

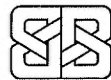
Silver Medal Winner
Brooklyn Bridge Park
Brooklyn, New York



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Partnering Strategies for the Urban Edge

2011 RUDY BRUNER AWARD FOR URBAN EXCELLENCE



BRUNER FOUNDATION, INC.

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Movies at the Park

Julienne Schaer

Project At-A-Glance

WHAT IS BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK?

- An 85 acre/1.3 mile linear park along the East River waterfront in Brooklyn, NY.
- A civic project that reuses a post-industrial site and reclaims the waterfront for public use.
- An urban green space designed to be financially & ecologically sustainable.
- A park designed for passive and active recreational activity, that also adds greenery and open space to a dense downtown with a growing residential population.

PROJECT GOALS

- Transform a “derelict and inaccessible vestige of New York’s industrial past” into beautiful, accessible, useable green recreation space.
- Return a part of the Brooklyn waterfront to public use.
- Create a “democratic and multi-use civic space”.
- Adhere to “community-identified principles for redevelopment and connectivity with the adjacent neighborhoods”.
- “Incorporate sustainable practices in every aspect of the park’s planning, design, construction and operation”.

Project Chronology

1984-85 Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ) announces the close of cargo operations and intention to sell piers for commercial development. Neighborhood-based grassroots groups emerge to advocate for park.

1989 Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition, an alliance of more than 60 member groups, forms and begins advocating for a park on vacated PANYNJ site.

1992 “13 Guidelines” emerge from community discussions, including idea of a self-sustaining park that will generate revenue to pay for its operating costs.

January 1994 Governor Mario Cuomo announces that the Urban Development Corporation will take the lead in implementing a plan for mixed-use development on the Brooklyn waterfront at Piers 1 through 5.

1996 The Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition commissions an economic viability study for the Park, paid for with State funding (\$1.5 million planning grant).

1997 State allocates \$1 million for master plan of the Park.

February 1997 Economic Viability Study for the Park is released, recommending that the park include a pool, marina, conference center, hotel, and ice-skating facility.

December 1997 Brooklyn Waterfront Local Development Corporation (BWLDC) formed and conducts community planning workshops and focus groups to solicit ideas for the waterfront. State Legislature provides almost \$2 million more for planning. Urban Strategies, Inc. with Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA) selected to develop master plan.

1999 Developer proposal for movie theater, retail shops, hotel and marina between Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges dies in the face of community opposition.

2000 City commits \$65 million to the Park project.

Summer 2000 First Annual Park Film Series.

Sept 2000 Vision for the waterfront authored by BWLDC released in an “Illustrative Master Plan.”

January 2001 Governor Pataki commits \$87 million to the Park project and donates adjacent state land to the Park.

May 2002 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the State and the City finalizing a \$150 million commitment to design and construct the park through the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation (BBPDC). MOU indicates that the park must develop its own resources for maintenance and programming, with no less than 80% of the area be reserved for park uses.

September 2003 Mayor Bloomberg and then Governor Pataki cut the ribbon on the completed first section of the Park – a 4.8 acre landscaped green with paths overlooking the Brooklyn Bridge.

December 2003 BBPDC signs a funding agreement with the State for \$85 million which also provides for the transfer of piers 1, 2, 3, and 5 to the BBPDC.

February 2004 Funding agreements signed to provide capital dollars from NYC (\$65 million).

2004 Environmental studies find pier piles eroding and inadequate to support some proposed uses. Financial analysis identifies \$15 million of annual operation and maintenance costs, and announces search for complimentary uses within the Park to generate revenues. Some community groups argue that this amounts to privatizing public park space.

Spring 2005 BBPDC proposes new Master Plan for Park designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc (MVVA). Public presented with alternative housing development scenarios for the Park. Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition supports the plan.

July 2005 General Project Plan (“GPP”) adopted by the by the Empire State Development Corporation, (ESDC) and the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation (BBPDC). (The GPP has since been modified several times, with the last modification approved on June 15, 2010.)

Nov 2006 Court ruling in case brought by Brooklyn Bridge Park Defense Fund affirms that it is legal to fund park with housing internal to the project boundaries.

Summer 2007 Floating pool brought to Pier 1 is a great attraction and establishes the popularity of the park as a recreation site.

February 2009 Demolition, site preparation work commences; construction on the piers section of the Park begins at Pier 1.

2008 One Brooklyn Bridge Park opens. Ground lease and Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) generate almost \$4m per year for park maintenance.

March 8, 2010 MOU signed between the City of New York, and local State legislators to require new study of funding alternatives to housing. State representatives given veto over decisions on funding.

March 22, 2010 Pier 1 opens with Old Fulton Street entrance, lawns with bridge and harbor views, waterfront promenade, playground, concessions, and pedestrian paths.

June 2010 Pier 6 uplands open, including a 1.6-acre destination playground, bikeway/walkway, dog run and seasonal water taxi service to Governors Island and other points in the harbor.

August 2010 The uplands between Pier 1 and 2, the Pier 1 water garden and the uplands of Pier 2 open, including spiral pool, boat ramp and a salt marsh with a stone seating area, portions of the park greenway opened and interim bikeway/walkway linking Piers 1-6.

Feb 2011 Study of Alternatives to Housing for the Funding of Brooklyn Bridge Park Operations report released for public review and discussion (BAE Urban Economics, 2011; Webster, 2011).

August 2011 Report concludes that housing is the most viable revenue generating model for Brooklyn Bridge Park and a Memorandum of Understanding is signed by the city, State Senator Daniel Squadron and Assembly member Joan Millman detailing the terms of development in Brooklyn Bridge Park.

