

PARSONS AND PARKS: HIGHBRIDGE REIMAGINED

Washington Heights, New York City



Lobby and 'Town Square' of Recreation Center

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DATA



PROJECT DATA

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

Project Name **Parsons and Parks: Highbridge Reimagined** Location **Washington Heights, Manhattan** City **New York** State **NY**

Owner **New York City Department of Parks & Recreation**

Project Use(s) **Outdoor Pool and Recreation Center**

Project Size **22,500 sqft** Total Development Cost **\$1.35 Million**

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) **\$350,000 per year (Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center)**

Date Initiated **January 26, 2011** Percent Completed by December 1, 2014 **100%**

Project Completion Date (if appropriate) **May 5th, 2014** <http://www.nycgovparks.org/facilities/recreationcenters/MX261>
Project Website (if appropriate)

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

Application submitted by:

Name **Joel Towers** Title **Executive Dean**

Organization **Parsons The New School for Design**

Address **66 Fifth Avenue** City/State/Zip **New York, NY 10003**

Telephone **(212) 229-8950 x 4208** Fax **(212) 243 1420**

E-mail **towersj@newschool.edu** Website (if appropriate) **<http://www.newschool.edu/parsons/masters-architecture>**

Perspective Sheets:

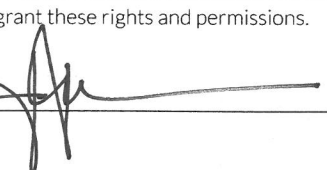
Organization	Name	E-mail
Public Agencies NYC Department of Parks & Recreation	Robert Garafola	robert.garafola@parks.nyc.org
Architect/Designer Parsons The New School for Design	Alfred Zollinger	Zollinga@newschool.edu
Developer NA		
Professional Consultant NA		
Community Group Harlem River Working Group	Chauncy Young	chauncyyoung@gmail.com
Other Council member District 10	Yadnis Rodriguez	CDeLaRosa@council.nyc.gov
Metropolis Magazine	Susan Szenasy	Susans@metropolismag.com
Parsons Alumni	John Loercher	J.C.Loercher@gmail.com
Columbia University, Clinical Psychology and Public Health	Mindy Fillilove, MD	mf29@columbia.edu

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

- Direct Mailing Direct Email Previous Selection Committee member Other (please specify)
 Online Notice Previous RBA entrant Professional Organization
 Social Media Bruner/Loeb Forum

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, and to post on the Bruner Foundation websites, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature



Date

12/9/14

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROJECT
AT-A-GLANCE



PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

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

This sheet, the Project Data sheet, and the representative photo will be sent to the Committee in advance as the *Project Overview*.

Project Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

1. Give a brief overview of the project. Approximately 500 words.

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.) Approximately 500 words.

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DESCRIPTION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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

1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project? Approximately 500 words.

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve? How many people are served by the project? Approximately 500 words.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate. Approximately 400 words.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable. Approximately 400 words.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings? Approximately 400 words.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PUBLIC AGENCY
PERSPECTIVE



PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE

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

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

Name ROBERT L. GARAFOLA Title DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR MANAGEMENT, BUDGET, AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS
 Organization NYC DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION Telephone 212.360.1302
 Address 830 5TH AVENUE, ROOM 302 City/State/ZIP NEW YORK, NY 10065
 Fax _____ E-mail robert.garafola@parks.nyc.gov

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others or any purpose whatsoever the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature

Date

12/5/2014

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g. zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statement). Approximately 400 words.

When the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (Parks) was preparing the Master Plan for the parks of Northern Manhattan, one goal was to meet the recreational and fitness needs of all of the residents within walking distance. It was clear that this lower income, primarily Hispanic neighborhood had a large shortfall in interior facilities. The Highbridge Pool building, which was designed in the 1930's, was inadequate. Every summer the gymnasium and recreation spaces had to be converted to pool locker rooms, making the interior of the building unusable for recreation.

