

BRIDGEMARKET NEW YORK, NEW YORK



SILVER
medal winner

2003 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence

This is an excerpt from:

Creative Community Building: 2003 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence

Bruner Foundation, Inc.

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with

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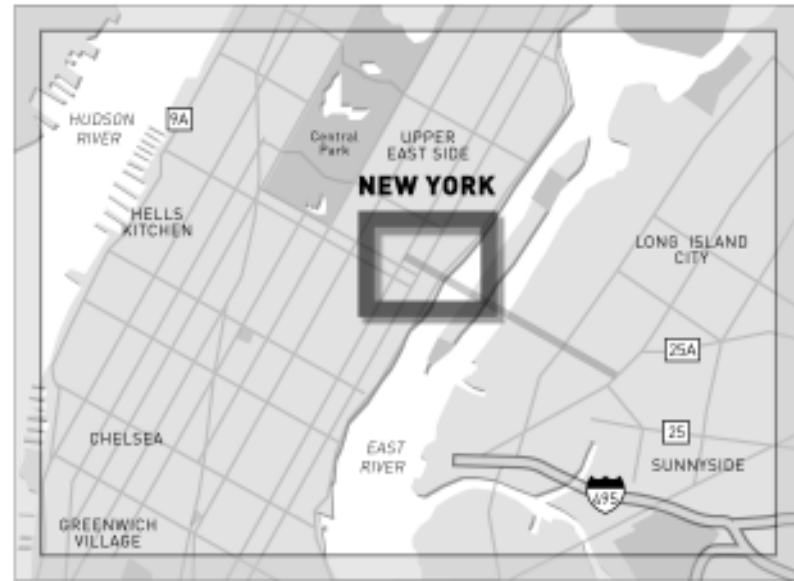
2003 Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence

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BRIDGEMARKET AT-A-GLANCE

WHAT IS BRIDGEMARKET?

BridgeMarket is a commercial development located under the Manhattan end of the Queensboro Bridge. The project includes:

- An adaptive reuse and restoration of a grand and important historic space beneath the landmarked Queensboro Bridge;
- A restaurant seating 900 people (Guastavinos);
- A high-end housewares and furniture store (Conrans);
- A supermarket (Food Emporium);
- A public plaza and garden.

MAJOR GOALS OF BRIDGEMARKET

- To return an important space to the public realm;
- To stimulate economic growth in the area surrounding the Queensboro Bridge;
- To repair what had been an urban gap between the neighborhoods of Sutton Place to the south and the Upper East Side to the north;
- To continue the public pathway along 59TH St. to the East River and along First Avenue between 59TH St. and 61ST St.

PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

1908

Queensboro Bridge opens to traffic. The area under the bridge created by the Guastavino arches is used as a market for farmers bringing goods in horse-drawn carriages over the bridge from Long Island.

1930s

Market closes as the bridge is taken over by the New York City Department of Transportation. The area under the bridge becomes a site for DOT sign shops and parking.

1972

Office of Midtown Planning and Development undertakes the Queensboro Bridge Area Study to formulate policies and design proposals for the use of land and public facilities in the area bounded by 52ND Street, 66TH Street, Park Avenue and the waterfront.

1973

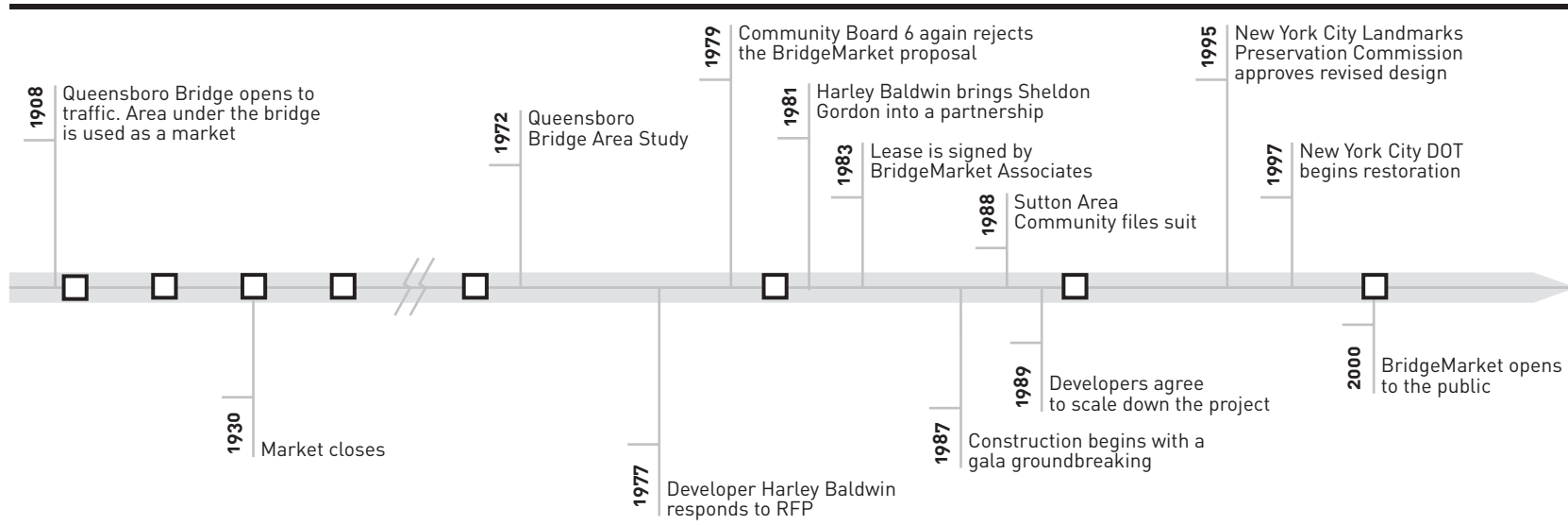
The City approves a resolution to lease the area under the bridge to American Cinematheque for a \$6.5 million film museum and exhibition center – but the proposal could not find financing.