KEY PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED

REGINA MYER *President, Brooklyn Bridge Park*

ELLEN RYAN *Vice President, Brooklyn Bridge Park*

JEFFREY SANDGRUND *Vice President of Operations,
Brooklyn Bridge Park*

KARA GILMOUR *Director of Education and Stewardship,
Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy*

DAVID LOWIN *Vice President for Real Estate, Brooklyn Bridge Park*

JENNIFER KLEIN *Vice President of Capital Operations,
Brooklyn Bridge Park*

NANCY WEBSTER *Executive Director,
Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy*

NANCY BOWE *Chair Board of Directors,
Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy*

MARTY MARKOWITZ *Brooklyn Borough President*

MICHAEL VAN VALKENBURGH *Partner,
Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.*

MATHEW URBANSKI *Partner,
Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc*

STEVE NOONE *Senior Designer,
Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.*

CHRISTOPHER BURKE *Gardiner & Theobald*

NANETTE SMITH *Special Assistant to the Mayor, NYC*

ADRIAN BENEPE *Commissioner,
NYC Department of Parks & Recreation*

KATE D. LEVIN *Commissioner, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs*

JOAN CHAN *President, Downtown Brooklyn Partnership*

DAVID OFFENSEND, PETER ASCHKENASY, HENRY GUTMAN, DANIEL SIMMONS
members Brooklyn Bridge Park Board of Directors

JANE WALENTAS *Doner/restorer of Jane's Carousel*

JOHN DEW *Co Chair Brooklyn Bridge Park Community Advisory
Council, Chair, Brooklyn Community Board 2*

SUE WOLFE *Boerum Hill resident*

LESLIE SCHULTZ *President of BRIC*

FRANKLIN STONE *resident, former Cobble Hill Association President,
Downtown Brooklyn Waterfront Local Development Corporation
and former member Brooklyn Bridge Park Community
Advisory Council*

ANDREW LASTOWECKY *Chair, Brooklyn Community Board 2 and a
member of the Parks Committee for Brooklyn Community Board 2*

TOM POTTER *Chair, Brooklyn Bridge Boathouse and former member
of Brooklyn Bridge Park Community Advisory Council*

SUSAN FELDMAN *Artistic Director, St Ann's Warehouse*

JANE CARROLL MCGROARTY *President, Brooklyn Heights Association
and member of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Community
Advisory Council*

ROBIN MOORE *Professor of Landscape Architecture,
Natural Learning Initiative, North Carolina State University*

DENNIS HOLT *Editor, Brooklyn Eagle*

ANDREA GOLDWYN *Director of Public Policy,
New York Landmarks Conservancy*

PETER FLEMMING *resident, Brooklyn Heights and member of the
Brooklyn Bridge Park Community Advisory Council*



Project Description



View from Pier 1

URBAN CONTEXT

The area occupied by BBP runs along the East River opposite the lower tip of Manhattan, with the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges at its north end. The park both uses and replaces the maritime, industrial infrastructure that lies along 1.3 miles of this Brooklyn waterfront. It includes 6 piers, Fulton Ferry Landing, and 2 existing, though redesigned parks – Empire Fulton Ferry Park (formerly a state park) and Main Street Park. It also includes Empire Stores and the Tobacco Warehouse, landmarked Civil War-era buildings.

The park is within the purview of Community Board 2 and directly borders Community Board 6. It abuts Brooklyn Heights, a site of the Revolutionary War Battle of Brooklyn, New York City's first suburb and its first designated historic district. Brooklyn Heights sits on a bluff 60 feet above the harbor, separated from it and the park by Robert Moses' triple-deck Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE), two highway levels topped by a promenade that provides views of the harbor, lower Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty. In the 1950s Brooklyn Heights experienced a brownstone revival among its trove of the "country's largest ensemble of pre Civil War houses" (*Schneider & Junkersfeld, 2011*) and is among the wealthiest of Brooklyn's communities. Other neighboring communities near the park include the recently named DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass), a gentrified area with arts, office,



retail and housing in old warehouses and factory buildings, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens, Boerum Hill, Vinegar Hill (all Historic Districts) and the Columbia Street Waterfront District, all of which add increasing economic and ethnic diversity. “The 95,000 households in Community Districts 2 and 6 comprised approximately ten percent of all households in Brooklyn in 2010.” (*BAE Alternatives to Funding, 2011; p. 84*). The park is also a few blocks from downtown Brooklyn, which has seen a major recent building boom of hotels, offices, and residences.

PROJECT HISTORY

There has been commercial ferry service between Manhattan and the Brooklyn piers for over 350 years, including Fulton steam ferries starting in 1814. The area grew along with Manhattan, but its major population boom came with the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883. While ferry service declined with the availability of the bridge, Brooklyn remained a major commercial shipping port until

the mid-20th century. “At its peak, the New York Dock Co. owned or managed over 40 piers and approximately 150 stores and warehouses, making the Brooklyn waterfront the largest private freight terminal in the world” (*History of Brooklyn Bridge Park, 2011*). “At one time, Brooklyn had so many waterfront warehouses that it was known as ‘the walled city’” (*Spector, 2010; p. 95*). Because of this industrial presence, though, there was essentially no waterfront access available for public recreation. Port and warehouse business declined through the 1950s and 1960s, moving to newer ports (many in New Jersey) that were better situated to accommodate containerized shipping.

In 1954, the waterfront was further cut off from the population of Brooklyn Heights by the construction of the BQE. That this highway was hidden under a pleasant promenade was, as Robert Caro (1974) indicates, a concession to the affluence of the Brooklyn Heights neighborhood, as well as evidence of the effectiveness of the Brooklyn Heights Association (BHA). In less affluent neighborhoods, such as Red Hook, the highway cut through surface streets and disrupted both vehicular and pedestrian circulation.

The piers and warehouses ceased being revenue generators by the 1970s. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, a quasi-governmental agency established in 1921 and empowered to build and operate transportation infrastructure in New York and New Jersey, ceased cargo ship operations in Brooklyn in 1983 and a year later proposed sale of the piers for commercial development.

Discussions within the community began almost immediately about potential uses for the piers and harbor. Local community groups, such as Brooklyn Heights Association, (BHA) were intent on avoiding a massive housing development of the sort proposed (and later built) at Battery Park in Manhattan. Many focused on the idea of a park which would serve this “underparked” area while also eliminating the possibility of a major real estate development.

In 1998 the Downtown Brooklyn Waterfront Local Development Corporation (DBWLDC) was created with state funds to lead a planning process for the site. DBWLDC included many governmental and community stakeholders. An RFP to study the site was won by a group of design and planning consultants including Urban Strategies and MVVA and led to an illustrative master plan made public in 2000. The plan, which had many elements that ultimately found their way into the final park design, was subjected to considerable public review and discussion. Public comments, for instance, demonstrated a desire for active as well as passive recreation and the impact of this input can be seen in the recreational fields now being built at Pier 5. In 2000 the Port Authority, which had hoped for a large, commercial development on the site, publicly agreed that a park was the best use for the land, and Mayor Giuliani announced the first significant commitment of public funds for park construction with an allocation of \$65 million, followed in 2001 by a donation of land and \$87 million from by the state.

