ago the Columbia rowing crew – with permission – painted a giant “C” on the rockface at the northern end of the Harlem River. It has been repainted regularly. The Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation Historic Preservation Studio (2004) recommended that this feature be listed as a significant cultural feature. It raises the question of what other equally iconic features may contribute to the sense of place.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *Preservation Plan for the Harlem River Area.* Historic Preservation Studio. Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (2004)

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## **II. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE BOA**

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## A. Existing Land Use and Zoning

*See Existing Land Use and Zoning maps for each community district in the Harlem River BOA at end of this section.*

### 1. Land Use

The BOA's primary use for **transportation** is manifest: 72.6% of the land is owned by public and private railroads. This land includes active railroad right-of-way, spurs, yards, maintenance facilities, and yards that derive the bulk of their revenue from billboards. It also includes the Spuyten Duyvil Triangle, a fragile marshland. NYC and NYS DOT own streets, bridges, ramps and overpasses which consume significant acreage and airspace throughout the corridor.

The BOA is set within a broader transportation corridor, which includes the Major Deegan Expressway and the Harlem River.

**Parkland** is the second largest land use: city and state parks account for 26.3% of the total acreage. A number of other sites are candidates for park use, either as parkland or greenway easements. It should be noted that much of the plans for the future park are really for transportation – the Greenway. The recreational potential of the BOA is of course very different if the river itself is included, that is with the waterfront serving as the frame of a larger Harlem River Park.

There is one fully built-out **commercial** site (River Plaza) and two fully built-out high-density **residential** sites (River Towers on the waterfront and 2400 Johnson Avenue on the ridge above it).

With the exception of Robert Clemente State Park, which uses the river in a very limited way for boating, none of the current uses of this seven-mile waterfront is directly dependent on the water. River *views* – enjoyed by MetroNorth passengers and high-rise apartment dwellers – are probably the current greatest value extracted from waterfront locations.

### 2. Zoning

About 80% of the BOA is zoned for **manufacturing**<sup>39</sup>. This is more of a reflection of its history than either its current use or projection of its future. Zoning in the BOA is often irrelevant because property is state-owned or mapped parkland, in which case change of use requires no zoning action.

*None* of the 45 sites is currently zoned as **commercial**.

*Five* sites are currently zoned as **residential**:

- The Bridge Park sites and Fordham Landing are R-7 zones, which permit medium-density residential development, usually 14-story buildings with low-lot coverage that are set back from the street. The park sites are owned by the City and being used as official city parks.
- 2400 Johnson Avenue and a small city-owned vacant parcel in CD8 are zoned R-6, for lower medium density, usually 3-5 stories. The Johnson Avenue site is a high-rise building.

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<sup>39</sup> All zoning information from NYC Department of Buildings Zoning Resolution and Zoning Maps.

The Spuyten Duyvil Triangle sites (owned by a public railroad, a private railroad, and NYC) are zoned R1, for single-family detached houses on large lots. Residential development at this low density is not believed to be viable.

All of the rest are zoned for manufacturing, either:

- M1 Generally light industrial uses, often serving as buffers between commercial and residential and heavier manufacturing. Strict performance standards apply. Retail and office use is permitted. (Target retains this zoning classification. Most of the active railroads are under this category.)
- M2 Allows uses that permit more noise and vibration and have lower performance standards. In most cases industrial uses do not need to be entirely enclosed.
- M3 Allows heavy industry that usually generates traffic, noise, odor and pollutants, though with some performance standards. Typically located on waterfronts and buffered from residential areas by distance or another manufacturing district. (The six small sites on the waterfront north of University Heights Bridge are an M-3 zone, although none are believed to be carrying out activities currently that fit this description.)

### ***Special zoning districts***

#### **New York City Coastal Zone**

The Harlem River BOA falls entirely within the boundary of the New York City Coastal Zone, which is generally delineated by the steep slope or the “nearest legally mapped street at least 300 feet landward of the Mean High Tide.” The coastal zone establishes the City’s policy for development and use of the waterfront. Consistency with its policies is required for all discretionary actions.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Scenic view protections implied by waterfront, parks and arterial highways***

Waterfront zoning amendments enacted by the City Council in 1993 require view corridors in most non-industrial developments. They establish specific height and setback requirements and regulate bulk and

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<sup>40</sup> NYC Department of City Planning. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/wrp/wrp.shtml>. “Local discretionary actions, including those subject to land use (ULURP), environmental (CEQR) and Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA) review procedures, are reviewed for consistency with the WRP policies. WRP review of local actions is coordinated with existing regulatory processes and in most instances occurs concurrently. For local actions requiring approval by the City Planning Commission, the Commission acting as the City Coastal Commission makes the consistency determination. For local actions that do not require approval by the City Planning Commission but do require approval by another city agency, the head of that agency makes the final consistency determination. For federal and state actions within the city’s coastal zone, such as dredging permits, the Department of City Planning, acting on behalf of the City Coastal Commission, forwards its comments to the state agency making the consistency determination.

“A proposed action or project may be deemed consistent with the WRP when it would not substantially hinder and, where practicable, will advance one or more of the ten WRP policies, dealing with: (1) residential and commercial redevelopment; (2) water-dependent and industrial uses; (3) commercial and recreational boating; (4) coastal ecological systems; (5) water quality; (6) flooding and erosion; (7) solid waste and hazardous substances; (8) public access; (9) scenic resources; and (10) historical and cultural resources.

“These policies, including their goals, standards and criteria, as well as further explanation of the WRP regulatory framework and review process, are presented in the New Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP).

“If a project requires preparation of an Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the WRP consistency assessment will be incorporated in the EAS or EIS. Applications requiring “joint” NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and United States Army Corps of Engineers approval should also include the NYC Consistency Assessment Form and supporting information to address relevant WRP policies.

height on piers and platforms.<sup>41</sup> View corridors are required at every street end and in 600-foot intervals of a street end within a waterfront district.<sup>42</sup>

Also require public access to waterfront residential developments—Fordham Landing site if developed for residential use would need to have a public esplanade or at least access to a sitting area.

Billboards are major impediments to views in the southern end of the BOA where they are clustered on railroad property. Special permitting requirements apply to outdoor advertising within 900 feet (increased from 200 feet in 2005) of parks and arterial highways.<sup>43</sup> Railroads are generally exempt from highway sign regulations.

#### ***How important is zoning? The Sherman Creek Plan***

Like its Bronx counterpart, the Manhattan side of the Harlem River is a hodgepodge of private and public ownership, many of them utilities and transportation facilities. The Sherman Creek Plan has elected to use zoning as the prime mechanism to reclaim the waterfront over time. It does this by taking advantage of the waterfront regulations that zoning implies, e.g., regarding waterfront access and view corridors. The new zoning class (MX) allows a mixture of recreation, commerce, housing and light manufacturing. (It was recently introduced in Greenpoint/Williamsburg). The strategy encourages the transfer of development rights from the public sites to private owners, creating an “envelope” of rights while retaining public ownership of the underlying land. Merging zoning lots will give flexibility to the private developer.

This zoning-based approach may not make sense on the Bronx side, according to the EDC architect of the Sherman Creek Plan, because it fails to address the two most critical factors that complicate the Bronx shoreline: the railroad and the steep grade.

#### **Special Natural Area District (SNAD)<sup>44</sup>**

The Riverdale Special Natural Area District was recently expanded to include Spuyten Duyvil. It is a special zoning district overlay that provides added protections for an area’s natural features, without changing or altering the requirements of the underlying zoning. In most cases, a development, site alteration, or enlargement must be reviewed by the Department of City Planning to evaluate impacts on natural features. The SNAD was mapped in Riverdale in 1975 and covers approximately one-half of Bronx Community District 8.

Section 105-00 of the zoning regulations states that the goals of the Special Natural Area District are to:

- Guide development in areas of outstanding natural beauty in order to protect, maintain and enhance the natural features of such areas;
- Preserve land having qualities of exceptional recreational or educational value to the public;
- Protect aquatic, biologic, botanic, geologic and topographic features having ecological and conservation values and functions;

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<sup>41</sup> “Preserve existing visual access in the development of waterfront public lands and facilities. Minimize reduction of existing visual access caused by the scale, design, and location of public projects in areas such as streets, parks, bridges and highways. Preserve visual corridors provided or defined by mapped streets (open or improved) that terminate at the shoreline or within the waterfront block.” (*The New Waterfront Revitalization Program* 27)

<sup>42</sup> Zoning resolution 62-42. NYC Department of City Planning.

<sup>43</sup> NYC Local Law 14.

<sup>44</sup> NYC Department of City Planning. Interpretation of the regulations provided by the Riverdale Nature Preservancy: [www.riverdalenature.org](http://www.riverdalenature.org).



- Reduce hillside erosion, landslides and excessive storm water runoff associated with development by conserving vegetation and protecting natural terrain; Preserve hillsides having unique aesthetic value to the public; and
- Promote the most desirable use of land and the direction of building development in accordance with a well-considered plan, to promote stability of residential development, to promote the character of the district and its peculiar suitability of particular uses, to conserve the value of land and buildings, and thereby protect the City's tax revenues.

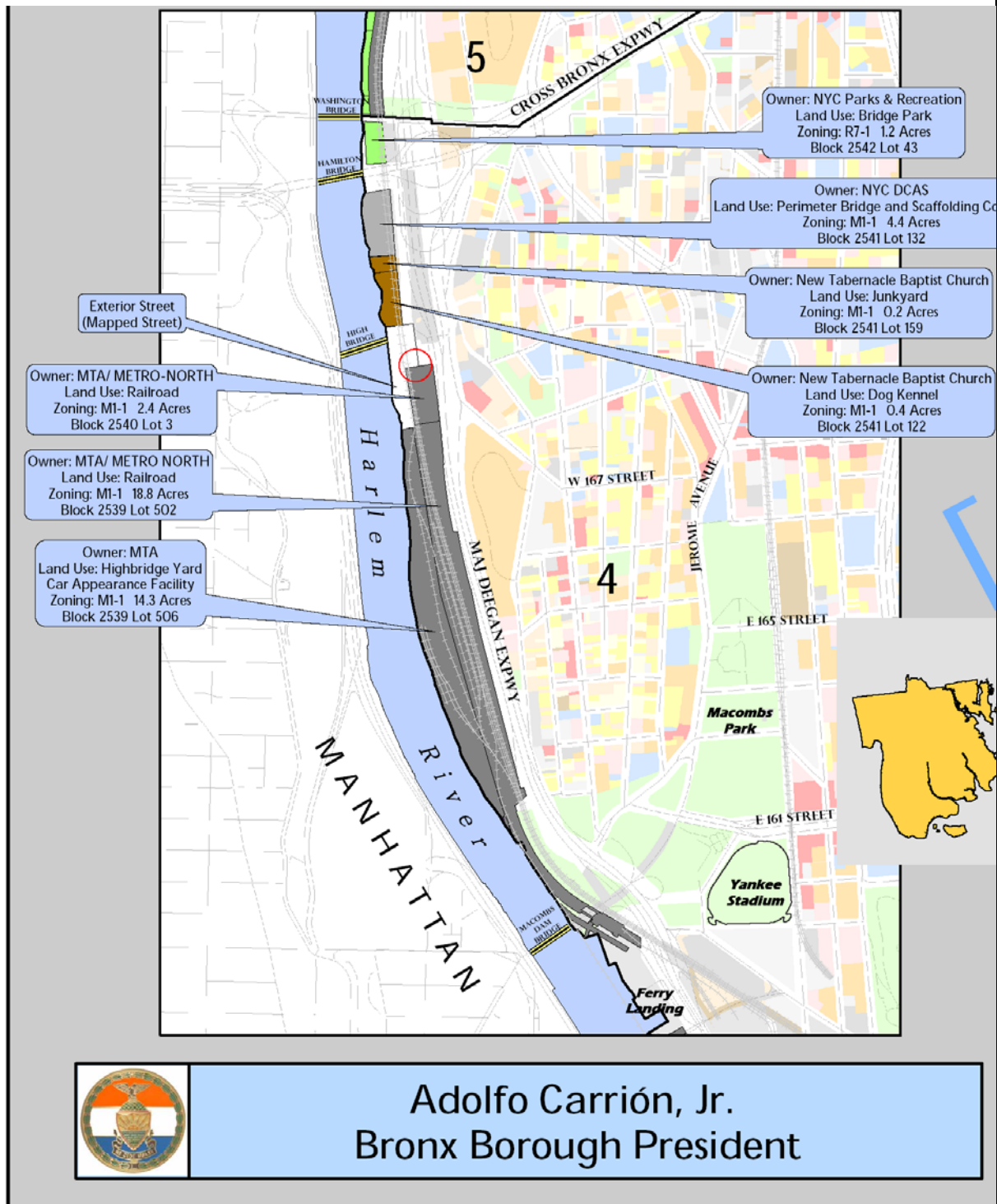
The list of natural features includes:

- Rock outcrops
- Geologic deposits such as erratic boulders, glacial formations, and mineral deposits
- Steep slopes, which are defined at or greater than 25 percent
- Existing natural topography
- Topsoil
- Aquatic features, such as beaches, wetlands, swamps, meadows, creeks, lakes, ponds, and natural springs
- Botanic environments, including primary succession communities, secondary succession communities, climax communities, dunes, heathlands, and wild grasslands
- Trees of 6" caliper or greater in size.



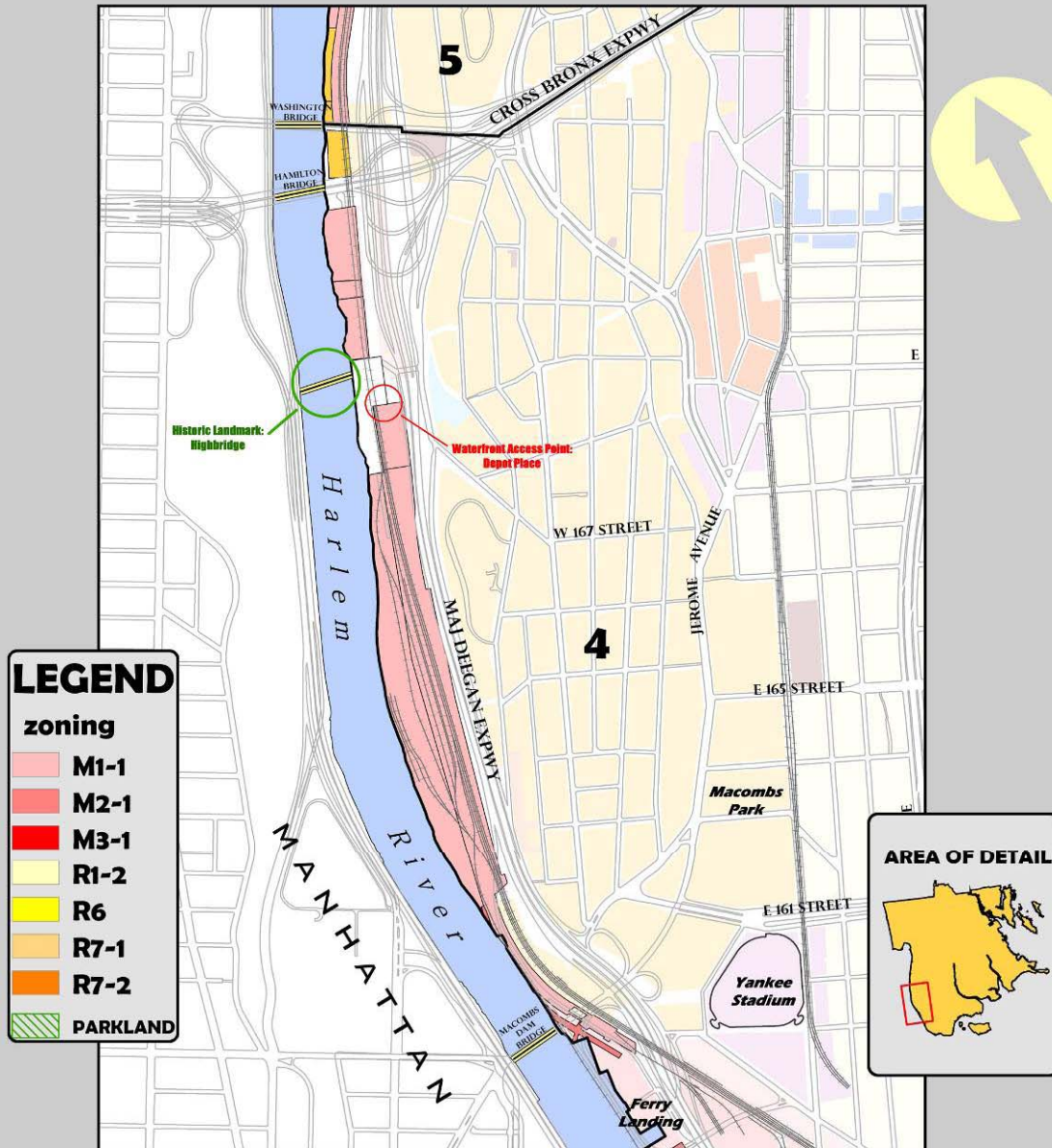
**EXISTING LAND USE AND ZONING MAPS**  
**for community districts in the Harlem River BOA**

## EXISTING LAND USE COMMUNITY DISTRICT 4



Map 5 Community District 4 Existing Land Use

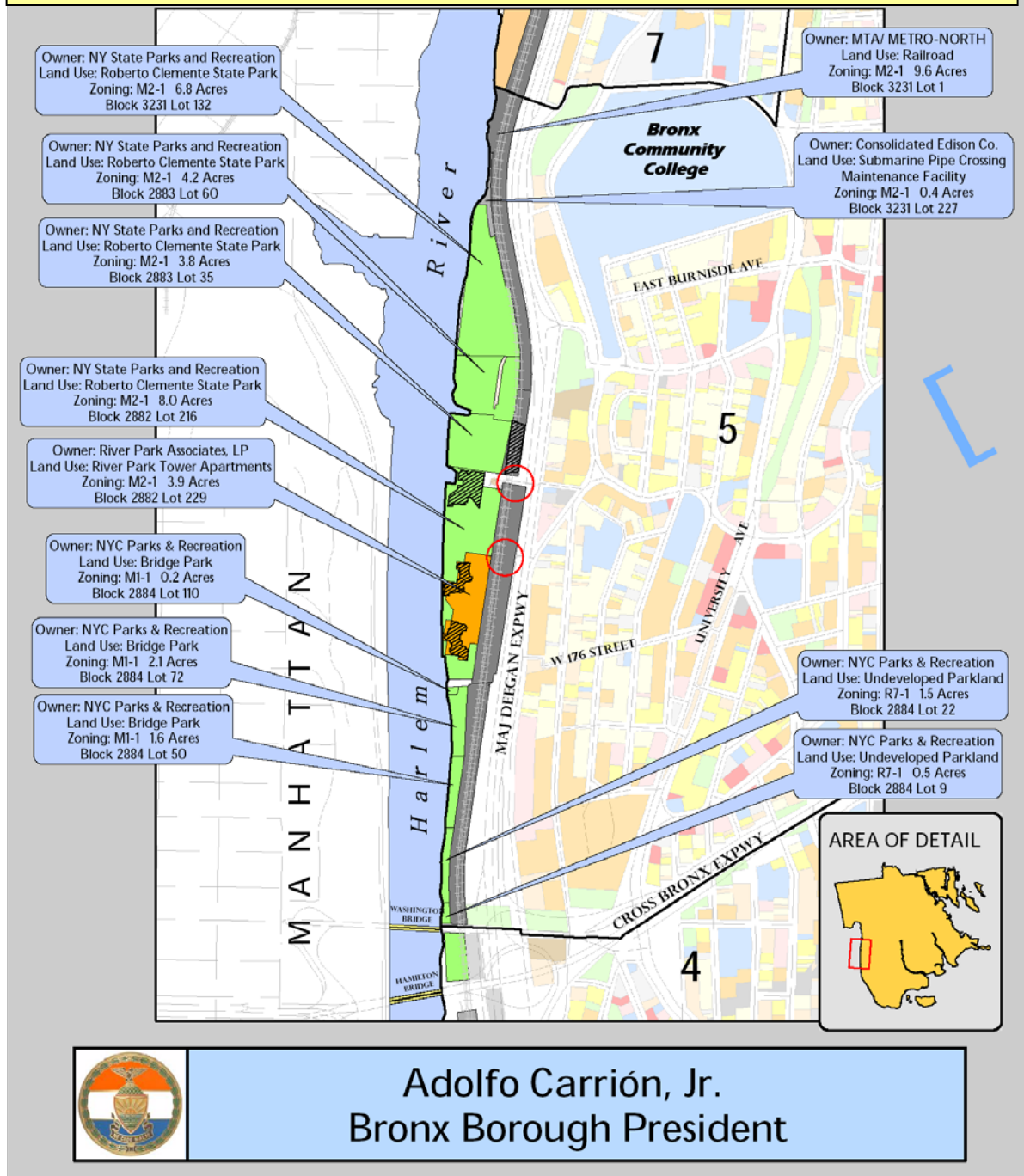
# EXISTING ZONING COMMUNITY DISTRICT 4



**Adolfo Carrión, Jr.**  
**Bronx Borough President**

Map 6 Community District 4 Existing Zoning

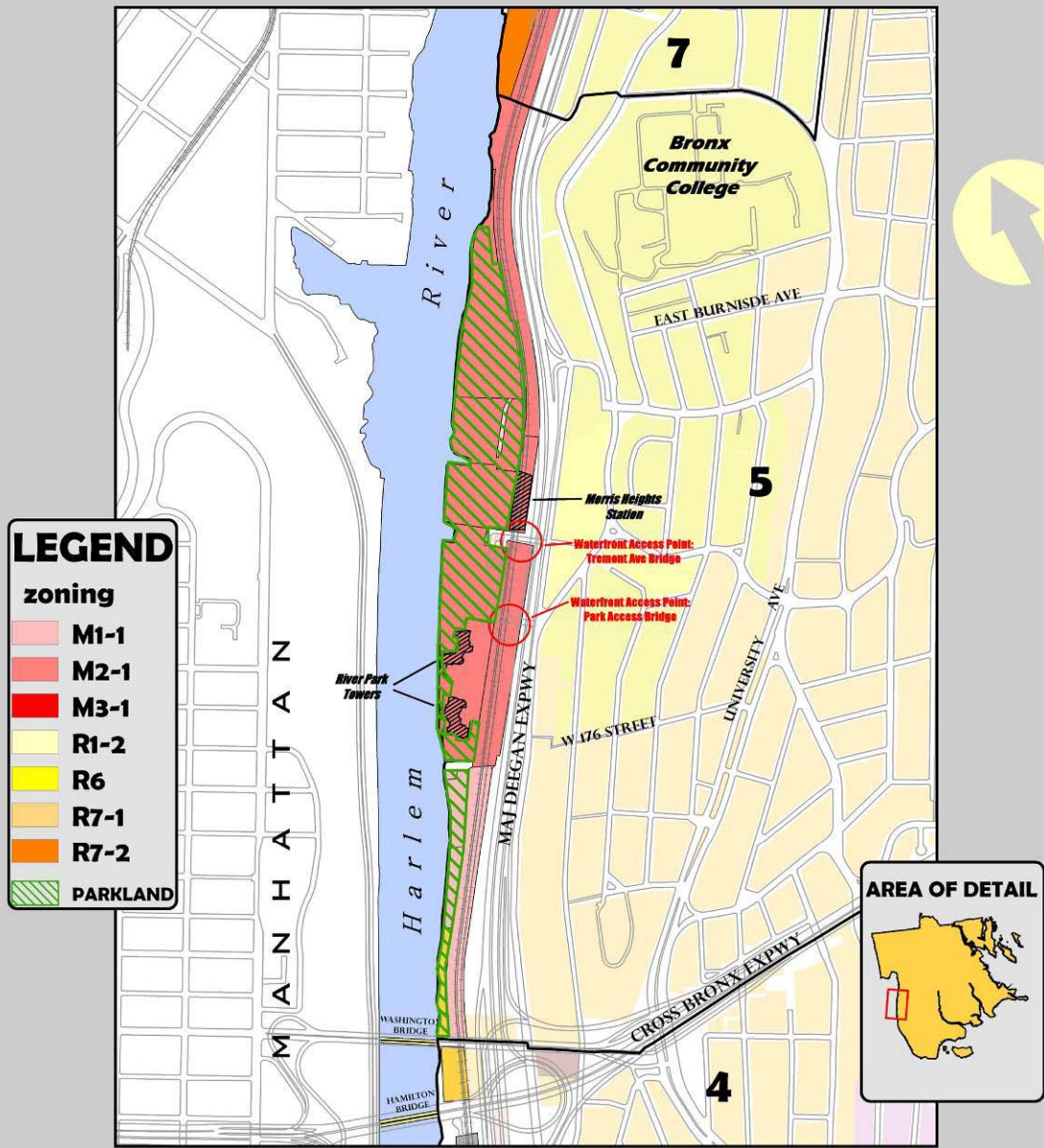
## EXISTING LAND USE COMMUNITY DISTRICT 5