1975

Another proposal is unveiled, this time for a \$2 million, two-story international fair of food stores, movies, restaurants and boutiques, which foundered after community opposition.

1977

Developer Harley Baldwin responds to a Public Development Corporation (PDC) request for proposals and wins with his plan to create a European-style marketplace. Baldwin hires Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates (HHPA) to create a plan modeled after world marketplaces. The Sutton Area Community Association (SAC) opposes the plan.



1978

The project is approved by all relevant city government bodies and the city's General Services Department enters into a lease with the PDC and a sublease to Harley Baldwin. SAC and local area politicians fight the proposal that is "killed" by the New York State Assembly's Committee on Cities, claiming the city would collect too little revenue from Baldwin. Later in the year the City Council again approves the BridgeMarket plan.

1979

Community Board 6, which includes Sutton Place, again rejects the BridgeMarket proposal. In response to New York State Assembly concerns, the lease is changed to increase the rent the city would collect to \$80,000 for the first year, increasing to \$340,000. The project is opposed by local state senator Roy Goodman and continues to be stalled in the State Assembly.

1981

Harley Baldwin brings Sheldon Gordon into a partnership as BridgeMarket Associates. Together they renegotiate the lease with the PDC.

1982

City legal counsel determines that state approval is not needed. A new 50 year lease is approved by the Board of Estimate and passed by the City Planning Commission, the City Art Commission, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), the Manhattan Borough Board, Community Boards 6 and 8, among others - a total of 19 city agencies, plus the New York State Legislature. The plan is endorsed by interested non-profits including the New York Landmarks Conservancy and the Municipal Arts Society.

1983

Lease is signed by BridgeMarket Associates, which receives a \$23 million construction loan from Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association.

1985

The Department of Transportation begins repairs on the upper level of the bridge, preventing the project's excavation work from proceeding.

1986

The Landmarks Preservation Commission holds a public hearing for review of a modified plan that is larger and more ambitious than the original. Concerns are expressed by preservationists that the changes are too elaborate and would obscure too large a portion of the bridge. Following modifications that reduced the size of construction, the plan is approved.

1987

Construction on what is now a \$35 million plan begins with a gala groundbreaking ceremony. Completion scheduled for late 1988.

1988

Demolition, excavation, and much of the cleaning has been completed when The Sutton Area Community files suit against BridgeMarket Associates, alleging that the excavated space is greater than that reviewed in public hearings. Because of the suit, developers are unable to obtain needed title insurance, causing lenders to suspend financing and construction to stop.

1989

Through negotiations with the Public Development Corporation and the neighborhood association, the developers agree to scale down the project by providing less commercial space and more public space. After delays and cost overruns Baldwin steps aside and gives the managing role to Gordon, who successfully renegotiates the \$28-million construction loan and finds a lender who will provide permanent financing.

1990

City threatens to cancel lease due to non-payment of rent by developers.

1991

BridgeMarket is stalled due to a dramatic downturn in the real-estate market, which leads to a restructuring of the project to involve three commercial tenants.

1992

To eliminate dangerous conditions, Economic Development Corporation (successor agency to PDC) uses some the \$500,000 completion bond put up by developer to fill in the excavation with several hundred thousand cubic feet of material.

1994

New York State Court of Appeals rules against SAC, saying that Board of Estimate approval is not needed for the change in the plan.

1995

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission unanimously approves revised designs calling for a 90,000 square-foot complex with commercial space at ground level, and a steel-and-glass building on a public plaza. SAC continues its opposition, saying plans cover view of bridge.

1997

The New York City Department of Transportation begins restoration of the stonework and tile vaults.

1998

Conran Holdings files suit saying developers violated agreement by bringing in A&P-owned Food Emporium, a group they felt did not have a strong enough reputation for quality.