The 2002 Memo of Understanding between Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Pataki is viewed as a landmark event for the park. In it they commit both entities to long term capital funding for the park, create the Brooklyn Bridge Park Development Corporation (BBPDC) as a subsidiary of the Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC), and affirm the long held understanding that the park would be self-sustaining for operational expenses, mandating, however, that at least 80% of land would be reserved for park use. That was also emphasized in Spring 2003 when the a concept plan, based on the Illustrative Master Plan, was released. The reality of the revenue generating plan, however, may not have hit home for some in the neighborhoods until spring 2005 when the specific plans for development, including housing sites, were laid out. “The 2004 announcement of condo developments along the site’s border at the southern and northern edges of the park set off an outcry from some residents who felt they were blindsided” (*Gonzalez, 2008*) leading to formation of the Brooklyn Bridge Park Defense Fund, which filed suit in federal court to block the plan – a suit it eventually lost.

Demolition, site preparation and construction on the piers began in 2009 but controversy over revenue sources continued. A 2010 Memo of Understanding reaffirmed the city and state’s financial commitment to the park, and the principle of self-financing for park operations, but also required a new assessment to examine alternatives to housing for funding sources – resulting in the study released February 2011 and final report released in June 2011 (*see Finances*).



Etienne Frossard



Julienne Schaefer

Top: View of Brooklyn Bridge from the Park
Bottom: Pier Uplands

Many of these structures, and parts of the piers themselves, were deteriorated after decades of disuse and neglect. In fact, the 19th century shed on pier 4 collapsed in a storm in winter 2010.

Major use of the park by the public began in Spring, 2010 with the opening of the Old Fulton Street entrance along with Pier 1's lawns, waterfront promenade, playground, concessions, and pedestrian paths. Later that spring the Pier 6 playground, bikeway/walkway, and dog runs opened, and in the summer of 2010 the park opened the water garden, spiral pool, boat ramp, salt marsh with a stone seating area on the area upland of Piers 1 and 2 and the interim bikeway/walkway linking Piers 1-6.



Julienne Schaer



Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc.

FACILITIES²

- Pier 1 encompasses 1,300 feet of promenade along the East River, 2.5 acres of lawns, a playground, all with sweeping views of the New York harbor, the Manhattan skyline, and the Brooklyn Bridge.
- Pier 2 will have a structure for shading and rain shelter that was adapted from original storage shed. A spiral tidal pool where Pier 2 meets the shoreline uplands provides visitors with opportunity for direct access to the water
- Pier 6 includes a 1.6 acre playground, with “swing valley” featuring long rope swings, “slide mountain” with two-story high slides, a water-play area, climbing structure, and a large sandbox, as well as three sand volleyball courts, a dog run, lawns and seasonal concessions.
- Main Street is a 4.8-acre park that features a nautically-themed playground and dog run in addition to rolling lawns and ways to walk down to the water’s edge for river views. Main Street includes a cove that is between the Brooklyn Bridge and the Manhattan Bridge on the Brooklyn shore of the East River which provides visitors access to the water, and is a rich habitat for fish, crabs, and birds of the New York Harbor Estuary.
- The Empire Fulton Ferry section of the park, opened in September 2011, and includes a refurbished lawn and promenade, the historic 1922 Jane’s Carousel within a new all-weather pavilion designed by Jean Nouvel, and a picnic grove.

- Tobacco Warehouse is a Landmark 19th century warehouse saved from demolition in 1998 and stabilized as a two story building with four walls and no roof. It currently serves as outdoor space for public and private events.

DESIGN

The designers of BBP were faced with a series of challenges but also enjoyed some natural features that lent themselves to the creation of a spectacular space. A major challenge was the physical separation of the waterfront from population centers—the piers are several blocks from most housing and the nearest subway stops, and in addition are cut off from the rest of Brooklyn by the BQE. The site is dominated by five large piers, each approximately 5 acres, with large industrial sheds that held the shipping facilities. Many of these structures, and parts of the piers themselves, were deteriorated after decades of disuse and neglect. In fact, the 19th century shed on pier 4 collapsed in a storm in winter 2010.

On the other hand, the space occupies 1.3 miles of waterfront that faces out onto New York Harbor with spectacular views of the Statue of Liberty and the lower Manhattan skyline. Van Valkenburgh said “it’s about the views... Until we walked out behind the sheds we didn’t understand that these were the best views in New York.” The design, he added, is about both the green space and the “blue space,” providing grass, vegetation and water that are accessible to

² Taken largely from BBP website

park patrons. In addition, the size offers advantages and opportunities for design and programming options. Each pier is large enough to provide significant park space. Van Valkenburgh notes that they were also lucky that the land designated for the park was not contaminated – it was never used for harsh industrial processes such as coal gasification. Therefore no environmental remediation was needed.

The park is viewed as a place within the city rather than an escape from it. The final design is a “collage” of different kinds of spaces and materials, busy, messy and complex, providing opportunities for many people to be involved in a broad variety of behaviors all around the park. Each pier provides the opportunity for independent programming, such as green lawns for wading and viewing (Pier 1, Pier 3), playing fields and courts (Piers 2 and 5). (Plans to connect the piers with a floating waterway were shelved because of the cost and lack of permits from New York State). The structural capacity of the piers drove aspects of the topography of the park, with heavier elements being located on the uplands and lighter landscapes on the pile supported piers.

Connection to the water is critical. This is one of the only places in New York where a park visitor can have actual contact with the bodies of water that surround the city, avoiding large bulkheads at the waterfront. Beaches, marshes, ramps for wading and boats, the waterpark and sprays – all allow and encourage people to see, touch, and enter the water.



Etienne Frossard

Connecting the park to the city was trickier. The design places wide and welcoming entries at the 3 spots where major streets touch the park (Atlantic, Old Fulton, and Main Street) with playgrounds near the entries at Old Fulton, Atlantic and Main Street for easiest access for parents and children who are likely to have walked several blocks to get to the park. The 396-foot-long Black Locust timber Squibb Park Bridge, designed by Ted Zoli, will climb 60 feet, connecting Pier 1 to the Brooklyn Heights promenade. Buses along Atlantic Avenue bring people to Pier 6 and an interim bike/jogging path connects Piers 1 and 6.

The design creates a varied topography with rolling hills, valleys, grassy meadows and marshes, broad open spaces with vistas as well as smaller intimate areas. The playgrounds carve out a distinct area in Pier 6 but fold around pathways that encourage adults without children to stroll through and beyond. Varieties of vegetation provide greenery everywhere and serve to mark boundaries.

Pier 1 kayacking



Photos by Julienne Schaeer

The west side of the park unfolds to the East River with meandering trails of crunchy stone that was designed to slow down movement and enhance the experience of moving through the varied settings.

