

PROJECT DATA

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Project Name Hunts Point Riverside Park Location Lafayette Avenue & Edgewater Road

Owner New York City Department of Transportation

Project Use(s) boating, fishing, celebrations, festivals, yoga, lunching, barbequeing, play, quiet contemplation

Project Size 1.72 acres Total Development Cost \$3,270,000

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) _____

Date Initiated July 2004 Percent Completed by December 1, 2008 100%

Project Completion Date (if appropriate) May 2007

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates _____

Application submitted by:

Name Linda R. Cox Title Executive Director/Bronx River Administrator

Organization Bronx River Alliance/New York City Department of Parks & Recreation

Address One Bronx River Parkway City/State/Zip Bronx, NY 10462

Telephone (718) 430-4665 Fax (718) 430-4658

E-mail linda.cox@parks.nyc.gov Weekend Contact Number (for notification): (917) 299-5117

Key Participants (Attach an additional sheet if needed)

Organization	Key Participant	Telephone/e-mail
Public Agencies	Commissioner Adrian Benepe, NYCDPR, (212) 360-1305, adrian.benepe@parks.nyc.gov	

Architect/Designer George Bloomer, RLA; NYCDPR; (718) 760-6712, george.bloomer@parks.nyc.gov

Developer _____

Professional Consultant Joan Byron, Pratt Center for Community Development, (718) 636-3468, jbyron@pratt.edu

Community Group Majora Carter, Majora Carter Group, (718) 874-7313, majora@majoracartergroup.com

Other _____

Please indicate how you learned of the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*. (Check all that apply).

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct Mailing | <input type="checkbox"/> Magazine Advertisement | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous RBA entrant | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Previous Selection Committee member | |
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Signature Linda R Cox

Relevant Project Dates

- 1997: Bronx River Working Group convened by Partnerships for Parks. Majora Carter stumbles down an abandoned street-end with her dog and discovers the Bronx River.
- 1998: Rocking the Boat locates at the park. Working Group has 35 member organizations
- April 24, 1999: First Golden Ball Festival culminating at the future site of Hunts Point Riverside Park; NYCDPR Commissioner Stern declared 1999 "the Year of the Bronx River."
- 2001: Working Group has 65 members and has raised \$33 million. Bronx River Alliance founded
- Summer 2004: Ground broken at Hunts Point Riverside Park
- Spring 2007: Hunts Point Riverside Park re-opens to the public

Additional Community Representative Perspective Sheets completed by:

Adam Green, Rocking the Boat, (718) 466-5799, adam@rockingtheboat.org.

Jenny Hoffner, American Rivers, (404) 373-3602, jhoffner@americanrivers.org

2009
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
ABSTRACT



ABSTRACT

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name Hunts Point Riverside Park

Address Lafayette Avenue & Edgewater Road City/State/ZIP Bronx, NY 10474

1. Give a brief overview of the project, including major project goals.

Hunts Point Riverside Park is a new gem on the Bronx River which grew out of community activism to reclaim the waterfront and gain open space for one of the most underserved neighborhoods in New York City. Hunts Point Riverside Park also holds deep significance as a symbol of the renaissance of the river, the development of the Bronx River Greenway, and the engagement of local communities in parkland acquisition, design, and management. Hunts Point Riverside Park is the first access point to the Bronx River created in the Hunts Point peninsula, a community whose waterfront was made publicly inaccessible by dense industrial and commercial uses. Community residents and leaders greened the site through their own efforts, used it as a community park before its formal redevelopment, worked closely with planners and designers from the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to envision the ultimate design, and continue to lead the programming of the space.

Today, Hunts Point Riverside Park is a stand-alone success, demonstrating the rewards of community efforts and offering the public a thoughtfully-designed sliver of nature in the South Bronx. The park is a place where youth can launch wooden boats they made themselves, learn the mysteries of mating horseshoe crabs, or participate in an oyster re-introduction project. Hunts Point Riverside Park is also a beacon of what's to come: the Bronx River Greenway, a system of linear parks and on-street connections that will run the full 23-mile length of the river, opening up access to a precious natural resource and reconnecting neighborhoods long isolated from one another.

The park showcases the work of the Bronx River Alliance, a public-private partnership between NYCDPR, community groups, and other public agencies to reclaim the Bronx River. The Alliance is dedicated to serving as a coordinated voice for the river and working in harmonious partnership to protect, improve and restore the Bronx River corridor so that it can be a resource for the communities through which the river flows.

Hunts Point Riverside Park is a dream made tangible by local leaders who have long seen a different future for their neighborhood: a place where children have a beautiful park in which to play, where the river is not cut off from view, and where nature's wonders are within reach.

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.)

Hunts Point Riverside Park is a striking example of how a deep level of community participation can achieve excellence in placemaking. As the first new park on the Bronx River Greenway, Hunts Point Riverside Park typifies the transformation underway—the dramatic redevelopment of an entire river corridor into a resource for Bronx River neighborhoods through a community-led process. The story of this park is one of community leaders and residents who successfully captured the public's imagination around the idea of restoring a river and the strong and enduring partnership that developed between them and NYCDPR to make that vision tangible.