1998

Construction and permanent financing are arranged and a groundbreaking ceremony is held for the start of new construction.

2000

BridgeMarket opens to the public.

KEY PARTICIPANTS

(those interviewed indicated with an asterisk)*

Public Agencies

New York City Economic Development Corporation:

Janel Patterson*, Vice President

Robert Balder*, Executive Vice President

Mel Glickman*, Vice President

Landmarks Preservation Commission:

Jennifer Raab*, past Chair

Brian Hogg*, Chair of Preservation Department

NYC Dept of Transportation:

Tom Cocola*, public relations

New York State Senate:

Former Senator Roy Goodman

Architect/Designer

Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates:

Hugh Hardy*, Principal; Pamela Loeffelman*

(with Perkins Eastman Architects at the time of the interview)

Conran and Partners:

Sir Terence Conran.

Construction Manager:

Sciame Construction, Inc. Frank Sciame*, President

Stanley Goldstein, PC:

Stanley Goldstein*, Structural Engineer

Fisher Marantz Stone, Inc.:
Paul Marantz*, Lighting Designer

Landscape Designer:
Lyndon Miller*, Public Garden Design

Walter B. Melvin,
designer in charge of terra cotta work

Graciano Corporation:
terra cotta restoration specialist

Boston Valley Terra Cotta

Developer

BridgeMarket Associates, LLP:
Sheldon Gordon*
Harley Baldwin*
Richard Rich
Henry Catto

Community Groups

New York Landmarks Conservancy:
Roger Lang*, Director, Community Programs and Services

Municipal Arts Society:
Frank Sanchis III*, Senior Vice President

Community Board 8:
M. Barry Schneider*, Former Chair

Community Board 6:
Toni Carlina, Chair*

Sutton Area Community Association, Inc.:
Richard Eynen, Past Chair *
Mary Claire Bergin, Current Chair*

East 60s Neighborhood Association: Judy Schneider*

On-Site Retail

Guastavino's Inc.:
Richard Romano*, General Manager

Food Emporium (A&P):
Harry Rubinstein*, Director, Regional Real Estate
Sam Burman*, Vice President, Design & Planning
Dennis Schess*, Store Manager

The Terence Conran Shop:
Lori Jenkins*, Manager

Neighborhood Businesses and Residents

Daniel Brodsky*, Developer, 401 First Avenue

Seth Geldzahler*, VP Real Estate, Bed, Bath and Beyond

Residents on-the-street*

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

LOCAL CONTEXT

The neighborhood that surrounds Bridgemarket is one of the wealthiest in New York City. To the south is Sutton Place which is among the “toniest” and most exclusive addresses in the city. To the north is the Upper East Side – also known politically as the Silk Stocking District. The Upper East Side includes some of the most important museums in the world, art galleries, and multi-million dollar townhouses. However, at the time this project was launched, the few blocks immediately to the north of the Queensboro Bridge were less elegant, accommodated several factories, and had few residential or daytime shopping facilities. The block where the Queensboro Bridge touches down in Manhattan, was long considered a kind of “no-man’s land” separating these two districts.

At the same time, New York City government represented a veritable thicket of agencies, political bodies and interest groups for developers to negotiate. One writer noted that at various times 19 city or state agencies made rulings on the Bridgemarket development. These included Planning, Preservation, the Board of Estimate – a unique (and now defunct New York City entity) that served as its chief administrative body – and local Community Boards. Community boards were created in the 1960s to be the first level of government and their role can be especially strong in dealing with local planning issues. The area under the bridge was of concern to two community boards – CB8 which included the site



Aerial with BridgeMarket in foreground



Vaults during restoration

itself and the Upper East Side, and CB6 which begins at 59TH street (at the border of the site) and includes Sutton Place.

Since the site is part of a bridge over a waterway, the New York State Assembly also claimed the right to approve plans for development.

HISTORY

Bridgemarket has a long history that has been interrupted and restarted so many times over so many decades that it that has taken on almost mythic proportions – even within the context of notoriously difficult New York City private development efforts. There is no single individual we could find currently involved in a public agency or private corporation who had been active in this project for the entire length of the saga.

The site is clearly one that affects people deeply. Since the 1930s, few outside the neighborhood had viewed the high vaulted ceilings under the bridge, even in its “ramshackle” state in the early 1980s when it was being used as a parking lot and sign shop. The developers (first Baldwin then Gordon and later Conran) fell in love with the space and its potential, as did the various designers and engineers who were to work on the project over the years.