Design elements were chosen to fit the large scale of park. The tall light poles, for instance, fit the park's scale and allow for use of fewer lights, saving energy and providing a "moonlighting" effect on broad swaths rather than lighting small points. The city has standards for fixtures and furniture (lights, benches etc.) but as Van Valkenburgh partner Matt Urbanski noted, large parks have an opportunity to be different. Here they created "elements that are easy to replace, simple and relatively inexpensive — but at the same time specific to this site" (*Davis & Schaer, 2010*). Large swaths of lawn and wetland, large boulders and paving stones also emphasize the scale of the place.

The varied views and topography frame user perspectives. From the south the park looks at the Statue of Liberty while the north end is framed by the base of the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges. The west side of the park unfolds to the East River with meandering trails of crunchy stone that was designed to slow down movement and enhance the experience of moving through the varied settings. Van Valkenburgh's design choices of landscapes and plantings reflect the coastal nature of the park, but also fit his emphasis on the user experience moving through the setting.

Top: Pier 1 summer
Bottom: Movie night in the Park



Photos by Julieanne Schaer

The designers were opportunistic in finding places to add programming. For instance, the Pier 1 gatehouse is used for a food concession. Where there are typically utility buildings to shelter electrical boxes, pipes, meters, etc., at Pier 1 they took that small structure and added some programming to it. “Suddenly it becomes a visitor’s center that can open up and display or distribute information; it’s part of the gateway to the park. The building is constructed of galvanized steel and wood timbers — common park materials. The steel is a good, cheap material for marine locations, and the wood we found on site. That architectural vocabulary becomes a motif throughout the park” (*Davis & Schaer, 2010*).

Another design challenge was dealing with the noise from the BQE that supplies a constant 80 decibel background din. A large berm is planned that will slope up toward the back of the park to block some sound and is projected to reduce noise levels to a more manageable level of 60 dbA.

Playgrounds were designed in collaboration with the Natural Learning Initiative (NLI) at North Carolina State University, experts in child development and play, led by Professor Robin Moore. Van Valkenburgh notes their philosophy that for parks to be successful, parents have to be comfortable. The play areas at Pier 6 include Swing Valley, with swinging ropes, Slide Mountain, with a thirteen-foot winding tube slide; Sandbox Village; and Water Lab, a water play space with moat, fountain, and wading pool. The spaces were organized so that parents could stay with toddlers in the central playground while still keeping an eye on older children who are more comfortable in peripheral play areas.

Sustainable Design

Adrian Benepe, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation and BBP Board member says that BBP represented “an all out effort for sustainable design... our ultimate recycled park.” Focus on minimizing environmental impacts can be seen in a number of approaches. Recycled materials were used in significant scale. Wooden benches throughout the park are made from the almost one million board

Left: Pier 6 playground, Slide Mountain
Right: Pier 6 playground



feet of long leaf yellow pine salvaged from the National Cold Storage Warehouse that was demolished for park construction. The pine was milled and benches constructed in Greenpoint Brooklyn woodshops³. Once ubiquitous in the Southeast but now nearly extinct, long leaf pine has high levels of resin that makes it highly resistant to weather and insects. Fence posts and other features are made from locally harvested Black Locust. Benepe noted that the Parks Department is watching these uses carefully as they are seeking alternatives to rare rain forest hardwoods and MVVA is studying the potential for Black Locust to be that alternative.

Granite used in the Granite Prospect overlooking the harbor was salvaged from the reconstructed Roosevelt Island Bridge while over 3000 cubic yards of granite from the recent reconstruction of the Willis Avenue Bridge in the Bronx are being used in other seating at Pier 1 and for landscaping in the Empire Fulton Ferry section of the park. A 20+ foot hill at Pier 1 (a height determined by ADA grade requirements) was built with rock taken from excavations by the Long Island Railroad.

City parks have a mandate to reduce or eliminate rain water discharge into city sewers and BBP represents the most ambitious attempt to date. Water from all over the park drains into underground tanks that are unprecedented in New York. Four tanks holding over 350,000 gallons are already in operation and the system is anticipated to provide the majority of water needs for irrigation of park plantings.

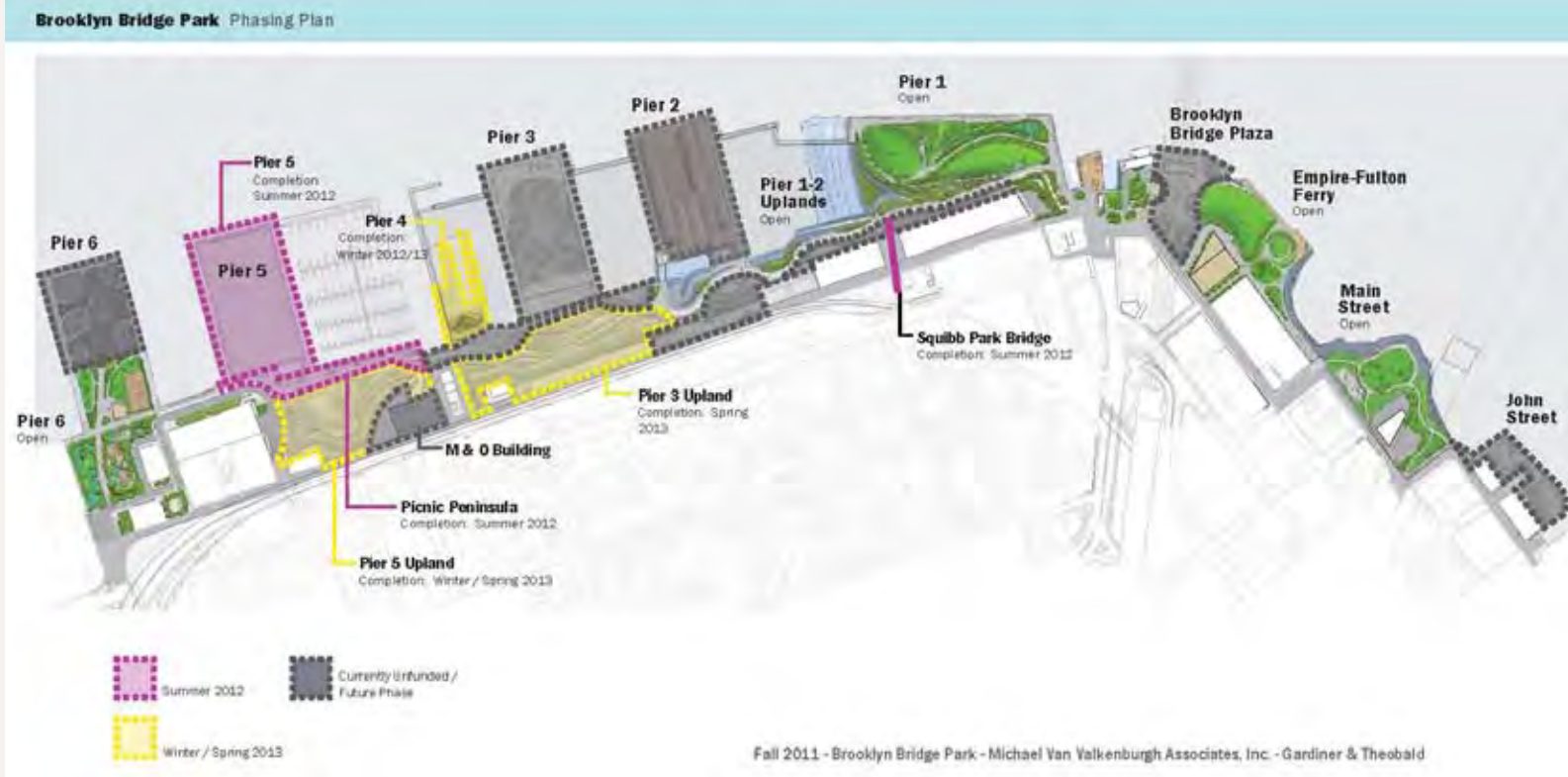
Other sustainable features include the selection of plants – mostly native – to minimize the need for irrigation, organic lawn care, soft downlighting to reduce light pollution, and electrical park vehicles supported by a solar charging station. Varieties of vegetation were also chosen to be able to survive the harsh winds and the salt spray that come off the tidal estuary.