Parks had entered into a five-year partnership with the Parsons the New School of Design and Constructed Environments, and asked them to focus their design-build program on converting the Highbridge pool house into a year-round recreation facility. We asked them to analyze the building, interview recreational staff and community members, prepare alternatives, and obtain Community Board and Landmarks Commission approvals, as well as construct it.

The Parsons students determined they could move the lockers to the pool deck, create family changing rooms, and add programmable space by enclosing the breezeway. The Community board approved the project with applause and appreciation. The Landmarks Commission approved it unanimously after the students delivered their well-illustrated and practiced presentation. Next, the students prepared construction documents, material and services lists, and sought material donations.

Parks and Parsons worked hard to find donors. Scheduling and construction became difficult; there was no way to determine when materials would arrive. Students revised the construction drawings and schedules to keep the project moving. Meanwhile they worked long summer hours constructing the project.

After the first year, Parks and Parsons found a donor for the materials and a City Council Member committed \$500,000 to enclose the breezeway. During the second year of student work, in the midst of the hot and dusty demolition phase, it became apparent that it would take another summer to convert the breezeway to a lobby. The third year, the students revised the design with community input, prepared the construction documents and performed another summer of quality construction.

Parks served as the client as well as the Engineer of Record. Our professional staff coached the students in design, and reviewed their construction documents and engineering calculations in order to certify them for the building department submission. Parks electricians and plumbers worked with the students. This partnership stimulated a new way of working.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

NYC Parks wants to meet the recreational and fitness needs of our growing population and its changing recreational preferences. We know there will never be enough money or time to address the entire city's pressing needs through

the capital projects design and construction program. We are exploring new methods of service delivery including strategic partnerships. This partnership with Parsons made it possible for us to address the public health crisis of obesity by providing year-round access to a neighborhood exercise facility.

Partnerships such as this one require Parks to do things differently. We have to play a more active role in the design than we would with consultants. We have to provide the professional certification of the construction documents. On this project, we had to work faster and prioritize so we could meet the nine-month design and construction schedule. Parks had to make use of its technical staff to do the electrical and plumbing work, despite the demands of opening the pools and keeping the park system in good repair. We had to focus our limited fundraising capacity on the project in order to provide sufficient funding for durable materials. In addition, we had to do some things that were hard for our Corporation Council to swallow, such as indemnifying the school. Changing our procedures delivered a project at less than half the cost of a standard design and construction project, in the same time frame.

As the student work neared completion, we focused our limited expense budget on improving the rest of the center, including the restrooms, lighting, and alarm system. We purchased new furniture, computers and exercise equipment. We coordinated volunteer efforts to refinish floors and paint. As the opening day drew closer, more and more people in the department were asked to help make the project a success. On opening day, it was clear how many people had helped realize this functional and smart Parsons student design, and how many people had done something extra, or something in a different way in order to make a lasting improvement to an aging City facility.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE (cont)

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

Prior to Highbridge Recreation Center's re-opening on May 5th, 2014, the center was only open during the school year to children and youth under 17. The construction and upgrades to the recreational facility enabled the building to be open year-round and to serve adults. The "Splash House" locker pavilion allowed the gym and a new room for fitness equipment to stay open throughout the year. The enclosure of the breezeway provided additional community space, a multi-purpose area, and a Computer Resource Center.

Since re-opening, Highbridge has attracted a much wider range of the growing community of Washington Heights, in particular adults and seniors who previously were not able to become members. As of September 30, 2014, 218 adults and seniors, in addition to 1,073 youth, have seized the opportunity to enroll in membership at the center. Also in the first five months after reopening, average monthly visitation has increased by 66 percent over the last fiscal year that the Center was opened thanks to both expanded hours and access during the summer.

The refurbished facility enabled Parks to offer a new fitness room with the latest equipment, sports clinics, computer classes, and 12 new fitness classes. Three of the fitness classes are through Parks' Shape Up program, taught by community members who have been trained and certified by Parks. These yoga and Zumba classes are free of charge in the refurbished dance/fitness room and average 20 people per class.

