

2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD: Silver Medal Winner  
Hunts Point Riverside Park

The Bronx, New York



This is an excerpt from:

# Urban Transformation

2009 RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE



BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

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*Neighborhood children in Hunts Point playground*

## Hunts Point At-A-Glance

### WHAT IS HUNTS POINT RIVERSIDE PARK?

- ❖ A new park built in a degraded industrial section of a residential neighborhood in the Bronx. The park provides a natural retreat, passive recreation and access to the Bronx River.
- ❖ A place for community gatherings and youth programs.
- ❖ The first public recreational access to the Hunts Point section of the Bronx River in over 60 years, and a showcase for ongoing river reclamation efforts.
- ❖ The first stage of development of the Bronx River Greenway (BRGW), connecting communities to each other and the waterway. The BRGW will eventually provide bike connections to Manhattan, other boroughs, Westchester County and the entire East Coast Greenway system. Hunts Point Riverside Park inspired the South Bronx Greenway, which will connect paths and facilities along the BRGW to streets and neighborhoods in the South Bronx.

### PROJECT GOALS

- ❖ To “reclaim the Bronx River as a resource for Bronx communities”.
- ❖ To open public recreational access to the Bronx River.
- ❖ To clean up and rehabilitate the park site.
- ❖ To serve as a symbol of the Bronx River’s rebirth and growth of the Greenway.
- ❖ To engage local communities in the redevelopment process
- ❖ To use design to “capture a sense of nature on a site located between a scrap metal yard and the world’s largest food distribution center”.
- ❖ To “create space for recreation and respite, provide habitat for wildlife, and offer a green oasis in a highly urbanized environment”.



## PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

**1996:** National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program identifies the Bronx River as an area that could benefit from an Urban Resources Partnership catalyst grant (\$182,000) and selects Partnerships for Parks as the entity to administer and coordinate the Bronx River Project.

**Mid-1997:** The Bronx River Working Group is formed; it includes approximately 10-15 organizations and government agencies.

**December 1997:** The Bronx River Project is launched. Jenny Hoffner is hired as the Bronx River Catalyst Coordinator by Partnerships for Parks (Partnerships), a joint program of the New York City Parks & Recreation Department and City Parks Foundation. Partnerships “re-grants” \$121,000 in funds for community development around urban ecosystem restoration (the money comes from a WaterWorks grant, funded by Urban Resources Partnerships, a former multi-agency Federal initiative).

**Summer 1998:** Jenny Hoffner meets with Community Board 2, and they recommend meeting with The Point CDC. Hoffner meets with Majora Carter of The Point CDC and invites the organization to submit a grant proposal for community and ecological development work along the Hunts Point section of the Bronx River.

**September 1998:** Majora Carter “discovers” the park site and writes \$10,000 seed grant proposal on behalf of The Point CDC for clean-up of site.

**Fall 1998:** The first of many community clean-ups at the abandoned street-end at Lafayette Ave and the Bronx River – the site of the future Hunts Point Riverside Park.

**Fall, 1998:** Majora Carter convenes the first meeting of community groups and elected officials, along with the State Department of Transportation and New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, to focus action on Hunts Point Riverside Park.

**1999:** Parks Commissioner Henry Stern declares 1999 the “Year of the Bronx River.”

**April 24, 1999:** The First Golden Ball Procession, organized by the Bronx River Working Group in collaboration with the National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program, lands at Hunts Point Riverside Park. Rocking the Boat sets up programming at the site. Prior to the site’s development as a park, The Point CDC and others use the site for community get-togethers and environmental education.

**2000:** The first “Amazing Bronx River Flotilla” is organized by Partnerships for Parks and the Bronx River Working Group.

**2000:** At the second “Golden Ball” event, Governor Pataki announces an \$11 million appropriation to fund the Bronx River Greenway (BRGW). In addition, then-Mayor Giuliani and Congressman José Serrano each announce separate \$11 million allocations to fund BRGW (for a total of \$33 million). The Parks Department allocates \$3.27 million of this mayoral funding to fund Hunts Point Riverside Park capital improvements. Community design meetings are organized and convene at The Point.

**Spring 2001:** Design of the park by NYC Parks commences when landscape architects George Bloomer and Nancy Prince take a canoe trip down the River. After the Flotilla, Nancy provides a pin-up board in the park, inviting Community suggestions that will frame the project’s program and scope of work.

**2001:** Congressman Serrano allocates \$421,000 in National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) grants to fund ecological restoration work along the Bronx River. The grant program is administered by Jenny Hoffner with Partnerships for Parks and designed to encourage collaboration and coordination between the many groups now working along the river.

**2001:** Majora Carter leaves The Point CDC and founds a new nonprofit, Sustainable South Bronx.

**Fall 2001:** Discussions begin over request to increase usable area in the park by transferring a parcel from the Hunts Point Terminal Market (owned by New York City's Economic Development Corporation) to the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. First presentation to Community Board.

**Late 2001/Early 2002:** The Bronx River Alliance is formed from the Bronx River Working Group. Linda R. Cox is hired with dual title: Executive Director of the Bronx River Alliance and Bronx River Administrator in the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

**May 2002:** The NYC Art Commission approves the design for Hunts Point Riverside Park.

**2003:** Sustainable South Bronx starts the Bronx Environmental Stewardship Training program (BEST) for ecological restoration services training and placement. Trainees gain field experience with the Bronx River Alliance and Parks' Natural Resources Group.

**2003:** Hunts Point Vision Plan is developed.

**April 2003:** Capital project is put out to bid. The project is delayed to resolve permit issues with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**2004:** Groundbreaking takes place on \$3.27 million park capital improvement. Rocking the Boat relocates to Concrete Plant Park, just upstream.

**September 2006:** Rocking the Boat returns to the site adjacent to Hunts Point Riverside Park, purchased by The Point CDC with funds from NOAA grant.

The park's opening is delayed for improvement of pedestrian access to the park across a dangerous intersection with at-grade railroad crossing.

**2006:** Majora Carter marries James Chase in Hunts Point Riverside Park. Chase arrives on a boat built by students in a Rocking the Boat program.

**2007:** The Barry Segal Family Foundation, in connection with the Clinton Global Initiative, commits to \$300,000 over three years for training and managing Greenway Stewards to provide maintenance along the South Bronx Greenway, including in Hunts Point Riverside Park.

**Spring 2007:** Hunts Point Riverside Park re-opens to the public as the first new park on the Bronx River Greenway.



**2007:** Sustainable South Bronx's first annual Hunts Point Hustle 5k race goes through the park, with 120 participants. The Point's Fish Parade commences at the park.