However, Hunts Point Riverside Park is extraordinary not just for its process, but also for its product. The physical transformation of the site is remarkable, especially given the site constraints—a small site (1.72 acres) sandwiched between a scrap metal yard and the world's largest food distribution center. Careful design ensures that this toe-hold on the Bronx River waterfront is a treasured space for respite and recreation in a highly urbanized and industrialized neighborhood. The park features a dock and beach used by hundreds of paddlers and youth building boats, a waterfront amphitheater, a spray play feature with whimsical boats for climbing and shell chairs for tots, barbeque and picnic areas, open lawn, and dense landscaping championed by community members who invested hours of sweat equity into greening the site.

In fact, much of the design builds on community uses of the site prior to its formal development. The nautical theme evokes the spirit of a place seized by community residents for water-related activities. The amphitheater echoes the celebrations that community residents organized to celebrate their reconnection to the waterfront, most notably the procession of the Golden Ball down the Bronx River—an annual celebration illustrating the connections between Bronx River neighborhoods long isolated from one another by highways and urban development. These early activities galvanized public support for Hunts Point Riverside Park. Dedicated community organizing, inspired community events, and an extraordinary partnership between a public agency and a low-income, underserved community captured a remnant of the forgotten urban landscape—an abandoned street end—and transformed it into Hunts Point Riverside Park, a key destination along the river.

2009
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION



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1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project?

Hunts Point Riverside Park emerged from a groundswell of energy to reclaim the Bronx River as a resource for Bronx communities. The park holds deep significance as a symbol of the renaissance of the river, the development of the Bronx River Greenway, and the engagement of local communities in parkland acquisition, design, and management. The park was born from a struggle deeply rooted in the environmental justice movement for new parkland and waterfront access in the late 1990's in the low-income Hunts Point neighborhood, a community struggling with the city's highest rates of asthma and diabetes yet lacking in recreational facilities. Already engaged in a broad effort to reclaim the Bronx River and open up access to its shores, Hunts Point leaders saw the potential in a trash strewn lot, worked with residents to clean and green the site, and developed early concepts for the design of the park, many elements of which are reflected in the park's ultimate design. Hunts Point Riverside Park encapsulates the efforts of community residents and leaders to open up new access to the Bronx River and enable local residents to fully use the river as a recreational and environmental resource. This is especially important to neighborhoods in the South Bronx that have little open space and, despite being surrounded by water, lack recreational access to the waterfront. The development of the park illustrates how an asset-based approach to community organizing that looks to the strengths of a community—in the case of Hunts Point, its tremendous human talent—can find potential, galvanize change, and build momentum for other projects to improve quality of life.

The goal of Hunts Point Riverside Park from a design perspective was to capture a sense of nature on a site located between a scrap metal yard and the world's largest food distribution center. The park's sinuous paths, thoughtfully-designed details (e.g., small-scale boats for climbing, shell chairs, a pergola with seating) and dense vegetation creates spaces for recreation and respite, provides habitat, and offers a green oasis in a highly urbanized environment.

The development of a new park in an area with industrial and commercial uses reveals inherent tensions. However, waterfront access is crucial to these communities, and together, we are prepared to confront and manage these conflicts—barge, truck, and rail traffic, as well as the sensory impact of adjacent uses. In addition, we must manage public access to a river whose waters are not yet safe for primary contact. Some may question whether a waterfront park belongs in such a location, but community residents rightly ask: if not here, where?

2. How has the project impacted the local community?

As the first waterfront park in Hunts Point and the first new park on the Bronx River Greenway, Hunts Point Riverside Park is a victory for a generation of environmental justice activists who have fought tooth and nail for parkland and waterfront access in their neighborhood. Through extensive involvement in the design and development of Hunts Point Riverside Park, community members helped determine how millions of dollars were spent in their community, and when the park opened in 2007, residents could see that their efforts changed the face of their neighborhood. This type of community involvement in decision-making helps to reverse a history of land use planning that favored highways over neighborhoods, and that concentrated noxious land uses in communities like the South Bronx. The success that community residents have had in working with public agencies to improve neighborhood conditions on the Bronx River has provided invaluable experience that lays the groundwork for tackling other community problems. The park has also opened up new recreational opportunities to residents. Hundreds, if not thousands of Bronx residents launch boats from this site every year through events like the Bronx River Alliance's annual Amazing Bronx River Flotilla and regular programming by Rocking the Boat, a local non-profit that enables local youth to build traditional boats and use them in an extensive on-water education program. On weekends during the warm months, Rocking the Boat also offers community rowing days to the public from the park.

Hunts Point Riverside Park also offers space for quiet enjoyment and informal play, a rare treasure in Hunts Point. Here children safely play and have the type of contact with nature—skipping stones, discovering the critters that live at the water's edge—that defines childhood in less urbanized environments. For residents in the poorest urban Congressional district in the country Hunts Point Riverside Park provides a resource not found in some of the poshest Manhattan locales—the opportunity to contemplate the immutable, yet ever-changing natural phenomenon that is a river flowing out to sea.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate.

The story of Hunts Point Riverside Park is intertwined with the larger effort to reclaim the Bronx River that began in earnest in 1997 with the formation of the Bronx River Working Group. The Working Group brought together 65 community organizations around the common goal of claiming the river as a resource and, by 2001, had raised \$33 million to restore the river and develop the Bronx River Greenway. At this point, the Bronx River Alliance was formed as an independent non-profit to steward these funds and work with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, as well as other agency and community partners, to reclaim the river.