The Parks department transferred an up-and-coming director to the center. He quickly expanded sports programming. The Center hosted a free basketball league in conjunction with the National Basketball Associations' *NBA Fit Clinic* where 225 children learned from former NBA player Felipe López. *Dribble, Dish, and Swish* is another clinic that will be held later this month. Major League baseball will sponsor *Pitch, Hit and Run* next spring.

The new Computer Resource Center has proven to be a valuable resource to the community, providing computers, training and internet access for people who did not previously have access to computers or the skills to use them. The staff provides computer training, assistance with online job searches, and other useful resources. These assets will help to bridge the "digital divide" for the youth and will provide technical skills that will help them succeed at school.

The improved facility and year-round operability provided an opportunity for agile and entrepreneurial staff to step up into greater responsibility. It provided a venue for community members to teach classes to other community members, and for new clinics to be offered for people of all ages, who would otherwise not have access to such a facility, let alone one that is practically free.

Parks Department Recreation Centers are a vital resource for communities across the City. With many of our neighborhoods facing gentrification, there are limited options for affordable fitness opportunities aside from existing parks facilities. With limited space available to expand, projects like this one allow for expanded use of existing facilities.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be useful to agencies like yours in other cities? Approximately 400 words.

The collaboration between NYC Parks and its staff, Parsons, its students and faculty, private businesses and strategic philanthropy, demonstrated the ability of long-term government and academic partnerships to increase services in underserved communities without large city funding.

Parsons/The New School for Design raised significant private funding from Dan Tishman for instructors and tools, and obtained a major gift from Douglas Durst to pay for materials. Students prepared a video and raised funds on Kickstarter as well as in-kind contributions, trade discounts, and other cash gifts. Together with the schools contribution, private funds amounted to almost \$1 million.

In order to complete the project, Parks employees in Capital Projects, Requirements Contracts, Marketing, Recreation, Planning, the Manhattan Borough Commissioners Office, the Northern Manhattan Parks Administrators Office, Manhattan Shops, and Five Borough Shops demonstrated extra effort and initiative, providing guidance and labor for three years. This remarkable project inspired after-hours work, volunteerism, and even some employee donations. The project is easily replicable; Parsons did it again in 2014, constructing locker pavilions for Sunset Park Recreation Center in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. This center will now be able to operate year round as well.

This project allowed Parks to increase recreational services and promote healthy lifestyles. Highbridge is now better

suited to offer healthy alternatives that will help to reduce obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

This method of work has demonstrated that coordinated public-private efforts can enable increased recreational services in underserved communities.

The Parks Department is now working to replicate the Highbridge model and hopes to obtain funds to enclose the breezeway at the Sunset Park Recreation Center in Brooklyn.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The Design Build partnership allowed us to increase the level of service in an underserved community despite not having the capital funding normally required for a project of this scope. It also allowed us to make maximum use of an existing facility rather than construct a new one in a neighborhood that has no affordable sites.

Because we supplemented the student design and construction efforts with parks staff, the project engaged more people in the agency in its implementation. This is a positive in one way because it increases people's sense of accomplishment. On the other hand, it does take them away from their normal duties, which in some cases, causes conflicting priorities. It also requires a higher level of oversight because students perform the work.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
ARCHITECT
OR DESIGNER
PERSPECTIVE



ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE

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

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

Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____ Telephone () _____

Address _____ City/State/ZIP _____

Fax () _____ E-mail _____

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc. Approximately 400 words.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design. Approximately 400 words.

ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project. Approximately 400 words.

4. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context. Approximately 400 words.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
COMMUNITY
REPRESENTATIVE
PERSPECTIVE



COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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

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

Name Chauncy Young Title Coordinator

Organization Harlem River Working Group Telephone 212-203-1171

Address 1177 Anderson Avenue Apt 4F City State ZIP Bronx New York 10452

Fax _____ E-mail chauncyyoung@gmail.com

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature  Date 12/4/14

1. How did you, or the organization you represent become involved in this project? What role did you play? Approximately 400 words.