**2008:** The 10th Annual Amazing Bronx River Flotilla lands again at Hunts Point Riverside Park.

## KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

LINDA R. COX, Executive Director, Bronx River Alliance

MAGGIE SCOTT GREENFIELD, Greenway Director and Director of Communications, Bronx River Alliance

GEORGE BLOOMER, Landscape Architect, NYC Parks and Recreation, Capital Design Division

NANCY PRINCE, Landscape Architect, NYC Parks and Recreation, Capital Design Division

ADAM GREEN, Executive Director of Rocking the Boat Job Skill Apprentices for Rocking the Boat

ALEXIE TORRES-FLEMING, Executive Director of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

JOAN BYRON, Director, Sustainability and Environmental Justice, Pratt Center for Community Development; and Bronx River Alliance Board Chair

ROBERTO GARCÍA, Community Board 2 Chair

JOHN ROBERT, Community Board 2 District Manager

JENNY HOFFNER, former Bronx River Project Catalyst Coordinator for Partnerships for Parks

ADRIAN BENEPE, Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

JOSHUA LAIRD, Assistant Commissioner, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

CHARLES MCKINNEY, Chief of Design, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

MIQUELA CRAYTOR, Executive Director of Sustainable South Bronx

KELLIE TERRY-SEPULVEDA, Managing Program Director of The Point CDC

MAJORA CARTER, Majora Carter Group

JAMES CHASE, Majora Carter Group

JOHN NEU, Former owner of neighboring scrap/recycling yard

TOM OUTERBRIDGE, General Manager of Sims Municipal Recycling, a division of Sims Metal Management, current owner of neighboring scrap/recycling yard

ALYSSA COBB KONON, Executive Vice President, New York City Economic Development Commission

JAMES G. TUREK, Local/Regional Biologist, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Center

PAUL LIPSON, Chief of Staff to Congressman José E. Serrano

## Hunts Point Riverside Park



*View of Bronx River near Hunts Point*

### URBAN CONTEXT

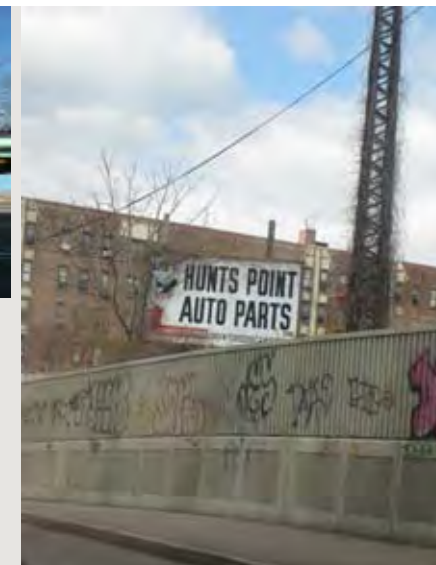
**T**he Bronx, the northernmost of New York City's boroughs, has been a part of New York City since the middle of the 19th century. The Bronx is one of the most densely populated counties in the country, even though almost a quarter of it is dedicated to public open spaces and parks, including the Bronx Zoo and the New York Botanical Garden. Since leaving its rural character behind in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Bronx has been home to immigrant and minority groups – first European, then African-American and Latino – especially Puerto Rican, Dominican and Jamaican. The 2000 Census showed that almost 30% of the population of the Bronx was foreign-born.

In the last three decades the Bronx, particularly the South Bronx, has been plagued by urban problems and blight. It was the site of many 1960s and 1970s urban development and renewal projects, and was sliced and segregated by highways and dotted with massive public housing projects. In the 1970s the Bronx was plagued by a wave of arson fires. The phrase “the Bronx is burning” was etched into the minds of many Americans when it was uttered live on camera by Howard Cosell as he viewed the silhouette of nearby burning buildings during his broadcast of a Yankees/Red Sox game in June 1977.

## NEIGHBORHOOD

At the southern tip of the Bronx, Hunts Point “was one of several large salt meadowland peninsulas... that jut into the East River.”<sup>1</sup> Even though the New Haven Railroad’s Harlem River branch had opened a station in Hunts Point in the 1850s, this remote area largely held farms and country estates and was not urbanized until the arrival of New York City subway lines in the first decade of the 20th century. These excellent transportation connections attracted industry to the area – although transport focused, even then, on multiple rail lines with little attention to commercial water transport options. The rail lines provided easy and inexpensive access to labor and freight for coal and other product deliveries. “By 1915, most of the area around Southern Boulevard between Intervale Avenue and East 163rd Street had been developed with 5-story apartment buildings and 4-story row houses.”<sup>2</sup>

Hunts Point retains a commercial and heavy industrial character, especially along the waterfront. Many automobile parts and repair operations dot the community. Nearly half of the Hunts Point land mass is occupied by the 329-acre Food Distribution Center immediately adjacent to Hunts Point Riverside Park. The idea of using this site for the city’s food distribution was the brainchild of the Lindsay Administration in the mid-1960s, conceived in response to the loss of manufacturing (including steel plants) in the area, and in order to meet the need for expansion and modernization of food market



operations in Manhattan. The excellent transportation infrastructure and largely industrial character of the area made Hunts Point a natural fit. “The location was convenient for goods to travel in and out by all types of transportation—rail, highway and water. By locating all of New York City’s food markets in one full-service hub, retailers could conveniently purchase everything that they needed in one location.”<sup>3</sup> It is now reportedly the largest wholesale food market in the world.

“The remainder of the peninsula comprises an industrial neighborhood where a diverse mix of food, manufacturing, construction, utility, municipal, auto-related and waste-related uses coexist. The northwestern portion of the peninsula contains a solid residential community, now home to roughly 12,000 residents.”<sup>2</sup>

*Auto body shops in Hunts Point neighborhood*

## PROJECT HISTORY

The area along the Bronx River is so industrial that at one point in recent history some in the city government proposed to rezone all of Hunts Point for industrial use. Residents of the South Bronx, including the Hunts Point area, have lived for decades near a waterfront made virtually inaccessible by industrial development. Stories abound of longtime residents who did not know that they lived on a peninsula. A few locals, especially those from the Puerto Rican community who had grown up in a fishing culture, picked their way through the garbage to fish in the river. For most people, however, high fences, large industrial plants, heavy truck traffic, train tracks, garbage and other unpleasant activities (including prostitution, drug use and dealing) were more than sufficient barriers to finding and exploring the water's edge.

In the 1970s, a group called Bronx River Restoration fought for reclamation of the Bronx River in the West Farms area of the South Bronx. Their work stemmed from the environmental movement and from a desire to counteract the deterioration of their community. They were able to conduct environmental studies and initial planning, but were severely limited by reduced funding during the recession of the early 1980s. The group was able to complete a *Bronx River Restoration Master Plan* in 1980, which some suggest laid out the guidelines for many later efforts along the river.