As the Working Group was gathering steam, Majora Carter, a member of the Group doubtful that the river touched her community, was led by her dog down a trash-strewn abandoned street-end and discovered the river firsthand. Majora then wrote a \$10,000 seed grant enabling residents and leaders to green the site and use the space as a park before its formal redevelopment. Following the allocation of \$3.27 million in mayoral funds for a formal capital investment by NYCDPR, community residents worked closely with planners and designers from the agency to envision the ultimate design.

While the vision of Hunts Point Riverside Park and the Bronx River Greenway as a whole rose from the neighborhoods that line the river, NYCDPR has been a welcoming public agency home to this project, assisting in raising funds for Bronx River projects, managing the design and construction processes through the agency's Capital Division, and maintaining and operating the parkland through the Bronx Borough office.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable.

The capital improvements to Hunts Point Riverside Park were funded by \$3.27 million in New York City mayoral funds. Because the abandoned street-end redeveloped for the park is city-owned property, there were no site acquisition costs. The site was augmented by the donation at no cost of a waterfront parcel from the adjacent Hunts Point Produce Market, property under the jurisdiction of the city's Economic Development Corporation. Therefore, the entirety of the \$3.27 million was dedicated to design, construction, environmental remediation, and construction oversight.

Several off-site improvements were crucial to the success of the park—traffic calming measures and pedestrian improvements to the entrance implemented by NYCDOT and the GreenStreets program, as well as a safe railroad crossing provided by NYCEDC.

City support for Hunts Point Riverside Park should be couched in the context of the confluence of federal, state and local funds that were pouring into the Bronx River effort at the time. Led by the vision outlined by the Bronx River Working Group, government and businesses dedicated \$33 million to the Bronx River—and today, that figure has risen to over \$120 million.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings?

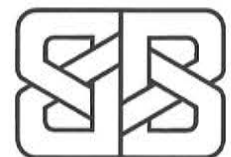
Hunts Point Riverside Park is unique in that the forces that led to its creation—a renewed community organizing effort to reclaim the river, strong community leaders, receptive public agencies and elected officials—came together at the perfect moment for this park and the Bronx River Greenway to emerge. However, there are lessons to be gleaned from the creation of this park that could be applied to various settings.

One transferable lesson is that public-private models of park development can bring strong and lasting results and can do so far away from the concentrated resources of a central business district. The partnership model for park management is by now well-known—and originated in New York City with the Central Park Conservancy—but Hunts Point Riverside Park offers a model of how the partnership model can be implemented in an underserved community. It draws on a public agency that commits to investing in building constituencies for parks; it exemplifies an asset-based approach to community development; and it involves active listening and responsive planning to evident community uses and articulated desires. Hunts Point Riverside Park showcases the value of linking to a larger effort: the development of the Bronx River Greenway. The broader endeavor to reclaim the river inspired the public, brought public resources to bear, and galvanized lasting change.

2009

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COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	Adam Green	Title	Executive Director
Organization	Rocking the Boat	Telephone (718)	466-5799
Address	60 East 174th Street	City/State/ZIP	Bronx, NY 10452
Fax (718)	466-2892	E-mail	adam@rockingtheboat.org

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Signature Adam Green

Digitally signed by Adam Green
DN: cn=Adam Green, o=Rocking the Boat, ou, email=adam@rockingtheboat.org, c=US
Date: 2008.12.11 16:12:22 -0500

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

Rocking the Boat uses Hunts Point Riverside Park every day. We are a youth development organization that builds boats and uses them to develop empowered and responsible adults. In discovering Hunts Point Riverside Park in spring, 1998, shortly after it was reclaimed by the community, we found the perfect place to do our work. At that point it was not much more than an empty lot, but one with some amazing direct access to the Bronx River. We used it as the site where we stored and launched the three or four boats we had so far built until the capital construction project began in 2004. The moment the official construction was completed in 2006 (complications related to providing safe crossing of a railroad line delayed the official park opening until spring 2007), we moved back to the park, having by then built somewhere around 20 wooden boats, serving thousands of young people each year. Currently, Rocking the Boat actively uses the park every day, 10 months out of the year, and it offers the ideal environment for us to do our community and youth development work.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

The major issue for Rocking the Boat as a youth development organization has been accessibility and safety. Hunts Point is the 16th Congressional District, currently the poorest in the nation. The residential section of Hunts Point neighborhood that the park is located in ends a couple of blocks short of the park and then turns industrial. This section is less populated, has fewer traffic lights, and fewer street lights. Our primary concern was safety, both from speeding trucks and cars, and from crime. This concern was especially prominent in light of the schedule of our after school programs, often ending after dark. Safety continues to be a major issue in the community, but the park's presence has helped to address it. An intersection that formerly had no lights or crosswalks now has both, and even has beautifully planted traffic islands. The City has already committed significant funding for a green street project—part of the South Bronx Greenway—on the main avenue that leads to the park. This will transform the street, and incomparably increase community access and safety. The local police precinct has paid special attention to this area, patrolling more aggressively than they used to. Community members are feeling more and more comfortable in coming to the park and that in itself is helping to create even a safer environment.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

The primary trade-off was the inaccessibility to the park for the four years it was under construction. As thrilled as we all were to have a new park in progress, the access that we had had in our makeshift park was wonderful and we hated to lose it. During the construction period, Rocking the Boat relocated twice, first to another abandoned site up the river, and then to another, more remote, park at the mouth of the River. This relocation was challenging, for the staff, but more than anything, for the students, who had to trek all over the borough to take part in our programs.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