The space which Bridgemarket occupies was created as part of the Queensboro Bridge, completed in 1908 and designed by engineer Gustav Lindenthal and architect Henry Hornbostel. This 7,000 foot “through-type” cantilever bridge structure linked the Harlem Railroad with the Long Island Railroad and played a major role in

opening the Borough of Queens to development. The bridge was declared a New York City Landmark in 1973. The large spaces below the bridge's Manhattan landing are most notable for their tile vaults created by the Guastavino Fireproof Construction Company. Founder Raphael Guastavino adapted a technique from his native Barcelona called the Catalan vault, a fireproofing system that sets layers of flat terra cotta tiles at perpendicular angles in a basket-weave pattern "mortared together with a special mixture of Portland cement and Cow Bay sand." ("New York Bridgemarket Opens After Decades in Restoration", *Architecture Week*, N.3.1) This space, which later became known as "the cathedral," was made up of 36 of these vaults, self-supporting under compression. The vaults create 30 by 34 foot bays that range from 24 to 44 feet in height. Other similar Guastavino vaults are in Grand Central Station (over the Oyster Bar restaurant) and in Ellis Island on the ceiling of the Main Hall.

New York City created a public farmers market in this space in 1916 ("New York's own open air Les Halles"; newyorkmetro.com; Nov. 29, 1999) as part of a campaign to get pushcarts off city streets. The market ceased operation during the Depression and was taken over by the New York City Department of Transportation which for four decades used it as a garage, sign shop and storage room.

The first attempts to develop a plan to restore and reuse this space appeared about the time the New York State Dormitory Authority began construction of a residential complex on Welfare Island (renamed Roosevelt Island). In 1972 the Office of Midtown Planning

and Development initiated a study of the land use options for the Queensboro Bridge area to look for ways to make the area more economically productive. The first plan to emerge for the space called for a movie theater and exhibition center designed by architect I. M. Pei, but there was local opposition and the developers were not able to obtain construction funding.

In 1977 the New York City Public Development Corporation issued a request for proposals soliciting development plans for the site. The RFP was restrictive; it asked proposals to justify a design with estimates of revenues and jobs to be produced. Harley Baldwin won with a plan to create a European-style marketplace. Baldwin had achieved success with adaptive reuse projects in Aspen, Colorado,



Queensboror Bridge detail

and this represented a step up to “the big leagues” of development. He says that the site “desperately wants to be a farmer’s market,” and likened its potential to the great markets of the world, such as those in Lyon, Stockholm and Tokyo. He imagined ground-floor food stalls for independent dealers, including butchers, greengrocers, and pasta-makers; a new mezzanine level with six ethnic-food restaurants; and an open-air plaza containing two farmer’s market sheds, a greenhouse, a planting area, and parking. The proposal offered to restore “one of New York’s great architectural secrets” that is “hidden away behind grimy industrial glass,” with a development that will “combine the pride and quality of the small shopkeeper with the convenience of the supermarket.” Development cost was estimated at \$2 million, plus \$2 million of improvements by tenants.

Initially Baldwin seemed to hit all the right buttons for dealing with New York’s often opaque political and bureaucratic review and approval system. He selected the architectural firm of Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer & Associates to design the market. HHPA had recently won acclaim as preservation architects with the restoration of Andrew Carnegie’s mansion for the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum. Hardy, said one informant, was “the pied piper of the project and was viewed as being on the cutting edge of adaptive reuse in the 1970s in New York.” Baldwin also hired several politically connected attorneys and lobbyists to help him navigate the thicket of New York agencies for planning and approvals. Baldwin rented an apartment in the city and went to endless official and neighborhood meetings to sell his idea.

Early response was largely positive. The plan was endorsed by the Municipal Arts Society which called it “a sensitive proposal” and received approval from a panoply of city agencies. The one cloud on the horizon was opposition by the Sutton Area Community Association (SAC). SAC argued that development would increase traffic to the area. They feared that the trucks and cars brought by Baldwin’s market would worsen the air quality of the neighborhood (already below EPA standard on every day it was measured in 1977) and bring tourists and “undesirables” to an otherwise quiet residential area. One informant said that they worried that the area would become a busy Faneuil Hall type market.



Conran's and Food Emporium

When the Board of Estimate approved the project in late 1977, the opposition turned to the New York State Assembly for help (state approval was necessary because the bridge crossed a state waterway). SAC argued that the rent the city had agreed to charge (\$40,000 in the first year, increasing to \$100,000) was far less than the site was worth. The issue gained traction following closely after recent deals for the renovation of Yankee Stadium and Hunt's Point Market, both of which had raised eyebrows as city "give-aways." Roy Goodman, State Senator from the so-called "silk-stocking" district that included the bridge, came out against the proposal, as did other local politicians. In July 1978 the Assembly rejected the proposal citing inadequate compensation to the city. In November local politicians were elected on a platform of opposition to Bridgemarket.

In 1981, after three years of rejections by the Assembly (even though rental payments in the lease had been significantly increased), the city's legal counsel ruled that the market site was, after all, "not integral" to the bridge and therefore state approval was not needed. A 50-year lease was signed between the city and Bridgemarket Associates in the fall of 1983, and \$23 million of private financing was obtained from the Teachers Insurance & Annuity Association.