I have served as both as the coordinator of the Harlem River Working Group and as Chairperson and the Co-Chairperson of the High Bridge Coalition, representing the nonprofit I worked at, the Highbridge Community Life Center, where I served as the director of Community Organizing. I participated in the Highbridge Park Master Plan effort, which identified the needs for improvements to the Recreation center that were carried out by the Parsons school and the Parks Department. I worked directly with the schools and community in the Highbridge Neighborhood of the Bronx, coordinating the Highbridge School Coalition, and the United Parents of Highbridge. The United Parents of Highbridge, a coalition of all the neighborhood parents, and the Highbridge School Coalition, a coalition of all the school principals, parent associations and community based organizations coordinated by through our joint organizing efforts have held neighborhood wide school art contests asking students to envision the opening of the High Bridge since 2006 and has celebrated the neighborhood and its namesake through a neighborhood fair aptly named "Celebrate Highbridge."

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? Approximately 400 words.

It was important to improve the recreational services in our neighborhood, as well as increase access to them by reopening the Highbridge.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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

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

Name Ydanis Rodriquez Title Council Member

Organization The New York City Council Telephone 917-521-2616

Address 618 W. 177th Street City State ZIP New York, NY 10033

Fax _____ E-mail _____

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.



Signature _____ Date 12/4/14

1. How did you, or the organization you represent become involved in this project? What role did you play? Approximately 400 words.

As the Council Member representing District 10, during the budget process I am often presented with the needs of the community and requests for funding those proposals. When I was approached and presented the idea for the Renovation of High Bridge Recreation Center, I thought it was a great idea that would come a long way in meeting the needs of the youth who use the pool and our park in the summer. It was a natural project for me to support and fund during the budget process. I was proud to lend my support and allocate \$500,000 to this project.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? Approximately 400 words.

Overall, the main priority for the community was for the youth who have made High Bridge Park and pool their main recreational outlet each summer and for the recreation center to be brought up to date. For years there has been an interest in engaging that group of youngsters and ensuring they had a facility that would motivate them academically as well as serve as a recreational space. The surrounding community was also interested in seeing High bridge park be more utilized. This project would accomplish those goals.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (cont.)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

I believe the project has improved the quality of life for both our parks users and residents alike. The renovation has attracted outside visitors who have in turn stimulated the local economy by making the area surrounding Highbridge a destination for them to consume products from local merchants. In addition, our youth have a high quality center for their use and enjoyment.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

The process valued community input and the Parks Department did a good job in presenting the phases of the project to the community board and the elected representatives. As is the case with most city projects, the time frame of construction was long. If I could change one thing it would be to have the project completed sooner.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
OTHER
PERSPECTIVE



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

Name Susan Szenasy Title Publisher/Editor in Chief
 Organization Metropolis magazine Telephone 212-886-2531
 Address 61 West 23rd St. City, State, ZIP NY, NY, 10010
 Fax 212-627-9988 E-mail susans@metropolismag.com

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature Susan Szenasy Date 12/2/14

1. What role did you play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

I was an interested observer, watching from the sidelines, from the inception of the project to its completion. True, I watch hundreds of projects from the sidelines. But this one stood out for me. It brought together all things that design can do at its very best. This project recognizes community needs and the importance of community participation, architecture built to serve those needs, but even more than this, it shows that teaching and learning architecture, if done the way the Parsons program was, can elevate the profession, foster lasting relationships between client and designer, show the public what architects can do. And, even more, create a sense of accomplishment and lasting pride for the students who designed, constructed, and perspired to create something of value, based on values. I watched all this like a proud parent, celebrating the goodwill, the skill, the commitment, and the conviction of all the parties—especially the Parsons students who had the defining experience of their young lives.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on your community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