Map 7 Community District 5 Existing Land Use



# EXISTING ZONING COMMUNITY DISTRICT 5

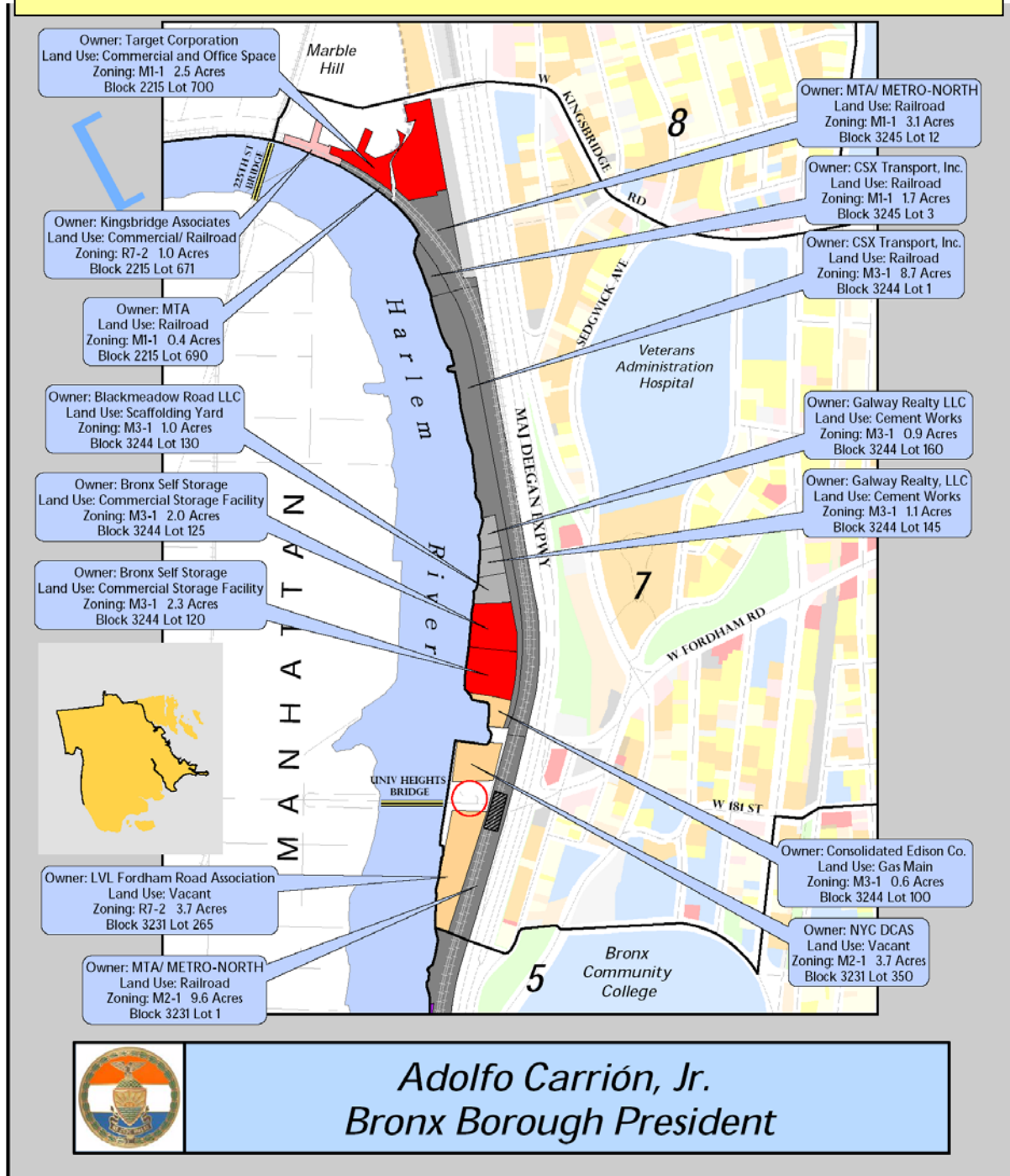


**Adolfo Carrión, Jr.**  
**Bronx Borough President**

Map 8 Community District 5 Existing Zoning

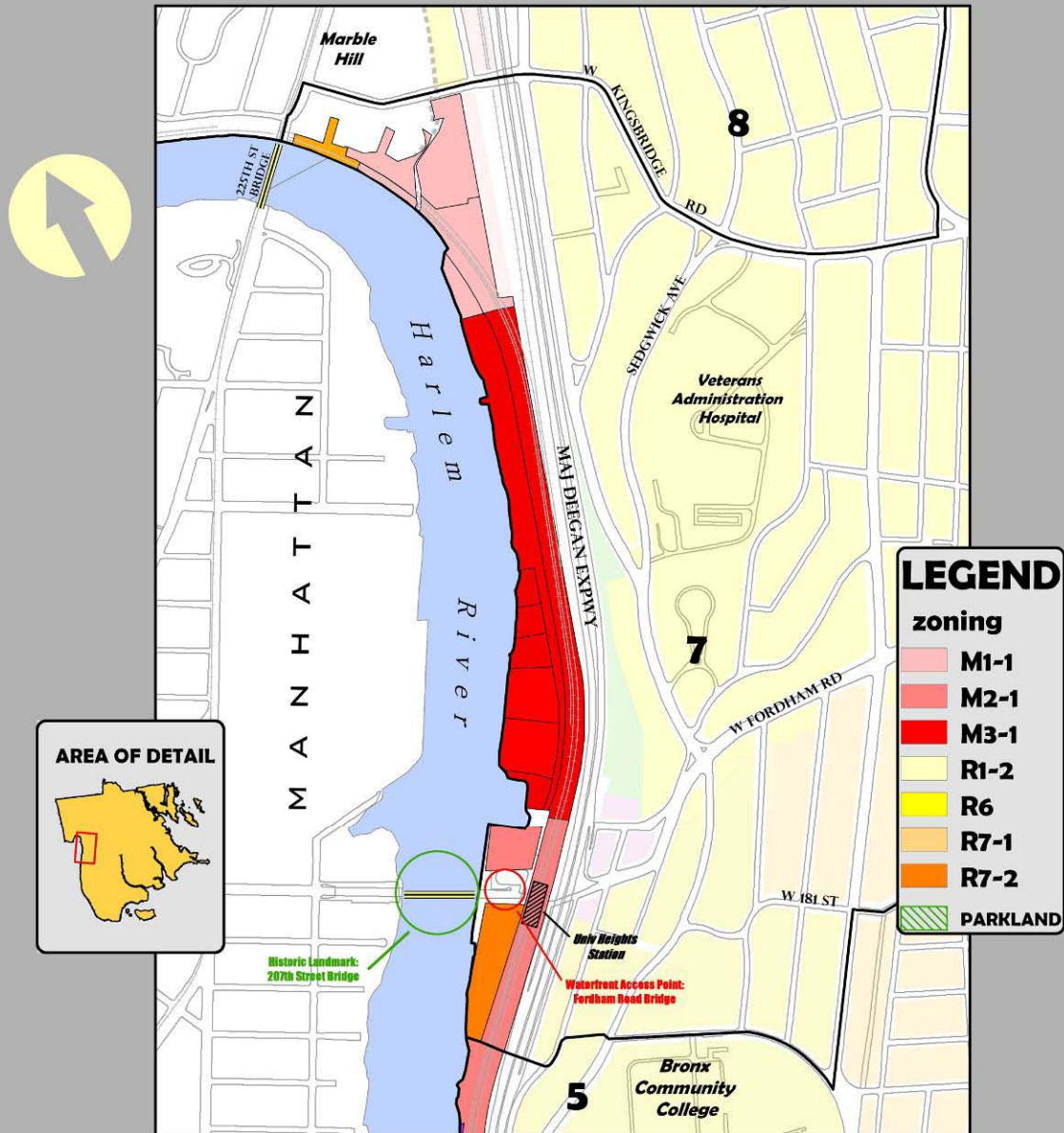


## EXISTING LAND USE COMMUNITY DISTRICT 7



Map 9 Community District 7 Existing Land Use

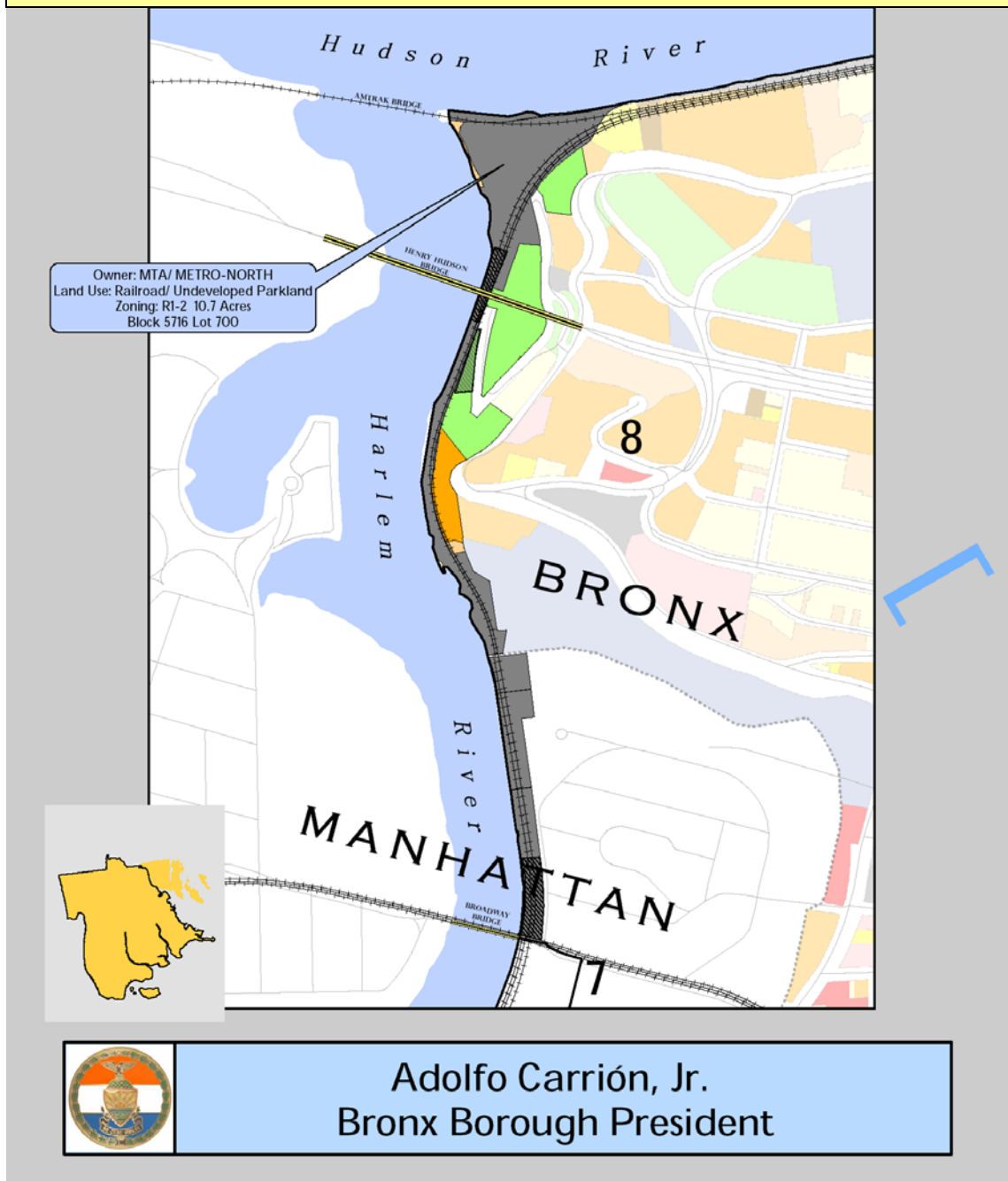
# EXISTING ZONING COMMUNITY DISTRICT 7



**Adolfo Carrión, Jr.**  
**Bronx Borough President**

Map 10 Community District 7 Existing Zoning

## EXISTING LAND USE COMMUNITY DISTRICT 8



Map 11 Community District 8 Existing Land Use



# EXISTING ZONING COMMUNITY DISTRICT 8



**Adolfo Carrión, Jr.**  
**Bronx Borough President**

Map 12 Community District 8 Existing Zoning

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## B. Land Ownership Patterns

(See *Land Ownership Map* on following page.)

Two-thirds of the sites and 82.6% of the total acreage in the BOA are publicly owned (New York City, New York State, and NYS public authority). They occupy the largest parcels and most of the direct river frontage.

New York State is the controlling owner of 65% of the total land: one state public authority, MTA/MetroNorth, owns 78 acres, or 48.4% of the total. New York State Parks & Recreation owns 26.7 acres or 16.6% of the total acreage. The City, by contrast, is a minority owner: its agencies (Parks, DCAS, and DOT) own thirteen small parcels totaling 28.3 acres, or 17.6% of the total.

The 15 sites under private ownership are small. Fordham Landing (3.7 acres) is the largest. (Target is larger but only 3.3 acres are included in this study area.) Nevertheless, these private parcels are clustered around the two vital points of at-grade access (Depot Place and University Heights Bridge), and they are on the waterfront, making them strategically important to a vision of expanding the waterfront park.

In general ownership extends to the pier line, which is the same as the bulkhead line everywhere except for the Highbridge Yards.

### *The importance of Exterior Street*

Exterior Street is a mapped right-of-way that once ran along the Harlem River. It has been built on in many sections (e.g., by the Major Deegan) but exists as remnants and dead end roadways throughout the corridor, parts in public and parts in private ownership. It extends to the west of the railroad right-of-way from Depot Place to the Hamilton Bridge. (It is maintained by NYC DOT in semi-serviceable condition.) Exterior Street serves as the access road to many of the waterfront sites north of Depot Place and north of University Heights Bridge. It figures importantly NYC Parks Department planning for the greenway, although a route directly on the river would be preferable. (Exterior Street runs along the railroad right-of-way.)

In general, when thinking about ownership in this BOA, it is more helpful to think of it in three dimensions rather than two. Its particular topography and history have left the corridor rife with layers and “envelopes” of rights and ownership. A full understanding of these as well as the potential for creating more is need to unlock the most creative and effective planning. This report is not an analysis of these ownership issues, but urges that they be investigated and that their implications be made clear to the public involved in the planning. Some relevant issues are:

- Ownership of the underwater land between the bulkhead and the pier.
- Ownership of air rights, especially over the railroads and the highway
- Mapped and unmapped streets, easements
- Development and other rights that have been transferred by underlying owners
- Current or existing condition of mapped and unmapped streets

### *What do the railroads own?*

The chain of bankruptcies, spin-offs, and reorganizations of the railroads has left entities that may not have operated a railroad in centuries still in control sidings, junctions, and switching areas. The ownership of land is complicated by the ownership of rights over it. In the 1980's, MetroNorth was created, and got an envelope of air space about from some distance above the ground to about 17 feet above it.

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Map 13 Harlem River BOA Land Ownership Pattern



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## C. Brownfield, Abandoned, and Underutilized Sites

(See *Table of Sites Showing Ownership and Land Use Patterns* at end of this section.)

A “Brownfield” or “Brownfield site” is defined as any real property, the redevelopment or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence of potential presence of a contaminant. Because of their location downslope of dense urban development and history of industrial and transportation use, all of the 45 sites in the BOA are presumed to be at least moderately contaminated. They are also all considered important for planning to fulfill the community’s desires to be able to reach a waterfront park and greenway and a clean river.

Thirty-three sites are deemed to be “underutilized” or to have reuse or redevelopment potential that could be coupled with remediation.

Four are in the **Spuyten Duyvil Focus Area**: the Spuyten Duyvil Triangle (3) and a sliver property owned by DCAS. (Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park, a relatively new and well-maintained park, and 2400 Johnson Avenue, a high-rise apartment building built into the bluff, are deemed fully-built out.)

Twenty-nine are in the **Central Focus Area**. Target, a newly built shopping center, has been included because of the tremendous potential of its parking lot to create access to the waterfront and connect two major greenways. (Excluded are Roberto Clemente State Park, a relatively new and well-maintained park; River Towers, a high-rise residential complex; and two sites owned by NYC DOT and used for streets.)

### *Opportunities to connect the community to the waterfront*

Fourteen of these 33 “underutilized” sites of interest have immediate potential to be developed as “activity nodes” that could draw people to the waterfront. They are clustered around the at-grade street connections at Depot Place, University Heights Bridge, Target, and Spuyten Duyvil Train Station. These might be considered the low-hanging fruit. Railroad properties are more challenging but ultimately critical to completing the greenway and integrating the upland with the waterfront.

### *Opportunities to enhance the underlying resource*

Different criteria apply to assess the potential of sites to clean up the river, which is critical to exploiting the waterfront’s full recreational potential. Analysis of their contaminants and conduits will reveal the sites whose remediation is likely to yield the greatest benefit to the river.

A preliminary review of data provided by NYS DEC identified multiple known hazardous sites within or proximal to the BOA:

- 5 Remediation Sites (3 Voluntary Cleanup, 2 Superfund, 1 Spill)
- Spillsites (including those affecting groundwater)

The DEC databases are assumed to be grossly underrepresentative. Because the Bronx does not rely on groundwater for drinking water, investigation and enforcement of regulatory requirements have historically been lax here compared to upstate areas. This, combined with the long and intensive use of this corridor for railroads, roadways, and industry, make it certain that far more sources of contamination will be revealed with further reviews of databases, site inspections, and testing.

Virtually all of the land in heavily urbanized areas has been subject to contamination with certain metals and hydrocarbons. Highest on the probability list are lead and hydrocarbons associated with heating and/or running internal combustion engines. A number of other metals, notably copper, zinc, chromium,

cadmium, and mercury have also been commonly used in industry, and can be distributed on urban lands at concentrations which can negatively impact human and/or ecological health.

Lead contamination has been shown to be associated with land use history in the Harlem River BOA. Properties adjacent to transportation corridors can have elevated levels because of the universal use of tetraethyllead as a gasoline additive, and the condensation of droplets or dry decomposition on vegetation or building surfaces, and subsequent concentration in soils following recurring movement in precipitation.

While all contaminants tend to be associated with particles in smaller size classes, i.e., particles with high surface energies, amongst and between particles within this broad class, there may be partitioning between humic fractions, clays and silts, and other fine particles.

Where testing has been done in the BOA, results have borne out these predictions. Soil borings were taken in 100 locations on 17.5 acres between the shoreline and the railroad tracks north of the University Heights Bridge for the 2003 Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Croton Filtration Plant. Soil samples revealed volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds (VOC's and SVOC's) related to gasoline, and diesel range total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH). Selected metals were found in the soil at concentrations higher than normal, and there was evidence of PCB residues. In addition, sediment in the river adjacent to the site was found to have SVOC's as well as elevated concentrations of selected metals.

These are all findings that would be expected given the presence of the railroad.<sup>45</sup>

The most common spill category in DEC's database is gas stations. Because of the presence of the Major Deegan Expressway and other major thoroughfares, the area upland of the BOA is punctuated with active and former gas stations. It is expected that fuels and metals, in addition to VOC's and SVOC's, have migrated through soils and groundwater to the waterfront and the river.

Test results from 1987 are also available for the Fordham Landing site just south of the University Heights Bridge. Soil samples taken in the vicinity of a concrete-enclosed gasoline tank had elevated levels of lead, VOC's, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's) and some benzene, toluene, and xylene. The PAH's were believed to be due to the presence of asphalt in the fill, which could be expected throughout the proposed BOA.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> EPA Road Map to Understanding Innovative Technology Options for Brownfields Investigation and Cleanup: Guide to Contaminants and Technologies. Third Edition 2001.

<sup>46</sup> *Fordham Landing Final Environmental Impact Statement* (CEQR #87-023X) prepared July 8, 1988 by Allee King Rosen & Fleming, Inc.

**Table 6 Spillsites within and Proximal to Proposed Harlem River BOA**

***Spillsites Within and Proximal to Proposed Harlem River BOA***

SPILL_NO	SPILL_NAME	SPILL_STR
0408566	MARBLE HILL HOUSES -NYCHA	2811 EXTERIOR ST
9812547	HENRY HUDSON BRIDGE	2152 HENRY HUDSON PARKWAY
0100120	RIVERPOINT TOWERS	555 KAPPOCK ST
0100242	SIDEWALK	1886 CEDAR AVE
0100280	IFO BUILDING	1886 CEDAR AV
0108590		150 WEST 225TH STREET
0108593	2575 PALISADE AVENUE	2575 PALISADE AVENUE
0109265	SEDGWICK AVE PURS	1823 SEDGWICK AV
0109454		920 SUMMIT AV
0204815		2400 JOHNSON AVE
0204849	VF4174	2600 NETHERLANDS AVE
0207126		150 WEST 225TH STREET
0207652	56 WEST 225TH STREET	56 WEST 225TH STREET
0207895	FORMER GAS STATION	90 W 225TH ST
0230030	GASETERIA	296 W. FORDHAM ROAD
0303753		950 MARTIN LUTH. KING BLV
0305483	GETTY	1314 SEDGWICK AV
0312716		1776 SEDGWICK AVE.
0401871	GETTY #264	2590 BAILY AVE
0401941	GETTY STATION	1314 SEDGEWICK AVE
0402968	GETTY GAS #58505	1314 SEDGEWICK AVE
8600020	555 KAPPOCK ST	555 KAPPOCK ST.
8605749	JACKSONS, 1974 CEDAR AVE	1974 CEDER AVE.
8701260	MOBIL S/S	296 WEST FORDHAM ROAD.
8705665	MOBIL	296 WEST FORDHAM ROAD
8707606	MOBIL S/S	1300 SEDGWICK AVE
8801702	MOBIL S/S	1300 SEDGWICK AVENUE
8802049	555 KAPPOCK ST/RIVER POIN	555 KAPPOCK STREET
9103196	2621 PALISADE AVE	2621 PALISADE AVE
9103485	2475 PALISADE AVE	2475 PALISADE AVE
9103685	2600 NETHERLANDS AVE	2600 NETHERLANDS AVE
9105086	RIVER TERRACE APTS	2621 PALISADES AVE
9204653	2621 PALISADES AVE	2621 PALISADES AVE
9204663		2621 PALISADES AVE
9205906	2175 CEDAR AVE	2175 CEDAR AVE
9411945	629 KAPPOCK ST	629 KAPPOCK ST
9416189	555 KAPPOCK STREET	555 KAPPOCK STREET
9416663	2548 BAILEY AVENUE	2548 BAILEY AVENUE
9501041	RIVER EDGE CO-OP	2575 PALISADES AVENUE
9513986	2550 INDEPENDANCE AVE	2550 INDEPENDANCE AVE
9515548	KNOLLS COOP #2	55 KNOLLS CRESCENT
9605584	RIVERVIEW DEVELOPMENT	1600 SEDGWYCK AV
9610676	2600 NETHERLAND AVE	2600 NETHERLAND AVE
9611209	GETTY	2590 BAILEY AVE
9612946	IFO 1810 CEDAR AV	IFO 1810 CEDAR AV
9613489	1788 SEDGWICK AVE	1788 SEDGWICK AVE
9613862	GETTY	1314 SEDGWICK AVE

9700991	1620 SEDGWICK AV	1620 SEDGWICK AV
9709680	56 WEST 225 STREET	56 WEST 225TH STREET
9802989	MARBLE HILL PUMP STATION	58 WEST 225TH ST
9807098		2600 NETHERLAND AVE
9807392	2600 NETHERLAND AVE	2600 NETHERLAND AVE
9814659	APARTMENT HOUSE	2550 INDEPENDENCE AVE
9900100	VAULT #VS2370	2500 JOHNSON AVE
9912537	RESIDENCE	1600 SEDGWICK AVE

# Proposed Harlem River BOA (approximate area)



Map Prepared by  
Office of Natural Resources  
NYSDOC Region 2  
6/15/2006  
George E. Pulos, Governor  
Doris M. Sheahan, Commissioner

**\*NOT FOR OFFICIAL USE  
OR PUBLICATION\***

This map was prepared using existing data sources. Reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the map. However, map accuracy is limited by the scale, accuracy, and date of the source data. This map is to be used for reference purposes only. Site specific conditions should be field verified.



0.8 0.4 0 0.8 Miles

**Map 14 Remedial Sites and Wetlands in Harlem River BOA**

## **D. Natural Resources**

### **1. Water**

#### *Surface Water and Tributaries*

The Harlem River is part of the Hudson River Estuary, an ecosystem designated in 1987 as an Estuary of National Significance in the National Estuary Program (one of 28 in the U.S.). It is a tidal strait flowing 7.6 miles from the Hudson to the East River between the Bronx on the mainland and the island of Manhattan.