SAC continued to lobby against the plan. One member is quoted in *The New York Times* saying "our residential areas must be protected ... I don't think it is elitist to say that just because we live on Sutton Place." Richard Eyn, an SAC officer at the time, says that the community wanted to be treated as partners. He clearly resents characterization of opponents to the plan as elitists who were against

any change to the neighborhood. Rather, he says, they had the long-term maintenance of the landmark in mind throughout the fight. They opposed, for instance, any new building on the plaza as an unnecessary obstruction of views of the bridge and a loss of public open space. He felt they were fighting for the quality of life of the neighborhood. "We fought to make it better, not just to keep it out." Baldwin, and his new partner Sheldon Gordon (a developer of malls in Los Angeles and Las Vegas) met with SAC to negotiate an agreement and "cease fire." In 1984 an understanding was signed by which SAC would cease opposition and the developers would include a community meeting space in the market and provide funding for community beautification projects.

Construction was finally scheduled to begin in 1985 but had to be delayed while the Department of Transportation completed repairs that were badly needed after years of deferred maintenance. Plans were modified during another review by the Landmarks Preservation Commission in order to assure that the view of the bridge structure was not obscured by the new facilities. Public hearings were held that were, according to then Chair Jennifer Raab, "long and not altogether pleasant," as residents used that forum to voice their objections to the project. Construction finally began in 1987, 10 years after Baldwin's successful response to the RFP, with demolition of DOT facilities and excavation of the site.

In April 1988 an environmental lawyer hired by SAC noticed that the area being excavated was larger than had been discussed in the public review sessions. The Community Board had reviewed



Vaults during construction

excavation for three underground levels, while other city agencies had approved a deeper, five level development. SAC filed suit to stop the construction. SAC members suggest it was hubris on the part of developers to increase the size of the project without consultation. Gordon, on the other hand, notes that the language of the original lease was “loose” and that he was allowed (even encouraged) by the city to make the project larger. He says he was assured by his lawyer that no further permits were needed, which was also the position the city administration took in court. The state court, however, agreed with SAC and work at the site was stopped while the suit worked its way through the appellate system.

Gordon notes that while the project was stopped he tried to remove himself from it. The legal fees and carrying costs were clearly more than he had anticipated, not to mention the frustration of working with the community and city agencies. He had, however, signed a completion guarantee with the city which insisted he live up to it.

The excavated site was a public hazard and the PDC tapped into the \$500,000 letter of credit put up by the developers to fill the hole with several hundred thousand cubic feet of earth. For the next few years the abandoned site was a sleeping space for homeless people, who were not deterred by frequent attempts to fence them out. The space was then, more than ever, an unpleasant and unsafe void. Residents reported that, rather than continuing up 1ST Avenue, they would walk a long block out of their way – to 2ND Avenue – to avoid passing 59TH Street, especially at night.

In the spring of 1994, to the surprise of many, the New York State Court of Appeals ruled for the city, saying that the inclusion of “an additional 50,000 square feet of below grade commercial space” did not change “the essence of what had been previously approved.” The city did not need to ask for Board of Estimate re-approval for an expanded site plan. Gordon said that he was disappointed – he had been hoping for a ruling against the city so that he could finally drop out of the project.

As the project started up again, however, it underwent a major change. Though developers still preferred the idea of a Lyon-type market, in a slow economy bank financing was only possible for larger and better-known tenants. Pamela Loeffelman, HHPA’s project manager, says “Harley (Baldwin) was revolutionary at the time,” but bankers thought of the market as similar to food courts that were once common and had become passé. The multi-level galleria with 50 small vendors was scrapped in favor of one large space housing three major tenants – a supermarket, a restaurant, and a high end housewares and furniture store. Sir Terence Conran came in to create the restaurant and store, and the natural food chain Bread and Circus was solicited for the market.

In 1995, the Landmarks Preservation Commission (for the third time) approved plans for a reduced program that provided 90,000 square feet of commercial space plus a small building on the public plaza, that later became the entrance to Conran’s. The homeless were removed from the site so that construction could begin again, though Glickman says that the Economic Development

Commission (EDC, successor to PDC) worked with the police to offer those who were willing a place in city shelters.

Still, development was not a smooth road. Bread and Circus was bought by Whole Foods, Inc., which decided that the site was too expensive and dropped out. Conran was negotiating with Dean and Deluca (a high-end specialty food store) for the spot when he found out that Food Emporium had been signed. Both Conran and the



Food Emporium entrance

neighborhood were concerned that the quality of the store would not be what had been promised. Conran went so far as to file a suit in 1998 again Bridgemarket Associates saying that he had been promised a “more upscale” neighbor. The suit was dropped when the Food Emporium agreed “to heed Conran’s very particular design stipulations” in their design. Food Emporium officials successfully wooed the neighborhood with catered parties and promises that this would be their flagship store. Apparently, most SAC members were tired of the fight by now and were unwilling to spend more in legal fees.