By the 1990s, the struggle for environmental justice became particularly relevant to a community overburdened with polluting industries, not the least of which were public waste treatment facilities and heavy truck traffic. Governor Patterson noted that “some areas of the South Bronx are burdened with some of the highest asthma rates in the State – four to five times the national average.”<sup>4</sup> Recent studies have linked levels of asthma in this community to soot from idling diesel trucks.<sup>5</sup> The American Diabetes Association cites the South Bronx as having New York City’s highest levels of diabetes. “South Bronx dwellers are 5 to 8 times more likely to die from diabetes compared to residents from New York City’s most wealthy neighborhoods”<sup>6</sup> Moreover, even though the Bronx has significant open recreation areas (including the Bronx Zoo and Bronx Botanical Gardens) the residential areas in the South Bronx are underserved with respect to close-by and accessible parks, recreational facilities, and waterfront access.

*Aerial view of Hunts Point Riverside Park site*

The latest generation of Bronx River planning was initiated in the late 1990s by the Bronx River Working Group with their Bronx River Action Plan (1999). The story that led directly to Hunts Point Riverside Park begins in 1997 when Partnerships for Parks hired Jenny Hoffner to catalyze community action. Hoffner described how Partnerships initiated The Bronx River Project to reclaim the river as a “healthy, ecological, recreational, educational and economic resource.” Hoffner coordinated the Bronx River Working Group to bring together diverse groups around river reclamation, including community and environmental organizations, government agencies, schools, and businesses. The Working Group grew to over 65 members by 2001, when it incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the Bronx River Alliance. Today, the Alliance formally sustains the collaboration among the groups, stewards the significant amount of funding allocated to the restoration of the River, and works closely with the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (a significant landowner along the Bronx River, with over 1,000 acres of Bronx River parkland).

In late 1997 Partnerships for Parks received a \$121,000 WaterWorks grant from the Urban Resources Partnerships, which provided seed money to community organizations. Urban Resources Partnership was an urban forestry program supported by the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Environmental Protection Administration, and Housing and Urban Development “that put federal resources into the service of community-initiated and community-led environmen-

tal projects...to enhance, restore, and sustain urban ecosystems in their...cities”

Hoffner conducted a windshield survey of the area to identify opportunities for river access, including the spot that is now the Hunts Point Riverside Park. This small site was listed on city maps as a continuation of Lafayette Avenue. The site was reportedly once part of Robert Moses’ plan to connect several expressways in the Bronx, with the Hunts Point site marked as a ramp to a proposed bridge over the Bronx River and through Soundview Park on the other side. In the 1990s planners discussed building a pedestrian bridge there to support the proposed bikeway routes on the far side of the Bronx River. Neither of these projects came to fruition.

Hoffner’s next step was community outreach to inform groups that grants were available. Her efforts included a call to Majora Carter, who then worked at The Point CDC. Hoffner suggested that Carter apply for one of these grants, but Carter, in her own words, “blew off” Hoffner’s request because she thought that the Bronx River was inaccessible and inconsequential to her work in the area.

Carter had lived all her life in this neighborhood and said she never knew it had potential access to the River. Sometime after the call with Hoffner, she “discovered” the site when her dog, Xena, took her through the garbage-strewn lot to the river’s edge – a “Eureka” moment for Carter. Later that day, she called Hoffner back, and

through The Point applied for (and shortly after received) one of the \$10,000 seed grants. The award kick-started organizing around the site and funding was leveraged with support from other agencies and corporations. Initial work included organizing community cleanups, connecting with businesses for help, and requesting land donations and setbacks at the park's borders.

The first cleanups began in the fall of 1998 and, according to Carter, the looming deadline of the "Golden Ball" event scheduled for Spring 1999 pushed the pace of the cleanup through the winter. There are few photographs of the site from that period, but all accounts indicate that it was a highly degraded space, with large-scale and heavy refuse from industrial and marine uses (such as huge links of anchor chains). The community received support for the cleanup from industrial neighbors as well as city agencies.



*Neighbors begin clean up of Park site*

New York City Department of Sanitation trucks helped remove some of the heavier waste, and the New York City Department of Transportation donated and constructed a smooth asphalt pathway that provided easy access for bikers and inline skaters. Carter and others would begin park cleanup some mornings at 6 AM, often just as prostitutes were leaving (though Carter noted that sometimes they would help with the painting). People could see that there was something new happening.

Momentum built in 1999 when Parks Commissioner Henry Stern declared it the "Year of the Bronx River" and initiated development of the Bronx River Action Plan, which laid out elements of the Bronx River Greenway (BRGW). The BRGW was designed to include a series of linear parks along the length of the river, and was developed with community organizations and the NYCDPR. The full BRGW plan was published by the Bronx River Alliance in 2005. Hunts Point Riverside Park was one of the first of the BRGW projects, and when completed it became the first new park on the Bronx River. The Golden Ball event was seen as a turning point for Hunts Point Riverside Park and, more broadly, the development of the BRGW. Conceived by a group of Swedish artists, the event entailed floating a large, heavy golden ball down the river to symbolize the river's return to the community. It was by some accounts an odd event, but certainly, Carter says, "a pivotal moment for the community, allowing people to see what could be done and especially to view the space from the river. People were surprised by



the level of empowerment they felt. It was an opportunity to see themselves differently as people who mattered – one of the proudest moments of my life.”

At the second Golden Ball event in 2000, Governor Pataki, Congressman Serrano and Commissioner Stern all took part. The Governor and Congressman announced two separate \$11 million awards, one from the New York State Dept of Transportation (NYSDOT) for Greenway development, and one from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for river restoration. James Turek, who oversaw the NOAA grant, noted that his agency was less interested in parks per se than in the health of fish habitats and the watershed. At the same time, an additional \$11 million award for the broader BRGW project came from the Mayor’s office, \$1 million of which was designated for design and construction of Hunts Point Riverside Park (and expanded to \$3.27



million as the actual costs were identified). The New York City Economic Development Commission (NYCEDC) also supported the development of the park by contributing an adjoining piece of land (part of the Hunts Point Market).

The Hunts Point Riverside Park’s design process (described in more detail below) was participatory, led by the Parks Department landscape architects and supported by The Point and Sustainable South Bronx. As the Park was designed and constructed, several contemporaneous planning processes unfolded for Hunts Point, involving overlapping sets of community organizations and city agencies. One plan concerned the creation of the South Bronx Greenway (SBGW), which was a direct spin-off of the organizing efforts around Hunts Point Riverside Park, and used the Park’s success to spur work on several segments.