Phasing Plan

The initial phase opened public entries and playgrounds at Piers 1 and 6, and in September 2011, the refurbished section known as Empire Fulton Ferry. These destinations include a variety of spaces on land at the water's edge, that are of varying scales, topographies and planting, with a connecting path. These spaces define the breadth of the park and support uses intended to build a constituency among parents, children and those who frequent events ranging from kayaking to evening films.

A number of other facilities are now in design and under construction to open through Spring, 2013 such as Pier 5 sport fields and picnic peninsula and the Pier 3 uplands (see Figure 1 Phasing Plan). The final elements will wait until the revenue generating development is in place so that the full operational costs don't come online before there are funds to cover them. At that point the first priorities will be construction of Pier 2, wave attenuation for the calm water harbor, completing Piers 6 and 3, and the John Street section to the north.

³ *Some of the woodworking was done in shops that were, themselves, part of a previous Bruner Award winner – The Greenpoint Design and Manufacturing Center (see http://www.brunerfoundation.org/rba/pdfs/1995/05_greenpoint)*



Etienne Frossard



Evening in the park

PROGRAMS

The park offers a vast array of educational and recreational programs for child and adult users and learners. Programs tie into the park's location and make use of its facilities, and are intended to provide opportunities for active and passive recreation, including waterfront access, to communities sorely lacking in park space.

Most public programs are organized by BBP Conservancy staff, usually in coordination with local schools and community groups. Crowds are often large – 8,000 commonly come to the evening movies – and the Conservancy says that half a million visitors have attended free public programs since the park opened. Typical free summer offerings have included:

- Evening “Syfy Movies with a View”
- Boating weekends
- Multiple fitness programs including workouts, dance, and biking
- Books Beneath the Bridge Literary Series at the Granite Prospect on Pier 1
- Children’s theatre presentations
- Seining to catch and release sea life
- Multiple classes on natural history, such as plant life, geology and birds
- Live performances representing cultures from around New York City
- Music programs including Jazzmobile and a Metropolitan Opera recital series
- Craft programs
- Public historical and architectural



Biking in the Park

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Community partnerships are many and varied and have been integral to this story from its start. The initial idea and many early conceptualizations of the park emanated from both existing and ad hoc community groups. The BHA, an organization with a long history of effective community advocacy, was involved from the start, for positive reasons (the area is underserved by parks) and was also driven by fear of large scale development in the community's front yard. Other neighborhood associations, such as those from Cobble



Etienne Frossard



Julienne Schaefer

Hill and the Fulton Ferry neighborhoods have also been heavily involved. In the late 1980s more than 60 groups came together in the Brooklyn Bridge Park Coalition, to advocate for the Park. The Coalition was an important force in working with local representatives to obtain funding for studies on park feasibility, planning and design and in developing a set of principles that have guided planning for several decades. In 2005, when the funding and planning for the park was becoming a reality the Coalition morphed into the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy (BBPC), with a primary task of raising funds to support programming in the park.

Community input to park decisions now comes in several forms. BBP has created the Brooklyn Bridge Park Community Advisory Council to provide continual public feedback, as well as the Park Community Council, with representatives from a variety of stakeholder organizations, including the Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy. In addition, through the Conservancy's programs there are numerous relations with local public and private schools, recreational organizations (such as boating, biking), arts groups and

others who use the park's facilities for the many and various kinds of programming.

While the park is well known and overwhelmingly seen as a popular and significant asset for the area, community groups have been on different sides of several long-term and ongoing disputes that in some ways go to the heart of the parks sustainability plan. The notion of a self-sustaining park goes back to the principles that emerged from community participation, but what that means and how that is to be implemented has led to considerable disagreement. Some ad hoc groups were created around the issue of keeping housing out of the park, at least in part based on a belief that such development represents privatization of a public space, with the presumption that other funding options can be found that are less onerous (see Finances for a discussion of alternatives). The Brooklyn Heights Association (BHA), a long time advocate for the park, joined with the New York Landmarks Conservancy (NYLC) to oppose the BBP on the use of the Tobacco Warehouse, though that opposition led to several resignations from the BHA board. BHA, along with the

Left: Opera in the Park
Right: Boating at the Park

New York Landmarks Conservancy, argued successfully in court that these properties were inappropriately removed from National Park Service protection. Even those who are in the midst of these disputes, however, agree that the process of displaying and vetting plans and designs was extraordinary and extensive and that plans were altered along the way on the basis of community input.

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

There is no one person who stands out as a visionary, singularly responsible for creating the idea of this park or moving the process that made it a reality. The push for the park was, to a significant extent, generated from the within the community. Public officials at the borough, city and state levels also played significant roles as did leaders and members of civic associations.

Brooklyn Bridge Park is a public park owned and run by a not-for-profit entity – The Brooklyn Bridge Park Corporation, which is responsible for the planning, construction, maintenance and operation of the park. BBP has close ties to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, whose director is one the 17 member board of directors.

The Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy is a non-profit (501c3) organization whose mission is to “ensure the creation, adequate funding, proper maintenance, public support, and citizen enjoyment



Julienne Schaer

of Brooklyn Bridge Park through partnership with government, development of programming, and active promotion of the needs of the park and its constituents.” The Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy has a membership of more than 60 civic, community and environmental organizations.

Brooklyn Bridge Park Community Advisory Council consists of 27 members representing various park constituencies appointed by local officials and serves as the “primary forum through which the community will provide feedback and comments to the Corporation on its major initiatives and policies.”⁴ Several dozen community organizations are represented, mostly from neighborhood associations.

FUTURE PLANS

There are a number of remaining elements of the plan for which funding is in place, that are either under construction or are about to break ground.

Pier 1, summer

⁴ <http://www.brooklynbridgeparknyc.org/about-us/community-advisory-council>



- Fall 2012 Expected completion of Pier 5. This will provide active recreation facilities featuring three outdoor multi-purpose recreation fields for soccer, lacrosse, cricket, rugby, football, field hockey or softball, a picnic peninsula, along with concessions, play equipment and passive recreation park space. These artificial turf fields will be available for play day and night. Pier 5's perimeter will provide a continuous waterfront esplanade for strollers, river viewers, sports spectators, and people who want to fish."
- Fall 2012 Expected completion of Squibb Park Bridge connecting the park at Pier 1 to Brooklyn Heights.
- Summer 2012 Expected completion of Squibb Park Bridge connecting the park at Pier 1 to Brooklyn Heights.
- Fall 2013 Completion of Pier 2 and Pier 3 upland area. In addition, a separation between Pier 4 and its upland area is planned to allow a wildlife preserve area to develop.

Other elements of the park are currently unfunded and awaiting decisions on development of revenue sources for maintenance and final allocations from New York City.

- Pier 2 – will include active recreation courts (basketball, handball, and bocce) in-line skating rink, swings, picnic tables, restrooms and a small concession, and a boat ramp for non-motorized craft.
- Pier 3 – recreation lawns, naturalized plantings and picnicking at the water’s edge, a continuous waterfront esplanade, including fish cleaning stations as well as play equipment for young children.
- Pier 4 – will be planted with native species to assist its evolution as a protected habitat preserve. The deteriorating connection between the pier and shoreline will be removed. Pier 4 will be surrounded by a calm water zone for non-motorized boating. The upland park area adjacent to Pier 4 will be an accessible beach for launching various water craft.
- John Street is the section of Brooklyn Bridge Park north of the Manhattan Bridge. It will feature a sculpted lawn with a harbor view of the Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges and the East River. A pedestrian bridge will allow viewing of the tidal pool that registers the daily and annual fluctuations of the river.

FINANCES

The model for financing this park is simple and straightforward, though the efforts to bring them to fruition and the discussions which have followed have been significantly more complicated. The city and state have agreed to fund the construction of the park but have declared that the park must generate its own revenues for maintenance, operation and programs. Maintenance and operations funds are required to come from revenue producing uses that can be located on up to 20% of the land included in the site, while other programming are supported by approximately \$1 million per year of fundraising. Table 1 shows expected maintenance and operation costs at full build out – \$16 million, while Table 2 presents figures for the most recent fiscal year, both for expenses and revenue. Current expenses are entirely supported by ground leases and Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) from One Brooklyn Bridge Park, the only housing project currently open, and the \$8 million reserve fund from revenues that were accumulated before the park opened.

Table 3 shows the sites identified for revenue generating development, which represent less than half of the allowed 20% of the project area. Table 4 provides the sources and uses of capital construction. Current estimates are that the full build out of Brooklyn Bridge Park will cost a total of \$350 million in capital funds, up from the original \$150 million estimate. Currently, \$274.9 million has been allocated, of which \$185.8 million comes from the City

of New York, \$85.7 million from the Port Authority (counted as the state commitment), and a \$3.5 million gift from David Walentas (for the Empire Fulton Ferry section). An additional \$55 million that was committed by Mayor Bloomberg, is now being released following an August agreement on financing. All parties involved indicate that it's a matter of when, not if, these final segments will be funded.

Funding and development controversies

The financial ground rules noted above came first from early community-generated guidelines and were memorialized in the 2002 Memo of Understanding that established BBP. The sites for revenue producing development (Table 3), identified in the 2005 General Project Plan (GPP), make up 9% of the project area. The GPP also delineated height limits and allowable uses for those sites. While these include some restaurants and other concessions, the primary generators are from housing developments, at One Brooklyn Bridge Park (already open), John Street, Empire Stores, along Furman Street, and at Atlantic Avenue. BBPC notes that their analysis found this approach would maximize and provide stable sources of revenue while minimizing the amount of commercially developed space, concentrating on sites on the city side of the site, while protecting the view corridor from the Brooklyn Heights Promenade. In addition they argue that these developments add “vital, active urban junctions at each of the park’s three main entrances,” and bring traffic and “eyes on the street” to support an urban feel and the safety of users in the park.

TABLE 1: PROJECTED FULL-BUILD ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES

Security	\$ 2,500,000	15.60%
Maintenance	\$ 1,150,000	7.20%
Utilities	\$ 800,000	5.00%
Insurance	\$ 100,000	0.60%
Landscaping	\$ 800,000	5.00%
Admin	\$ 1,501,520	9.40%
Tech Services	\$ 400,000	2.50%
Equipment	\$ 600,000	3.70%
OTPS	\$ 250,000	1.60%
General Contingency	\$ 2,430,456	15.20%
Market Contingency	\$ 1,500,000	9.40%
Maritime Maintenance ^a	\$ 4,000,000	25.00%
Total	\$ 16,031,976	100.00%

^a presents an annual average cost over 50 years

TABLE 2: FY11 OPERATING BUDGET
(JULY 1, 2010 – JUNE 30, 2011)
BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK

Park Administration and Management	\$ 580,777
Park Maintenance and Operations	\$ 2,772,000
Security	\$ 825,000
Landscape	\$ 170,000
Sanitation	\$ 440,000
Other Technical Services	\$ 223,000
Equipment and Repairs	\$ 360,000
Utilities	\$ 150,000
Miscellaneous and Supplies	\$ 204,000
Contingency	\$ 400,000
Maritime	\$ 375,000
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 3,727,777
Support and Revenue	\$ 3,727,777
Development Revenue (<i>One Brooklyn Bridge Park rent & PILOT payments</i>)	\$ 3,727,777