Restoration of the tile vaults was begun by the New York City Department of Transportation in 1997. Many of the vaults were in dangerous condition from the passage of time and soot that came from the oil drum fires of the homeless. Over 24,000 Guastavino tiles were repaired or replaced and groundbreaking for the new construction took place in 1998. Bridgemarket opened to the public in 2000, 23 years after the initial RFP.

CHANGING VISIONS

The story of Bridgemarket is one of multiple, changing visions, occasionally complementary, but at times in serious conflict. It began with an idea of the city, posed in the form of the RFP from the PDC/EDC to develop an empty and unused space into a commercial venture that would create jobs and tax revenues. The proposal that emerged represented a vision of developer Harley Baldwin, later taken up and supported by Sheldon Gordon, to provide the kind of exciting public marketplace of small, high quality vendors that had

been lacking in New York City. For the preservation community the proposal represented an opportunity to see private funds used to bring an exciting historical space from neglect and obscurity into public view. The community was fractured, with groups north of the bridge generally pleased by any plan that would enliven the space and enhance the area, while the more staid community to the south was concerned that change would deteriorate the quality of their neighborhood. In the end, the commercial product bore little similarity to the original plan and it was the preservationists’ vision that emerged as dominant.

DESIGN

Bridgemarket entails the adaptive reuse of a landmark structure. While there is new construction within and adjacent to the historic structure, the historic elements dominate. Legally and aesthetically, the landmark set the context and drove the development and the design.

The overwhelming feature of this site is the Queensboro Bridge. The area under the bridge, with its 36 Catalonian tile vaults, is enclosed by small pane, steel-framed windows and has been divided into two retail spaces. The larger of these spaces (38,000 square feet) is home to a Food Emporium supermarket. On the other side of a dividing wall is Guastavino’s Restaurant, named for the creator of the great vaults, which can seat up to 400 patrons. On the plaza is a new 3,800 square foot pavilion that serves as a retail space and entry to the mostly below-ground 35,000 square foot Terence Conran Shop.



Food Emporium windows

Design responsibilities evolved over the period of development. Originally, Hardy, Holzman, Pfeiffer Associates (HHPA), designed virtually the entire site for Harley Baldwin's market plan. In the final design, they were responsible for the site plan, the superstructure, overseeing restoration of historic elements, coordinating the various designers and engineers, and creating the raw space for the major retail sites. They also worked with and consulted to the designers for the interior areas. In the final plan, however, the primary responsibility for design of the interior spaces reverted to the tenants – the Food Emporium and Conran and Partners. Conran, working with HHPA, created the pavilion building and the store interior plan, developed the design for Guastavino's Restaurant and, by virtue of the 1998 lawsuit, was able to review and influence the Food Emporium design.



Food Emporium interior



Conran's interior

This adaptive reuse had to respond to a set of challenges posed by the unique nature of the space. The Landmarks Preservation Commission required that all new construction be structurally independent of the landmark, adding no additional load or stress to the bridge foundations and capable of being removed at some future date without harming the original structure. The new elements had to be visually distinctive to assure there would be no confusion about which was the original, landmarked structure. For that reason, preservationists applauded the redesign for the pavilion. The original entrance to Conran's "looked like a 19th century train shed," said Frank Sanchis of the Municipal Arts Society. The revised design, a steel and glass building with a curved roof, sharply contrasts with the historic features and provides "a modernist foil to the massive bridge."



Conran's interior

Preservationists wanted to be sure that visitors would get a sense of the size and volume of the original space created by the vaults. Baldwin and Gordon's original plans would have accomplished this by keeping the interior space whole, although some felt the various levels they planned for stalls and restaurants would have restricted the structure's visibility. The plan that was eventually realized intruded less on the height of the space but divided it into two separate retail areas. To mitigate this somewhat, glass was placed atop the dividing wall to allow visitors the ability to see through to the other side and to get a sense of the full volume of the space. "Still," said Brian Hogg, head of the Preservation Department at LPC, it is "an amazing use for the space." Hardy's design was "respectful of the historic structure and inaccessible portions of the



Repaired vaults

tile were made accessible," said Roger Lang of the New York Landmark Conservancy. He noted that it took advantage of the design and showed it off. "This use of space may be better than the original, which didn't foresee this space for use by the public. The Guastavino tiles were seen as utilitarian back then," said Frank Sanchis of the Municipal Art Society.

Restoring the terra cotta tiles on the fluted columns and vaults was a delicate process. Because they are held in place by compression, removing one could cause an entire vault to collapse. Removal and replacement involved extensive use of scaffolding and in some cases full wooden ceiling supports. Original tiles were chemically analyzed and new tiles were fabricated to match the color and the



Detail of vaults in Food Emporium

current weathered appearance of the existing tiles. In all, over 28,000 tiles were refurbished and replaced and the rest were chemically cleaned. In addition, for each of the nine 22- by 24-foot window openings, the glass and steel industrial sash was replaced with historically accurate copies that had significantly better thermal performance.