Hunts Point Riverside Park has had a tremendous impact on the quality of life in Hunts Point. Formerly without any parks space or public access to the water that surrounded them, Hunts Point residents now have arguably the most beautiful park in New York City with some of the most unique waterfront access. And thanks to the work of Rocking the Boat and the Bronx River Alliance, the residents also have some of the most unique programs. There are few places in the country where city residents can walk down the street in their own neighborhood and, for free, take a small boat out for a row or a paddle. As well, the park has a fishing pier, barbecues, remarkable landscaping, a sprinkler area, and beautiful shady areas for people to sit and relax. People come down to the park during their lunch breaks to sit on the benches on pier or on the picnic tables. Weekends are packed all summer-long with family events. The park has introduced a resource to this community, one of the most impoverished in the nation, that few residents could have imagined a decade before.

5. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

As active users of the park, we are thrilled to have such an amazing public resource. Our only request for change would be in the design of the waterfront area. Though it allows us wonderful access to the Bronx River, the design of the pier and dock and the material that make up the beach could be improved. The pier is built on pilings and sits in the center of an approximately 75-foot wide beach area. The upper beach is covered in tiny pebbles, perfect for throwing and skipping into the water. The lower beach is made up of larger round rocks that are extremely slimy due to being covered in water half the time. The pebbles from the upper beach are gradually making their way into the water, creating a mound somewhere just past the low-tide line. Walking our boats down to the water during low tide means a great deal of very slippery and unsteady footing, with an occasional slide into the water.

Ideally, the dock would be used to launch and then board our boats. The pier is designed for people, though, not boats, and the floating dock and the end of the pier has massive stabilizing pilings at 10-foot intervals -- too small for our boats (ranging from 12 to 18 feet) to fit between. Therefore, with this big, beautiful pier and floating dock sitting next to us, we use only the beach to launch and load our boats.

Through the advocacy of Rocking the Boat and the Bronx River Alliance, the City recently pledged \$200,000 to rebuild the dock and address some of the general waterfront issues. We will be closely advising this process and very much looking forward to the outcome of this work.

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	Jenny Hoffner	Title	Former Bronx River Project Catalyst Coordinator
Organization	Partnership for Parks	Telephone ()	784-5771
Address	501 Dancing Fox Road	City/State/ZIP	Decatur, GA 30032
Fax ()		E-mail	jhoffner@americanrivers.org

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Signature

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

In 1997, Partnerships for Parks (Partnerships), a joint program of the City Parks Foundation and New York City/Parks & Recreation, initiated a project to catalyze the reclamation of the Bronx River to a healthy ecological, recreational, educational and economic resource. Partnerships mission is to start, support and engage community involvement in NYC parks, so both parks and neighborhoods will thrive. With over 700 acres of parks lining the 8- mile stretch of NYC's Bronx River, a group of environmental, business, and community organizations approached Partnerships to help coordinate and broaden their collective efforts to restore the river. Hunts Point Riverside Park (HPRP) evolved out of our outreach efforts and small grants program. From 1997 -2002, I served as coordinator for the overall restoration project, a small grants program and the Bronx River Working Group, an alliance of over 65 community groups, government agencies and businesses. My role with HPRP was to oversee the seed grant program that provided the initial funds to grow the project and to serve as the community liaison/facilitator to the Parks Department/City.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

If I were to boil it down, I believe the two major community issues related to the project could be characterized as 'access' and 'process'. Access: For sixty years, the Hunts Point community had been cut off from the Bronx River by the industry, fences, truck traffic, etc. The irony and injustice is that Hunts Point is bounded on three sides by water – it's a peninsula- and yet the community had no access to the water. For this low income, community of color, it was an injustice that they had no access to their waterfront. Even with this injustice and the clear need, it was not a foregone conclusion that this dead end street would become a park. There were many obstacles, physical (train tracks, truck traffic) and bureaucratic (mapping, ownership) that would stand in the way. Of course, securing significant funding, over a million dollars to develop the park, served as another obstacle to its fruition. Process: For this low income, community of color that had been disenfranchised and left out of the decision making processes that shaped their neighborhood and their lives, it was important that the transformation of this dead end street into a park be guided and determined by the community itself. The development of the park was a learning experience for the community as well as partner agencies.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

The two biggest trade-offs that were required related to funding and design. Funding: Securing the funding for Hunts Point Riverside Park was a heavy lift. It was estimated to cost over a million dollars (in the end it cost more) to develop the small park. When the Bronx River received a lump sum \$11 million allocation of funding from the Mayor to develop the greenway, many projects stood in line to receive the funds. There was significant community support for Hunts Point Riverside Park and because of this support the Parks Department decided to allocate funds to the project. This was at the expense of other projects moving forward. Design: There were many ideas and dreams for the park. There was serious discussion of a pedestrian bridge that would connect the peninsula to the 160 acre Soundview Park across the river. This proposal would have precluded much of the park. There was also the potential to restore some of the shoreline to natural habitat. But with the limited space available, the natural area park across the river and the need for river access and recreation in the Hunts Point community, it was agreed that restoration of the shoreline would not be a priority. Partnerships for Parks, through my work, served as facilitator for the funding discussion and decision making as well as an internal advocate for the project and the community.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

Undoubtedly, Hunts Point Riverside Park has made the neighborhood a better place to live and work. In 1999, the site was a dumping ground that hosted prostitution and other illicit activity. Hundreds of tires, detritus from years of neglect and garbage from the adjacent recycling plant littered the site. It was an inhospitable area and a community liability.