The park went through an unusually detailed and thorough effort to establish maintenance and operations costs into the foreseeable future (Table 1). The largest single expense is for inspection and repair of the nearly 12,000 underwater wooden piers (attacked by marine borers (*Foderaro, 2011a*), and needing concrete cladding) amortized over 50 years. Generating revenue to meet this \$16 million expense budget is the basis of the biggest controversy surrounding the park. The BBP Corporation is convinced that housing is the only source that can provide sufficient funds without changing the nature and program of the park. Its sole source of income for current operations comes from One Brooklyn Bridge Park, a 438 unit luxury apartment complex. This site provides \$3.7 million annually in rent and PILOT fees to BBPC. This site was not originally listed as part of the park property or a potential income source. It was purchased by RAL, a private developer, from Jehovah's Witness as condominium development. Facing, ULURP (Unified Land Use Review Procedure), the daunting and protracted process required for city approval, they chose instead to give the building to BBPDC (for \$1) and rent it back at market rates. This allowed them to let BBPDC negotiate the less onerous state and city reviews for governmental operations, trimming years off of the development timetable.

Some in the community oppose housing as a means of supporting park operations because, they argue, it takes away useable park space, will block views to the harbor, and/or because it represents a change from traditional means of funding park operations through the city budget (one blogger said "I'll accept housing here when

TABLE 3: SITES FOR DEVELOPEMENT

Site Description	Allowable Use	Maximum Height (ft)	Maximum # of Floors	Maximum # of Units
John Street	Residential	170'	16	130
Empire Stores	Commercial/Retail	50-60'	4-5	n/a
PIER 1: Site A	Hotel/Residential	100'	9-10	175 Hotel/ 180 Residential
Site B	Residential	45'	4	
One Brooklyn Bridge Park	Residential	230'	14	450
PIER 6: Site A	Residential	315'	31	290
Site B	Residential	155'	15	140

TABLE 4: CAPITAL FUNDING

Sources – Currently Allocated (in thousands)

Item	Total Pre-FY11	FY11	FY12	FY13	Total
New York City Funding	\$ 105,873	\$ 13,042	\$ 4,900	\$ 62,000	\$185,815
Port Authority Funding	\$ 52,000	\$ 11,000	\$ 22,652		\$ 85,652
Fulton Ferry Park – Walentas donation	\$ 3,459				\$ 3,459
Total Sources	\$ 161,332	\$ 24,042	\$ 27,552	\$ 62,000	\$ 274,926

Uses – Phases Completed or In Progress* (in millions)

Item	Status	Cost
Pier 1	Complete	\$ 49,785,527
Pier 6, Pier 2 Spiral Pool and Greenway	Complete	\$ 52,692,012
Empire Fulton Ferry	In Progress	\$ 3,459,000
Pier 5 Pile Repairs	In Progress	\$ 13,000,000
Pier 5 Landscaping and Picnic Peninsula	In Progress	\$ 17,000,000

* Totals do not include Soft Costs or Early Works (site preparation and demolition)

high rises surround Prospect Park, Central Park...”). To address these concerns an MOU was signed in March 2010 between city officials and the two local state representatives that established a commission to study alternatives to housing for funding park maintenance. The MOU also gave these two state legislators effective veto over the Pier 6 and John Street housing site, presumably assuring that any outcome will be acceptable to the community.

The study of alternatives took as its base assumptions that funding approaches could not divert current funding sources from general city revenues and had to have similar timing and risks to the approved housing models. Alternatives studied included establishing a Park Improvement District, charging fees for recreational activities, increasing fee-based events, concessions and retail development, fund raising and parking fees. It specifically excluded from consideration potential revenue from other nearby properties owned by Jehovah’s Witnesses that are expected to come on the market soon, as a diversion of potential city revenue.

The draft study, released in February 2011, concluded that various options could generate between \$2.4 million and \$7 million of income for the Park – less than half of the funding expected to be generated by the original plans for the Pier 6 and John Street sites. Moreover, some of the options carried their own liabilities – maximizing concessions could affect the park environment and atmosphere, and charging for recreational activities potentially changes the park’s mission and program goals.

The argument was perhaps best framed by the cases made by the BBP Conservancy, on the one hand, and Community Boards 2 and 6, supported by the BBPCAC, on the other. For the Conservancy Nancy Webster writes that alternatives in the plan “will not be sufficient to replace the Pier 6 and John St. residential sites, which are expected to contribute approximately \$8.25 million in revenues per year” (*Webster, 2011*). She notes that the remaining funding from the city is at risk unless adequate revenues can be found as is provided in the proposed housing, which, she says, provides “the most park for the least development.” She is concerned about loss of momentum in park development.

Taking a different position, the local Community Boards, supported in an April 21 2011 vote by the BBP Community Advisory Council, reject the study’s initial premises and have asked the group conducting the Alternatives analysis to “aggressively study potential revenue generating ideas... involving the Watchtower properties” (*Scales, 2011*). Moreover Community Board 6 has said that until alternatives are in place any shortfalls in revenue should be covered by the BBP Corporation and city budgets, “justified by the fact that this unique location’s characteristics have already contributed to a vibrant synergy between the park, its surrounding neighborhoods, the waterfront and New York Harbor.”

Ultimately, an agreement was struck and memorialized in an August 2, 2011 Memorandum of Understanding that removed the state elected officials' veto powers and reduces the height and possible the number of housing projects at Pier 6 and John Street through a combination of additional revenue sources like concessions and parking fees, including the potential use of revenue from rezoning and sale of Jehovah's Witness-Watchtower properties to residential use before December 31, 2014 (*Foderaro, 2011b*).

Another controversy focuses on The Tobacco Warehouse in the Fulton Ferry Historic District. The Tobacco Warehouse, built in the 1870's, sits next to Empire Fulton Ferry Park, and was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. It had deteriorated in recent decades and currently is a two-storey roofless structure that is used for some public and private fee-based events. The Tobacco Warehouse and the neighboring Empire Stores were included in a 2001 National Park Service map made as part of an application for federal funds for marine restoration of Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park. This map delineated properties that were federally protected for outdoor recreation. In 2008, at the request of the city and state, the National Park Service, (NPS) removed these properties from that map saying that their inclusion had been a "correctable mistake," (*Strum, 2011*) potentially saving them from a lengthy and contentious process involved in converting a protected property. BBP has proposed leasing the site to St. Ann's Warehouse, a not-for-profit organization long identified with preservation efforts as well as high quality theatrical productions. BHA, the Fulton Ferry Landing

Association and the New York Landmarks Conservancy objected, however, saying that use of park property for private operations was not permitted under the terms of the grant and its associated map. They asked the NPS for clarification and eventually filed suit to stop the lease process. In April, 2011 the federal court ruled in support of opponents and the future of these properties is unclear, leaving St. Ann's future in limbo and, more importantly for the Brooklyn Bridge Park budget, doing the same for the adapted reuse prospects of Empire Stores (*Strum, 2011*).