Designing the interior of the Food Emporium was particularly challenging. The plan had to fit around the columns and meet the requirements of the Landmarks Preservation Commission as well as those imposed by Conran. In some cases this meant avoiding design features that are traditionally used for marketing in this high volume, low profit margin business. The result is a one-of-a-kind



Food Emporium interior

supermarket space. Store designers did extensive testing of designs and colors for shelving and signs, to be sure they would fit the space. The art deco register lamps are intended to reflect the historic character. In place of overhead signs directing shoppers there are more discrete signs on the side of shelves as well as directories at the entrances. Along the southern window wall (facing 59TH Street) the store displays potted plants and trees as well as cookware on stainless steel wire racks. The broad expanse of glass floods the store with natural light during the day, although the heat gain requires sunshades to be kept down much of the year. Glass walls were provided around and over the southern entry to allow shoppers entering the store visual access to the full expanse of the vaulted ceilings.

All the environmental services expected for a modern structure had to be included without damaging or visually interfering with the historic structure. Pipes were embedded in the concrete floor slab for heating, ventilation ducts were cut through the north wall instead of ceiling (which was directly under the roadway); and intake air was drawn from a duct sixty feet above the roadway. “It was very challenging,” said Food Emporium designer Sam Burman. “We had to conceal the duct work and electrical wiring so they would not detract from the architectural integrity of the arches that were incorporated into the design.” (Haeberle). Machinery and services are hidden from view behind walls, especially along the north side of the space. Shelving and refrigeration units had to incorporate air-handling ducts, wiring and lighting, since these could not be located in the ceiling. Spotlights on the pillars show off



Guastavino's

the ceiling vaults and provide additional reflected ambient light. Fire sprinklers are the only modern element protruding from the historic ceiling.

Guastavino's Restaurant, at 26,000 square feet, can seat up to 400 patrons. Upon entering the restaurant one encounters a very long bar that is dwarfed by the scale of the vaults – up to 45 feet above the floor. Dining tables are arrayed on the first floor, behind the bar, as well as on the floating mezzanine level. On the east wall is a large scale ribbon-like sculpture that adds to the drama of the space. The two-story kitchen is completely glassed in and accessible from both levels. The gentle up lighting from sconces mounted on the columns helps the room feel more intimate. Preservation requirements limited structures or signs that might interfere with the view of the bridge. A proposed canopy entrance, for example, was disallowed.



Bridgemarket park with bridge

The landscaped garden was created as an amenity for the neighborhood and includes an historic fountain, originally built into the wall beneath the east end of the structure under the vaults. The fountain was lost for decades and recovered with much of its pastoral mosaic damaged. It was restored and relocated to the public garden.

FINANCES

The numbers below are broad estimates from various participants. Hard data on sources and uses was not available and in some cases was withheld as proprietary.

Bridgemarket	
New York City	
Exterior restoration, tile vaults, industrial sash \$7,000,000.00	
Bridgemarket Associates	
Original excavation (1988)	\$10 -12,000,000.00
Construction (1999)	\$12,000,000.00
Tenant Improvements (approximate)	
Food Emporium	\$10,000,000.00
Terence Conran Shop/Guastavinos Restaurant	\$20,000,000.00
Total Project Cost (approximate)	\$60,000,000.00
Construction/Permanent Loan – First Union Bank	\$19,500,000.00



Bridgemarket park with restored fountain

IMPACT ON THE CITY

Bridgemarket has had a positive impact on the neighborhood in several ways. First, it has eliminated significant blight. An area some people were afraid to walk past has become an attraction, frequently mentioned in tourist guidebooks. Second, it provides major amenities to the neighborhood in the form of quality food shopping, and high end retail and restaurant, as well as a landscaped outdoor plaza. A local resident commented “It works. I’m sorry I was against it – this is great.”

Its effects on tax revenues, local business and development are harder to demonstrate, since the city has not yet conducted an economic impact study, although a recent mayor’s report suggested that 300 permanent and 350 construction jobs were created. There is, however, a good deal of opinion and anecdotal evidence. For instance, an article in *Home Textiles Today* (1/3/00) said that this was “not a traditionally high traffic area for retail stores” but with the coming of Conran’s “the neighborhood may be redefining itself.” The builder of a new high-rise condominium across the street, David Brodsky, indicated that Bridgemarket had influenced his development, although not decisively so. He said prospective condo buyers and tenants saw Bridgemarket as a positive feature for the neighborhood. Though, his development had started before Bridgemarket was completed, he said it “makes it easier to market quality of life for residential units.” Similar comments came from the real estate executives at Bed, Bath and Beyond. *Crane’s New York Business* noted a spurt of business activity in the area and attributed it, at least in part, to Bridgemarket. Conran agreed to

pay \$25 per square foot for his retail space, while current rates in the area have doubled. Other evidence can be seen in a recent RFP issued by the city which said “Guastavino’s at Bridgemarket is an excellent example of a successful redevelopment project. EDC selected Bridgemarket LP to develop the 61,000-square-foot-parcel of land below the Queensboro Bridge. The resulting 100,000-square-foot Food Emporium-Guastavino’s-Conran’s Design Store complex, known as Bridgemarket, is serving as a catalyst for the revitalization of the area around the Queensboro Bridge.”