Its best use classification by NYC DEC is as a Class I saline surface water, making it suitable for secondary contact recreation, like boating, but not primary contact recreation, like swimming and shellfishing for marketing. The Harlem is Essential Fish Habitat for 17 fish species, many of which migrate from the Long Island Sound to the Hudson River.

The Harlem River north of Macombs Dam Bridge is far cleaner and safer than either the lower Harlem or East Rivers, making it one of the most promising in the city for potential recreational development. A rigorous strategy to clean up the Brownfields, abate stormwater runoff (the main conduit of chemical contaminants) and combined sewer overflows (the major source of coliform bacteria and floatables) could raise the usage level to the legal requirement to permit swimming and fishing. This would catalyze the recreational value of the entire Harlem River Park with economic benefits to the adjacent communities.

A cove of approximately 1.3 acres is north of University Heights Bridge. It was previously used as a barge docking bay.<sup>47</sup>

Tibbets Brook flows south from Yonkers to the Harlem River, roughly along the route of the proposed Putnam rail trail. In the 1920's it was filled in and routed through a network of sewers south of Van Cortlandt Park. The Tibbett could one day be daylighted, as the Saw Mill River is in Yonkers, restoring it as an ecological and aesthetic feature of the waterfront and greenway, and mitigating rather than contributing to the pollution of the Harlem River.

A search of map archives may reveal more diverted and/or buried water bodies.

#### *Drainage*

Stormwater flows in to the Harlem River when rains causing Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO's) to shut off flow to the Wards Island Water Pollution Control Plant.

#### *Groundwater*

The groundwater level in the proposed BOA fluctuates due to the proximity of the Harlem River. On average, groundwater levels are higher than the river and flow toward it.<sup>48</sup> Groundwater in the Bronx is not used for potable water, which has left it vulnerable to weak enforcement of environmental regulations.

#### *Wetlands*

Less than a hundred years ago, this tidal strait had expansive wetlands in the northern reaches, connecting with the freshwater wetland system in the lower Tibbetts Brook. The river was once almost entirely lined with intertidal salt marsh, providing enormous habitat value for fish, local and migratory bird, and the

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<sup>47</sup> Final EIS for Proposed Croton Filtration Plant (Harlem River Site)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

substantial number of species that make salt marsh their permanent home, including *Spartina alterniflora*, ribbed mussels, and fiddler crabs. Oyster reefs, a keystone species of the estuary, were ubiquitous.

Today most of the river is bulkheaded, much of it dilapidated. Substantial sections are riprap made of construction debris. One exception is the mouth of the Harlem River at Spuyten Duyvil, which still contains rare, naturally occurring wetlands in the city of New York. It is designated by the New York State Department of State as part of the *Lower Hudson River Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitat*, which extends from the Battery to Yonkers. The shore in the area north of University Heights Bridge also contains NYS DEC-designated tidal wetland habitat.<sup>49</sup>

## 2. Soil

(See map on following page, *Soil Resources in the Harlem River BOA and Upland*)

One of the most valuable natural resources available to the Harlem River BOA is the soil underlying the waterfront and upland area. A soil survey suggests how the nutrient content and metals uptake capacity of the BOA and upland soils could be enhanced to contribute much more to the remediation of the downslope Brownfields and to the public health of the upland communities.<sup>50</sup>

Much of the waterfront in the BOA's Central Focus Area is historic fill used in the construction of the Harlem Ship Canal and the railroad. The soil here is of the LaGuardia Ebbets series – very deep, well-drained soils that have formed on human created or modified landscapes in a thick mantle (>40 inches) of human transported soil materials mixed with construction debris. Coarse fragment (>2mm) content ranges from 10 to 35 percent by volume, with more than 10 percent human artifacts. Most of these (concrete, asphalt, bricks, coal, ash) will act like rock fragments. Permeability is moderate in areas where the soil has not been compacted at the surface, and moderately slow where it has surface compaction or platy structure. Hydrologic Soil Group is B. (The Ebbets Series is pending final approval; therefore, it is not on the Official Series Description (OSD) website.)

The soil type of the Spuyten Duyvil waterfront and upland, as well as the band of land immediately upland of the BOA's Central Focus Area, is Chatfield Series. It consists of moderately deep, well-drained loamy soils that have formed in a moderately thick mantle of glacial till overlying granite, gneiss, or schist bedrock. Depth to bedrock ranges from 20 to 40 inches; solum thickness ranges from 16 to 36 inches. Rock fragments range from 5 to 50 percent in the A horizon and from 5 to 35 percent below. Permeability is moderate or moderately rapid; Hydrologic Soil Group is C.

Much of the BOA upland is taken up by impermeable transportation infrastructure, with dense development of buildings, parking lots, and paved surfaces. This is characterized as the Pavement and Buildings Unit, areas in which 80% or more of the surface is covered by asphalt, concrete, buildings, or other impervious materials, so intermingled with other soils that it is not practical to map them separately. Substratum phases are added to provide additional information. The till substratum phase indicates a high probability of unsorted and unstratified glacial till deposits in the substratum.

The upland has several significant areas characterized as Charlton Greenbelt. These are generally found in the area of the Old Croton Aquaduct and steep slopes running along the highway, service roads and

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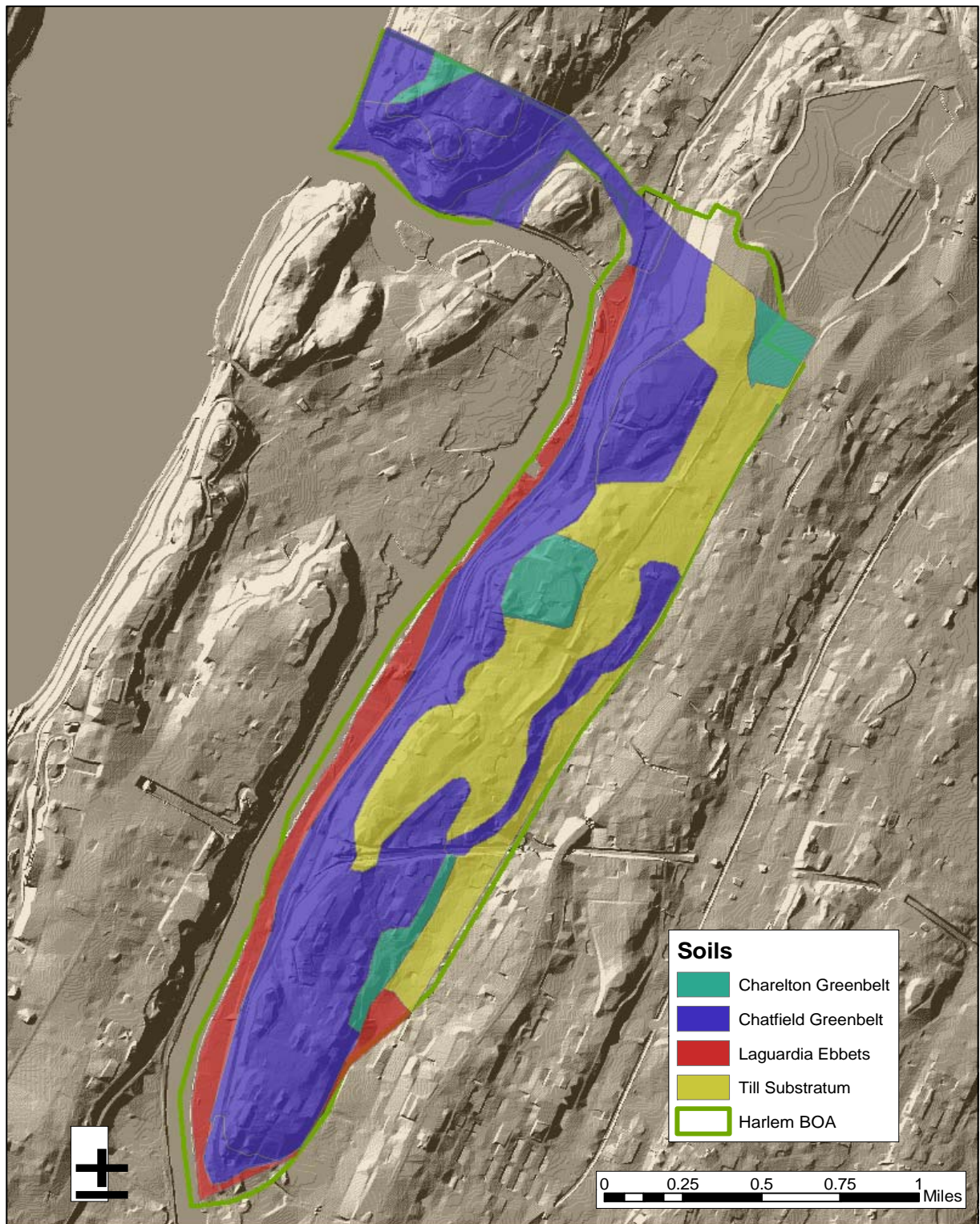
<sup>49</sup> Final EIS for Croton Filtration Plan, September 2003..

<sup>50</sup> This layer of the urban landscape is under active investigation by the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and this agency, together with the New York Soil and Water Conservation District, has made New York City the most comprehensive urban soil survey yet undertaken. (Paul Mankiewicz, PhD. NYC Soil and Water Conservation District)



railroad corridors. Charlton soils are very deep, well-drained loam that have formed in glacial till derived mainly from granite, gneiss, or schist. Depth to bedrock is greater than 60 inches; solum thickness ranges from 20 to 38 inches. Rock fragments range from 5 to 35 percent by volume to a depth of 40 inches, and up to 50 percent below. Permeability is moderate or moderately rapid; Hydrologic Soil Group is B.

The Greenbelt Series consists of very deep-to-bedrock, well-drained soils that have formed in more than 40 inches of loamy fill that has been piled on a natural surface that may or may not have had its topsoil layer removed before being covered. These soils do not have a fragipan or dense till within the top six feet, but the subsoil may have been compacted by heavy machinery as it was being deposited. Natural rock fragments range from 1 to 20 percent; these soils are relatively clean of human artifacts. Permeability is moderate in areas where the soil cap has not been compacted, but is moderately slow where it has been compacted and has platy structure; Hydrologic Soil Group is B.



Map 15 Soil Types and Composition

### 3. Open Space

The Harlem River BOA and its upland area contain 92 acres, or about 9% open space. These spaces provide the majority of aboveground area available for ecological and other enhanced development of this largely residential group of neighborhoods. As may be seen, there are about seven coherent open spaces throughout an area of about 1.5 square miles, as well as one long, linear park (the Croton Aqueduct Trail).

Given the scatter of these areas, they can be a quarter mile to almost a mile from residential centers. The long and narrow shape of the area suggests, however, that parkland along the Harlem River, or the creation of long green street parks along north-south avenues, could provide major, well-distributed amenities with near universal access for this zone of limited green space.

Enhancing and expanding these street parks can help carry the waterfront park into the upland -- visually, ecologically, and experientially.



**Map 16 Open Space and Parks in BOA and Upland**

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## **E. Summary and Recommendations**

The Harlem River BOA offers several opportunities to tie remediation and redevelopment of the waterfront to revitalization of the upland communities.

- Find ways for existing transportation infrastructure to support additional access to the waterfront.
- Incorporate public amenities in underutilized sites that will attract local residents to the waterfront and outsiders to the upland.
- Maximize parkland and greening of sites on the waterfront, and gateways to it.
- Use bioremediation techniques to address contamination; restore the shoreline's natural habitat where possible.

### **1. Transportation infrastructure: opportunities to create access**

The Harlem River Waterfront, a transportation corridor used by one million people a day, is now being asked to accommodate a waterfront park. The highway and railroad pose a tremendous challenge, both by degrading the natural resources on which the park will depend and by creating the greatest barrier to its access. Even the newest transportation modes to be added to the corridor – a greenway and water transport – will exact a toll on the natural resources.

Yet this intensity of transportation use also presents the new public waterfront its greatest opportunities. Since the upland communities were cut off from the waterfront by highway, the railroad has been used to develop the most effective public access to the waterfront. Decking the railroad was used to create the connections that made a major state park and large residential development on the waterfront viable. It was coupled with development of a valuable public amenity, a school built on the airspace over the railroad right of way. Further investigation should explore other opportunities to couple development with access to the waterfront.

There are four (soon to be five) train stations on the waterfront, all of them underutilized. How can train service and the stations better serve local residents? Greenway and park users?

Completion of the greenway and waterfront park depends on acquiring easements over railroad property and tracks. It also depends on the design and reconfigurations of highways, streets, and bridges. The agencies and public will benefit from thorough understanding of the ownership, development rights, and jurisdiction of these properties.

The Harlem River waterfront's capacity to revitalize the upland Bronx communities is directly related to the quality of access that can be created. The best access is broad, park-like and a destination in itself. The routes should be landscaped and contain amenities, like restaurants or food vendors, artwork, and benches.

Access is not just an opportunity for the upland residents to get to the river. It is the key to the economic revitalization of their communities. The same infrastructure that draws people *to* and *through* the Harlem River waterfront -- the river, the greenway and bridges, railroad and highway – can be used to draw outsiders to patronize local businesses and institutions .



“Access” should be universal. The best access is a single shared route. Pedestrian bridges and ramps, long distances and steep inclines do not meet the needs of people with limited mobility, who make up large portions of the populations of each of the BOA communities. An access plan should be developed that analyzes opportunities for “accessible access” that reaches deep into the populated upland, not its edge.

**Visual access is an economic value.** The waterfront and ridge should be developed to reveal scenic views and create places to enjoy them. A scenic view plan should be developed to: highlight attractive features, like the aqueduct; curtail billboards and other intrusions; encourage green roofs and landscaping of waterfront developments; and create vantage points that are attractive, quiet, and accessible.

## **2. Incorporate public amenities at access points**

Waterfront sites should be redeveloped with amenities that will draw residents of the upland communities down to the river. The areas around the access points and routes leading to the upland should likewise draw outsiders into the community. Together these function as “activity nodes” attracting the critical mass of visitors needed to create a viable public space.

It is helpful to think of these nodes in terms of complementary pairings of waterfront and upland. For example:

### Depot Place (waterfront) and High Bridge (upland)

The High Bridge is a gateway from Manhattan and a destination. Depot Place below is developed to provide an activity that adds to the view from above, like boating. Barbecue areas and vendors on the waterfront park draw local residents and create a “station” on the greenway.

### University Heights Bridge area (waterfront) and Bronx Community College (upland).

A sports facility draws students to the waterfront. The college’s Promenade of Famous Americans is an upland attraction for users of a greenway and marina/pier below. The area near the entrance to the bridge provides amenities to both. Access from the High Bridge to the waterfront is developed in conjunction with a concession serving both (e.g., an elevator and restaurant).

Light industry and commercial uses of the waterfront are not necessarily incompatible with the park or the greenway and business activities add an interesting, authentic component to the waterfront and greenway if they are visible. It is good for young people to see adults working in a variety of jobs, in a setting that encourages casual conversation. It is good for children to watch college students rowing and older people fishing. It is good for solitary joggers to see large families enjoying barbecues.

Transportation facilities can be attractive features of the park and greenway if they are highlighted and interpreted. Bridges, boats, trains, and highways could all be used as part of an outdoor museum.

The Harlem River BOA is an opportunity to reveal the natural beauty and cultural vibrancy of the Bronx to one million people who travel through this transportation corridor every day. Capturing just a small percentage of them as customers for the local economy would be a powerful boost for the local economies. There lies the most powerful engine of revitalization of these communities.

### **3. Maximize greening of waterfront and its gateways**

#### *Stormwater Capture Framework: Greenroofs, GreenStreets, and Below Grade Storage*

Landscape and design offer a powerful way to integrate the BOA upland with the waterfront, both ecologically and functionally. Massive greening of upland streets, orphan spaces created by the area's highways and ramps, and rooftops will improve the quality of the water and air for the benefit of both waterfront and upland. Done on a broad enough scale, the effect from the upland ridge should be of a continuous green carpet or "fingers" leading down to the river. Conversely, the route from waterfront to upland should draw outside visitors to the waterfront and Greenway below into the neighborhoods above.

As shown by the open space map, the BOA upland includes about seven coherent open spaces throughout about one and a half square mile area, as well as one long, linear park (the Old Croton Aqueduct). Given the scatter of these areas, they can be a quarter mile to almost a mile from residential centers. The long and narrow shape of the area suggests, however, that parkland along the Harlem River, or the creation of long green street parks along north-south avenues, could provide major, well distributed amenities with near universal access for this zone of limited green space.

Water regulates temperature and powers the growth of ecological systems in the terrestrial biosphere. By this measure, the water that runs off of rooftops, sidewalks and roadways throughout the BOA and upland provides an increasing cost in terms of pollutants delivered to the Harlem River, energy required to treat it if directed into a waste water treatment plant, but no benefits for the living world. Water captured on rooftops, in GreenStreet Parks, street-side plantings, pervious pavement, and in parks potentially saves us some fraction of the \$1.52 per hundred gallon cost of water in New York, as well as providing 540 calories of heat removal if this water evaporates from plant leaves or soil surfaces. A mere half a millimeter of water evaporated from a 400 square foot green roof is the equivalent of a ton of air conditioning. Trees supported by water capture at street-side can add 10% or more to the value of nearby properties. For these reasons, and others noted below, stormwater capture is one essential element in the redevelopment of the Bronx along the Harlem River.

Water capture is one of the primary functions green roofs, and this has substantial value along the Harlem River. Combined sewers discharge billions of gallons of untreated wastewater into this waterbody each year. These flows carry a number of pollutants, pathogens, and excess nutrients that contribute to poor water quality and degrade local estuarine habitat.

Green roof construction in the Harlem River BOA and upland offers a major strategic opportunity to improve the environmental quality of the river and enhance remediation of the waterfront Brownfields. By way of example, just a hundred acres of green roof (6% of the total BOA and upland acreage) could capture between 3 and 9 million gallons of stormwater per storm event, diminishing the volume and frequency of combined sewer discharge. Further investigation could identify the opportunities with the greatest implications for combined sewers, water quality and habitat value in the Harlem River.

Since stormwater capture on the highly urbanized landscape of the Harlem River BOA is central to decreasing the deleterious effects of combined sewer overflows, green roof construction is recommended as a stormwater management technique, given the fact that 43% of the land is residential, or about half of all the land is covered by residential, commercial and industrial uses.

Other options for managing stormwater and decreasing combined sewer overflows are to retrofit existing GreenStreets and construct new ones capable of functioning as stormwater capture parks. Between rain events, vegetation located along streets and within stormwater capture parks can use a significant portion

of diverted stormwater and move it to the atmosphere by evapotranspiration. Capillary rise of water stored in localized reservoirs beneath sidewalks and below planting bed could support plant growth during dry times, leading to less maintenance watering of these land value enhancing features. Stormwater that infiltrates into groundwater can also serve to reduce loading of the combined sewer.

#### **4. Bioremediation and Shoreline Restoration**

The goal for the Harlem River Waterfront is to ensure that the open space areas meet standards for active parkland. Because this park will be used for active water recreation, this means also bringing the river to its highest use, e.g. fishing and swimming.

Rip rap, pilings, or rocky habitat at the deep water edge of restored salt marshes like the Spuyten Duyvil and others to be restored along the Harlem can be designed and built to incorporate areas for attached organisms, from mussels to barnacles to oysters and seaweeds. The front walls of the sheet piling used to construct or restore salt marsh system can be fitted with a textured concrete or pumice-like foam glass to promote colonization of the walls with organisms, increasing habitat as well as water filtration, such as barnacles, green, brown, and red algae, and perhaps sponges, anemones, oysters, and sea squirts. The overall system will then be comprised of functioning salt marsh habitat on the tidal flats and a biologically diverse community of attached organisms living on the vertical walls of each terrace.

A bioremediation approach is recommended during redevelopment of the BOA sites and also where opportunities arise throughout the upland slope. Biological, biogeochemical and ecological approaches to remove or sequester pollutants, diminish the risk of contact, and increase the scale of natural features and ecosystem services in the Harlem River BOA, are both aesthetic and cost-effective methods of improving environmental quality.

Because many, perhaps the majority of the BOA sites are contaminated with gasoline, fuel or heating oil based hydrocarbons, as well as a few widely used metals from the prior industrial period, most notably lead, remediation can become substantially less costly.

Biological, biogeochemical and ecological approaches to remove or sequester pollutants diminish the risk of contact, and increase the scale of natural features and ecosystem services in the Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area may provide both an aesthetic that people are willing to vote for as well as a cost structure in line with the value added to environmental quality.

##### *Hydrocarbons*

Bioremediation with soil microbes has been a successful method for cleaning soils contaminated with hydrocarbons, and can be enhanced by using plants which act to build up a diverse rhizosphere environment. Phytoremediation techniques were developed to provide a cost effective alternative to traditional excavation and landfilling operations. Given potentially widespread contamination, and what have served as inhibitory costs to date, bioremediation and phytoremediation may be the methods of choice in order to move forward on a broad front in the Harlem River BOA.

##### *Phytoremediation for Heavy Metals*

Metals may also be moved out of the soil matrix and into plant material, in a process termed phytoremediation. Through environmental modifications including soil amendments, plantings, and irrigation, metals may be more selectively removed by this technique. It is also much less energy intensive and less costly than typically soil excavation, transport and landfilling. Physically excavating



contaminated soils incurs high material handling and tipping costs, ranging from about a hundred thousand to roughly a million dollars per acre. This method has the advantage of immediately eliminating identified chemical contaminants, but requires land set aside in perpetuity as unproductive landfill as well as an immediate cash commitment of a hundred dollars a cubic yard, or in some cases more, for mitigation and disposal.

Phytoremediation, on the other hand, incurs what are often much more modest costs as compared to excavation and landfilling. Removal of metals by plants cannot, however, meet environmental quality standards in very short time-frames, since metal uptake is proportional to plant mass grown on site and frequently requires 2–3 growing seasons and/or multiple harvests to achieve target concentrations.

#### *Heavy Metal Sequestration by Constructed Marsh Systems: Designing for Sulfide-Metal Binding in Wetlands and Groundwater Systems*

Because many of the BOA sites have high water tables and surfaces with low infiltration rates, it may be difficult to construct or install soil systems. In this case, specific above or below ground wetland treatment environments can be used to sequester metals and/or mineralize hydrocarbons. Below grade environments could be created or enhanced below or next to contaminated landscapes or with highway or roadway runoff in the Harlem River watershed.

Sulfur and iron are both readily available waste materials in the New York City waste stream, and could be utilized to augment the behaviour of natural systems around the Harlem River.

#### *Humic-Metal Binding in Constructed Wetlands*

Wetlands, in calcium rich environments, and humic matter are also mechanisms for removing heavy metals. Each of these provide an ecosystem service if situated in and around potential sources of metals.

Restoring marsh system along the edges of the Harlem River, or capturing stormwater in high pH groundwater systems could incorporate these valuable services, along with the many other benefits provided by vegetated green spaces, wetland areas, or groundwater catchment and treatment zones designed for pollutant removal. Nutrient rich soil and wetland systems also breakdown hydrocarbons, at concentrations substantially higher than those found in Brownfields. Because of the value they add to local properties, as well as affording local human and wildlife populations protections against chemicals of concern, incorporating natural attenuation and enhancements to increase bioremediation in this BOA may offer substantial cost effective mitigation measures to the redevelopment of the Harlem River BOA.

### **III. SITE PROFILES**

The Table of Brownfields, Abandoned and Underutilized Sites on the following page summarizes information about land use, zoning and ownership for the 45 sites in the Harlem River BOA. Because accessibility is the critical issue in the development of the Harlem River waterfront as a public waterfront, each site has been given one \* for:

- Direct waterfront access (e.g., dock, landing, “get-down,” etc.)
- Indirect waterfront access (on the river, but without access to it)
- At-grade access to local street
- Access to public transportation (subway, train)
- Disability Access
- Visual access

Priority (!) indicates they are of particular interest because of their underutilized capacity to create public access to the waterfront.