Left: Mayor Bloomberg, Cmsr. Benepe, Majora Carter and Linda Cox at groundbreaking

Right: Park design illustrated on site

By 2001 Carter had left The Point to form Sustainable South Bronx and work on community projects with an environmental focus, including training programs for green-collar jobs. Carter won a \$1.25 million federal grant to plan the SBGW, with Hunts Point Riverside Park serving as its starting point, both geographically and symbolically. During the same period, the EDC organized and led the creation of a task force to develop the *Hunts Point Vision Plan*, which was released in March 2005. The task force included key local businesses as well as The Point and Sustainable South Bronx. While the plan focuses on commercial and industrial development, it includes discussion of brownfield remediation and “greater access to the waterfront, streetscape enhancements, and intersection improvements for pedestrian safety, including the South Bronx Greenway.”<sup>8</sup>

The SBGW is partially complete (perhaps 20% at the time of the site visit) but fully planned, and has significant funding in hand from several sources. The start of construction on the section of Lafayette Avenue that leads directly into the Park has been made imminent by an infusion of federal stimulus money, and is slated to begin in early 2010. Plans show that the SBGW eventually “will link existing and new parks through a network of waterfront and on-street routes. It will encompass 1.5 miles of waterfront greenway, 8.5 miles of inland green streets, and nearly 12 acres of new waterfront open space throughout Hunts Point and Port Morris.”<sup>8</sup>

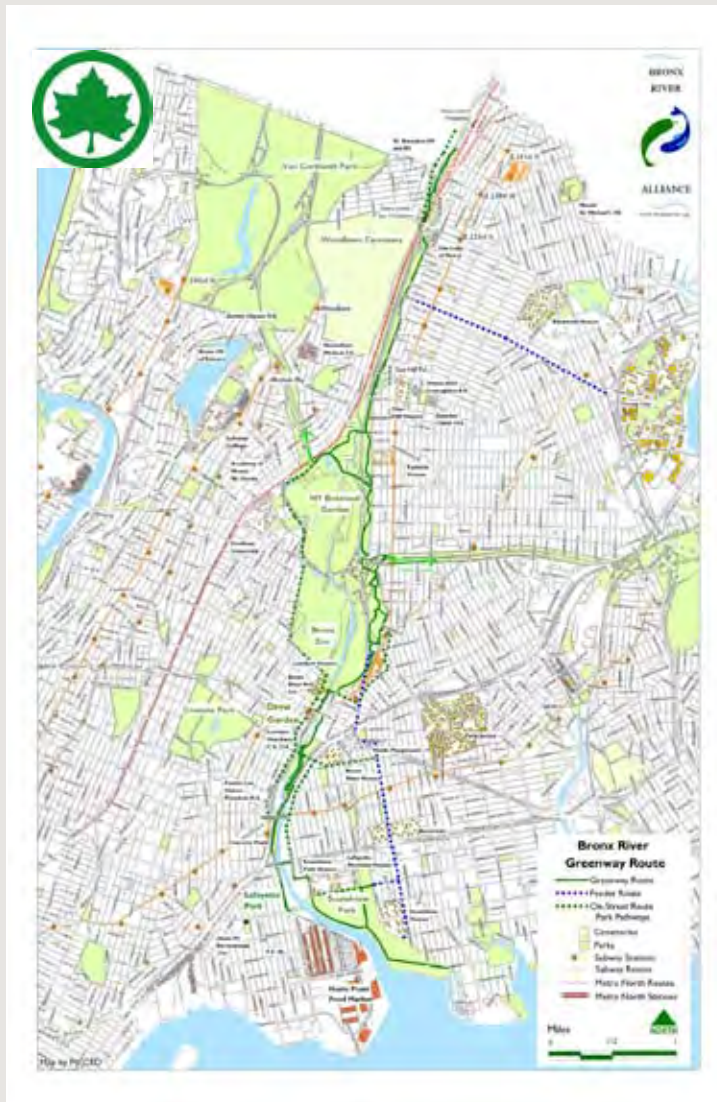


The SBGW will extend the larger network of the BRGW to the interior streets and neighborhoods of the South Bronx. The BRGW itself was approximately 60% complete at the time of the site visit and largely traversable via established routes through existing parks and new ones (such as Concrete Plant Park). It needs completion at a midpoint stretch (which is expected to take about five years) and substantial improvements to existing parklands in order to develop into a clear and attractive greenway system. Much of the funding needed to complete the project is in hand, but a great deal of construction and route development is still necessary. The full Greenway is projected to be available for use by 2015. To date over \$150 million has been allocated to the BRGW from federal, state, and local sources.

Hunts Point Riverside Park is a significant piece of this larger New York City park network, now under the direction of Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe. As the BRGW and the SBGW develop, the Hunts Point Riverside Park site has become a focal point of both

Lafayette Avenue approaching Hunts Point Park





Map of entire Bronx River Greenway

routes, and its successes have helped to generate enthusiasm, confidence, capacity, community support, and the continued attention of government officials – all of which have helped drive the BRGW and SBGW forward.

### PLANNING PROCESS

The parcel of land that became Hunts Point Riverside Park was technically a dead end street and mapped as such, and there was much debate within the city as to whether it should be a park. The Bronx River Working Group's coordinated voice for the river along with the local community's advocacy provided the Parks Department with the needed encouragement to sustain the long process of de-mapping the street and transferring the property to the Parks Department.

Once agreement was reached within the city that the land would become a park, landscape architects for the Parks Department took responsibility for the design. The City's dual goals of waterfront development and increasing available park space for underserved communities were part of a 1992 comprehensive waterfront plan, the *2003 Hunts Point Vision Plan*, and *PlaNYC*, the 2007 Citywide guide for sustainable development.

Local community organizations, led by The Point CDC and Sustainable South Bronx, worked with Park designers to encourage



members of the community to discuss their desires for the Park. At one point, the design team hung a banner on the site showing the preliminary plan, with post-it notes so that residents could attach comments and suggestions. For the Parks Department landscape architects, the design process included getting to know the site from the land and from the river, running scoping meetings, and meeting with community organization leaders. The designers note that “this Park taught us a lot about what it’s like – how heroic it is – to do an industrial site.” Soil remediation, permitting, and related due diligence were costly, and demanded as much work as making the Park. The designers’ priority was supporting the community’s perspective: “This was the Bronx River Working Group’s vision, not ours.”

The result of this community process was a list of desired features for the Park. The list, not surprisingly, was longer than the budget and the site could accommodate. Through a variety of forums, community members expressed their vision of a space that could serve as a green oasis in this industrial area of the South Bronx. The Park should draw in families, kids, fishermen and others. Hoffner noted that the community “loaded every dream on the site,” including a soccer field and a swimming pool – both much too large to fit on the site, but real needs in the community. These kinds of impractical suggestions may be common in such participatory processes, but in the end Hoffner was shocked at how many of the desires were actually accommodated in the final plan.