When Majora Carter and her organization, The Point Community Development Corporation (The Point), decided to take Partnerships up on our offer to apply for our small grants program, the transformation started and little by little things began to change. With the support of the \$10,000 grant and permission from the City, they hosted community clean ups, secured in kind donations of site grading from Con Edison, concrete barriers from the neighboring concrete plant and asphalt paving from City Department of Transportation. They hosted workdays to paint and plant trees and ultimately hosted celebrations.

In the early days of the transformation, the emerging Hunts Point Riverside Park was an immediate draw for positive activity. Families started to visit the river, anglers would bring their bathtub sized boats and put in there, and some were even seen rollerblading on the new asphalt path.

Now that the transformation is complete, more than being the first neighborhood public access point to the Bronx River in generations, Hunts Point Riverside Park is an oasis, an amenity, an inspiration. It is one few parks in the neighborhood and provides a play space for kids, a dock for anglers, a floating dock for getting on the river, a performance space for music, theatre and impromptu gatherings. It is a symbol of the transformation possible in the River and the neighborhood – guided and inspired by the community.

5. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

The development of Hunts Point Riverside Park was a complex and challenging undertaking.

The list of hurdles was long: securing funding for development, land acquisition, a collaborative design process, balancing access to the river with restoration of habitat, pedestrian safety issues related to crossing a truck route and railroad tracks, and coordination with the adjacent Hunts Point Market and development of a boat house. At times it seemed that it would not come to fruition.

Given the complexity of community design coupled with New York City bureaucracy, I believe the development process was a good and timely one. It was a community driven process right from the start. Majora Carter and The Point and, later, Sustainable South Bronx, spearheaded a community design process in partnership with the Bronx River Alliance and the Parks Department. The Parks Department, with the support of the community and its elected officials, was able to marshal the scarce resources to prioritize the acquisition and development of this unlikely park.

From breaking ground as a community clean up project in April 1999 to cutting the ribbon on a beautiful, multi-functional park with river access with a floating dock, river-themed spray showers, amphitheatre in 2007, each step of the way was challenging, but in the end worth it.

Jerry Hoff

2009

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Name	Majora Carter	Title	President
Organization	Majora Carter Group, LLC	Telephone ()	718 874 7313
Address	901 Hunts Point Ave	City/State/ZIP	the Bronx/NY/10474
Fax ()		E-mail	info@majoracartergroup.com

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Signature

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play?

I have lived in Hunts Point in the South Bronx all my life. I never knew one could get to the Bronx or East Rivers growing up there because the shore was lined with industry and as a child, my parents forbade to venture down there on my own. One morning while jogging with my big energetic dog in 1999, she pulled me through an illegal garbage dump that dead ended at the Bronx River. That day I applied for a \$10k seed grant from the Waterworks Program which Jenny Hofner (the program's coordinator) had been trying to get people to use. It was a joint project between US Forest Service and City Parks Foundation (NYC) to do river restoration projects. I organized community clean-ups while working at The Point CDC; and made connections with local businesses to help with heavy clean up, donate land and setbacks from the nascent park's borders. By 2001, I formed the non-profit Sustainable South Bronx, and had written a \$1.25M Fed'l Transportation Dept planning grant to design the South Bronx Greenway of which this park was the first project. I organized events and worked to attract other activities and event to the park to ensure its continued use. In 2006, after a major 2 year renovation, I was married in this park - and we threw a reception for over 300 people that was open to the public.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project?

Although everyone agreed that more parks were needed - the South Bronx still has the lowest parks to person ratio in the city, parents were concerned about building a park so close to industrial lots with traffic intersections that where not, at the time, pedestrian friendly.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? How did your organization participate in making them?

We were "the boots on the ground". We built on our pre-existing relationships within the community, with local businesses, electeds and community groups. There was some tension at the start, in particular, the business community and the residential community were very isolated from one another and trust needed to be built. The development of the park did supply our community a reason to understand the value of working together toward a shared goal.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

4. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how?

YES to both. The people who work at the local scrap metal yard and all the produce markets take their lunch in the park and get to interact with people who live in the community in ways that never happened before. A group called Rocking The Boat moved into the lot next to the park. They teach local kids how to build traditional wooden row boats and then study river ecology in them; and every Saturday there is free community rowing in these beautiful boats. On summer evenings and weekend afternoons, all of the bbq's are in use and people throw parties. The pier is wheel chair accessible giving everyone the chance to enjoy the river. Multiple generations of mostly men and boys fish off of that pier too. Kids are skipping stones on the river for the first time!

5. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through?