The individual site profiles provide further description about the history and condition of each parcel, including recommendations for their future use as documented in public plans. They have been grouped in six areas around shared access points:

- Macombs Dam Bridge/Highbridge Yards
- Depot Place
- Roberto Clemente State Park
- University Heights Bridge
- Kingsbridge Valley
- Spuyten Duyvil

Table 7 Brownfields, Abandoned and Underutilized Sites in the Harlem River BOA

Harlem River BOA Sites: Land Use and Ownership Patterns							
High Priority	Site Name	CB	Owner	Block/Lot	Acres	Current Use	Zone
	Exterior Street	4	NYC DOT	2539/20	1.2	roadway	M2-1
	MACOMBS DAM BRIDGE (ped access - low elev)						
	Highbridge Yard	4	MTA/MetroNorth	2539/506	14.3	Car appearance facility	M1-1
	Railroad	4	"	2539/502	18.8	railroad (active)	"
	"	4	"	2540/3	2.4	"	"
!	Depot Pl./Exterior St.	4	NYC DOT	n/a	3.1	mapped street	"
!	HIGHBRIDGE (ped access closed - high elev)						
!	New Tabernacle	4	New Tabernacle	2541/122	0.4	dog kennel	M1-1
!	"	4	"	2541/159	0.2	junkyard	"
!	Bridge & Scaffolding	4	NYC DCAS	2541/132	4.4	scaffolding	"
	ALEXANDER HAMILTON BRIDGE (no ped access - high elev) Cross Bronx Interchange						
	Bridge Park	4	NYC Parks	2542/43	1.2	City parkland	R7-1
	WASHINGTON BRIDGE (ped access - low elev)						
	Bridge Park	5	NYC Parks	2684/9	0.5	City parkland	"
	"	5	"	2684/22	1.5	"	"
	"	5	DCAS	2684/50	1.6	undeveloped natural area	M1-1
	"	5	"	2684/72	2.1	"	"
	"	5	NYS Parks	2684/110	0.2	State park	"
	River Park Towers	5	River Pk. Assoc.	2682/229	3.9	residential	M2-1
	Roberto Clemente	5	NYS Parks	2682/216	8.0	State park	"
	State Park	5	"	2683/35	3.8	"	"
	"	5	"	2683/60	4.2	"	"
	"	5	"	3231/132	6.8	"	"
	Railroad	5	MTA/MetroNorth	2684/205	4.7	active railroad	M1-1
	"	5	"	2682/130	5.5	"	M2-1
	"	5	"	2683/1	1.5	"	"
	"	5 & 7	"	3231/1	9.6	"	"
	Con Edison	5	Con Edison	3231/227	0.4	maintenance facility	"
!	Fordham Landing	5	LVL Fordham Rd Assoc	3231/265	3.7	bus storage (vacant)	R7-2
	UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS BRIDGE (ped access - low elev)						
!	north of	7	NYC DCAS to DPR	3231/350	3.6	undeveloped natural area	M2-1
!	University	7	Con Edison	3244/100	0.6	gas main	M3-1
	Heights	7	Bronx Self-Storage	3244/120	2.3	commercial storage	"
	Bridge	7	"	3244/125	2.0	lumber	"
	"	7	Galway Realty	3244/145	1.1	cement works	"
	"	7	"	3244/160	0.9	"	"
	"	7	Blackmeadow Rd	3244/130	1.0	scaffolding yard	"
	Harlem/Hudson line	7	MTA/Metro North	2215/690	0.4	railroad (active)	"
	"	7	"	3244/2	7.0	"	M1-1
	"	7	"	3245/12	3.1	"	"
	"	7	CSX	3244/1	8.7	railroad (active)	"
	"	7	"	3245/3	1.7	"	"
	River Plaza	7	Target Corp.	3245/51	3.3	retail shopping center	"
	BROADWAY BRIDGE (ped access - low elev)						
	Empty lot?	8	DCAS	5716/363	0.1	vacant	R6
	Blue Building		2400 Johnson Ave	5716/362	1.4	residential	R6
	HENRY HUDSON BRIDGE (ped access - high elev)						
	Spuyten Duyvil	8	NYC Parks	5716/278	1.7	City park	n/a
	Shorefront Park	8	"	5716/170	3.4	"	"
	"	8	"	5716/279	1.1	"	"
!	Spuyten Duyvil	8	MTA/MetroNorth	5716/700	10.7	railroad/parkland	R1-2
!	Triangle	8	DCAS	5716/501	0.2	undeveloped parkland	"
!	"	8	CRC Properties	5753/135	0.2	active railroad	R1-2
	TOTAL		45 sites		158.5 ACRES		
			Public 30 sites 132.9 acres (82.6%)				
			Private 15 sites (3 railroad) 28 acres (17.4%)				
			Railroad 16 sites (4 private) 88.8 acres (55.2%)				
			Park 13 park 42.3 acres (26.3%)				
			Roadway/Parking				
			Residential 2 sites (1 public, 1 private) 5.3 acres (3.3%)				
			Econ. activity 13 sites (2 utility, 1 R/R-related, 3 illegal or temporary) 34.6 acres (21.5%)				
		!	BOA Priority				

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## A. MACOMB'S DAM BRIDGE / HIGHBRIDGE YARDS AREA

### Community Vision:

- A continuous Harlem River Greenway linking the waterfront park and ferry landing near Yankee Stadium/Bronx Terminal Market to Depot Place/Bridge Park and points north.
- Enhancement of scenic views from Highbridge, the Major Deegan Expressway, the waterfront park, the river, and Manhattan.



### *History of Recommendations*

“Explore feasibility of a park-and-ride ferry operation at the Yankee Stadium waterfront parking site south of Macombs Dam Bridge. This would require construction of a dock adjacent to the future Oak Point rail link.” (1993 Bronx Waterfront Plan)

“The new Oak Point rail link, which will serve both the Harlem River Yard and the Hunts Point market and peninsula, will improve a rail-freight connection between New York and points north and west.” (1993 Bronx Waterfront Plan)

Deck Highbridge Yard site and Metro-North to develop for residential use. “For more than 20 years, various plans have supported the concept of air rights development above the Highbridge Yard. Although air right deck development is costly, the site could accommodate a large number of housing units at a density similar the adjoining neighborhood, which is zoned R7-1. (1993 *Bronx Waterfront Plan*)

“The Hudson River Greenway along upland streets has the potential to link many of the existing and proposed waterfront parks...If air rights development of Highbridge Yards is feasible, consider putting esplanade at deck level rather than water’s edge in order to facilitate access from the Highbridge community and afford excellent views of the river (1993 *Bronx Waterfront Plan*).

“The park mapping on the waterfront will continue the opening up of the Harlem River waterfront to the public begun with the Gateway Center at the Bronx Terminal Market.”

--Report on application by Parks re the Yankee Stadium Plan, NYC DCP February 22, 2006

### **NYC DOT Site (Exterior Street)**

**Ownership:** NYC DOT  
**Location:** Vicinity of Macombs Dam Bridge  
Community Board District 4  
**Size:** 1.2 acres  
**Zoning:** n/a  
**Block/Lot:** 2539/20  
**Access:** unknown

### **Description**

This parcel is used as a roadway.

### **History**

Exterior Street is the original street running along the Harlem River. It exists today as remnants of mapped and unmapped streets on public or private land.



### **Highbridge Yards and Railroad Sites (3 parcels)**

**Ownership:** MTA/MetroNorth  
**Location:** Between local street and the waterfront south of Depot Place  
**Size:** 35.5 acres (.8 miles of waterfront)  
**Block/Lot:** 2539/606 (14.3 acres)  
2539/502 (18.8 acres)  
2540/3 (2.4 acres)  
**Zoning:** M1-1  
**Access:** No public access; private access from Depot Place, an at-grade roadway. Visual access of the river is blocked by billboards and a structure.

### **Description:**

Highbridge Yards includes active railroads, including the Oak Point Rail link (“outboard of the bulkhead between the Harlem River Yard and the Highbridge Yard.”) This short rail link is critical to a plan to use truck-to-rail transport to reduce trucking of freight through the Bronx to Long Island. It is also critical for the East Side Access Project, which will bring the Long Island Railroad into Grand Central Terminal.

A car-maintenance facility was completed in 2003. It is a 900 foot-long structured steel frame facility with storage capacity for 100 cars and a fueling facility. There is also an electric substation and an 8,300-square foot office building.

The views are of the High Bridge and Highbridge Park in Manhattan.

### **History**

Highbridgeville, south of the High Bridge, was a stop for steamboats from New York City in the summer. Piers also served steamboats carrying commuters to Wall Street. The piers were removed in 1927.

Before the 1990’s, plans contemplated decking the highway and Highbridge Yards and creating an elevated promenade overlooking the river. However, with the railroad’s acquisition and development of the vacant land, the idea of acquiring air rights to build a platform came to be considered impractical.

“Highbridge was a ‘greenfield’ site,” according to Peter Cannito, president of MTA/MetroNorth, which expanded its development in the late 1990’s. (quoted in DesignBuild Magazine, March 2003)

The long-abandoned rail freight yard “contained pockets of contamination, including asbestos pipes.”

Because of the high water table created by proximity to the river, MTA brought in fill to raise the whole site three feet above the flood plain (fill including two feet of stone ballast under the tracks).

## B. DEPOT PLACE AREA

### Community Vision:

- A waterfront greenway extending from Macombs Dam to 225<sup>th</sup> Street
- Expansion and enhancement of Bridge Park with active recreation to draw local residents to the waterfront
- Restoration of pedestrian access on the High Bridge as the centerpiece of a unified Harlem River Park on both sides of the river
- Public bus service to Depot Place



Depot Place is seen as the key to unlocking this vision. This two-lane road with narrow sidewalk crosses over the railroad and Major Deegan Expressway at grade with the local street. It was built by MTA for access to its yards. It is located in a commercial area at the foot of a relatively short, gentle slope from a densely populated neighborhood.

To the south of Depot Place lie the Highbridge Yards and Yankee Stadium. To the north, lies nearly one mile of undeveloped private and city-owned parkland. This strip between river and railroad ranges from 50 to 300 feet in width, including Exterior Street, a mapped city street running along the railroad. Planning for the greenway here has assumed that the route would use Exterior Street. Were access to waterfront properties to become available, however, a riverfront esplanade could be feasible.

BOEDC has obtained funds from Congressman Jose Serrano to develop schematic designs for a Harlem River Promenade. EDC may serve as the project sponsor. The Parks Department has capital funds to implement the greenway here. The Borough President has allocated funds to improve Depot Place.

### *History of Recommendations*

One of the few working waterfront uses that might be accommodated would be ferry service from the southernmost part of the reach. (*1993 Bronx Waterfront Plan*)

Concept of Regatta Park initiated by Adolfo Carrion and developed by NYC DPR. Calls for water related activities both active (boating) and educational.

Refurbish and reopen the High Bridge. Refurbish the Monumental Stair in Highbridge Park. (The Parks Council: *The Old Croton Aqueduct* design study, 1997)

-endorsed by 2003 *Harlem River Committee*

-identified in 2005 *NYS Open Space Conservation Plan* “long list” - properties with potential for fee purchase

Illuminate the Highbridge at night. (2003 *Harlem River Committee*)

Make the Washington and Alexander Hamilton bridges scenic features of Bridge Park (2003 *Harlem River Committee*)

Improve small boat landing at RC Park (2003 Harlem River Committee report)

Make rowing more available with a boathouse at RC Park (2003 Harlem River Committee Report)

Reopen the High Bridge for pedestrian and bicycle use. (2004 *Bronx Arterial Needs Major Investment Study*; NYC Parks & Recreation Dept. recommendation; others)

Add pedestrian & bicycle access to Washington Bridge (2004 *Bronx Arterial Needs Major Investment Study* – all alternatives)

Construct new Harlem River crossing south of the Washington Bridge to reduce congestion at the Highbridge Interchange (one alternative identified in 2004 *Bronx Arterial Needs Major Investment Study*)

“EDC is currently spearheading the Sherman Creek Project, which will enhance the waterfront along Boards 5 and 7 in the Bronx. For the sake of continuity, as well as for accessibility, we request that the study area be expanded to include up to Depot Place in CD4. This will make waterfront access available to our community residents and will generate the “birth” of our waterfront development.” (*Community Board 4 District Needs Statement, 2006*).

### **Depot Place/Exterior Street Site**

**Ownership:** NYC DOT  
**Location:** around Depot Place  
Community Board District 4  
**Size:** small  
**Zoning:** n/a  
**Block/Lot:** n/a  
**Access:** \*\*\*\*\*  
Access from local street for pedestrians and vehicles, possibly including buses

### **Description**

Exterior Street is a mapped street running north from Highbridge Yards for about a mile between the waterfront properties and the railroad. It varies in width and is approximately 60 feet wide. It is accessed from the local street at Depot Place, an at-grade crossing over the railroad. The small parcel around Depot Place used for storage and parking. The overpass is 40 feet wide (35-foot road and 5-foot sidewalk).

### **History**

#### *Recommendations*

2003 *Harlem River Committee* recommended improving paving and lighting.  
identified in 2005 *NYS Open Space Conservation Plan* “long list” - properties with potential for fee purchase.

### **New Tabernacle Site (2 parcels)**

**Ownership:** New Tabernacle Baptist Church  
**Location:** On the waterfront north of High Bridge  
Community Board District 4  
**Size:** 0.6 acres (0.4 and 0.2)  
**Zoning:** M1-1  
**Block/Lot:** 2541/122  
2541/159  
**Access:** \*\*\*  
This site is accessed from Depot Place to Exterior Street.

### **Description**

One parcel is used by a hunting club for use as a dog kennel, which is currently in dilapidated condition. The other parcel is being used as a junkyard and shantytown.

### **History**

The Tabernacle Baptist Church owns these parcels.

### **NYC DCAS Site**

**Ownership:** New York City Department of Administrative Services (DCAS)  
**Location:** On the waterfront between the Tabernacle site and the Hamilton Bridge  
Community Board District 4  
**Size:** 4.4 acres  
**Zoning:** M1-1  
**Block/Lot:** 2541/132  
**Access:** Access from local street to Depot Place bridge, looping around to Exterior Street

### **Description**

The site is currently being used by the Perimeter Bridge and Scaffolding Co., Inc.  
It looks across at an unspoiled section of the Manhattan waterfront.

### **History**

The scaffolding company leases this parcel from DCAS on a month-to-month basis. It is an active business employing some 30 people and providing services to the construction industry.

### **Bridge Park Sites (6 parcels)**

**Ownership:** NYC Parks  
**Location:** On the waterfront south of the Hamilton Bridge to Roberto Clemente State Park  
Community Board District 4 & 5  
**Size:** 5.9 acres  
**Zoning:** R7-1 (1) and M1-1 (5)  
**Block/Lots:** 2542/43  
2884/22  
2884/50 & 72 (currently DCAS)  
2884/110  
**Access:** \*\*\*  
Access is from Depot Place to Exterior Street.

### **Description**

This site is unimproved parkland between the water and the railroad. The Hamilton and Washington Bridges are very high and allow for much air, light and sight lines. The areas under them are expected to provide welcome respite from the sun for future greenway users.

Remnants of a staircase provides architectural interest and views of Manhattan and Harlem River bridges are stunning.

Its views – natural and manmade – are the most arresting of any on the waterfront.

### **History**

In the 1890's the area between Washington Bridge and High Bridge was occupied by Kyle's Amusement Park, which had a large pier.

Up until the early 1900's this was the city-owned Washington Bridge Park, which extended from where the Alexander Hamilton Bridge is now to where Roberto Clemente Park now is.

It was demapped for the construction of the Deegan in the 1950s. In 1963 the Hamilton Bridge cut it in two, completing its abandonment as a park.

New York Restoration Project began the cleanup and restoration of the area in 2004, starting from the northern end.

The parcel between the Hamilton and Washington Bridges was used by NYC DOS as a recycling facility and as an illegal dump.

### ***Recommendations***

The park is "isolated and lonely" and considered a "place of great danger" yet has great potential because of its views. (2004 Harlem River Committee)

"Potential users of the Harlem River Greenway need to be directed to Depot Place, since it is the only existing inter-modal access point in the study area.. Large, colorful signs should be installed along Sedgwick Avenue." (Hunter College Study 2004)



## **C. ROBERTO CLEMENTE STATE PARK AREA**

### **Community Vision:**

- **A waterfront greenway from Macomb's Dam Bridge to 225<sup>th</sup> Street**
- **Water-based recreation and education serving residents of River Towers and local neighborhoods**

This park is the centerpiece of a plan for a larger Regatta Park that includes the Harlem and Manhattan River waterfronts linked by the High Bridge and University Heights Bridge and all of the water in between. Swindler's Cove Park and Peter Jay Sharp Boathouse on the opposite shore hold the promise of complementary recreational waterfront uses. Community Board 5 is exploring the feasibility of creating new access from Bronx Community College to Roberto Clemente State Park, down the historic step street through University Woods to Cedar Street and over the Deegan.

### *History of Recommendations*

1992 Bronx Waterfront Plan recommended acquisition of easement to extend esplanade north of Roberto Clemente Park; Trust for Public Land recommended it be opened for public access and improved with a river front esplanade.

"Promote waterborne travel by developing links to other points in the borough and building slips piers from Roberto Clemente State Park and other locations along the river." (2003 *Harlem River Committee*)

"Upgrading existing parkland (Roberto Clemente State Park and Bridge Park) is the highest priority of the Borough President's 2003 Harlem River Committee...While the acquisition of additional parkland is desirable, underutilization due to inaccessibility and unsafe conditions remains a major obstacle to the expansion of open space resources along the Harlem River." (2003 *Harlem River Committee*)

Construct pedestrian overpasses over the railroad and expressway at Sedgwick Avenue to connect the waterfront with the upland community (2003 *Harlem River Committee*)

"Explore possibility of pedestrian access from Bronx Community College. A foot bridge would extend the northern end of RC toward the community while providing access for students to water sports, environmental and ecology programs." (2003 *Harlem River Committee*)

"Anchor Roberto Clemente State Park at its southern end to the community and facilitate additional access with a pedestrian bridge at 176<sup>th</sup> Street." (2003 *Harlem River Committee*)

Encourage collegiate rowing programs by providing storage and launching facilities (2003 *Harlem River Committee*)

Develop an environmental center in Roberto Clemente Park to encourage greater use (2004 *Waterfront Project Plan*)

"Create new pedestrian links from adjoining communities at both the northern and southern ends of Roberto Clemente State Park, in addition to the two existing vehicular bridges in these areas. The first could extend from the Cedar Avenue playground at the end of West 179th Street, and the second could stretch from the end of the West 176th stepped street...Implement an extension of an existing pedestrian bridge over the Major Deegan Expressway from the Highbridge community at West 161st Street to

supplement an existing ramp to the north.” (NYRP) Education facility, classrooms, and boat storage at southern end of Roberto Clemente Park (NYRP)

### **Roberto Clemente State Park Site (5 parcels)**

**Ownership:** New York State,  
River Park Associates, LP owns development rights on 3.9 acres containing the River Towers apartment complex

**Location:** On the waterfront between Bridge Park and MTA/MetroNorth property

**Size:** 26.7 acres

**Zoning:** M2-1

**Block/Lot:** 2882/229 (River Towers)  
2882/216  
2883/35  
2883/60  
3231/132

**Access:** \*\*\*\*\*

The site is accessible over two at-grade bridges from Sedgwick Avenue, which is served by bus and a MetroNorth station. There is parking for cars and buses and direct water access for boats. There are no barriers to views of the unspoiled Manhattan shoreline and Harlem River Bridges.

### **Description**

This is a New York State park containing River Towers, a residential complex of four 40-story towers that is home to more than 4,000 people.

A concrete path runs between the apartment buildings and the river.

Recreational facilities include an outdoor aquatics center, a multi-purpose recreational building, outdoor ballfields, picnic areas and other amenities, including restrooms.

### **History**

In the 1890’s Lewis G. Morris had a private dock here.

The park and towers were built in 1972 on former industrial land.

\$20 million has been identified for RCSP from the Croton Water Treatment Plant allocation for Bronx parks.

**Con Ed Site****Ownership:** Consolidated Edison Co.**Location:** On the waterfront north of Roberto Clemente State Park  
Community Board District 5**Size:** 0.4 acres**Zoning:** M2-1**Access:** none (except for employees)**Description**

The site is being used by Submarine Pipe Crossing as a maintenance facility.

**History**

### **MTA/Metro North Site**

**Ownership:** MTA/MetroNorth (8 parcels)  
Air rights over tracks owned by NYC used for school and access roads to Roberto Clemente State Park and River Towers.

**Location:** On the waterfront between Con Edison and Fordham Landing; otherwise running between the waterfront properties and the Major Deegan Community Board Districts 5 & 7

**Size:** 41.4 acres

**Zoning:** M1-1

**Block/Lot:** 2884/205  
2882/130  
2883/1  
3231/1

**Access:** \*  
The two railroad stations provide access to the waterfront in Roberto Clemente State Park. The railroad tracks are often used illegally as a shortcut from the University Heights Bridge to Roberto Clemente State Park.

### **Description**

The site is an active railroad, and includes two stations (Morris Heights and University Heights).

### **History**

New York City acquired air rights to build the elementary school next to River Towers and two access roads from Sedgwick Avenue to River Towers and Roberto Clemente State Park.

## D. UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS BRIDGE AREA

### Community Vision:

- **Harlem River Greenway from Macomb's Dam Bridge to 225<sup>th</sup> Street, linked with Putnam Trail**
- **Waterfront park and recreational facilities**
- **Mixed use development, if any**
- **Marina**

The eight privately and publicly-owned parcels totaling 15.3 acres on either side of this bridge present opportunities for residents of University Heights as well as Washington Heights and Inwood in Manhattan. This low bridge is at the foot of Fordham Road, the old path leading down to Fordham Landing. Access to the waterfront sites is by a vehicular ramp curving around to Exterior Street, a mapped street which turns into a private roadway.

The landmark University Heights Bridge is an at-grade, pedestrian-accessible bridge that is used most by Manhattan residents to reach Roberto Clemente State Park (often by trespassing on the railroad right-of-way). The area above the waterfront, at the lower end of Fordham Road is occupied by commercial uses.

This area is considered to be the most valuable open space along the waterfront by Trust for Public Land because so many people are already able to access it, via the bridge and Fordham Road.

### *History of Recommendations:*

Sites within the BOA identified for potential redevelopment as residential: Fordham Landing, Broadway/225<sup>th</sup> Street, University Heights Bridge North, Highbridge Yard, and Yankee Stadium waterfront. (1993 *Bronx Waterfront Plan*)

Extend the adjoining Kingsbridge community to the water's edge by developing 14 acres north of Univ. Heights Bridge as mid-rise residential (R6 and R7-1), a density similar to upland neighborhood, including parking and related commercial and community uses. (1993 *Bronx Waterfront Plan*)

Relocate industries on city-owned land north of Univ. Hts Bridge elsewhere in the Bronx as they produce few jobs. (1993 *Bronx Waterfront Plan*)

Create an esplanade and new waterfront park at least 6 acres in size as part of the redevelopment of the 20-acre site; Rezone city-owned parcels north of University Heights Bridge from M3-1 and M1-1 to medium-density residential. (1993 *Bronx Waterfront Plan*)

Development should "provide river access including promenade development, green areas and recreational facilities." (2004 report by Bronx Borough President's Harlem River Committee)[Fordham Landing is an opportunity to develop needed affordable housing. (2004 *Report by the Women's City Club, New York City's Housing Crisis: What Can Be Done*)]

As part of the proposal for the Croton Filtration Plant, NYC DEP would have provided waterfront access in the form of a pedestrian walkway along the redeveloped bulkhead line beginning at Fordham Road and extending north to what is now the Target site. (Final SEIS, Croton Filtration Plan)

Fordham Landing and Sherman Creek on the Manhattan shore opposite should be developed synergistically.. to make them visual and functional complements, linked by the University Heights Bridge. (*Manhattan Institute report, January 2006*)

“Unless there is an outside source of funding to acquire the property for parkland, the City recommends it remain zoned for housing.” (Wilbur Woods, NYC Department of Planning).

“The thinking in the borough planning department now leans toward a recreational or cultural use that enhances the rest of the waterfront.” (Matt Mason, Bronx Department of City Planning)

Fordham Landing is identified as one of properties with potential for fee purchase. (*2005 NYS Open Space Conservation Plan “long list”*)

In its 1995 report, Trust for Public Land recommended purchase of Fordham Landing site for the expansion of Roberto Clemente State Park. The NY State Office of Park, Recreation and Historic Preservation is working to assemble funding for state acquisition of the site. It was identified in 2005 NYS Open Space Conservation Plan as priority for funding with monies under the state Environmental Protection Act of 1993 and the Clean Air/Clean Water Bond Act of 1996.



## **Fordham Landing Site**

**Ownership:** LVL Fordham Road Association  
**Location:** On the waterfront south of the University Heights Bridge  
Community Board District 7  
**Size:** 3.7 acres  
**Zoning:** R7-2  
**Block/Lot:** 3231/265  
**Access:** \*\*  
**Fordham Landing is accessible by car on the ramp at the end of Fordham Road circling underneath the approach to the University Heights Bridge. Pedestrians use the sidewalk along the same ramp. It is otherwise landlocked by CSX Transport property to the south and MTA/MetroNorth to the west. The site is below the grade of the bridge and local street.**

## **Description**

Fordham Landing is a flat, vacant site paved with asphalt, which is currently being used for school bus storage despite its residential zoning.