Among the requested elements that were provided were a green lawn to lie down on, a place for kids to play, an amphitheater, access to the river, and a water feature in which children could splash on a hot day. There is also a place to barbecue and have picnics – we were told that it is not uncommon early on a summer’s day to find nine-year-olds standing by the barbecue grills, holding a bag of charcoal to reserve a place. The Park program called for wide paths with gentle curves to facilitate access by emergency vehicles, wheelchair users, and canoes, as well as places to store and launch boats. “The final design included all of these features and was beautiful,” Hoffner said, emphasizing that people see this as “our design.” In sum, the community feels that the Parks Department listened and responded to their requests.

*Schematic Plan of Park design*

## DESIGN CHALLENGES AND INTENTIONS

The site bends or “doglegs” as it approaches the water, making it impossible to see the river from the entry. Fortunately, the contribution of the Hunts Point Market parcel, a small triangle of land to the south end of the Park, gave the Park a wider footprint and more water access. The EDC, the Market’s landlord, worked with the market operators to arrange for the land transfer. Alyssa Konon, EDC Executive Vice President, notes that the Hunts Point Market deserves credit for choosing to “play nice” with the park by transferring the piece of land. Konon acknowledged that the Market saw the value of the Park to the community, and recognized that they, too, benefit from improvements in the neighborhood.

Another construction issue was the need to mitigate toxins in the soil, particularly lead, before construction could begin. This turned out to be less of an effort than anticipated. However, after cleanup at the site was complete, designers were faced with the problem of how to “shoe-horn” as many as possible of the desired functions into the relatively small and narrow space. One early proposal would have restored the shoreline as a natural habitat, but this approach was rejected, as it would have severely limited the amount of usable park space.

The landscape architects also had to address a sharp 15’ drop in elevation from the park entrance to parts of the riverbank. This elevation change was mitigated by creating a gentle slope that accommodated the stone amphitheatre. Also, at the point where the

river reaches this site, significant tidal changes result in water level fluctuations that make the design of the floating dock a challenge.

The Park’s location also posed several problems. First, this “neighborhood park” was several blocks from the nearest residential buildings. Second, the narrow site is sandwiched between two massive commercial/industrial facilities. Third, and of greatest concern, was the need to find a way to bring families – especially children – safely to the site across a wide avenue, through busy truck traffic, and over active train tracks. The Park was intended to provide a transitional space between the harsh and gritty industrial district and the natural environment of the river. Designers intended that the Park serve multiple purposes:

- Connecting different parts of the community and bringing them to the river
- Buffering visitors from the built environment of the city
- Creating a green oasis
- Serving as a public gathering space

The final plan had five specific areas and components:

- Entrance
- Garden and water play feature
- Green oval
- Amphitheatre
- Access point to the Bronx River



## PARK DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Hunts Point Riverside Park was completed in May 2007. The 1.72-acre Park includes a waterfront with floating dock, a small amphitheater, an area with tables and barbecue grills, and a children's play area that includes water sprays; there is substantial landscaping throughout. In the play area are concrete stylized "river boats" and child-sized seashell-shaped seats. Off-site improvements directly related to the Park include a streetlight with a left turn arrow, which controls traffic during train crossings, and a small planted peninsula that serves as a traffic island and makes it easier to cross the main thoroughfare. Fencing around the Park and a trellis near the children's play area are all made of bright blue metal, meant to reflect the industrial character of the area. Different colored stones were used around the Park to set off various uses – a warm yellow color at the amphitheater, and a cool gray granite at the edge of the grass oval.

The Bronx River flows on the east side of the Park. A gravel ramp and a dock provide access to the water. This area of the river is tidal, serving barges and recreational boats. The south side of the Park is



*Views of playground, dock, and trellised seating area*



bounded by a concrete retaining wall and fence that separates it from the Hunts Point Market.

On the north side of the park, a large industrial metal fence both separates and connects the Park to the neighboring property. The fence incorporates parts of an historic brick wall that was preserved to provide a glimpse of the previous building. The fence has gates in several places, providing access to the José E. Serrano Riverside Campus for Arts and the Environment, which is owned by The Point CDC and used primarily by their tenant, Rocking the Boat. The site houses a series of temporary buildings used by Rocking the Boat to teach, conduct water testing, and build wooden boats. The campus property, sandwiched between Hunts Point Riverside Park and the Sims scrap yard further North, was acquired by The Point with NOAA funds. Significant environmental remediation removed pollutants left by the site's previous use as a fur factory. Soil was removed and replaced, and turf block was used to provide

a porous surface. Large planted swales were installed to work with the turf block so that rainwater would permeate the surface and not wash off into the sewer system or the river. The campus allows a variety of non-profit uses, starting with (but not limited to) its tenant Rocking the Boat. Students from the program regularly roll their boats through raised metal gates, through the Park, and down to the river. The Rocking the Boat program is particularly suited as a neighbor to the Park; indeed, its founder says that the Park is the only place in the Bronx where they can operate effectively.

From the west, visitors enter the park at the intersection of Edgewater Road and Lafayette Avenue. They must first cross a railroad siding marked by semaphores; freight trains block the entrance twice a day. A small parking lot at the entrance serves the Park. The entry is flanked by black granite stone pillars with inscriptions announcing the Park and showing the Greenway route.

*Views of Park entrance area*

Materials, including plantings, were chosen for appearance and durability. The site is meant to be green and inviting, while still reflecting the industrial character of the area. Plants were chosen to provide a lush setting while requiring minimal water or maintenance. Some plants were selected specifically to attract Monarch butterflies in the fall. No irrigation system was installed, other than a hose-bib, although there are retention basins that allow runoff to recharge the groundwater. The designers chose plant materials that provide visual interest during at least three seasons and are not prone to vandalism. For instance, they did not originally plant bulbs or other flowers that might be likely to be picked. This year, though, the Park's regular gardener has planted spring bulbs, which appear to be respected and left in place. The designers report that there

has been very little plant replacement since opening, suggesting that the plants have thrived and that there has been little damage inflicted by users. They comment, "It's obvious that the community cares, because it's maintained well." Regular Park maintenance is provided by roving City park crews, assisted by Sustainable South Bronx Environmental Steward interns, and riverside maintenance is provided by the Bronx River Alliance's Conservation Crew.

Light poles were chosen from standard Parks Department fixtures, in part to ease bulb replacement and maintenance. "We need to have empathy for the maintenance people," the designers said, "who have to pull the hose, etc. – it's a kind of sustainability." They designed the water feature so that its spray would run off to the plantings and not down the drains, reducing water use and easing the strain on storm drains. The children's play space was located near the entrance to reduce parents' anxieties about children wandering too close to the water's edge.