Assessing Project Success

IMPACTS

- This is the largest new park in New York City in decades and the first new park in Brooklyn in over 100 years. It is in an "underparked" area of an "underparked" borough.
- This park provides important facilities for young families already living in the area, attracts more to come there, and is a destination for people all over Brooklyn.
- It has turned a decaying post industrial site into showpiece park with facilities for active and passive recreation.
- The park is by design environmentally and economically sustainable.

- The design is being used to promote sustainable methods in NYC Parks and supports excellence in design as a public park standard.
- The park clearly supports development of this area, although there are two caveats. First, because this is such a large and diverse section of the city with so much recent economic activity, it is very difficult to pinpoint the economic benefits of one development, even one this large. Second, economic development in this area is not universally seen as a social benefit. As noted above, some people supported the idea of a park as a substitute for large scale development.
- The park's Final Environmental Impact Statement (2005) states that upon full build-out the park will create 605 restaurant jobs, 424 retail jobs, 144 office jobs, 75 hotel jobs, 128 education/research and development jobs, and 94 jobs at the park itself (maintenance, operations, & administrative) for a total of 1469 jobs. In addition, it estimates that construction of the park will create the equivalent of 150 construction jobs per year of construction, over \$300 million in direct and indirect economic output with \$18 million non-property related tax revenues.
- This is considered a "statement park." It makes a statement about the value of high quality design; about capability to adopt sustainable practices on a large scale in both materials reuse and water reclamation; about the willingness of the public sector to invest in creating this kind of public infrastructure, even in difficult economic times; and about the public sector's inability to commit to long-term maintenance of these investments.



Julienne Schaer



Etienne Frossard

Top: Pier 1 Promenade
Bottom: Aerial View of Park

SUCCESS IN MEETING PROJECT GOALS

- *Transform “derelict and inaccessible vestige of New York’s industrial past” into beautiful, accessible, useable green recreation space*

The project succeeds (some national design critics say magnificently) in taking this derelict and empty space and turning it into an accessible and heavily used showpiece for the park system.

- *Return of the city’s waterfront edge to public use*

Brooklyn’s waterfront is open and available for public recreation as never before in its more than 300 year history. Formal water play areas, wetlands, boat ramps and docks make the water touchable and useable. It is heavily used. An internal park survey showed that over 30,000 visitors came to the park on summer weekend days, even when there were no major park events.

- *Create “democratic and multi-use civic space”*

This space is not, as was once feared, a playground for the nearby wealthy. With its many free programs, access by local schools, and ad hoc use by people from many Brooklyn neighborhoods this is a park that, like Central Park, is more than a local green space.

- *Adhere to “community-identified principles for redevelopment, connectivity with the adjacent neighborhoods”*

The park design and operation follows the 13 Guiding Principles developed from community meetings in early planning stages, though

some question the interpretation of these principles for housing as part of development to support operations (see discussion in Finances).

- *Incorporate sustainable practices in every aspect of the park’s planning, design, construction and operation*

The park is viewed by the Parks Department as the broadest expression of sustainable design yet (see Design). It did the common things well, in plantings and organic lawn care, and went far beyond accepted practice in finding and using recycled materials. The designers used materials, design and topography to eliminate water run-off to the river and sewers, and then went far beyond common practice to channel those waters into vast underground tanks for use in irrigation.

The park is designed to be economically sustainable, using park space for revenue to cover operational expenses and depending also upon fundraising (through the Conservancy) to address programming costs.

SELECTION COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Discussions among Selection Committee members on Brooklyn Bridge Park addressed a complex array of topics including questions regarding ownership of the park, sustainability of operation and maintenance, and accessibility of the park. All of this discussion was



Etienne Frossard

in the context of a clear admiration for the engagement of issues and the emerging success of an incomplete project.

Ownership of the public realm is a classic debate. Is the park a public amenity supported by public resources or is it a private facility supported by commercial revenues. The Selection Committee reviewed perceptions of how Central Park in New York has a reputation of being for New York natives and visitors alike, while Prospect Park in Brooklyn appears to be more associated with more local community ownership. The Committee asked the question, “Who owns Brooklyn Bridge Park?” The conclusion was that the park is both a public and private sector enterprise, and has importance both for close neighbors and visitors alike. While the implications surrounding the balance of private vs. public revenue streams was

hotly debated, the Committee concluded that both have importance in long-term sustainability. The disposition of the perimeter parcels for private investment in a way that interferes with the full enjoyment of the park are seen by some as selling out the public realm, and by others as a reasonable way private property interests to support the public interest. The Committee found no clear moral high ground in this discussion, but rather praise for the creative funding projected in as a method of securing the future of a major new public amenity.

The Selection Committee discussion also focused on the ability to both complete and sustain Brooklyn Bridge Park. There were open questions on what was yet to be completed and how it would be financed. There were also questions about how the financial model projected for sustainability might be adapted by other cities and towns, as the scale of the project would be difficult to replicate outside of New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, or other major urban areas. While such questions were raised, the level of public support and long term commitment to the very idea of this park left the Committee believing it was not likely to fail.

The Committee also raised questions about and expressed admiration for the approach the project took to prioritizing accessibility. The park events were free and avoided privatization. It supported multiple events even as it became so crowded that the locals opted out and made room for the tourists. Also, the park has become such a popular amenity it was increasingly true that rising property

values adjacent to the park may force out all but the wealthiest residents. There were also some concerns relating to the physical isolation of the park. It is separated by the BQE except at piers 1 and 6. The proposals for future connections across the BQE require some extraordinary infrastructure improvements, but at a cost that only the government of New York City might be able to manage. Also, the lack of parking requires access by transit, but the access points are very limited. Overall the park struggles with a tension between trying to be a place separate from the fabric of the city and one fully integrated with it.

In the final analysis the Committee praised the project for the dynamic and passionate debates among stakeholders that are bound to assure its continued success. Landscape architect Michael Van Valkenburgh considers it a life's work; he has been involved formally for fourteen years and remains very proud of both the completed work and the future plans that continue to emerge. He and many others follow the politics around its evolution, try to protect and defend its key features when threatened, and make room for the public debate still occurring.

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