Yes, the D.O.T. and the Parks Dept were not coordinated with regard to the rail road tracks that cross the entrance to the park. When it was just a community led project, the safety of kids going to the park was neither agency's official responsibility; but when the park was beautifully renovated by the City, the track crossing became a problem. They closed the park all together for the first 6 months after it was completed because there was no approved pedestrian safety plan. Then they put 4 full time parks employees on the tracks to make it "safe". Everyone knew about the project for years, and it should have been figured out before the park was completed. On the other end of the park, the floating pier was not designed with small boats in mind. Its pilings are about 10 ft apart, but the pier is not flush to the outside between the gaps making it very difficult to bring the row boats along side. Also, there are metal brackets on the pilings that are higher than the lowest tides, so that the pier gets stopped but the water keeps dropping -- also making it hard for small boats to dock at low tide. Perhaps the biggest problem is no bathroom. This makes it difficult for older people and families with small kids to enjoy the park for long periods of time,

2009
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PUBLIC AGENCY
PERSPECTIVE



PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by staff representative(s) of public agency(ies) who were directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name Joshua Laird Title Asst. Commissioner, Planning & Natural Resources

Organization New York City Department of Parks and Recreation Telephone (212) 360-3402

Address The Arsenal, Central Park City/State/ZIP New York, NY 10065

Fax (212) 360-3453 E-mail joshua.laird@parks.nyc.gov

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1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements).

The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (Parks), in partnership with the Bronx River Alliance and a variety of community and regional organizations, played an extensive role in the development of Hunts Point Riverside Park. The agency acquired site control for the project, designed and constructed the park and provides ongoing maintenance for its operation. Once a derelict street end, the site was improved under the agency's GreenStreets Program, a collaboration between Parks and the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) that seeks to transform traffic medians and other areas of the public street realm into vibrant green spaces. Parks also successfully negotiated the transfer of a small area of property to the park from the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), the owners of the adjacent Hunts Point Terminal Market. The addition of this parcel expanded the park's shoreline frontage and opened up waterfront views. The design of the park was accomplished by the Parks Department's in-house design division and included extensive consultation with community residents and Community Board 2. The result is a beautifully landscaped park that reflects a strong community vision for the site. Parks also managed the construction process and today provides ongoing maintenance and operations for the park.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them?

The development of Hunts Point Riverside Park advanced broad city goals for waterfront redevelopment and for increased access to parks in underserved communities. New York City's 1992 Comprehensive Waterfront Plan places a particular emphasis on opening up public access in underserved communities in the Bronx. Hunts Point Riverside Park demonstrates the Parks Department's commitment to developing such open spaces in underserved neighborhoods, and, although it was completed before the 2007 publication of PlanNYC, it also exhibits the City's commitment to the plan's sustainability goals and that all New Yorkers should live within a ten-minute walk of a park.

As the city makes the transition from an active, working waterfront to one used increasingly for recreation, we grapple with some inherent tensions. Hunts Point Riverside Park had conflicts with adjacent active commercial and industrial uses at both the waterfront and the entrance to the park. The beach and dock sites are adjacent to an active barge dock, requiring our close communication with the scrap metal businesses using it. In addition, to access the site, park visitors must cross the CSX railroad line that runs into the Hunts Point Produce Market, the world's largest food distribution center. Developing a safe railroad crossing was a complicated, multi-agency process.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible.

Hunts Point Riverside Park marks the southern terminus of the Bronx River Greenway, a system of linear parks that will ultimately provide ten miles of paths and access that is one of the Parks Department's signature efforts to stitch together a corridor of parkland along the city's waterfront. The success of Hunts Point Riverside Park has built momentum for the Bronx River Greenway, as well as the South Bronx Greenway which meet at the site. These greenways will ultimately provide the city with a complete connection between Manhattan, the Bronx, and Westchester County, as well as miles of waterfront pathways and acres of new parkland in some of the city's most underserved neighborhoods. In New York City, there are few remaining sites for new parks, and yet we know that as our city grows, open spaces will be in more demand. Seizing the potential of our waterfront enables us to build neighborhood parks which, when taken together, can also function as a linear system enabling non-motorized modes of transportation in an increasingly congested city. Hunts Point Riverside Park also symbolizes New York City's efforts to reclaim our shores for recreation, inspiration, and education. Removing a portion of the seawall at Hunts Point Riverside Park and naturalizing the shore so that boats can be launched encapsulates the next generation of waterfront uses in New York City, a transition in many cases that balances the working waterfront with active recreation. The development of Hunts Point Riverside Park has prompted a response from multiple institutions, providing ancillary benefits for Hunts Point—traffic-calming measures at the entrance to the park instituted by NYCDOT, renovations at the adjacent scrap metal yard to hold stormwater on site, and a vegetated wall to green their street front.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities?

One of the most notable aspects in the development of Hunts Point Riverside Park is the degree of partnership that played a role at every stage. Crucial groundwork for the park was laid by Partnerships for Parks, a joint program of the City Parks Foundation and Parks, when in 1997 it launched the Bronx River Project—a four year effort to build community ownership of the Bronx River and leverage resources to restore and open up access to it. In response to growing community advocacy, former Parks Commissioner Henry J. Stern declared 1999 "The Year of the Bronx River," leading to the creation of the agency's Bronx River Action Plan. This document laid the groundwork for initial steps the agency would take to facilitate revitalization projects along the river. The Bronx River Working Group which had been formed in 1997, continued to grow and by 2001 represented 65 community groups and had leveraged \$33 million for the Bronx River. At this time the group formally incorporated as an independent non-profit entity: the Bronx River Alliance. Today the Alliance is a coalition of over 100 member organizations, serving as a coordinated voice for the river and working in harmonious partnership to protect, improve and restore it. Community-based organizations, businesses, and government agencies coordinate their efforts to protect and restore the Bronx River at regular meetings of the Alliance. At present, over \$120 million in Federal, State, City, and private dollars have been earmarked for the greenway, ecological restoration and education activities. Hunts Point Riverside Park is the proof that we have succeeded in demonstrating that public/private partnerships can work in lower-income, but deeply engaged communities. We believe that cultivating constituencies for parks can jumpstart community leadership that in turn can be transformed into new models for partnership, like the Bronx River Alliance.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

Hunts Point Riverside Park demonstrates the power of strong public-private partnerships—that these endeavors can produce excellence in placemaking and effect lasting change. Community residents and leaders shaped every aspect of this park—from the "discovery" of the site to its current uses—from its design to its management.