Jenny Hoffner, a landscape architect, suggests that the big victory is the Park's existence – not any particular aspect of its design. Rather, every element of the Park has a long history in the community process and is appreciated by those who use it. Others with whom we spoke were happy with the Park design, but agreed that there were a few issues to resolve. The lack of a permanent bathroom on site is noted as a problem, particularly because the Park is used by very young children and older adults. There is a portable toilet at the site



*Amphitheater at Hunts Point*



now, but no permanent facilities. There are, however, plans to add a bathroom as part of the new campus on the former fur factory site owned by The Point CDC.

All agree, as well, that the dock design (done by an outside consultant) did not meet the needs of its primary users. On the one hand, the platform and ladder appear to invite swimming where none is sanctioned due to poor water quality, while on the other hand the dock does not provide easy access for bringing boats into or out of the water, or for tying them to the dock on return. This area of the Bronx River is tidal, so the dock was designed to float up and down. Unfortunately, the dock bottoms out against a stop that was placed too high; at low tide the dock is unusable by boaters. Furthermore, the outer pylons, ostensibly placed there as a buffer against meandering barges, interfere with docking a rowboat or canoe. At the time of the site visit, the dock was damaged – an errant barge may

have hit it – and a new “dockmaster” from the park system had been directed to design a solution (although the primary users of the dock, Rocking the Boat, had not yet been consulted on the plans). Bronx River Alliance and Rocking the Boat petitioned a local Council member for funds to repair and improve the dock, and \$200,000 has been allocated to NYCDPR to complete the repairs and improvements.

*Views of Rocking the Boat students launching boats*

Several people who were involved in the development of Hunts Point expressed frustration that it was closed for six months after completion while a solution was sought to the railway crossing problem. They felt that this issue should have been anticipated and solved before construction was completed. During this period, Majora Carter spent a great deal of time speaking in local elementary schools and started an Alinsky-like campaign by asking children to get their parents to call 311 (the city complaint hotline) to request that the Parks Department open the park. Responding to internal and external pressure, EDC and DOT worked to identify the level of safety and traffic control needed, and the requisite signaling was finally installed, allowing the Park to open.

### LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

No single individual or organization can claim sole responsibility for the Park, especially when viewing it as part of the broad network of New York's greenways. Rather, a number of individuals, not-for-profit organizations, and governmental agencies shared responsibility for planning, development, funding and operations. Certain individuals, however, were important in project leadership. Majora Carter (through The Point and later Sustainable South Bronx) provided drive, energy and creativity that was clearly essential to this effort. Her organization and focus led directly to the development of the Park and kicked off efforts for the South Bronx Greenway. Her involvement was made possible, however, by the context that



was established by many other people at Partnerships for Parks, the Bronx River Alliance, The Point, The Parks Department, the Office of Congressman José E. Serrano, and numerous other government offices. Jenny Hoffner played a key role at the outset, distributing seed grant money, organizing a forum for many community groups to meet together, and facilitating the collaboration with the Parks Department. Linda Cox held (and continues to hold) dual positions, at the Bronx River Alliance and the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, which made it possible for her to serve as a liaison between community members and city officials.

The project provides an interesting model for non-profit community development that emphasizes the joint roles of community organizations and government agencies. The Park was developed

*Students learning about river ecology*



through a strong grass roots approach that made use of the energy, ingenuity and creativity of the local community. However, the effort and action was not uni-directional. This was a true public-private partnership with unusual depth and dimension, in which the private entities were almost exclusively not-for-profit, community-based organizations, while the public partners included federal, state and local government offices. The community-based response was recruited and proactively seeded by an early federal grant program and a city-based public-private partnership. The project was administered by a not-for-profit community organization, planning and capital work were funded by agencies at every governmental level, and the park received the support of city agencies necessary to create the project on the ground.

In the case of Hunts Point, city agencies showed an unusual respect for cohesive planning ideas that came from the community. As a result, the Park development process has started an inclusive, progressive conversation about the development future of this neighborhood and the entire South Bronx. This dialogue is visible in the work for the *Hunts Point Vision Plan*, organized by the EDC, with a task force that included key local businesses as well as The Point and Sustainable South Bronx. In earlier years, the bottom line was simply about zoning for heavy industry. Now there are productive conversations among public and private players about how urban design affects local communities with issues such as redesigning truck routes.

The interplay between these sectors and organizations was not seamless, and delays and disagreements certainly were present. At the outset of development at Hunts Point, for example, there were tensions between community groups and surrounding businesses over the level of truck traffic and the effluent flowing from the scrap yard into the river (Carter says that she often called the Department of Environmental Protection to report problems). Historically, the business community and residents did not interact. The fact that functional and even positive relations developed between them is a credit to both sides. Community leaders sought these business neighbors out, solicited in-kind support for the Park, and looked for ways to work cooperatively. They described how industry leaders came to the Sustainable South Bronx and said “don’t protest, we want to be good neighbors,” and subsequently increased their own green practices and local hiring. The scrap yard recycling center, for instance, has recently installed a green wall that is powered by solar panels and bioswales that support storm water management. The Hunts Point Market chose to cede land to enhance the Park, and successive owners of the scrap yard have looked for ways to cooperate and support the Park. Employees of the businesses are among the most frequent weekday park users.

There is an impressive level of continuity in the neighborhood efforts at Hunts Point. Although individuals in leadership positions have moved on at many of these public and private organizations since the project began (for instance, the city administration has

changed, there is new leadership at The Point and Sustainable South Bronx, and Carter has created her own consulting firm), progress has continued and even accelerated. Community programs are flourishing, and the SBGW and the BRGW are developing into a complete network of parks, with associated street improvements. That these projects were sustained through so many transitions is a credit to the foresight, planning, and organizational development of those involved.

Key not-for-profit organizations involved in Hunt's Point Riverside Park and related efforts include:

*The Bronx River Alliance* – the BRA began in the late 1990s as the Bronx River Working Group, a meeting place for several dozen local community organizations to share goals and ideas. They found support for community projects that helped to clean, make use of, and gain access to the Bronx River. BRA became the “coordinated voice for the River.”

*The Point CDC* – a non-profit “dedicated to youth development and the cultural and economic revitalization of the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx.” The Point chooses to focus on the assets of its South Bronx home (largely the talents and social capital of its residents, rather than problems like crime, inadequate housing, and poverty). “Our mission is to encourage the arts, local enterprise, responsible ecology, and self-investment in the Hunts Point community.”

*Sustainable South Bronx* – a non-profit that focuses on environmental justice issues, founded in 2001 by Majora Carter (then working for the Point CDC) to address “land-use, energy, transportation, water & waste policy, and education to advance the environmental and economic rebirth of the South Bronx, and inspire solutions in areas like it across the nation and around the world.”