From the perspective of the preservation community this project has been a great benefit to the city and one that improved through its various iterations. The prime benefit was saving the tile vaults and restoring them to their original state, making them accessible to the



Bridgemarket park fountain

population, even attracting more people by virtue of the reuse of the space beneath them. “It’s mind boggling that this is publicly accessible for the first time in 70 years,” said Brian Hogg. This is seen as a clever use of “found space” and something to be emulated in other parts of the city. For example, in a discussion of development in lower Manhattan a Community Board member suggested that “the arches under the Brooklyn Bridge could become artists, retail or commercial space, along the lines of the Bridgemarket development under the Queensboro Bridge.” (“Rebuilding New York: Not so Quiet on the Eastern Waterfront,” *Grid*; 2002)

FUTURE PLANS

The EDC has no future plans in the immediate area, except for work on local piers – it only works with city-owned properties and there are few left in the area. Community Board 8 member Schneider says that they are reviewing plans for a waterfront park which would be tied to renovations along FDR Drive. Development of that park, he says, is connected to the success of Bridgemarket.

Local developers are likely to continue building and opening retail stores in the area, depending on the state of the New York City economy. Bridgemarket itself has little room to grow or change; its main thrust will be to extend its customer base. Conran’s in particular needs to overcome relatively poor visibility and limited access to public transportation if it is to become a destination site and bring shoppers from Bloomingdales or other nearby home stores further east.

ASSESSING PROJECT SUCCESS

MEETING PROJECT GOALS

- *To return an important space to the public realm;*

The restoration of the Guastavino vaults is seen by the preservation community as a great success and benefit for the city. The vaults themselves have been carefully and sensitively restored and made a star attraction by the design of the development below and are regularly viewed by a great many people. The project also demonstrated that private capital could support sensitive development in a for-profit setting.

- *To stimulate economic growth in the area surrounding the Queensboro Bridge.;*

This project is viewed as a redevelopment success by the EDC although, from a purely financial perspective, its success must be tempered by recognition of the loss of a quarter of century of potential revenues during the long period of its development. It is likely that business growth in the neighborhoods near Bridgemarket has been considerably helped by its presence.

While Bridgemarket is a stunning setting that was sensitively designed, none of the retail uses is in itself unique, as, by contrast, the market of Baldwin’s original plans might have been. For the original partners, the development process was a frustrating odyssey that ended with a development of uncertain profitability.

- *To repair what had been an urban gap between the neighborhoods of Sutton Place to the south and the Upper East Side to the north;*

The physical gap between the two neighborhoods has certainly been eliminated by Bridgemarket, as has the danger inherent in the formerly derelict conditions of the site. It is unclear, however, the extent to which Bridgemarket has knit the neighborhoods to its north and south more closely to each other than they had previously been.

- *To continue the public pathway along 59th Street to the East River and along First Avenue between 59th St. and 61st St.*

Bridgemarket has contributed to the restoration of both of these pathways. If further park development occurs along the river, the route to the East River is likely to be more heavily used.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The selection committee was impressed with a number of aspects of Bridgemarket, particularly the important and unique contribution of its historic restoration of the arches. In its initial discussion, the committee remarked that this use of “found space” may be replicable in other cities where unused space under bridges creates derelict and even dangerous gathering places that foster crime. It was noted, however, that the restoration of historic Catalan vaults at a landmark bridge was undoubtedly unique to New York, and that under-bridge space in other cities might not offer the urban design opportunities of Bridgemarket.

The committee also noted the urban design contribution represented by Bridgemarket in the restoration, addition of new public open space, and continuation of public access along 59TH Street to the East River. The restoration and relocation of the historic fountain as part of a new urban park contributed a significant amenity to the cityscape, particularly in Manhattan where urban open space is scarce.

Although the committee felt the goal of re-knitting two neighborhoods was laudable, it was unclear to what degree this had actually been accomplished, and also to what degree Bridgemarket had contributed to this goal. The committee also found it unclear how much of the recent introduction of new home furnishing stores and other signs of economic development were due to the impact of Bridgemarket. They noted that BridgeMarket was a very unusual project with unique circumstances, one that would be difficult to replicate elsewhere.

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SILVER MEDAL WINNER

Bridgemarket