Hunts Point Riverside Park is a striking example of how a deep level of community participation can achieve excellence in placemaking. The maximized use of the waterfront, the maritime elements in the park, the focus on contact with nature, and the attention given to creating gathering spaces reflect community uses and desires.

However, opening up waterfront brings undeniable challenges. There remains conflict between the dock at the park and the adjacent scrap metal recycling facility. Barges have caused some damage to the dock facility (repairs are currently underway) and recreational users of the site, including youth groups, must be instructed to be aware of the potential dangers of boating in an active waterway.

Despite these tensions, the park is an unmistakable success. Today the park is used for yoga and boating, informal lunches and barbeques, for wedding ceremonies, for community festivals—the Hunts Point Fish Parade, the Amazing Bronx River Flotilla—and even for elegant galas, such as the Alliance's Upstream Soiree. This space and these events transform public perceptions of what's possible in Hunts Point.

2009

**RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROFESSIONAL
CONSULTANT
PERSPECTIVE**



PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name Joan Byron Title Director, Sustainability and Environmental Justice

Organization Pratt Center for Community Development Telephone (718) 636-3468

Address 379 DeKalb Avenue City/State/ZIP Brooklyn, NY 11205

Fax (718) 636-3709 E-mail jbyron@pratt.edu

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1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project?

We were planning consultants to the Bronx River Alliance, and also to several of the community-based organizations involved in the creation of Hunts Point River Side Park. Beginning in 1996, we facilitated a community visioning process that was led by The Point CDC, in response to an influx of trucking and waste-related uses that were exacerbating the area's already severe environmental problems. A key element of the plan that emerged from that process was a proposal for a greenway system that would include a continuous waterfront path, on-street linkages to upland neighborhoods, and a series of waterfront parks with space for small boat launching and landing, active and passive recreation for all age groups, and access to a renewed river and its ecosystems. The community plan served as a blueprint for immediate action, including the reclamation of the dead-end street that has now become Hunts Point River Side Park; it was also a precursor to plans for both the Bronx River Greenway Plan (now being implemented by the Bronx River Alliance, in partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation), and the South Bronx Greenway Plan, developed by Matthews Nielsen Landscape Architects for the New York City Economic Development Corporation, The Point, and Sustainable South Bronx.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible.

The park is nothing less than transformative, as a resource in itself, and as a harbinger of the larger network of green space that is to come. By opening up a waterfront whose very existence was unknown to many members of the community, Hunts Point River Side Park has validated the vision of community members themselves, and energized their continuing struggle for the social and environmental renewal of the South Bronx. It has also become a focal point for a range of community events - performances, festivals, parades, etc., and a resource for local educators and organizations serving young people.

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession?

The project is a demonstration of the ways that the professions of planning, urban design, landscape architecture, etc. can provide leverage for the energy and vision of local activists, and enable the creation of high-quality places that are truly owned by their communities. Hunts Point River Side Park would not have come to be if we credentialed professionals had not come together with local people who deeply understood their neighborhood's needs and its strengths. They were also willing to fight to make their vision a reality; by clearing rubble from a dead-end street with their own hands, by pressing elected officials to make funding available, and by working patiently with the city agencies charged with designing and building the park, to ensure that the final product was faithful to their vision. The work we did together made it possible for community members to come to the table with city government - in this case, the Department of Parks and Recreation - and be taken seriously.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project?

Hunts Point River Side Park's greatest strength is its role as an anchor for its home community, a place for home-grown events and activities, and a symbol of the power of local vision and activism. It is the place one takes guests and visitors to see, and an element in the evolving narrative of environmental justice in the South Bronx.

The park will be even more successful when the greenway connections - to the upland residential community, and to the Bronx River Greenway to the north - are in place. The park as it now exists is an extraordinary oasis - but it will only reach its full potential when it becomes a node in the larger network that its creators envision.

2009
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
ARCHITECT
OR DESIGNER
PERSPECTIVE



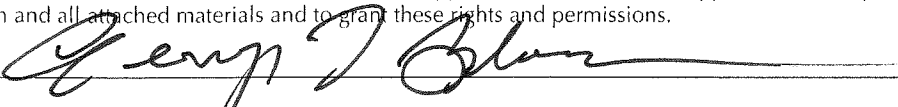
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This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

Name	George T Bloomer, RLA	Title	Project Manager/Lead Designer
Organization	NYC Parks & Recreation	Telephone	(718) 760-6712
Address	Olmsted Ctr., Flushing Meadows-Corona Park	City/State/ZIP	Flushing, NY 11368
Fax	(718) 760-6823	E-mail	george.bloomer@parks.nyc.gov

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1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc.