*Partnerships for Parks* – a joint program of the City Parks Foundation and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Its mission is to “help New Yorkers work together to make neighborhood parks thrive” [http://www.partnershipforparks.org/wedo/wedo\\_index.html](http://www.partnershipforparks.org/wedo/wedo_index.html). Their program “Catalyst for Neighborhood Parks” received and administered the funds that seeded many of the initial projects for the greenways, including Hunts Point Riverside Park.

*Rocking The Boat* – a non-profit organization located in the South Bronx dedicated to using “traditional wooden boatbuilding and on-water education to help young people develop into empowered and responsible adults.” Rocking the Boat has brought all of its operations to the site immediately adjacent to Hunts Point Riverside Park, a space owned and operated by The Point.

Key governmental agencies involved in Hunt's Point Riverside Park and related efforts include:

*NYC Office of the Mayor* - supported and funded the park project and the greenways over two administrations.

*Office of Congressman José Serrano* – played a major role seeking out and providing sources of funding from various federal agencies as earmarks for this neighborhood.

*NYC Department of Parks and Recreation* – was responsible for design and construction and continues to maintain the park.

*NYC Economic Development Corporation* – the largest landlord in Hunts Point; controls the Hunts Point Market property; responsible for developing the Hunts Point Vision Plan, and for arranging transfer of land to increase the park to its present size.

*NY Department of Transportation* – the agency through which state funds were provided; worked on the street and railway safety aspects of the park.

*National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration* – served as a source of federal funding for river restoration.

*Bronx Community Board 2* – community boards are local governmental bodies in New York City that provide community residents the opportunity to have input in planning decisions and activities of city agencies. Community Board 2 has been involved in the community response to plans, such as for the changes to Lafayette Avenue.

As these community organizations develop their voices, other projects become possible. For instance, non-profit organizations in Hunts Point fought the expansion of a waste water treatment facility in the neighborhood, taking it to the courts. The organizations were awarded \$20 million as part of a community benefits agreement. These funds will be used for the development of a community boat-house on the “fur factory” site adjacent to the park, a floating pool which docks off of Barretto Point Park in the summer months, and a maintenance facility for the SBCGW. All of these efforts provide momentum for further, badly needed, environmental remediation and increases in recreation space for the South Bronx.

## FINANCES

Considering Hunts Point Riverside Park as an individual site, the description of its funding is simple and straightforward (especially compared to many other not-for-profit development projects). Support for the costs of designing and building the park came from one source – the city budget. Originally estimated at \$1 million, the final amount of \$3.27 million covered hard costs and in-house services, including the landscape architects who were full-time employees of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. There were no site acquisition costs, since the space was owned by the City. Park maintenance comes from the Department of Parks & Recreation budget, supported by green-collar job trainees from Sustainable South Bronx.

The full story, though, includes the prehistory of how the community came to identify the opportunity for the Park and its waterfront access. Furthermore, the effort at Hunts Point Riverside Park was paralleled by – and in some cases triggered – broader park developments, including the BRGW and SBGW. This regional park development was a more involved process, including multiple funding sources from all levels of government, distributed over many years, with different purposes. The whole process was initiated, for instance, with federal support in the form of an WaterWorks grant from Urban Resources Partnerships.

In terms of the broader constellation of projects, Mayoral support totaled \$11 million, mostly for the planning and development of parts of the BRGW, including Concrete Plant Park. The City's commitment to the BRGW project has now grown to over \$50 million. New York State initially also allocated \$11 million to the BRGW, a number which has now swelled to over \$30 million. Federal transportation dollars have funded a significant portion of the BRGW (\$50 million). Together, with private sources funding the clean-up of Starlight Park, the total funds committed to Greenway projects now total over \$150 million. Beyond Greenway capital projects, Congressman José Serrano allocated funding to NOAA and created grants administered by the Bronx Zoo/Wildlife Conservation Society to support the environmental restoration of the river. As of 2009, this funding totaled \$17.5 million.

#### HUNTS POINT RIVERSIDE PARK – ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS, 2008

Use	Amount	Source
Maintenance & Operations staff (salary and fringe benefits)	\$ 56,945	City tax levy funds
Security (Parks Enforcement Patrol)	\$ 10,150	City tax levy funds
Waterfront Playground Associate	\$ 4,885	Corporate donation
<b>TOTAL STAFF COSTS</b>	<b>\$ 71,980</b>	
Portable Toilet	\$ 1,710	CDBG
<b>Total Annual Operating Cost</b>	<b>\$ 73,690</b>	

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds were obtained to support the development for the SBGW, relating to the EDC-sponsored effort to create the *Hunts Point Vision Plan*. Additionally, over \$20 million of federal stimulus funds have been allocated to the area and specifically the SBGW, including support to recreate Lafayette Avenue as a boulevard with a green median strip. Together, these funds indicate a serious commitment to open space, recreational waterfront development, and transportation alternatives in the Bronx.

### HUNTS POINT RIVERSIDE PARK CAPITAL COSTS

DESIGN	
In-house design services	\$ 190,000
Consultant's fee for environmental, structural & marine engineering, including original bulkhead design	\$ 136,000
Survey	\$ 58,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 384,000</b>
CONSTRUCTION	
Landscaping	\$ 633,778
Hardscape	\$ 1,591,057
Utility Connections	\$ 18,500
Contaminated Soil Mitigation	\$ 60,775
Contractors Costs (including mobilization, RE vehicle, construction sign, etc.)	\$ 201,890
Change Orders*	\$ 348,768
Permit, fees	\$ 14,000
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 2,868,768</b>
Construction Management	\$ 180,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 3,432,768</b>

\*changes in bulkhead design, additional trees, DEC planting requirements along shoreline  
Source for all of above Capital Costs - NYC Mayoral funds

### RELATED IMPROVEMENTS

		Source
NYC Parks Green Street @ Park Entrance	\$ 116,744	New York City Department of Parks & Recreation Green Streets
Signal and striping @ Park Entrance	\$ 10,000	NYC Department of Transportation
Railroad Crossing @ Park Entrance	\$ 250,000	NYC Economic Development Corporation
	\$ 100,000	NYC Department of Transportation
	\$ 100,000	NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
Subtotal RR/Entrance	\$ 450,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 576,744</b>	

## IMPACTS

The impact of this project can be judged on multiple levels: as a community-generated planning and design process; as a park serving various community needs; and as the impetus for broader community participation leading to other related recreational and waterfront development.