It faces a dilapidated section of the Manhattan waterfront, which is about to begin a long-range conversion to mixed-use (residential/commercial/light manufacturing).

In 1990 the property was rezoned to R7-2 to permit residential development, conditioned on providing public access to a riverfront esplanade.

Soil tests done for a 1987 Environmental Assessment included revealed elevated levels of lead, VOC's, and PAH's.

## **History**

Piers at Fordham Landing once served steamboats carrying commuters to Wall Street. (Bronx Historical Society).

The La Salla Group, has owned the site for many years. In 1989 the owners proposed and received a change from manufacturing to residential zoning, intending to build 450 subsidized middle-income housing units. As required by the city, it included a 740-foot public waterfront esplanade with access from the University Heights Bridge. The housing has not been built.



## **NYC DCAS Site**

**Ownership:** New York City Department of City Administrative Services – in process of being transferred to NYC Parks

**Location:** On the waterfront just north of University Heights Bridge, fronts on Exterior Street, a mapped street, and faces railroad tracks  
Community Board District 7

**Size;** 3.6 acres

**Zoning:** M2-1

**Block/Lot:** 3231/350

**Access:** \*\*

**This site is accessible by car by ramp (or foot on the sidewalk) at the end Fordham Road**

### **Description**

This site looks over at a currently dilapidated section of the Manhattan waterfront.

Extensive testing was done on this site as part of the 2003 Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Croton Filtration Plant. Soil samples revealed VOC's and SVOC's related to gasoline, and diesel range TPH's. Selected metals were found in the soil at concentrations higher than normal, and there was evidence of PCB residues. In addition, sediment in the river adjacent to the site was found to have SVOC's as well as elevated concentrations of metals.

### **History**

This site is part of a larger area proposed by NYC DEP for the Croton Water Filtration Plant, which, if approved, was to include a waterfront esplanade. The waterfront access was quickly abandoned due to security concerns for the Filter Plant, and later the EIS found that the site was not appropriate. This site received mitigation funds from the Croton Filtration Plant for development of a waterfront park.

### **Con Ed Site**

**Ownership:** Consolidated Edison Co.  
**Location:** On the waterfront between DCAS and Bronx Self-Storage; fronting on private roadway that continues from Exterior Street  
**Size:** 0.6 acres  
**Zoning:** M3-1  
**Block/Lot:** 3244/100  
**Access:** \*\*  
This site is accessible by car or foot from the ramp at the end of Fordham Road to Exterior Street and then the private road.

### **Description**

Con Edison is currently using the site for a gas main.

The site looks across to a currently dilapidated section of the Manhattan waterfront.

Extensive testing was done on this site as part of the 2003 Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Croton Filtration Plant. Soil samples revealed VOC's and SVOC's related to gasoline, and diesel range TPH's. Selected metals were found in the soil at concentrations higher than normal, and there was evidence of PCB residues. In addition, sediment in the river adjacent to the site was found to have SVOC's as well as elevated concentrations of metals.

### **History**

This site was part of DEP's proposal for the Croton Water Filtration Plant, which, if approved, would have included a waterfront walkway.

### **Bronx Self-Storage Site (2 parcels)**

**Ownership:** Bronx Self-Storage  
**Location:** On the waterfront between Con Ed and the Cement Works, fronting on the private road that continues from Exterior Street  
Community Board District 7  
**Size:** 4.3 acres (2.3 and 2.0)  
**Zoning:** M3-1  
**Block/Lot:** 3244/120  
3244/160  
**Access:** \*\*  
This site is accessible by car or foot from the ramp at the end of Fordham Road to Exterior Street and its private roadway extension

### **Description**

One parcel has a newly-built facility being used for commercial storage. Bronx Self-Storage sold the northernmost parcel for development of a scaffolding yard.

This site looks across to a currently dilapidated section of the Manhattan waterfront.

Extensive testing was done on this site as part of the 2003 Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Croton Filtration Plant. Soil samples revealed VOC's and SVOC's related to gasoline, and diesel range TPH's. Selected metals were found in the soil at concentrations higher than normal, and there was evidence of PCB residues. In addition, sediment in the river adjacent to the site was found to have SVOC's as well as elevated concentrations of metals.

### **History**

These parcels were included in the DEP's proposal for the Croton Filtration Plant which, if approved, would have included a waterfront walkway.

Formerly Butler Lane.

### **Cement Works Site (2 parcels)**

**Ownership:** Galway Realty  
**Location:** On the waterfront between the lumberyard and scaffolding yard; facing the private roadway which is an extension of Exterior Street  
Community Board District 7  
**Size:** 2.0 acres (1.1 and 0.9)  
**Zoning:** M3-1  
**Block/Lot:** 3244/145  
3244/160  
**Access:** \*\*  
This site is accessible by car or foot from the ramp at the end Fordham Road, north on Exterior Street and the private roadway extension

### **Description**

*Description of business – no. of employees, truck traffic, need for water*

The site includes small buildings and above ground structures used for its concrete batch business.

The site looks across at a currently dilapidated section of the Manhattan waterfront.

Extensive testing was done on this site as part of the 2003 Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Croton Filtration Plant. Soil samples revealed VOC's and SVOC's related to gasoline, and diesel range TPH's. Selected metals were found in the soil at concentrations higher than normal, and there was evidence of PCB residues. In addition, sediment in the river adjacent to the site was found to have SVOC's as well as elevated concentrations of metals.

### **History**

This site was formerly occupied by XCEL Ready Mix, a concrete batch plant. In 2003 both parcels were sold to the current owner for \$2.4 million.

### **Scaffolding Yard Site**

**Ownership:** Blackmeadow Road LLC  
**Location:** On the waterfront between the cement works and railroad property, at the end of the private road that extends from Exterior Street  
Community Board District 7  
**Size:** 1.0 acres  
**Zoning:** M3-1  
**Block/Lot:** 3244/130  
**Access:** \*\*  
This site is accessible by car or foot from the ramp at the end of Fordham Road to Exterior Street. It dead ends at the railroad property.

### **Description**

See addition to Self-Storage Site.

This site is currently being used as a scaffolding yard. The site looks across at a currently dilapidated section of the Manhattan waterfront.

This site looks across to a currently dilapidated section of the Manhattan waterfront.

Extensive testing was done on this site as part of the 2003 Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Croton Filtration Plant. Soil samples revealed VOC's and SVOC's related to gasoline, and diesel range TPH's. Selected metals were found in the soil at concentrations higher than normal, and there was evidence of PCB residues. In addition, sediment in the river adjacent to the site was found to have SVOC's as well as elevated concentrations of metals.

### **History**

Formerly storage site.

## E. KINGSBRIDGE VALLEY AREA

### Community Vision:

- **Continuous Harlem River Greenway from Macombs Dam Bridge to 225<sup>th</sup> Street**
- **Link to Putnam Rail and Hudson River Valley Greenways**
- **Waterfront Access**
- **Access to River Plaza Shopping Center via the waterfront**

Every plan for the Harlem River waterfront has envisioned a greenway or esplanade continuing north to Kingsbridge, where it would connect to the north-south Putnam Rail route and westward through Riverdale to the Hudson River route. The Parks department is in the process of acquiring rights over two sections of the Putnam railroad from 230<sup>th</sup> to 237<sup>th</sup> Street, raising the urgency of making this link with the river greenways. The Kingsbridge Valley presents a rare opportunity for at-grade access to a densely-populated neighborhood and lively commercial district.



### *History of recommendations*

An enhanced system of linear open spaces is recommended for CD8 using both existing facilities and the designation of additional parkland resources. This interconnected network of on-street and off-street pathways will provide an additional recreational amenity as well as an alternative means of commuting. (CD2000: *A River to Reservoir Strategy*, Bronx CB8 197a Plan adopted in 2003)

Increase recreational and transportation opportunities through a network of greenways and bike trails including the Old Putnam Line, including portions south of Van Cortlandt Park, the Hudson River Valley Greenway, and various north-south and east-west routes. (CD2000: *A River to Reservoir Strategy*, Bronx CB8 197a Plan adopted in 2003)

## **CSX Transport Sites (2)**

**Ownership:** Consolidated Rail Corporation  
**Location:** either side of the railroad tracks, including the waterfront, from the end of the Galway property to the Target Site  
Community Board 7  
**Size:** 2 parcels totaling 10.4 acres; the 1.7 acre parcel is on the waterfront.  
**Zoning:** M1-1  
**Block/Lot:** 3244/1  
3245/3  
**Access:** Non-existent

### **Description**

The sites contain several railroad spurs and may be developed in the future for storage and distribution of gravel and sand.<sup>52</sup> If the Croton Filtration Plant had been built here, the plan was to create a waterfront greenway.

“Based on sampling efforts performed for [the Final SEIS for the Croton Filtration Plant], data are available identifying potential contaminants of concern at the Harlem River Site. Volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds (VOC<sub>5</sub>, SVOC<sub>5</sub>) related to gasoline and diesel range total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH) were detected in the soil and groundwater at different locations at the site. The data also indicated that selected metals were found in the soil at concentrations that could be considered higher than normal background levels for the eastern United States. Based on information derived from regulatory reports, PCB residues in soil may be presents at a localized portion of the site. In addition, sediment in the river adjacent to the site was found to contain semi-volatile organic compounds as well as elevated concentrations of selected metals.”

### **History**

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<sup>52</sup> From the *Croton Filtration Plant EIS*



### **MTA/MetroNorth Line Sites (3)**

**Ownership:** MTA/MetroNorth  
**Location:** a long, narrow strip running inland next to the Deegan until it reaches Target, where it runs directly on the river  
Community Board 7  
**Size:** 10.5 acres  
**Zoning:** M3-1 and M1-1  
**Block/Lot:** 3245/12  
3244/2  
2215/690  
**Access:** Non-existent

### **Description**

The railroad tracks are used by commuter and freight lines.

The property is fenced with chain link and poorly maintained. Otherwise it includes scenic landscape features, like rock faces. There are no billboards in this area. There is a building on the property that may be historically significant.

Extensive testing was done on this site as part of the 2003 Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Croton Filtration Plant. Soil samples revealed VOC's and SVOC's related to gasoline, and diesel range TPH's. Selected metals were found in the soil at concentrations higher than normal, and there was evidence of PCB residues. In addition, sediment in the river adjacent to the site was found to have SVOC's as well as elevated concentrations of metals.

### **History**

These sites are proposed for creating the connection between the Harlem River Greenway and the Putnam Rail Trail, either along the west side of the Deegan from the University Heights Bridge or via some sort of pedestrian bridge over the railroad to the waterfront.

### **River Plaza (Target) Site**

**Ownership:** Target Corporation  
**Location:** 225<sup>th</sup> Street west of the Major Deegan Expressway  
Community Board 7  
**Size:** 3.3 acres  
**Zoning:** M1-1  
**Block/Lot:** 3245/51  
**Access:** \*\*\*\*\*

The entrance to the Target Mall is on 225<sup>th</sup> Street, a local street that crosses the Deegan Expressway over an at-grade overpass. A waterfront view corridor has been preserved between the two buildings. The surrounding area is flat terrain. An elevated subway station is 1 block away; MetroNorth's Marble Hill Station is slightly further. Parking is available.

### **Description**

The River Plaza Shopping Center is a multi-level "Big Box" development that fronts the local sidewalk with parking in the rear. It includes two parcels totaling 5.8 acres, one of which is within the BOA. It includes 16 retail stores, including three anchor tenants: Target Department Store, Marshall's, and Applebee's, which are well-integrated with the surrounding Kingsbridge commercial district.

No EIS or EAS is available for this development because it was done as-of-right.

It lies on soft soil with a water table of 14 feet.<sup>53</sup>

While the site is considered fully built out, the parking lot in the rear, as required by zoning, is not fully utilized. The parking lot, which is higher than the railroad tracks below, has no access to the river.

The quality of the view from here is mixed. The Henry Hudson and Broadway Bridges and the Palisades are permanent scenic features. Relics of the working waterfront may not be. The dilapidated Manhattan waterfront is likely to be improved. The view from the roof takes in the George Washington Bridge as well.

### **History**

Target was built in 2004 on the site of a vacant warehouse formerly used by Presbyterian Medical Center for medical records and other abandoned industrial buildings. The development was done as-of-right, in conformance with zoning.

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<sup>53</sup> "Commercial Real Estate: Regional Market," *The New York Times*, 9/15/04.

## F. SPUYTEN DUYVIL AREA

### Community Vision:

- **Restore natural shoreline and habitat**
- **Create waterfront access**
- **Complete link in Hudson River Valley Greenway**
- **Passive recreation**
- **Protect scenic views**

### *History of Recommendations*

Acquisition for parkland endorsed by Parks departments since Koch administration; 1993 *Plan for Bronx Waterfront*.

Extend overpass at Spuyten Duyvil railroad station. “Given the site’s proximity to active railroad lines, its relative inaccessibility (a vehicular bridge would be needed), and sensitive natural features, residential development would be inappropriate at this location. The site should be preserved in its natural state as an extension of the adjoining Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park. Pedestrian access to the site could be provided by extending the overpass at the SD Railroad Station” (1993 *Bronx Waterfront Plan*)

Plant additional wetlands to treat the outfall from the combined sewer overflow pipe that empties in the Hudson River just east of the triangle. To do this, the grade of the triangle would be lowered to allow water to infiltrate farther inland. To protect the wetland from the strong currents of the shipping channel, protective structural “arms”, constructed of gabions or another appropriate technology, would be positioned where needed. Any such construction would be covered with vegetation.. (*Bronx Link of the Hudson River Valley Greenway*)

Local residents were divided in the 1990’s in their reaction to a plan to create access to the river at the Spuyten Duyvil Triangle, fearing that recreational development would destroy the unspoiled nature of the area. The issue will be revisited, however, with a new feasibility study for a river route for the Hudson River Valley Greenway. The Amtrak Train Bridge and Triangle are key components of this route. Protect scenic views of [the Harlem River] from intrusion by mapping special scenic view districts. (*CD2000: A River to Reservoir Strategy*, Bronx CB8 197a Plan adopted in 2003)

In 2004 Community Board 8 registered its preference for the least intrusive means of stabilizing the slope and restoring the wetland edge. Preserve the salt marsh of the Spuyten Duyvil Triangle; create accessibility (2004 *Bronx Waterfront Project Plan*)

The 2005 *NYS Open Space Conservation Plan* identified acquisition of the Triangle as priority for funding with monies under the state Environmental Protection Act of 1993 and the Clean Air/Clean Water Bond Act of 1996.

### **Blue Building Site**

**Ownership:** 2400 Johnson Avenue  
**Location:** On Johnson Avenue, a ridge overlooking the Harlem River  
Community Board District 8  
**Size:** 1.4 acres  
**Zoning:** R6  
**Block/Lot:** 5716/362  
**Access:** \*\*  
This site is accessible from the local street, which is served by bus transportation. Its view of the river is unimpeded. Its physical access to the waterfront requires a steep walk (or drive) to the Spuyten Duyvil train station.

### **Description**

This large cooperative apartment building known as the “Blue Building” was built in 1969, one of the first in Spuyten Duyvil, and is among the highest priced because of the quality of its views of the river. The site includes a wooded slope down to the railroad below.

### **History**

This site was part of the former Isaac Johnson Iron & Co. Works, a munitions factory that operated from 1853 through the 1930’s.

### **Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park Sites (2)**

**Ownership:** NYC Parks

**Location:** slope and lowland between railroad, MetroNorth train station and upland street  
Community Board District 8

**Size:** 4.5 acres (3.4 and 1.1)

**Zoning:** n/a

**Block/Lots:** 5716/279  
5716/170

**Access** \*\*\*

The park is easily accessible by MetroNorth, which also has parking. It is accessible to upland residents by a local steep street, and a rail link bus that meets commuter trains on weekdays. A step trail from the Henry Hudson Bridge to the waterfront has been closed by MTA for several years.

No direct water access. Superior river views from the water's edge, the station, and the upland, where a small overlook with bench on Palisades Avenue at the top of the ridge provides a seating area for viewing the Henry Hudson Bridge, the Hudson and Harlem Rivers and Palisades.

### **Description**

Natural area, including soft trails.

### **History**

The original parkland was acquired by the city in 1982. The Henry Hudson Bridge was built over and on part of it in the 1930's. The disturbed land was terraced and restored in 1986 by NYC Department of Parks and Recreation as part of the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act Project. Further improvements in 1994 provided graveled pathways, an overlook, and a footbridge allowing pedestrians to access a natural spring and small pond that feed into the Harlem River.

There has been strong community involvement in this park on the part of volunteers (e.g., Friends of Spuyten Duyvil) and Community Board 8. Annual clean-ups of the river take place with the cooperation of MTA.



### **Spuyten Duyvil Triangle Sites (3 parcels)**

**Ownership:** MTA/MetroNorth  
**Location:** river side of Spuyten Duyvil train station  
**Size:** 10.7 acres  
**Block/Lot:** 5716/700  
**Zoning:** R1-2  
**Access:** none

**Ownership:** DCAS  
**Location:**  
**Size:** 0.2 acres  
**Block/Lot:** 5716/501  
**Zoning:** R1-2  
**Access:** none

**Ownership:** CRC Properties  
**Location:**  
**Size:** 0.2 acres  
**Block/Lot:** 5753/135  
**Access:** none

#### **Description**

Vacant. Has active tracks on two sides. Not accessible from the upland. A small brick building in the middle houses the Amtrak swing bridge operator. The remainder of the parcel of land is overgrown with shrubs and small trees. Wetlands run along the eastern edge of the triangle. Superior views of the Palisades, Hudson and Harlem Rivers, Henry Hudson Bridge, and historic Spuyten Duyvil.

#### **History**

Isaac Johnson & Company Iron Works, a munitions manufacturer, operated beside the Spuyten Duyvil Creek from 1853 through the 1930s. Much of the surrounding area was part of the firm.

The Hudson Valley Greenway Bronx Link is a major planning effort funded by NYMTC in 2006, which will look closely at using the Amtrak Bridge and SD Triangle as part of a river route for bicyclists and pedestrians.

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## NY4P Park Profiles

### *Bronx City Council District 11*





**Maps 1.A.8-14: NY4P Park Profiles**

***Bronx City Council District 14***



**Maps 1.A.8-16: NY4P Park Profiles**

***Bronx City Council District 16***





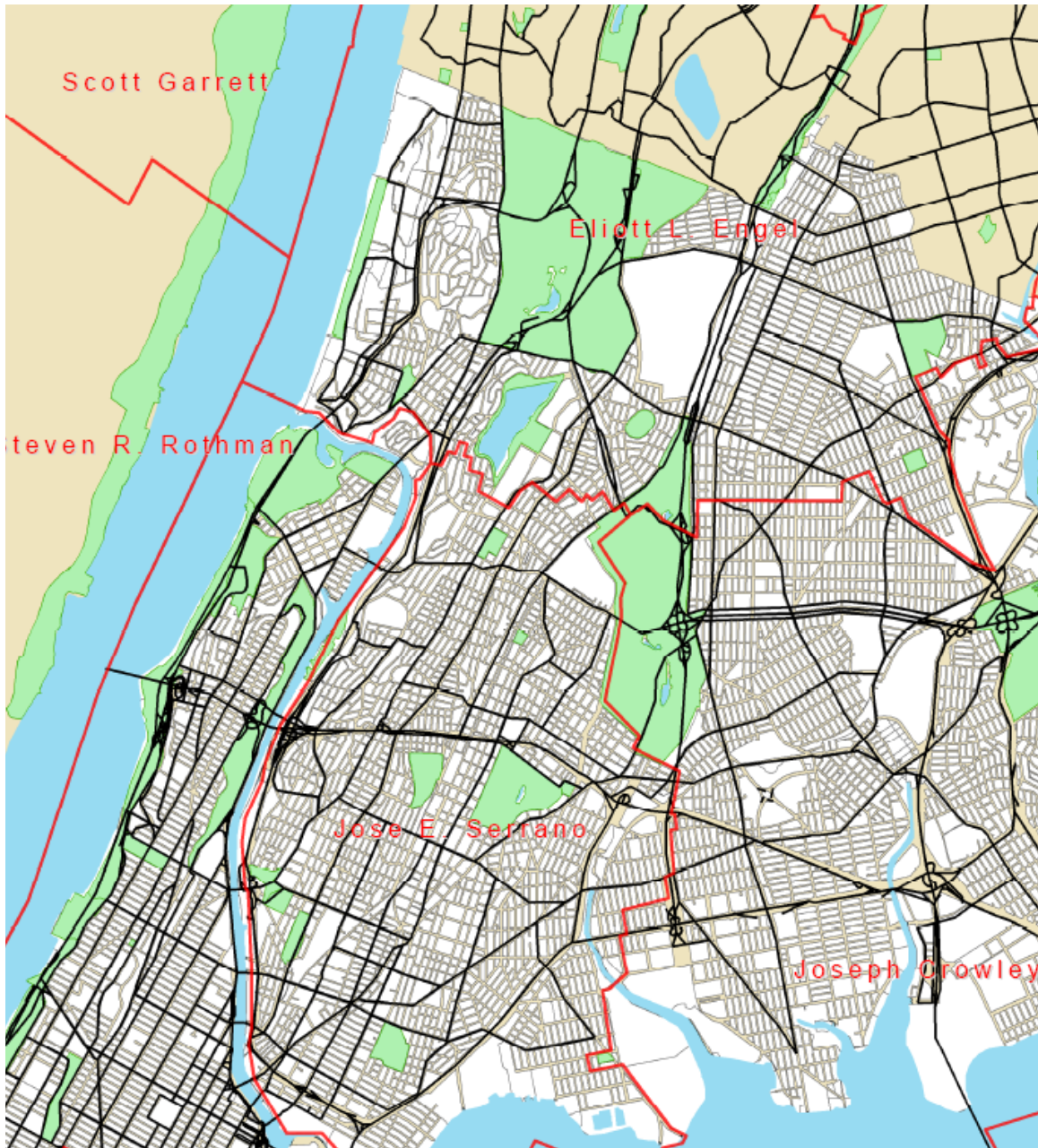
## Congressional Districts in the Harlem River BOA

### C.D. 16

**Hon. Jose E. Serrano (D-NY)**  
2342 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
Tel. (202) 225-4361

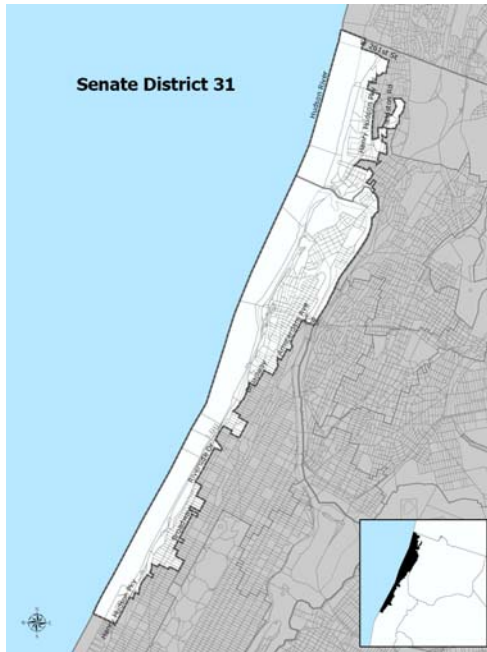
### C.D. 17

**Hon. Eliot L. Engel (D-NY)**  
2302 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515  
Tel. (202) 225-2464





## NYS Senate Districts in the Harlem River BOA



31<sup>st</sup> S.D.  
Hon. Eric T. Schneiderman  
Deputy Minority Leader  
31 LOB  
Albany, NY 12247  
Tel. (518) 455-2041