Hunts Point Riverside Park was an abandoned street end. An on-site boatbuilding and launching activity, the industrialized neighborhood and the river inspired the marine oriented theme and materials of the design. The park is a bridge connecting the residential community to the Bronx River. The design provides a transition from the rigid, gritty industrial edge of the neighborhood to the river and the natural environment. Along the way there are lush plantings, opportunities for play, passive areas and gathering spaces. The design functions on multiple levels: as a connector; as a buffer to the adjacent industrial sites; as a green oasis; as a public gathering space; and as a community park celebrating the river. The design is green and inviting but at the same time reflects the industrial character of the neighborhood. There are five components to the design: the entrance, water play and garden, the green oval, an amphitheater and the river. All these elements are connected by a serpentine paved path that closes on itself to create the green oval at a pier and floating dock. Many of the materials reflect the industrial aesthetic of the area. Instead of using a traditional steel picket fence, here the fence is made of a heavy gauge wire mesh that is painted a brilliant ultra-marine blue. It announces the park to the upland residential community with a decorative industrial feel. The same fencing material is used as a horizontal plane of the pergola in the water play and garden area. The amphitheater is set into the slope on the highest point of the park with the river as background. Primitive monolithic quartzite block seating is set into a lawn covered slope giving an informal look to the amphitheater. There is an open oval shaped lawn area adjacent to the river. The water play and garden design is a stylized fishing village with a mooring pile spray feature, boats and fanciful conch shell seats. The boats were inspired by the types that once plied the river. The park is heavily planted along the edges to focus attention on the river and buffer the industrial neighbors.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design.

The Community of Hunts Point is surrounded by water but the waterfront has long been used for industrial purposes. This industrial edge presents a barrier to the waterfront. The Bronx River Greenway is an effort to reclaim the Bronx River as a resource for Bronx communities and create a new ribbon of parkland through the heart of the Bronx. By opening new access, the greenway reconnects Bronx neighborhoods to the river and enables local residents to fully use the river as a recreational and environmental resource. Hunts Point Riverside Park provides a new visual and physical connection to the Bronx River. The program for the design required that it function on multiple levels: as a connector, as a buffer to the adjacent industrial properties, as a green oasis, as a public gathering space, and as a community park that celebrates the river. Over the course the year several large river oriented gatherings are scheduled in the park such as the annual Bronx River Flotilla, where hundreds of people come to canoe and meet the Bronx River. The program required that the design be flexible enough to accommodate such a large crowd but still retain the intimate quality of a community park. An adjacent property near the entrance, a former fur and tanning facility, was acquired by The Point Community Development Corporation. The entrance of the park was designed to function as a front door and gathering space for both the park and the former fur factory properties. When the roll-up gates to the adjacent site are open there is a seamless connection. This adjacent property is also where Rocking the Boat, an environmental education group that teaches boat building to inner city teens has set up operations. The design had to accommodate bringing the boats through the park to be launched in the river. Since the completion of the park the demand for rowing and boat building has increased significantly. The amphitheater provides opportunities for socialization. It is a place that can be used as an outdoor classroom for environmental education, impromptu performances, scheduled gatherings and quiet contemplation.

ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

1. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project.

The initial site was a dogleg shaped 100 feet wide street right-of-way along the river, long used as an illegal dumping ground. The dogleg obstructed the view to the river. It was essential to the success of the project to secure the use of an adjacent triangular parcel of city owned land. This added 60 feet of waterfront and established a view to the river from the entrance and further up the street providing a visual link from the community to the river. It took a lot of coordination through various city agencies and officials to secure the land. The parcel was eventually transferred parks. One of the more difficult challenges was a 15 foot change in elevation between the parcels and the steep, unstable and highly erodible riverbank. Part of the solution was to take advantage of the grade change to form the amphitheater. The trade off was that part of the waterfront would not be directly accessible since a bulkhead was necessary to secure the riverbank and there would have to be a relatively high retaining wall along the south property line. Plantings at the base of the wall help to soften the impact and with time should obscure the wall.

A portion of the site contained lead contaminated soils. This required mitigation and permitting. Although this did not negatively impact the design, it did use a significant portion of the funds leaving less money available.

Another challenge was the design of the floating dock. The Bronx River is tidal at this location with a 6 foot +/- change in elevation from high to low tide. The US bulkhead and pier line restricted how far the pier and floating dock could project into the river. Staying within the limit line meant there was insufficient water depth to keep the "floating" dock from resting on the river bottom at low tide. The compromise was to design the dock so that it was supported at an elevation above the river bottom and therefore would not float about 25 % of the time at low tide.

The visual impact of the metal and plastics recycling operation on the adjacent property to the north was another significant design challenge. A perforated metal screen fence 16 feet high was designed to filter the view and mitigate the visual impact of the piles of plastics and scrap metal. The screen fence is heavily planted with quick growing poplar trees and upright English Oaks to provide additional buffering.

2. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context.

The site itself was an unimproved street right-of-way that ties the park into the street grid of the adjacent community. The park is a bridge between the residents of the neighborhood and the Bronx River. It connects the people to the river visually, physically and psychologically. The design provides a transition from the rigid, gritty industrial edge of the neighborhood to the river and the natural environment. The Point Community Development Corporation owns the adjacent property at the park entrance where there is a grid of honey locusts set in a field of stone screenings. The screenings extend into the adjacent property which is separated by roll-up gates. When the adjacent gates are open there is a seamless connection between the properties this accommodates larger gatherings expands the park visually.

Many of the materials used reflect to the industrial character neighborhood, such as the fence and perforated metal screen discussed above.