From the first perspective, this was a remarkably community-driven process, through which the community contributed significant effort and critical ideas. Community organizations managed and participated in this process from the start. They organized neighborhood meetings, clean-up events, festivals and design input sessions. At the same time, the community effectively coordinated its planning with city agencies. Their efforts paid off: the final design of Hunts Point Riverside Park reflects community needs and concerns.

The Park itself is an important community amenity and is well-used. On weekdays, especially in the early part of the day, it did not seem heavily trafficked (at least at the time of the Bruner Foundation spring site visit), but later in the day it is used after school by students working with Rocking the Boat in their boat-building shops, labs, and on the water. On weekends and summer days, the park is reported to be very crowded for picnics, passive recreation, boating, and occasional (illegal) swimming. Every Saturday in season Rocking the Boat makes available rowboat trips free of charge, and the Bronx River Alliance conducts about ten canoe trips from the park per

season. It has also become a site for festivals and special events such as Majora Carter’s wedding and the starting of The Point’s annual Fish Parade. It stands out as a lush, green space amidst industrial neighbors. When the wholesale market closes in mid-afternoon, the park creates a presence on a street that is otherwise largely empty. The Park’s place in the community and the process used in bringing it about seem to have had an impact on its immediate neighbors, most obviously seen in the environmentally-conscious elements added at the scrap yard site. And, without the Park, it is unlikely that the neighboring brownfield “fur factory” space would have been acquired, remediated and developed as the José E. Serrano Riverside Campus for Arts and the Environment.



Views of Cement Park near Hunts Point

Hunts Point Riverside Park was the first new park and link in the Bronx River Greenway (BRGW), which will soon include new elements along its length, including the Concrete Plant Park. The BRGW will link residential neighborhoods to the Bronx River waterfront along a critical north-south corridor in the Bronx in which bike and pedestrian connections are currently made difficult by the borough's dense highway network. The BRGW will eventually extend along the full 23-mile length of the river, providing a venue for healthy recreation and bike travel. The Bronx River Alliance and the Parks Department lead the effort to develop the 8-mile length of the Greenway in the Bronx and coordinate with Westchester County government agencies that are advancing the remainder of the Greenway beyond the city lines.

In addition, the successful completion of Hunts Point Riverside Park has given a boost to the development of the South Bronx Greenway. Planning is underway on a section of the Greenway that will run for a half mile along Lafayette Avenue between Hunts Point Riverside Park and Bruckner Boulevard. Construction is expected to begin in Summer 2009. It will include a green median strip with grass and trees and a separated bicycle path, improving safe access to the Park.

The development of both Greenway systems will provide an inexpensive, efficient and environmentally friendly means of transportation – locally, and even to Manhattan, Westchester County



and beyond via the route's designation on the East Coast Greenway system. The "Tour de Bronx," which traverses this route, is now the city's largest free bike event. Several people interviewed pointed out that a safe series of bike paths is more than just a recreational element here.

Many people pointed out a less tangible impact of the Park project on the psyche of community members. This community had spent decades in a downward spiral. The South Bronx was used as the repository for many undesirable city facilities no other neighborhood would tolerate, such as waste treatment plants and jails. The ability to conceptualize, plan and complete this Park has, they say, created a feeling of competence and empowerment that carries over to other situations and projects, and allowed residents to imagine other options for their community.

*Artist rendering of future improvements Greenway along Lafayette Ave.*

## FUTURE PLANS

Completion of the Greenways will be a significant focus of effort in coming years. As individual leases are renewed, the EDC will create a 35-foot right-of-way along the Bronx River running the entire length of Hunts Point Market. This is coupled with another plan for on-street paths along Food Court Drive, surrounding the Market.

There are also ambitious ideas for adding value to the market in several ways, perhaps not directly caused by Hunts Point Park, but supported and reinforced by its success. Currently, the market is open only to wholesale buyers. There are plans to add retail operations in the Fulton Fish Market and other purveyors' shops, creating a destination site for local residents and visitors. There are reported to have even been very preliminary discussions about the potential for creating working piers for the Fulton Fish Market that would bring commercial fishermen down the Bronx River for the first time in over a century.



Detail of railing at dock

## Assessing Project Success

### SUCCESS IN MEETING PROJECT GOALS

*1. To "reclaim the Bronx River as a resource for Bronx communities"*

The Park has reclaimed the area's defining natural resource – the Bronx River – as a visible and vibrant part of community life.

*2. To open public recreational access to the Bronx River*

There is now direct and easy access to the river in a community where none had existed before, with public access to affordable recreational boating.

*3. To clean up and restore the park site, and spur efforts to clean the Bronx River.*

This brownfield site has been remediated and recreated as a green space. The Park supports river remediation work and has enhanced the river's image and visibility.

*4. To serve as a symbol of the Bronx River's rebirth and growth of the Greenway.*

It is both a symbolic and a physical home for the Greenway, and an image of new accessibility to the river.



*5. To engage local communities in the redevelopment process.*

This was a community-driven and directed development and design process, and seems to have encouraged subsequent community engagement in other projects.

*6. To use design to “capture a sense of nature on a site located between a scrap metal yard and the world’s largest food distribution center,” and to “create space for recreation and respite, provide habitat, and offer a green oasis in a highly urbanized environment”.*

The project is complete and successful and its presence and design are appreciated by the neighborhood. The Park is an oasis of green in this otherwise industrial community, and its community-envisioned amenities are well used.

While its physical design is not unusual, the park’s function and the process of its creation are innovative. In the South Bronx, the very existence of the Park is impressive. It has become an important resource and focal point for community activities, youth programs and weekend and summer activity.

*7. To view the community from a perspective of strengths.*

The planning effort reflected the adoption of an “asset-based” philosophy and approach to community development, in contrast with traditional problem-based approaches. Rather than focusing solely on problems to be fixed, this approach identified local physical and human resources and tapped their energy and efforts. Hunts

Point Riverside Park and the Greenway show that an “asset-based” approach can have successful outcomes.

## SELECTION COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Committee felt the reclaiming of open space on the Bronx River by the local community was a compelling and important story. They gave a great deal of credit to the community groups involved in discovering the site and organizing to engage the City of New York in building a public park in their neighborhood. The Committee noted that creating green space and a connection to the Bronx River was tremendously important in such a densely populated neighborhood, especially where there had been little access to public green space in the neighborhoods.

The Committee noted that the effectiveness of this Park was augmented by the construction of nearby parks which continue to expand river access, and by the presence of Rocking the Boat, a program that introduces inner-city youth to boat building and navigation on the River via the Park. They also felt that the participation of the community in the design of the Park has resulted in a high degree of ownership of the park and heavy use by local residents. The reclaiming of formerly industrial land, the cooperation of the City of New York, and the involvement of residents in the design of the project were felt to be ideas that could be effectively adapted to cities across the country. 🌿

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