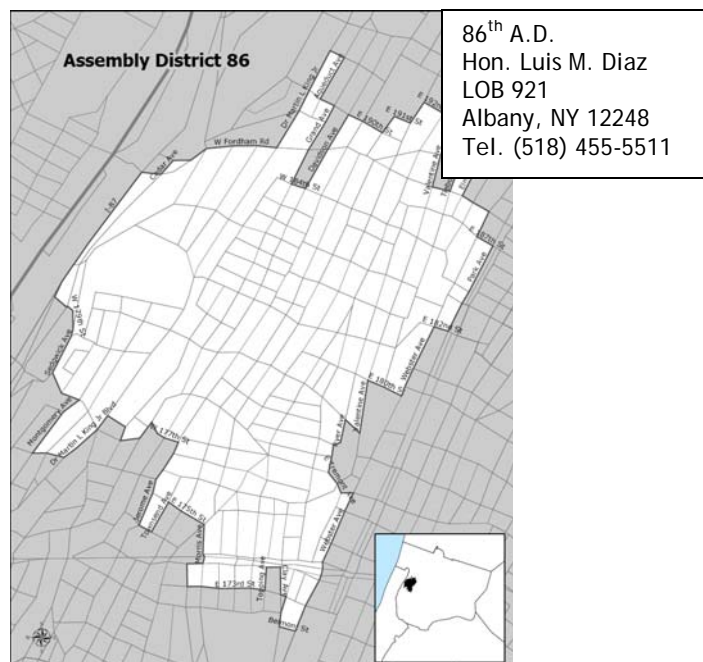
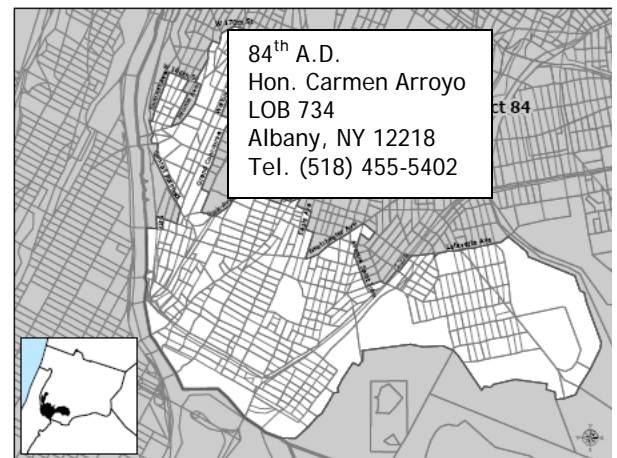
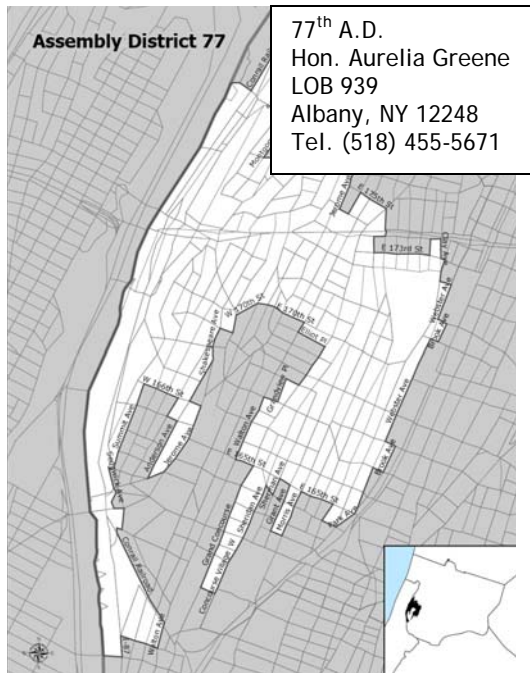
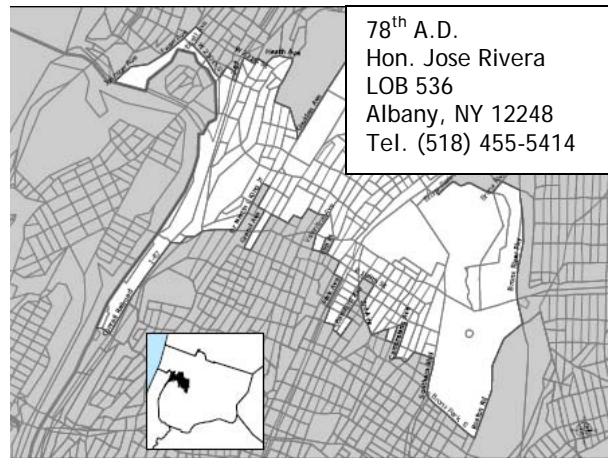
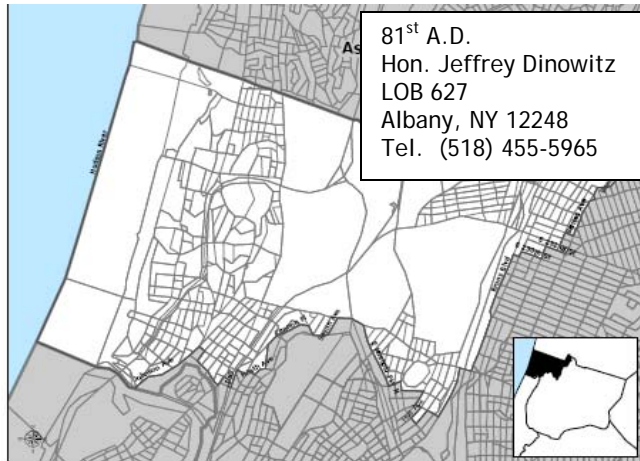


33<sup>rd</sup> S.D.  
Hon. Efrain Gonzalez, Jr.  
420 State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12247  
Tel. (518) 455-3395

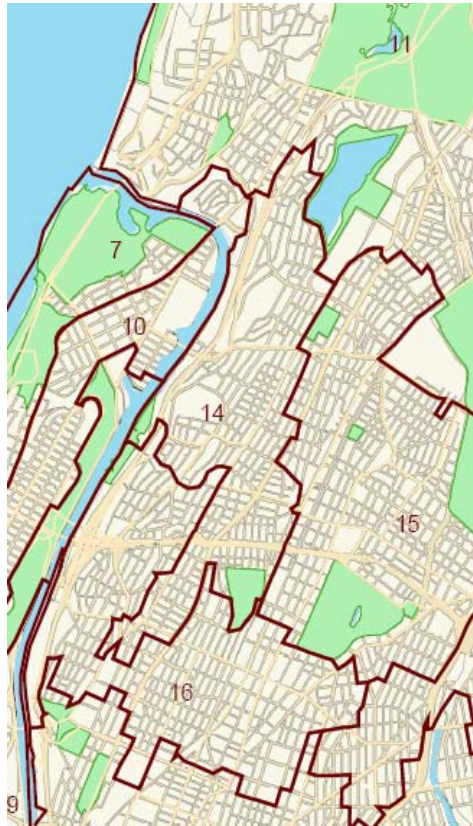


28<sup>th</sup> S.D.  
Hon. Jose M. Serrano  
706 LOB  
Albany, NY 12247  
Tel. (518) 455-2796

## New York State Assembly Districts in the Harlem River BOA



## New York City Council Districts in the Harlem River BOA



11<sup>th</sup> C.D.  
Hon. G. Oliver Koppell  
250 Broadway 18<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10007  
Tel. (212) 788-7078

14<sup>th</sup> C.D.  
Hon. Maria Baez  
250 Broadway 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10007  
Tel. (212) 788-7074

16<sup>th</sup> C.D.  
Hon. Helen D. Foster  
250 Broadway 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10007  
Tel. (212) 788-6856

**Census Tract Districts in the Community Participation Area of the Harlem River BOA**

\* in the BOA

\*\* closest to Major Deegan Expressway

**Bronx Community District 4**

53.01\*

189\*\*

193\*\*

199

201

211

219

**Bronx Community District 5**

205\*\*

213.01

215.01

215.02

217.01

243

245

247\*\*

251

530.1\*

530.2\*

**Bronx Community District 7**

255

257\*\*

239

253

261

263

265

269\*\*

271.02\*

**Bronx Community District 8**

293\* and \*\* (Spuyten Duyvil Focus Area)

273\* and \*\* (Central Focus Area)



## Public Participation Documents

### 1. Techniques for Community Involvement

The Harlem River BOA project has encouraged residents of the four upland communities to add new specificity to the planning for their shared waterfront. What uses would draw them to it? How would they get there? What uses would bring others, and how would they get there? How can the waterfront be developed to connect the four communities to each other, to new employment centers, and to amenities that might be created? How will the underlying resource, the Harlem River, be protected? How can the waterfront change from posing a threat to public health to an enhancement?

The goal has been to encourage residents to think creatively and strategically about how brownfields along the waterfront can be a springboard for the revitalization of their neighborhoods and the river.

#### *A Collaborative Approach to Urban River Management*

The Harlem River BOA project was structured to give community-based organizations a leadership role in order to insure that the public will remain engaged in the development of the waterfront from conception through implementation.

In May 2005 BCEQ formed a committee that by agreement includes a majority of community-based non-profit organizations with longstanding and diverse interests in the waterfront: BCEQ, Manhattan College, NYC Soil and Water Conservation District, New York Restoration Project, Metro Forest Council, the Gaia Institute, and others. Many of the members of the Steering Committee were involved in planning this brownfields project, having worked with BCEQ on five Water Conferences -- three on the Harlem River. This committee was then supplemented with agency members, including representatives of New York State Department of State and Department of Environmental Conservation, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, City Planning, the Bronx Borough President, and Bronx Community Boards 4, 5, 7, and 8, and formalized as the Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area Project Steering Committee. The Committee was involved in defining the scope and boundaries of the project and will review the draft of the report. Members are contributing all of the concepts, technical data, and mapping. A smaller coordinating committee handles the day to day operations with the project manager, who is the point of contact with the state agencies.

Based on five years of mailing and sign in sheets a large list has been developed (currently in Excel format and AOL email address book). When funding is available, the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality will develop a single community contact list which will be available for people to sign up on the BCEQ web page ([www.bceq.net](http://www.bceq.net)). After the initial setup expense, to create and enhance the list the group should be able to contact hundreds of individuals and organizations directly with information about the project as well as general brownfields and water issues. Currently over 350 individuals and organizations are contacted by a series of emails from [harlemriver2004@aol.com](mailto:harlemriver2004@aol.com) (as blast emails are not permitted on AOL). The new web format should enable an easier communication connection.

The Blackboard Learning System™ was been made for members of the steering committee to use as a working space, known as the eBlackboard. It is a repository for minutes, agendas, notices, lists, etc. Access is by password through the Blackboard e-Education platform-- serving

Manhattan College. The committee has been using it for years as a place to exchange and share large data files and reports. This is a supervised discussion place and access is by invitation.

The Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area website ([www.hrboa.org](http://www.hrboa.org)) has been created to share information and progress about the project with the public. This will be the technical, engineering, and mapping information that the steering committee members can supervise. It will explain the program, schedule of meetings, reports issued, and news relevant to brownfields. It will be linked to the BCEQ website which will be more community oriented, and to the other partner's web pages – i.e., Bronx Borough President's Office, Gaia Institute, NYC Soil and Water Conservation District, and NYS Departments of State and Environmental Conservation.

The BCEQ web page ([www.bceq.net](http://www.bceq.net)) is currently under revision, and is moving to a new server and web master, spring 2006. It will have a section on the Harlem River Project, including the link to the [www.hrboa.org](http://www.hrboa.org) page. As BCEQ is a membership organization, the web page will be designed to allow the community to sign up for news alerts on the Harlem River, sign up for the mailing list or email list, and automatically update the information. The BCEQ web page will also upload the BCEQ newsletter – the FOCUS, when funding becomes available, which will dedicate a page each edition to the Brownfields project.

### ***Capitalizing on the Strength of the Community-based Organizations***

The Harlem River BOA project emerged as the plan of action agreed to by participants in the Harlem River Brownfields Conference held at Manhattan College in 2005. This conference, sponsored by the Bronx Council on for Environmental Quality (BCEQ) and its partner organizations, built on the previous years' conferences, which resulted in a pledge by participants to work together on the Harlem River. BCEQ formed a committee that by agreement includes a majority of community-based non-profit organizations with longstanding and diverse interests in the waterfront: BCEQ, Manhattan College, NYC Soil and Water Conservation District, New York Restoration Project, Metro Forest Council, the Gaia Institute, Riverkeeper, Empire State Rowing, and others. Many of the members of the Steering Committee were involved in planning this brownfields project, having worked with BCEQ on five Water Conferences -- three on the Harlem River. This committee was then supplemented with agency members, including representatives of New York State Department of State and Department of Environmental Conservation, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, City Planning, the Bronx Borough President, and Bronx Community Boards 4, 5, 7, and 8, and formalized as the Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area Project Steering Committee

### ***Soliciting Public Input***

*(See Appendix for Conference program, maps, press release, editorial, and summary of comments.)*

The BOA project was presented to the public at BCEQ's third conference on the Harlem River ("The Harlem River Waterfront: Developing a Community Vision") on March 22 from 3:00-7:00 pm. The event was publicized with the help of Partnerships for Parks by email announcements to 400 individuals and organizations, notices in related newsletters (e.g., Regional Plan Association, Waterwire, etc.), local television (Hilary Kitasei's interview with Gary Axelbank on BronxNet ran for a week before the event); and press releases to local newspapers. An editorial meeting with the *Riverdale Press* resulted in a major editorial.

More than seventy-five people from the four community districts were randomly assigned to tables where facilitators focused discussions on the improvements that were needed to revitalize the BOA. Their recommendations were posted on a wall, and participants were each given

allotments of stickers to “vote” their priorities. Their comments and rankings refine and update the consensus that has emerged over many years.

Members of the Steering Committee were able to review the draft of the Pre-Nomination Report on the Blackboard or request email or hard copies. The draft was revised based on extensive comments received from the Borough President’s Office and the NYC Parks Department, among others. At a public meeting on May 24th, the Committee approved the draft Pre-Nomination Report and the decision to apply for funding to proceed to Step Two (Nomination) as recommended by the project manager. (See appendix: *Harlem River BOA Pre-Nomination Report: Summary of Findings and Recommendations*). Partners agreed to support the application submitted by the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality with Manhattan College as fiscal sponsor – a decision made by the Board of Directors of the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality on May 10. The budget was drawn up by the coordinating committee through subsequent email communications and circulated for approval to the Steering Committee.

## 2. Future Partners and Participants

All of the plans, including this one, have under-represented the views of residents who are non-English speakers, non-natives, and generally non-participants in civic affairs. Recommendations for future outreach include:

- Prepare description of project in Spanish
- Hold community meetings, site visits and walking tours in Spanish
- Use a door-to-door strategy to learn the best way to reach residents of major buildings (e.g., through a tenants organization, a billboard, etc.)
- Hold presentations and meetings in the largest residential buildings, especially River Park Towers.

The next phase of the Harlem River BOA project will solicit and strengthen partnerships with the following stakeholders:

- MTA/MetroNorth, Amtrak, and private railroads
- NYS Office of Parks and Historic Preservation
- Tenants and Cooperative Associations
- Social Service Organizations with ties to the local community
- Hispanic and Dominican cultural organizations
- Youth organizations
- Youth Committee of each Community Board
- Parks Committee of each Community Board
- Planning/Land Use Committee of each Community Board
- Disability advocates
- Transportation planning organizations (Regional Plan Association, Traffic and Transportation Committees on each Community Board; Transportation Alternatives; Tri-State Regional Planning Association; Institute for Rational Urban Mobility; Environmental Defense East-of-Hudson Rail Freight Operations Task Force)
- Organizations involved in planning redevelopment of Manhattan side of the Harlem River

- Preservation organizations (Historic Districts Council, Municipal Art Society, Landmarks Conservancy, New York State Office of Historic Preservation, Society for Industrial Technology)
- Target; Yankee Stadium; Bronx Terminal Market; Gateway Center
- New York Metropolitan Transportation Council for federal funding Brownfield redevelopment and transportation projects through the TIP (Transportation Improvement Plan)



**FOR RELEASE: March 12, 2006**

**CONTACT:**

**Karen Argenti at 646-529-1990**

**Hilary Kitasei at 212-227-9505**

***Harlem River Brownfields Topic of BCEQ Water Conference***

Industry deserted the Bronx waterfront of the Harlem River many decades ago, leaving large lots of underutilized, often contaminated sites known as brownfields. How these brownfields should be redeveloped to meet the needs of the Bronx of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – for parks, housing, and jobs – is the subject of a conference organized by the Bronx Council on Environmental Quality (BCEQ) at Bronx Community College, on Wednesday, March 22, from 3:00-7:00 pm. The public is invited to participate in this free event, which will include presentations and a “working dinner.”

This is the third year that the environmental group BCEQ has focused on the Harlem River, each time engaging a broader public in developing a vision for the future waterfront. Participants this year will learn about New York State’s Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program, and how it can be used to guide the redevelopment of distressed properties in the direction a community wants.

The Harlem River waterfront is arguably the most beautiful but least accessible in the city. In addition to a steep slope, the Metro North railroad and billboard-pocked Major Deegan Expressway cut off physical and visual access to the river below. The waterfront that was once a boating mecca for rich and poor alike was taken over by industry and utilities. Many of the large properties are now vacant or underutilized, their redevelopment complicated by their perceived or real contamination. The BOA program helps the local community foster their redevelopment into productive use while restoring their environmental quality.

The first panel features three “pioneers” who opened people’s eyes to the fun and beauty in the blighted waterfront: Urban Divers, Shorewalkers, and Friends of Brook Park.

“By leading dives in a river considered polluted, leading walks along impossible-to-reach shorelines, and making a park in the shadow of highways, they showed us the impossible is possible,” said BOA project manager Hilary Kitasei.

The keynote talk will be given by Dr. Paul Mankiewicz of the Gaia Institute, Mathy Stanislaus of New Partners for Community Revitalization, and environmental attorney Justin Bloom. They will recommend strategies for the community to see its vision through the politically and economically-charged process of redeveloping brownfields.

Participants will be asked to rank various priorities for the future waterfront and to consider their potential conflict. These priorities will be reported at the closing session, after the New York Restoration Project presentation of their work along both sides of the Harlem River.

The Waterfront Conference and the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Project are being co-sponsored by the Bronx Borough President’s Office, Bronx Community Boards 4, 5, 7 and 8; Department of Parks and Recreation, Friends of Brook Park, Gaia Institute, Manhattan College, Metro Forest Council, NYC Soil and Water Conservation District, New York Restoration Project, NYS DOS & DEC, and Riverkeeper. The Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program is administered by the New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The Conference will hold informative environmental exhibits and workshops. Con Edison is the corporate sponsor of the Conference, which is free and open to the public.

Call 718-324-4461 or email [harlemriver2004@aol.com](mailto:harlemriver2004@aol.com) to register for the conference, and get directions or reserve parking. For further information visit our web page at [www.hrboa.org](http://www.hrboa.org). See two photographs for your use.

**Harlem River Waterfront.JPG** -- Caption: The New York State Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program is designed to help communities revitalize sites like this one on the banks of the Harlem River in the Bronx. Photo by Karen Argenti

**Harlem River Picture.JPG** -- Caption: Stunning natural and man-made features make the Harlem River waterfront the city’s most beautiful, according to its admirers. Photo by Karen Argenti

## Harlem River Waterfront BOA

March 22, 2006

The New York State Brownfield Areas Opportunity (BOA) Program is the redevelopment planning arm of the Superfund/Brownfield Law. The Harlem River BOA proposal came out of BCEQ's previous Harlem River conferences, and was developed in partnership with broad community participation.

In March 2005, the Harlem River BOA was awarded a grant by the NYS Departments of State and Department of Environmental Conservation for a Pre-Nomination Study, or preliminary description and analysis of the area. When complete, it will be reviewed by the NYS Departments of State and Environmental Conservation to determine if the community should proceed to the next step -- assessments of priority brownfield sites and development of an area-wide implementation strategy.

The study is being carried out by the Bronx Council on Environmental Quality in collaboration with the Borough President's office, the Gaia Institute, and Manhattan College. A steering committee has been formed, which includes representatives of the Borough President; Community Boards 4, 5, 7 and 8; and agencies and community organizations with interests in the waterfront. Hilary Kitasei is the project manager. The Borough President's office is preparing maps and the Gaia Institute is doing the environmental analysis.

**Scope.** The Harlem River BOA includes 162 acres of the Bronx shore of the Harlem River, which contains many vacant or underutilized properties whose development is complicated by the presumption of contamination. It includes two sub-areas: 156 acres from the Macombs Dam Bridge to the Bronx border with Marble Hill, and the 6-acre triangle in Spuyten Duyvil at the confluence of the Hudson River. A broader community participation area includes the populated upland areas whose residents have the most direct stake in the future in the waterfront: Concourse, HighBridge, Morris Heights, University Heights, Kingsbridge Heights, Marble Hill, and Spuyten Duyvil.

**Background.** The Harlem River and its neighboring communities are poised for a long-overdue revival. For centuries, the Harlem provided a bountiful harvest of seafood and a source of transportation for indigenous tribes, followed by colonists and the first generations of the new republic. At the turn of the last century, the river was host to a proliferation of boathouses and regattas, attracting rowers and spectators from around the world. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrialization and planning policies all but eradicated public access to the River and replaced the festive boathouses and sustenance fishermen with factories and power plants, sewage outfalls, miles of bulkheads, roads and railways that turned New Yorkers away from their waterfronts. In the case of the Harlem River, highways and railroads cut the inland communities off from their seven-mile waterfront almost completely.

The Harlem River BOA is presumed to be one large brownfield, with significant contamination throughout all environmental media. Its redevelopment and restoration require thorough planning and analysis of hazardous substance sites, which includes participation at all levels. It is anticipated that targeted brownfields redevelopment efforts will contribute to the expansion of public access opportunities, open space protection, protection of fish habitat and intertidal areas, tourism and recreation promotion, and improving linkages between the waterfront and historic communities.

## Brownfields in a Nutshell

March 2006

**Brownfields** are real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. Cleaning up and reinvesting in these properties takes development pressures off of undeveloped, open land, and both improves and protects the environment.<sup>1</sup>

**Brownfields redevelopment can be ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable.** The nature, context, and perspective of the challenges confronting Brownfields practitioners demand this new approach. By integrating the concepts of sustainable development, community involvement, risk management, and collaborative project teams with Brownfields redevelopment, Brownfields redevelopers can avoid re-creating Brownfields and continuing their legacy.<sup>2</sup>

The **Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA)** grant program was created by the October 2003 New York State Brownfields Law to promote neighborhood planning in areas with multiple Brownfields. Most brownfields produce little tax revenue and few jobs, if any. When brownfields are investigated, cleaned up, and returned to productive use New York City, its economy, and its neighborhoods benefit.<sup>3</sup>

The **Brownfield Opportunity Areas** (BOA) Program provides municipalities and community based organizations with assistance to complete area-wide approaches to brownfields redevelopment planning.

Through the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program communities will have opportunities to return dormant areas back to productive use and simultaneously restore environmental quality. The Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program will enable local governments and community based organization to: address a range of problems posed by multiple brownfield sites; build consensus on the future uses of strategic brownfield sites; and establish the multi-agency and private-sector partnerships necessary to leverage assistance and investments to revitalize neighborhoods and communities.

### Info on Brownfields and/or BOAs

NYC Office of Environmental Coordination

[www.nyc.gov/html/oec/html/brown/brownfields.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/html/brown/brownfields.shtml)

DOS Division of Coastal Resources

[http://nyswaterfronts.com/grantopps\\_BOA.asp](http://nyswaterfronts.com/grantopps_BOA.asp)

[http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/BOA\\_intro\\_LP.htm](http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/BOA_intro_LP.htm)

US EPA <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/index.html>

Scenic Hudson Brownfields Resource

<http://www.scenichudson.org/brownfields/index.html>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/sustain.htm> (A Sustainable Brownfields Model Framework, EPA, 1999, p. i)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/html/brown/brownfaq.shtml> From the NYC OEC web page: A brownfield is property that is not being redeveloped because it is or might be contaminated. The possible presence of hazardous materials poses liability, cost, and time obstacles to investment in and redevelopment of these sites. Brownfields are often a blight on urban neighborhoods.

# WORK SHEET PLAN

## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT VISIONS AND GOALS ON THE HARLEM RIVER WATERFRONT

**Total Time:** 4:00 pm to 7:30 pm

**Dinner and Keynote Speakers:** 4:15 to 4:45 pm

**Coffee and Working Session:** 4:45 to 5:15 pm

**Recorders bring recommendations up front to combine:** 5:15 pm

**Placing of Dots on Sheets:** 5:30 to 5:45 pm

COMMUNITY VISION AREAS	LEADER
Community redevelopment and revitalization & Improving economic conditions	Paula Caplan & Hilary Kitasei
Providing new housing opportunities	Dart Westphal
Addressing environmental justice issues, SEQR/CEQR	Justin Bloom
Transportation	Walter Matystik
Infrastructure	Shino Tanikawa
Recreation opportunities	Jerry Willis
Improving quality of life & environmental quality	Jane Jackson

***Facilitators** were asked to have participants introduce themselves and briefly share their relationship to the waterfront. They then recorded general recommendations on the flip chart sheets in large print so they can be ranked later using the dots. They recorded more specific “sub-recommendations” to the side or on a separate sheet.*

The Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area Project builds on two decades of planning by the city and other organizations, all with community input, for the Harlem River waterfront. Goals expressed in all of these plans have included:

- Access for the upland communities to a public waterfront that offers recreational resources.
- A continuous greenway linked to the greater network of greenways
- Ecological restoration of the Harlem River
- Redevelopment that enhances the waterfront by drawing people to it, restores its ecology, and creates local jobs and revenue

***Keeping in mind these goals, have participants consider how land within the BOA might be redeveloped and what impact it would have on each area.***

## **The Harlem River Waterfront: Developing a Community Vision**

# **IMPROVING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS & COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION**

**THIS WORKSHOP WAS COMBINED AS THE IDEAS WERE SIMILAR (two pages)**

### **PRE-WORKSHOP STATEMENT TO INITIATE CONVERSATION - ECONOMIC**

Marina Development and Accessory Facilities

Restaurants

Children's water facilities

### **PRE-WORKSHOP STATEMENT TO INITIATE CONVERSATION – COMMUNITY RE-DEVELOP**

How can the Harlem River waterfront realize the economic benefits from a new Yankee Stadium, revitalize Bronx Terminal Market, Target, increased ferry and train service, and other developments?

#### **Recreation**

- Expand and improve public parkland with concessions (e.g., batting cages, miniature golf, ice skating, floating swimming pools, boating, outdoor theater, fishing,)
- Encourage commercial recreational facilities on private sites

#### **Education**

- Schools (e.g., schools in conjunction with new housing developments; satellite facilities of Bronx Community College)
- Environmental center
- Campground

Residential (improved property values)

Tourism

Small business/vendors/fairs/flea markets

Large employer

## IMPROVING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS & COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION, cont.

REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP HELD ON MARCH 22, 2006

### IMPROVING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS & COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT

(facilitated by Paula Caplan, Bronx Borough President's Office and Hilary Kitasei, Project Manager)

1. Public health is an economic value: greenway, cycling – down to yscunc (?) center, hub – link with areas outside of BOA (2)
2. **Tourism: re-open High Bridge, connect with other greenways, tourism on both sides – make it a destination as well as a crossing (17)**
3. bike, canoe rentals (5)
4. Flea market, kiosks, vendors
5. Access to green space: Fordham Landing easement for greenway and housing
6. Indirect economic impact of open space – people save money not travelling for recreation (1)
7. Beauty has intrinsic value, e.g. for mental health; need to preserve
8. Windmills (5)
9. Parks: healthy communities, better air quality, greenway links with parks and provide safe commuting options (Fed CMAQ \$ recognizes this)
10. Tourism-related activities (4)
11. Multiplier effect: viable community, affordable housing (Manhattan too)
12. Horseback riding, roller blading, kayaks, and other activities that the adjacent communities want and *can afford*
13. Walking tours (3)
14. Youth hostel, campsite/campground
15. Fairs, carnivals, greenmarkets
16. Activities should be located at bridge nodes
17. Family attractions
18. Focus on *local* needs (4)
19. Commercial(?) activities near Roberto Clemente State Park
20. Regattas to induce visitors/economic activity



## **The Harlem River Waterfront: Developing a Community Vision**

### **RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **PRE-WORKSHOP STATEMENT TO INITIATE CONVERSATION**

Greenway – consider priorities sections to complete; how to expand use (bicycle rental/storage?)

- Yankee Stadium area to Roberto Clemente
- North of University Heights Bridge
- Link to Hudson River Valley Greenway
- Putnam Trail

Regatta Park

Fishing, Swimming, Boating, etc.

#### **REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP HELD ON MARCH 22, 2006**

RECREATION (facilitated by Jerry Willis, Rails and Trails, National Parks Service)

Increase access

1. Proposed park at end of Park Ave.
2. Spuyten Duyvil – acquisition of Spuyten Duyvil Triangle as connection between Harlem and Hudson River Valley Greenways
3. Depot Place
4. Roberto Clemente
- 5. University Heights (20)**

**Multi-use space (11)**

1. Environmental Education
2. films
3. Wave Hill type

Playgrounds (3)

1. Skate park
2. Volley ball, baseball, basketball – Roberto Clemente Park
3. Swimming – Roberto Clemente & Bridge Park

Greenways

- 1. Connections to all greenways (Putnam, Hudson, Harlem, Regatta, Old Croton) (12)**
- 2. Re-open High Bridge (walk, run, bike) (8)**
3. Shorewalking

Sitting areas/passive recreation

1. Sculpture garden (5)
2. Fordham Landing
3. Bridge Park

**Kayak/canoe launches (27)**

1. Fordham Landing
2. Bridge Park
3. End of Park Ave
4. Roberto Clemente Park

## **Restoration of natural shoreline (19)**

Fishing (1)

1. Bridge (Park?)
2. Depot Place

## **The Harlem River Waterfront: Developing a Community Vision**

### **PROVIDING NEW HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **PRE-WORKSHOP STATEMENT TO INITIATE CONVERSATION**

**Background:** One major waterfront site\* is currently zoned for housing, and others could possibly be rezoned for residential use. The impact of brownfield development on existing housing on and off the waterfront should also be discussed.

**\*Fordham Landing:** 3.7 acres south of University Heights Bridge. Rezoned to R7-2 in 1990 to permit residential use. Privately owned, but with requirement under an agreement with the city as a condition of development to provide a publicly accessible riverfront esplanade. Proposals have been floated for 450-500 units of affordable housing that includes a school.

**Highbridge:** Earlier plans recommended decking the Highbridge Yards to extend the community to the waterfront. Since the railroad acquired much of the vacant industrial property in the early 90s and converted it to intense use, however, the idea of acquiring air rights to build a platform has been considered impractical. Affordable housing, in particular, would require major subsidies. So long as there are other vacant industrial sites available in upland areas, this is no longer a viable option..

**Morris Heights:** River Towers in Roberto Clemente State Park; one and two families along the Expressway. How might redevelopment of the waterfront change the use, desirability, and character of each? What would give tenants and owners a stake in the improvement of their property?

#### **Housing overlooking the Waterfront?**

#### **REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP HELD ON MARCH 22, 2006**

##### HOUSING (facilitated by Dart Westphal, Chairperson BCEQ Water Committee)

1. Don't build more housing in CD 4 even if rail yard goes away (1)
2. Same for CD 5 (1)
3. All new housing elsewhere (outside of CD 4 & 5) should include waterfront access
4. Mixed income (4)
5. Ownership housing (3)
6. Fordham Landing for housing (2)
7. Current self-storage site could be mixed-use housing, stores, and offices (4)

## **The Harlem River Waterfront: Developing a Community Vision**

# **ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES, SEQRA/CEQR**

### **PRE-WORKSHOP STATEMENT TO INITIATE CONVERSATION**

- Access to the waterfront
- Affordable recreation
- Reducing pollution and noise that degrade the quality of life of upland communities
- Controlling billboards and other highway-related visual blight
- Encourage early public participation in planning processes, ie SEQRA/CEQR
- What it looks like at other waterfronts?

### **REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP HELD ON MARCH 22, 2006**

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE/SEQRA (facilitated by Justin Bloom, Environmental Attorney)

- 1. CSO abatement projects, e.g., Spuyten Duyvil (19)**
2. Safe access, e.g. Spuyten Duyvil (5)
3. Community involvement (9)  
Use alternative ways, e.g.: schools, email, churches, cultural institutions, shopping areas  
High profile political participation;  
Involve new residents, immigrants, other stakeholders (1)
4. Outreach – partner with existing programs – city/schools (6)
5. Recreational access (6)
6. Mapping environmental negatives (2)
7. Access /transportation – expand transportation corridors to BOA areas and between them via water (8)
8. Recreational boating/ shore access for paddlers (10)
- 9. Environmental education (19)**
- 10. Small business incubation (15) – maritime related water-based**

## The Harlem River Waterfront: Developing a Community Vision

### TRANSPORTATION

#### PRE-WORKSHOP STATEMENT TO INITIATE CONVERSATION

Pedestrian connections to the waterfront for upland residents

- Pedestrian overpass at Sedgwick Avenue
- Pedestrian bridge from 176<sup>th</sup> Street to southern end of Roberto Clemente State Park
- Improve Exterior Street at western end of Depot Place
- Pedestrian access from Bronx Community College
- Fordham Landing
- More comprehensive access (e.g., by decking the railroad and highway)
- Weekend jitneys
- True disability access (elevator)

Improve cross-river connections

- Highbridge (open up)
- Alexander Hamilton Bridge
- Washington Bridge
- 176<sup>th</sup> St.
- Morris Heights
- University Heights Bridge
- Henry Hudson Bridge
- Amtrak Bridge

Overall Safety (e.g., lighting, wild dogs, law enforcement, eyeballs)

Water-borne transportation –consider locations and affordability

Rail – Additional stations or different use of Metro North lines?

Parking facilities

#### REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP HELD ON MARCH 22, 2006

TRANSPORTATION (facilitated by Walter Matystik, Manhattan College)

1. more pedestrian walkways over the highway and bridges for park & waterfront access (8)
2. **Better public transportation access; e.g., buses to Depot Place (11)**
3. **Re-open High Bridge (17)**
4. River/water taxis – RCSP reg Docks (?) (8)
5. Work with existing park facilities for public use (0)
6. Shuttles to/from transportation hubs, like subway stations (5)
7. **Access: footbridges across highways & railroad tracks (12)**
8. Access water quality: PVC sampling well can test what industrial users are putting into the river

## The Harlem River Waterfront: Developing a Community Vision

### INFRASTRUCTURE

#### PRE-WORKSHOP STATEMENT TO INITIATE CONVERSATION

Marina/dock facilities

Covering sections of highway or rail corridor

Lighting (for safety, for aesthetics)

Access

Drainage

Sanitary Sewers

Hydrants

#### REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP HELD ON MARCH 22, 2006

INFRASTRUCTURE (facilitated by Shino Tanikawa, NYC Soil and Water Conservation District)

1. Restore bridges into Roberto Clemente Park (needs clarification) (7)
2. Feasibility study for “park and float” ferry/water taxi service (needs clarification) (7)
- 3. Improve/enhance bus routes and re-evaluate existing ones (14)**
4. Acquire 2 parcels owned by New Tabernacle Church (16)
5. Pedestrian access to Bridge Park from Cedar Avenue South (3)
- 6. Bronx County/Hudson River Valley Greenway – revisit planning recommendations (11)**
7. Transportation projects to access TEA-LU Federal \$ (1)
8. Greenways, bikeways, access for emergency & maintenance; water borne ferry (11)
- 9. Water-borne access – water taxis and ferries (11)**
- 10. On-water recreation access/kayaks, canoes (11)**

## **The Harlem River Waterfront: Developing a Community Vision**

# **IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE & ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY**

### **PRE-WORKSHOP STATEMENT TO INITIATE CONVERSATION**

- Air quality
- Water quality
- Open Space
- Scenic Quality
- Noise
- Historic resources

### **REPORT FROM THE WORKSHOP HELD ON MARCH 22, 2006**

#### **QUALITY OF LIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY** (facilitated by Jane Jackson)

1. **Get state as partner with city to invest in clean up to make currently contaminated lands usable. Cleaning up soil will make river cleaner; plants, soil, and wetlands help clean river (39)**
2. Paddling/boating (3)
3. Improved access, especially to parkland (5)
4. Discontinue waste dumping at water's edge (8)
5. Intermodal waterway transport (3)
6. Ferry across river (6)
7. Shoreline businesses should be water-related (6)

## **The Harlem River Waterfront: Developing a Community Vision**

### **COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION SUMMARY**

The Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area Project builds on two decades of planning by the city and other organizations, all with community input, for the Harlem River waterfront. The overall visions expressed in each of these plans have all included the following elements:

- Access for the upland communities to a public waterfront that offers recreational resources.
- A continuous greenway linked to the greater network of greenways
- Ecological restoration of the Harlem River
- Redevelopment that enhances the waterfront by drawing people to it, restores its ecology, and creates local jobs and revenue

In this workshop, participants were randomly assigned to focus tables to recommend the goals that should guide the redevelopment of the waterfront brownfields. Maps showing the current use of waterfront sites in community boards 4, 5, 7, and the whole BOA, were used to help focus the discussion on the BOA. After the several hundred recommendations were posted on large sheets of paper, participants were given a sheet of stickers to “vote” for their highest priorities.

#### **11 Goals Ranked as Highest Priority**

- **Greenways/Open High Bridge Access**
- **Restoration of Natural Shoreline**
- **Kayak/Canoe Launches**
- **Ferries/Water Taxi**
- **Access**
- **Wetlands/Clean Soil & Water**
- **CSO Abatement**
- **Acquisition of sites owned by Tabernacle Church at Depot Place**
- **Improvement of bus routes and public transportation to water**
- **Environmental educations**
- **Small water-based business incubation: ferries and water taxis**

In general, the public interest is in attaining access to the waterfront, both on land and at the coast. They want buses to take them to the access points: Depot Place, Highbridge, Fordham Landing. They want something to do when they get there: kayaking, roller blades, walking along the Greenway. They want something new for tourism – marina’s, water transportation, cleaner water. They want to restore the natural shoreline and recreational activities that go with a natural shoreline. They want to increase environmental education along the corridor. They want to participate in the decision making to make the water, air and land cleaner and greener.



# Bronx Council for Environmental Quality

## Environmental Focus



"an aesthetic, unpolluted environment with a natural and historic heritage"

May- July 2006

### Inside

Water Conference  
Continued  
-2& 3-

2006 Calendar of  
Bronx Events  
- 4&5-

Helen C. Reel  
Remembered  
-6-

### 2006 BCEQ Water Conference

Industry deserted The Bronx Waterfront of the Harlem River many decades ago, leaving large lots of underutilized, often contaminated sites known as Brownfields. How these Brownfields should be re-developed to meet the needs of The Bronx of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – for parks, housing, jobs, and commerce – was the subject of BCEQ's annual conference held at Bronx Community College on Wednesday, March 22. This is the third year that BCEQ has focused on the Harlem River, engaging a broader public in developing a vision for the future waterfront each time.

The Harlem River waterfront is arguably the most beautiful but least accessible in the city. In addition to a steep slope, the Metro North railroad and billboard-packed Major Deegan Expressway cut off physical and visual access to the river below.

The waterfront that was once a Boating Mecca for rich and poor alike was taken over by industry and utilities. Many of the large properties are now vacant or underutilized, their redevelopment complicated by their perceived or real contamination. The Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) program helps the local community foster their redevelopment into productive use while restoring their environmental quality.

### The Program – Strategies presented

Mathy Stanislaus of New Partners for Community Revitalization, and environmental attorney Justin Bloom set the pace for the conference. They recommended strategies for the community to see its vision through the politically and economically-charged process of re-developing Brownfields. After attendees broke for a light dinner, they heard from a panel made up of the NYC Parks Department, along with local "pioneers"-- Shorewalkers, and Friends of Brook Park. The New York Restoration Project presented their work along both sides of the Harlem River. "By leading dives in a river considered polluted, leading walks along impossible-to-reach shorelines, and making a park in the shadow of highways, they showed us the impossible is possible," said BOA project manager Hilary Kitasei. This plateful of ideas was just what we needed for the next task.



### Public Participation clarifies the Community's Vision

Participants were randomly assigned to tables with focused discussions on the improvements that were needed to revitalize the BOA. Their recommendations were posted on a wall, where all participants then affixed allotments of stickers to register their priorities. Their comments and rankings refine and update the consensus that has emerged over many years, which will be synthesized next month, as the Vision and Goals statement of our project report.

Continued on page 2

**Pictured to the left:** Stunning natural and man-made features make the Harlem River waterfront the city's most beautiful, according to its admirers. Photo by Karen Argenti



**Bronx Council for  
Environmental Quality**  
[www.bceq.org](http://www.bceq.org)

**Founder Theresa Lato**

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**1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Dr. Paul Mankiewicz**

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**Corresponding Secretary Jorge Santiago**

**Supervising Editor Ellen Pollan**

**Managing Editor Christina Taylor**

**Committee Chairs**

**Memberships/Events- Maria Luisa Cipranio (Acting)**

**Water- Dart Westphal**

*Email at [dwestphal@mpcbrooklyn.org](mailto:dwestphal@mpcbrooklyn.org)*

**Education- Mark Stern and Dennis Bader**

*Email at [mstern6@nycboe.net](mailto:mstern6@nycboe.net) or*

*[db284@cornell.edu](mailto:db284@cornell.edu)*

**Parks/Open Space- Paul Sawyer**

*Email at [bizei3V0@verizon.net](mailto:bizei3V0@verizon.net)*

**Communications- Ellen Pollan**

*Email at [Offcen1279@aol.com](mailto:Offcen1279@aol.com)*

**Grants/Funding- Stephen Franciosa**

*Email at [hacfive@aol.com](mailto:hacfive@aol.com)*

**Recycling/ Solid Waste- Harry Bubbins (Acting)**

**Nominations- Jeffrey Z. Katz and I.C. Levenberg-Engel**

*Email at [chappzack@aol.com](mailto:chappzack@aol.com) or*

*[bceqpres@earthlink.net](mailto:bceqpres@earthlink.net)*

**Newsletter made possible by  
generous support from State  
Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz,  
Con Edison and  
BCEQ memberships.**

## 2006 BCEQ Water Conference Continued

During the Water Conference, eleven goals ranked as the “highest priority” were reported at the closing session:

- *Greenways/Open High Bridge*
- *Restoration of Natural Shoreline*
- *Kayak/Canoe Launches*
- *Ferries/Water Taxi*
- *Access*
- *Wetlands/Clean Soil & Water*
- *CSO Abatement*
- *Acquisition of sites owned by Tabernacle Church at Depot Place*
- *Improvement of bus routes and public transportation to water*
- *Environmental education*
- *Small business (maritime) incubation*

The community-based steering committee will review the Community’s Vision and Goals and make it part of the first deliverable in the process. Each step of the way, BCEQ promises to develop methods to ascertain what the community’s vision is and how that fits into the options presented to us. Community participation will continue to be part of our unique environmental sensitive program and will include meetings with public agenda web page



**Pictured above:** Our local “pioneers” discuss what are doing on the Harlem River: Harry Bubbins of the Friends of Brook Park, Hilary Kitasei, the BCEQ Harlem River BOA Project Manager and moderator of the panel, Cy Adler of the Shorewalkers, and Colleen Alderson of the NYC Parks Department. Photo by Karen Argenti.



**Pictured to the left:** It did not end with the talking tables. Each person was asked to rank the priorities with red dots or hearts. The priorities were attached to the wall and all participated. Working here is Jane Jackson of NYRP, Hilary Kitasei of HR BOA, Elizabeth Cooke-Levy of Friends of Van Cortlandt Park, steering committee member Jane Sokolow and BCEQer Dart Westphal talking with Harry Bubbins of Friends of Brook Park. Photo by Karen Argenti.



## *2006 BCEQ Water Conference Continued*

### **About the BOA**

The Waterfront Conference and the Brownfield Opportunity Areas Project was co-sponsored by the Bronx Borough President's Office, Bronx Community Boards 4, 5, 7 and 8; Con Edison, Department of Parks and Recreation, Friends of Brook Park, Gaia Institute, Manhattan College, Metro Forest Council, NYC Soil and Water Conservation District, New York Restoration Project, Partnerships for Parks and the Hudson Riverkeeper. The Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program is administered by the New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The Harlem River Brownfields Opportunity Area project builds on more than two decades of planning by New York City for the future of its waterfront; borough-based planning for the Harlem River waterfront; and private and public studies and plans that focus on open space, greenways, and transportation in the surrounding area. It also draws on the results of five years of focus on issues affecting the water quality and the Harlem River by the applicant (BCEQ). All of these efforts have involved extensive public outreach and solicited participation.

For more information please visit the Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area website, [www.hrboa.org](http://www.hrboa.org).

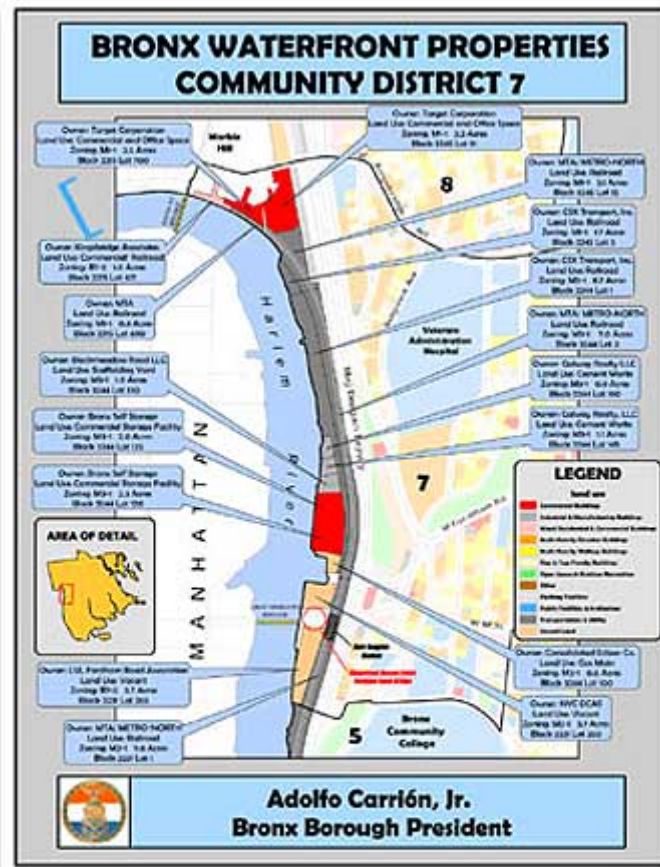


**Pictured to the left:** Creating recreation areas on both sides of the Harlem River, to emphasize what Bette Midler says: "To restore is human, to maintain divine." Here, our partners, the New York Restoration Project, did a magnificent job at the Peter Jay Sharp Boathouse at Swindler Cove Park in Manhattan, across from Roberto Clemente State Park in the Bronx.

**Pictured on bottom left:** "Community redevelopment and revitalization" and "improving economic conditions" were joined as one group. Paula Caplan of the Borough President's office and Hilary Kitasei of our BOA led a lively discussion of what is to come. BCEQ President Ira Charles Levenberg participated in this session.

**Pictured on bottom right:** Everyone was interested in





Map courtesy Bronx borough president's office

**HARLEM RIVER ADVOCATES** hope to bring accessible recreational space to waterfront stretches in Community Boards 4, 5 and 7.

## Harlem River Planning Moves Forward

By **HEATHER HADDON**

**A** coalition of Bronx community groups, elected officials and the city Parks Department is progressing with plans to transform the underutilized Harlem River waterfront into an accessible and amenity-rich open space.

Stakeholders gathered last month at Manhattan College to brainstorm goals for a 162-acre stretch bordering the river, which flows past the Bronx' western border. The area runs from Highbridge to 225th Street, and is a patchwork of parks, railroad lines and privately owned parcels. Much of it is now unusable because of environmental contamination.

The conference was the latest step in a growing movement to redevelop the Harlem River through the state's Brownfields Areas Opportunity (BAO) program. Beginning in 2003, the state has funded community groups to plan new uses for designated waterfront areas. The program also awards lucrative tax credits to developers who clean up and build on contaminated properties in line with community priorities.

The Bronx Council on Environmental Quality, an advocacy group, was awarded a \$100,000 state grant last March to determine whether the Harlem River can be designated as a BAO. If so, groups will move forward with further assessments and designate priority areas for redevelopment. The Bronx borough president's office, the Gaia Institute and Manhattan College, along with local residents and Community Boards 4, 5 and 7, are also collaborating on the effort.

Top ideas generated by conference participants were making the Harlem River more accessible, and creating parkland and recreational facilities. "We want redevelopment that will draw people to the river," said Hilary Kitasei, who is overseeing the project for the Council.

A key component is connecting the waterfront to a larger Harlem River Greenway, which has been in development by the Parks Department for several years. The greenway would connect the Old Putnam Trail — a 1.5-mile path flowing from Westchester through Van Cortlandt Park — with the waterfront at 225th Street. It must cross Metro North railroad tracks through some type of overpass before continuing all the way down to Robert Clemente State Park and the High Bridge.

The Parks Department recently made a breakthrough in the project through successful negotiations with a cargo railroad company that owns parcels along the Putnam. The city obtained rights over two stretches of an abandoned railroad corridor that starts in Van Cortlandt Park at 237th Street, and travels to roughly 230th Street. Before they can become parkland, the acquisitions must go through the city's land use review process. That step can take an additional one to two years, according to Ashe Reardon, a Parks spokesperson.

But the city has less leverage over the waterfront's many private developments. They range from a Baptist church's dog kennel near West 167th Street, to acres of dormant property surrounding the University Heights Bridge. Tax credits from the BOA program, which are up to 22 percent of remediation and pre-construction costs, are intended to encourage private owners to fix up their properties. "It's very lucrative," said Justin Bloom, an environmental lawyer involved in the project.

Cleaning contaminated sites is costly and labor intensive. The Harlem River waterfront contains fill made of unknown materials that was dumped there in the early 20th century. That type of contamination, as opposed to sites with chemical spills, is easier to remedy.

Advocates will have a better sense of the extent of the contamination if the project qualifies as a state BAO. After issuing a report on their initial goals, the Harlem River coalition will apply for additional state funding for more site assessment and community outreach. The program's third phase involves detailed planning for specific locations along the waterfront.

The multi-year process is laborious, and participants say the state isn't helping matters. The BOA has gone through numerous revisions, and the Harlem River group still hasn't received any of the funds allocated to them last year. The technically complex undertaking has required intensive volunteer labor. "The organizations are leading the state agencies on this," Kitasei said.

But advocates are heartened by the growing excitement over transforming broken piers and jagged rocks into esplanades and jungle gyms. The Council hopes to finish its initial report in May, and have an established blueprint in the next few years. "There will be a solid plan in place ... that can be a mechanism to get movement on these properties," Bloom said.



# Opinions

## Editorial comment

### From wasteland to wonderland

**I**t's no accident that in baseball's Golden Era two of the city's major league ball parks overlooked the Harlem River. The Harlem was once one of the city's great playgrounds: its banks were dotted with colorful boathouses that hosted a thousand sculls; riders on horseback promenaded and raced their steeds along the Manhattan shore; the bluffs above the river were home to an amusement park, as well as the Polo Grounds that later became the home diamond of the New York Giants.

All that changed as the river was industrialized. Now, with most of the industry gone, Bronxites hope to reclaim the shore as a place where people who live in one of the most urbanized areas in the country can find beauty and ease at their doorstep.

Last week at Bronx Community College, visionaries from community organizations and government agencies met to plan and advocate the transformation of the Harlem River. They envision a necklace of green from the terminus of Park Avenue deep in the South Bronx neighborhood of Port Morris to the Spuyten Duyvil

Triangle in Riverdale. A greenway would connect the parks, some of which would include fishing piers, places to launch kayaks and canoes, eco-classrooms and gardens.

Pie in the sky? Not really. This is the third such conference BCEQ has hosted: the Bronx borough president's office and the city and state Parks Departments back the reclamation effort; the state has now designated the BCEQ as the organization to

fidest Yes, from Cy Adler, the founder of Shorewalkers, who told the conference the walks he leads always find a route that safely overcomes such obstacles, even without the help of planners and government agencies, who could negotiate easements.

Colleen Alderson of the Parks Department told the participants that in a week or so, the local community board will get the design for a park at the Washington Bridge,

west of the Cross Bronx Expressway. It is to be accompanied by greenway linking the new park to Roberto Clemente State Park.

By 2009 there will be a new park on two acres of land near the Bronx Terminal Market, and if the Yankees get their new stadium by next year a waterfront park and esplanade will be built to replace parkland the team will take.

The defunct Fordham Landing housing development just south of the University Heights offers an opportunity for the city to acquire another 3.7 acres of shoreline for a park. And the conference was unanimous in calling for the re-opening of the High Bridge,

to link the shoreline parks of the Bronx and Manhattan.

Ultimately, as Mr. Adler told the conference, connecting all the parks along the river by greenways would create what he called the "Grand Harlem River Park," a recreation area larger than Central Park.

How are the many obstacles to be overcome and the new initiatives achieved? Harvey Rubbins of the Friends of Brook Park

**As efforts continue to clean up the shore of the Harlem River, formation of a Harlem River Alliance could create a necklace of green from the tip of Spuyten Duyvil to the South Bronx.**

river was industrialized. Now, with most of the industry gone, Bronxites hope to reclaim the shore as a place where people who live in one of the most urbanized areas in the country can find beauty and ease at their doorstep.

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Pie in the sky? Not really. This is the third such conference BCEQ has hosted: the Bronx borough president's office and the city and state Parks Departments back the reclamation effort; the state has now designated the BCEQ as the organization to represent community wishes as it plans the cleanup of brownfields, land polluted by its industrial owners.

The state has formally designate 156 acres along the Harlem and the six-acre Spuyten Duyvil Triangle as the "Harlem Brownfield Opportunity Area." But as speakers at the conference made clear, the question remains: opportunity for whom?

Will portions of the Harlem attract residential developers intent on gentrification? Will the plans for a new Yankee Stadium and vast new parking garages rob a portion of the shoreline of its potential to serve the needs of nearby residents? Can the city or state be persuaded to seize junkyards? Can a greenway really find a way through or around a maze of industrial facilities that include Metro-North's big car-cleaning building, Con Ed's pipe maintenance facility and a cement plant?

The answer to that question was a con-

**continue to clean up the shore of the Harlem River, formation of a Harlem River Alliance could create a necklace of green from the tip of Spuyten Duyvil to the South Bronx.**

Clemente State Park.

By 2009 there will be a new park on two acres of land near the Bronx Terminal Market, and if the Yankees get their new stadium by next year a waterfront park and esplanade will be built to replace parkland the team will take.

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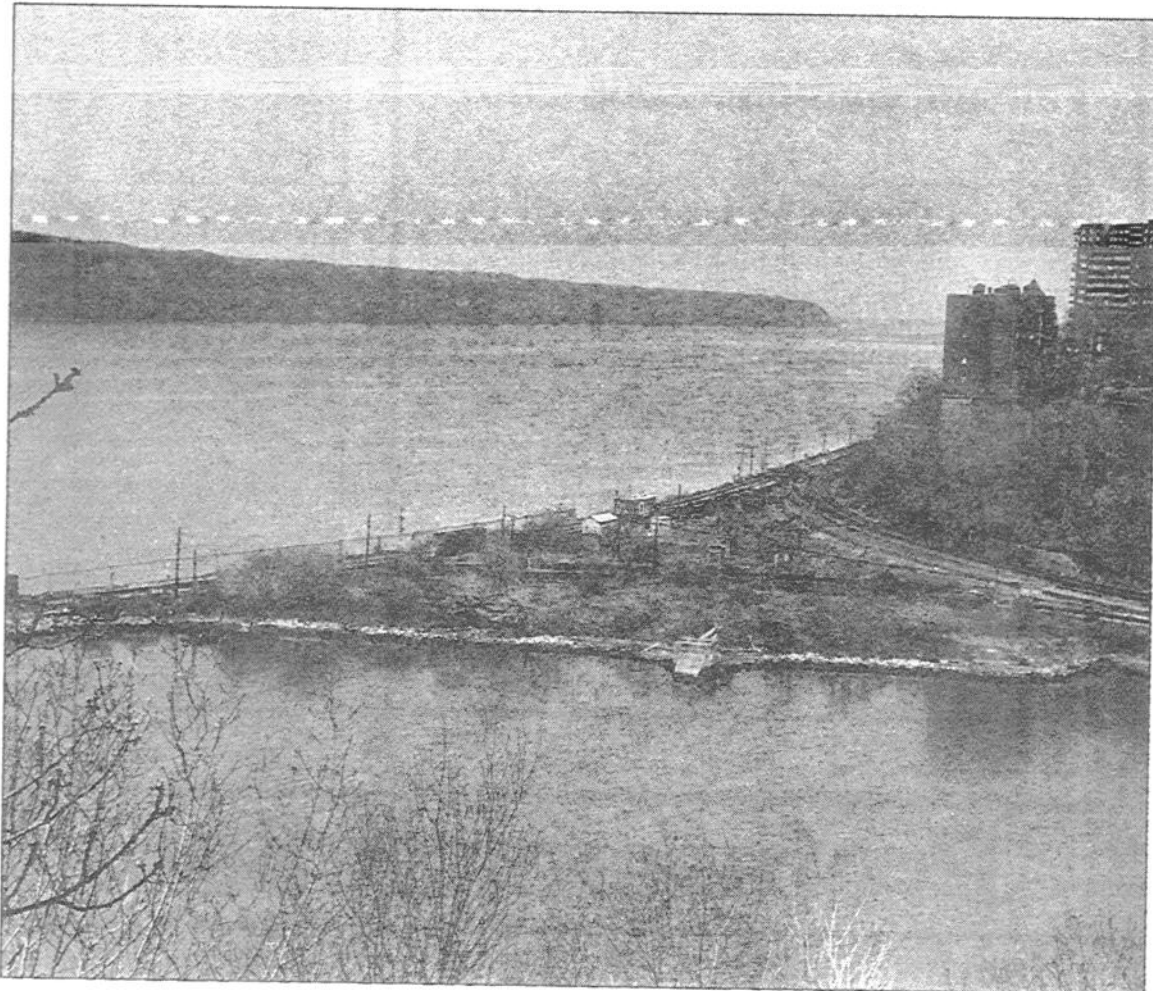
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Ultimately, as Mr. Adler told the conference, connecting all the parks along the river by greenways would create what he called the "Grand Harlem River Park," a recreation area larger than Central Park.

How are the many obstacles to be overcome and the new initiatives achieved? Harry Bubbins of the Friends of Brook Park provided the answer. Mr. Bubbins, whose organization is spearheading efforts to gain access to the Harlem for his park-starved South Bronx community, urged the conference to "look at the river as a whole," and to form a Harlem River Alliance.

The Harlem River Alliance would unite neighborhoods, planners and advocates in an organized effort to transform the shore, drawing on the experience of the Bronx River Alliance, a public-private partnership that has achieved remarkable successes and won some \$60 million in federal, city and state funding.

Such an alliance would do more than advocate for environmental sensitivity and recreational opportunities. Just as greenways would link parks along the Harlem, a Harlem River Alliance would link communities, forging ties from Riverdale to Port Morris that would strengthen both, and all the neighborhoods in between.



Riverdale Press file photo

## **Reviving a river**

THE SPUYTEN Duyvil Triangle, in photo above, will be the northern tip of a redevelopment plan stretching the length of the Harlem River shoreline and including new fishing piers and eco-classrooms and gardens. See Editorial comment.



**Public Meeting Summary May 24, 2006 for Application for Step 2 Nomination for a BOA**  
**Part B.1. - APPLICANT INFORMATION, section 5. Public Meeting Summary**

**Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA)**  
**Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ)**  
Manhattan College, RLC Building, Room 205  
**3840 Corlear Avenue, Bronx, NY 10463**

**TIME AND DATE: May 24, 2006 at 3 p.m.**

**ATTENDANCE:**

1. Nichole McCall, Department of City Planning, Bronx Office
2. Matt Mason, Department of City Planning, Bronx Office
3. Paul Mankiewicz, Gaia Institute, NYC Soil and Water Conservation District
4. Laura Stockstill, OBP, Environment and Open Space
5. Paula Caplan, OBP, Planning
6. Dart Westphal, Project Director, BCEQ
7. Karen Argenti, BCEQ
8. Hilary Kitasei, Project Manager
9. Walter Matystik, Manhattan College
10. Jane Sokolow, Metro Forest Council
11. Maria Luisa Cipriano, Parks, P4P
12. Brian Sahd, New York Restoration
13. Curtis Craven, NYS DOS
14. Joslyn Shapiro, NYS DEC

**NOT ABLE TO MAKE IT:** Shino Tanikawa\*, Jim Sciales, Colleen Alderson\*, Lee Ilan, Basil Seggos, (\* above sent comments in terms of our agenda and the report.)

**PURPOSE OF THE MEETING:** Present an idea of what to do in the next phase, the RFP. Summarize the Pre-Nomination Report findings, and move to discuss next steps.

**Meeting was chaired by Karen Argenti on behalf of BCEQ, who prepared this summary**

**1. Hilary Kitasei, presented a Summary of Pre-Nomination Report Findings and Identification of needs from the report.**

BCEQ signed the contract (May 2006), but we have not received any confirmation or initial funds. The DRAFT Pre-nomination report is waiting for comments from the Steering Committee. This large file can be downloaded and viewed on the Manhattan College Blackboard. Although the State MOU has not been signed (making next steps uncertain), we are being encouraged to meet the deadline (Friday, May 26) for Step 2, to keep our options open. At its May meeting, BCEQ voted to sponsor a Step 2 application, as long the application can sustain the support staff needed to assist our otherwise volunteer efforts to fulfill the next steps. The application requires the input of the steering committee on the direction the project should take and the activities that should be funded.

Handout: *One-page bullet point of issues, needs, maps. List of eligible activities for Step 2: Nomination Study*

- inventory and analysis of existing conditions and opportunities
- economic and market trends analyses
- reuse potential for properties with an emphasis on the identification and reuse potential of strategic sites which may catalyze area revitalization
- key findings and recommendations

**2. Discussion and decision of activities for Step 2 Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program Application and Guidance Package - Applications must be postmarked by May, 26, 2006) [http://nyswaterfronts.com/BOA\\_package.asp](http://nyswaterfronts.com/BOA_package.asp)**

**PREPARING BUDGET/NARRATIVE --** BCEQ would be the applicant; the steering committee would be advisory and work with assisting in the next contract. We would hire support staff for BCEQ, including fringe and payroll related expenses. Based on Hilary's recommendation, we will adopt the approach that would "Take me to the River, via BOA, Greenway and Transportation Initiatives, including 10 **Phase I Environmental Site Assessment** for access points." Budget will be presented and circulated via email.

**4:45-5:00 pm                      NEST STEPS – 14 to 21 days to get the report in for the Step 2**

**5:15 pm                              ADJOURN**

**Attached:              Project Manager Handout 4 pages  
AGENDA and attachments  
Steering Committee List**

**Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA)**  
**Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ)**  
Manhattan College, RLC Building, Room 205  
(718-862-7268 for weather emergency info on the day of the meeting)  
**3840 Corlear Avenue**  
Bronx, NY 10463

**TIME AND DATE:** May 24, 2006 at 3 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE:**

15. Nichole McCall, Department of City Planning, Bronx Office
16. Matt Mason, Department of City Planning, Bronx Office
17. Paul Mankiewicz, Gaia Institute, NYC Soil and Water Conservation District
18. Laura Stockstill, OBP, Environment and Open Space
19. Paula Caplan, OBP, Planning
20. Dart Westphal, Project Director, BCEQ
21. Karen Argenti, BCEQ
22. Hilary Kitasei, Project Manager
23. Walter Matystik, Manhattan College
24. Jane Sokolow, Metro Forest Council
25. Justin Bloom, by phone
26. Rita Kessler, CB 7 (or Barbara)
27. Maria Luisa Cipriano, Parks, P4P
28. Mike Seliger, BCC

**NOT ABLE TO MAKE IT:** Shino Tanikawa, Jim Sciales, Colleen Alderson (submitted comments), Lee Ilan, Basil Seggos,

**PRE-MEETING THINKING:** (If you are not going to be at the meeting, please let us know what your comments are in terms of our agenda today, concerning the report.)

- (1) BCEQ signed the contract (May 2006), but we have not received any confirmation or initial funds.
- (2) The DRAFT Pre-nomination report is waiting for comments from the Steering Committee. This large file can be downloaded and viewed on the Manhattan College Blackboard.
- (3) Although the State MOU has not been signed (making next steps uncertain), we are being encouraged to meet the deadline (Friday, May 26) for Step 2, to keep our options open.
- (4) At its May meeting, BCEQ voted to sponsor a Step 2 application, as long the application can sustain the support staff needed to assist our otherwise volunteer efforts to fulfill the next steps.
- (5) The application requires the input of the steering committee on the direction the project should take and the activities that should be funded.

**HOW TO USE THE BLACKBOARD:** Go to <http://ecourses.manhattan.edu>

- Log in. Your username is your first initial followed by your last name (one word) followed by dot guest. Example: hkitasei.guest The password is harlem.
- Go to "My Courses", then "Harlem River Project", click "Steering Committee"
- Click "Pre-Nomination Report" The report is in sections.

**Harlem River Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA)  
Bronx Council for Environmental Quality (BCEQ)**

**AGENDA**

**Purpose of the meeting:** Present an idea of what to do in the next phase, the RFP. Summarize the Pre-Nomination Report findings, and move to discuss next steps.

**3:00-3:30 pm            UPDATE**

3. **What is the next stage and what needs were identified in the Pre-Nomination Report?** Hilary Kitasei, Summary of Pre-Nomination Report Findings and identification of needs from the report.

- inventory and analysis of existing conditions and opportunities
- economic and market trends analyses
- reuse potential for properties with an emphasis on the identification and reuse potential of strategic sites which may catalyze area revitalization
- key findings and recommendations

**3:30-4:30 pm            PREPARING BUDGET/NARRATIVE**

2. Discussion and decision of activities for Step 2 (If motion #1 fails, go to #4) or Discussion of the report and finalizing Step 1

**Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program Application and Guidance Package**

[http://nyswaterfronts.com/BOA\\_package.asp](http://nyswaterfronts.com/BOA_package.asp)

**APPLICATION MATERIALS**

[Announcement of Funding Availability](#)

[Application Form](#)

[Guidance for Applicants](#)

[Application Workshop Schedule](#)

[Sample Resolution](#)

(Applications must be postmarked by May, 26, 2006)

**4:45-5:00 pm            NEXT STEPS**

**5 pm                      ADJOURN**



Updated 051706

**BCEQ Harlem River BOA Project Steering Committee**

**\*Coordinating Committee**

\*Dart Westphal (project chair)  
Director  
Bronx Council on Environmental Quality  
Mosholu Preservation Corp  
3400 Reservoir Oval  
Bronx NY 10467  
718-324-4461  
FAX 718-324-2917  
[dwestphal@mpcbronx.org](mailto:dwestphal@mpcbronx.org)

Hilary Kitasei (project manager)  
20 River Terrace Apt. 12M  
New York, NY 10282  
212-227-9505  
917-74105300 (m)  
FAX (212) 227-0077  
[hilary@kitasei.com](mailto:hilary@kitasei.com)

\*Justin Bloom (project attorney)  
Attorney at Law  
29 W. 70th St. #2B  
New York, NY 10023  
917-991-7593  
FAX 928-396-0677  
[bloomesq1@gmail.com](mailto:bloomesq1@gmail.com)

\*Paula Caplan (technical assistance)  
Deputy Director of Planning and Development  
Office of the Bronx Borough President  
851 Grand Concourse  
Bronx NY 10451  
718-590-3514  
FAX 718-590-2698  
[pcaplan@bronxbp.nyc.gov](mailto:pcaplan@bronxbp.nyc.gov)

Curtis Cravens  
NYS Department of State  
123 William Street  
New York, NY 10038  
212-417-5005  
FAX (212) 417-5688  
[cgravens@dos.state.ny.us](mailto:cgravens@dos.state.ny.us)

Daniel Walsh  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
Hunters Point Plaza  
47-40 21<sup>st</sup> St.  
Long Island City, NY 11101  
718-482-4599  
[dcwalsh@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:dcwalsh@gw.dec.state.ny.us)

\*Paul S. Mankiewicz, PhD (technical assistance)  
New York City Soil & Water Conservation District  
Executive Director  
(alternate: Shino Tanikawa)  
email: [shinot@aol.com](mailto:shinot@aol.com)

The Gaia Institute  
440 City Island Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10464  
718-885-1906 office  
718-885-3074 lab  
FAX 718-885-0882 X  
[gaiainst@aol.com](mailto:gaiainst@aol.com)

\*Walter Matystik, M.E.,J.D. (fiscal manager)  
Assistant Provost, Faculty Research  
Adjunct Professor, Computing, Policy & Planning  
Manhattan College  
4513 Manhattan College Parkway  
Bronx, N.Y. 10471  
718-862-7268  
FAX 718-862-7941  
[walter.matystik@manhattan.edu](mailto:walter.matystik@manhattan.edu)

\*Xavier Rodriguez (community outreach)  
District Manager  
Bronx Community Board 5  
Bronx Community College  
Philosophy Hall – Basement 5  
University Avenue & W. 181<sup>st</sup> Street  
Bronx, NY 10453  
718-364-2030  
\*FAX 718-220-1767 (use fax)  
[Brxcb5@optonline.net](mailto:Brxcb5@optonline.net) (rarely reads)

Josslyn B. Shapiro, Ph.D.  
Division of Environmental Remediation  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
47-40 21st Street  
Long Island City, NY 11101  
(718) 482-6446  
[jbshapir@gw.dec.state.ny.us](mailto:jbshapir@gw.dec.state.ny.us)

Ms. Lee Ilan  
Senior Environmental Planner  
New York City Office of Environmental Coordination  
100 Gold Street, 2nd Floor  
New York, NY 10038  
Tel. 212-788-2929  
Fax 212-788-2941

[lilan@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:lilan@cityhall.nyc.gov)  
URL: [www.nyc.gov/oec](http://www.nyc.gov/oec)

David Mojica  
Bronx Community Board 4  
District Manager:  
1650 Selwyn Avenue, Suites 11A & 11B  
Bronx, NY 10457  
718-299-0800  
FAX: (718) 294-7870  
[brxcb4@optonline.net](mailto:brxcb4@optonline.net)

Rita Kessler  
District Manager  
Bronx Community Board 7  
229A East 204th Street  
Bronx, NY 10458  
(718) 933-5650  
FAX: (718) 933-1829  
[rkessler@cb.nyc.gov](mailto:rkessler@cb.nyc.gov)

Grace A. Belkin  
District Manager  
Bronx Community Board 8  
5676 Riverdale Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10471  
(718) 884-3959  
FAX: (718) 796-2763  
[bronxcb8@hotmail.com](mailto:bronxcb8@hotmail.com)

(CB 8 representative: Brad Trebach  
Chair, Environment & Sanitation Committee  
3801 Greystone Avenue  
Bronx, New York 10463-1902  
(718) 543-7174  
Fax: (718) 549-5641  
[btlegal@verizon.net](mailto:btlegal@verizon.net)

New York Restoration Project  
(technical assistance)  
Brian Sahd  
[bfsahd@nyrp.org](mailto:bfsahd@nyrp.org)  
Jane Jackson  
254 West 31st Street  
10th Floor  
New York, NY 10001  
212-333-2552  
Fax (212) 333-3886  
[jjackson@nyrp.org](mailto:jjackson@nyrp.org)

Riverkeeper, Inc. (technical assistance)  
Basil B. Seggos  
Chief Investigator  
828 Broadway  
Tarrytown, NY 10591  
800-21-RIVER  
FAX (914) 478-4527  
[bseggos@riverkeeper.org](mailto:bseggos@riverkeeper.org)

Empire State Rowing Association  
James Sciales  
Empire State Rowing Association, Inc.  
Roberto Clemente State Park  
West Tremont Avenue & Matthewson Road  
Bronx, NY 10453  
(914) 766-4664 (w)  
(914) 636-2360 (h)  
[sciales@us.ibm.com](mailto:sciales@us.ibm.com)

Mailing address:  
IBM Global Services  
Route 100, Mail Drop 4405  
Somers, NY 10589

Karen Argenti (community outreach)  
61 Clear Lake Road  
Whiting, NJ 08759  
732-350-1183  
646-529-1990 (M)  
FAX 646-347-1047  
[kabx101@aol.com](mailto:kabx101@aol.com)

Metro Forest Council  
Jane Sokolow LMNOP  
Two Spaulding Lane  
Bronx, New York 10471  
718- 548-8090  
FAX: (718) 884-1227  
[jessokol@webspan.net](mailto:jessokol@webspan.net)

Partnership for Parks  
Joseph Sanchez (community outreach)  
Highbridge Catalyst coordinator  
718-430-1803  
[joseph.sanchez@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:joseph.sanchez@parks.nyc.gov)

NYC Department of City Planning  
Bronx Borough Office  
Matt Mason (for Purnima Kapur)  
City Planner  
One Fordham Plaza Room 502  
Bronx, NY 10458  
(718) 220-7340  
FAX (718) 584-8628  
[m\\_mason@planning.nyc.gov](mailto:m_mason@planning.nyc.gov)

NYC Department of Parks and Recreation  
Colleen Alderson  
Assistant Director & Bronx Project Manager  
Planning Division  
830 Fifth Avenue, Room 403  
New York, NY 10021  
212-360-3437  
Fax (212)-360-3453  
[Colleen.Alderson@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:Colleen.Alderson@parks.nyc.gov)

Bronx Community College  
Dr. Michael Seliger  
Acting Assistant Dean of Planning and Program  
University and West 181<sup>st</sup> St.  
Bronx, NY 10453  
718-289-5192  
[michael.seliger@bcc.cuny.edu](mailto:michael.seliger@bcc.cuny.edu)







New York State Departments of State and Environmental Conservation  
Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program  
New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources  
41 State Street – 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Albany, NY 12231-0001  
Tel. (518) 474-6000

Bronx Council for Environmental Quality  
Mosholu Preservation Corporation  
3400 Reservoir Oval, Bronx, NY 10467  
Tel. (718) 324-4461

Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrión, Jr.  
851 Grand Concourse, Bronx NY 10451  
Tel: (718) 590-3500

Hilary Kitasei, Consultant  
20 River Terrace #12M, New York, NY 10282  
Tel. (212) 227-9505

*Photo on front courtesy of Massimo Strino; photo on back courtesy of the Harlem River Boat Club*