Every indication says that the community's life was enriched in many different ways – from socializing to exercise, to working with digital technology – and that's just the local community. Beyond them, the Parsons Community had the opportunity to design and build for real people with real lives and needs, and, equally important, the opportunity to figure out how a real building gets put together and the work that brings it to life. Unfortunately, the practice of design-build is still rare in architecture schools, though there are legendary programs like the Rural Studio and Dan Rockhill's studio. In reality, this should be the way every future architect learns her or his profession. But the schools are hopelessly out of tune with the needs of the new the generation of architecture students who bring with them a deep interest in socially conscious and environmentally aware work, as well as the desire to make things. Fortunately for the Parsons students this process of total involvement has become the very foundation of their future practice. It's safe to call it the most important moment of their long lives of design.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

4. What do you consider to be the the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

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

Name	John Loercher	Title	
Organization		Telephone	516-314-6689
Address	247 Warren Street Apt 8	City/State/ZIP	Hudson NY 12534
Fax ()		E-mail	JC.Loercher@gmail.com

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature	<i>John Loercher</i>	Date	11/18/2014
-----------	----------------------	------	------------

1. What role did you play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

During my Thesis semester at Parsons in 2011, I was offered a position as Teacher's Assistant to the Director of The Design Workshop, Alfred Zollinger. In this role I assisted the design studio with their presentation to NYC Landmarks preservation committee, developing their submission to NYC DOB, participated in pin-ups and reviews and offered general assistance outside of normal studio hours. This position gave me the opportunity to sharpen all of the skills that I had learned the preceding year as a student.

After the semester ended and the project had been approved by the DOB and the LPC, I was offered a second teaching opportunity (post-graduation) as one of two summer instructors. Two days after I graduated, I returned to the studio at Parsons to set up our temporary office for the next 4 weeks. During these 4 weeks, I assisted the design studio in preparing a full set of Construction Documents: Drawing sets, Specifications, fabrication drawings, budgets and schedules. Our challenge was to complete two outdoor pavilions, fully equipped with plumbing and electrical, all within fifteen weeks.

Four weeks later, when we arrived on site the real hard work began. We showed up on site at 730AM five days a week (until crunch time) and did our best to keep the motivation high. My role as summer instructor shifted from teacher to construction manager and this gave me the unique opportunity to really understand the design-build model from a management standpoint. Above all, safety was my main concern and I was required to receive OSHA training to ensure our site was held to the highest of safety standards.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

The two pool pavilions at Highbridge Park came at a unique time of expansion for the community. In it's current state, the Highbridge Park Community Center was only capable of housing one season's activities at a time. It's winter activities (basketball, dance, etc) were experiencing an increase in popularity, but were forced to shut down during the pool season to make way for a massive locker room and changing station that took over the indoor spaces. To compound the issue, the Parks Department was anticipating an even larger attendance growth with the opening of the High bridge, the renovation of an old footbridge connecting the Bronx with the Harlem River shoreline in winter 2014.

Our project, "Splash House" as phase one of a multi-year project bought back all of the interior space of the rec center. Rather than the old model of funneling users through the building and out to the pool, new que lines (for men and women) were located on either side of the building, creating the dual entrances that the center always lacked. For the first time, all of the classes, workshops and after school activities were able to remain active throughout the year.

Besides the improved capacity that "Splash House" allowed, it was also an incredible upgrade to the quality of the facilities. The old changing rooms were old lockers on makeshift carts that would be rolled into the gymnasium at the start of the summer. They were beat down and no longer secure. The general aesthetic was old, weathered plywood and the experience was not comfortable. With the addition of "Splash House", the simple fact that pool-attendees could line up outside was an improvement. While waiting on line, users could play in the park and bask in the sun.

"Splash House" adds a new element of fun to the entrance of the pool that previously didn't exist. The design studio capitalized on public requirements that would otherwise be perceived as restrictive to make a unique and pleasurable entry experience. The security checkpoint has been transformed with a new security desk and large neon-green "Supergraphics" that welcome each user and the required shower is now a misting system that is fun to go through and fully integrated into the entry sequence.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

At Parsons, The Design Workshop has an exciting history of completing projects that are impressive in scope and complexity within a single summer. As students, we develop an incredible amount of personal investment and ownership in these projects as they are often some of our first built works. About five or six weeks into the summer, our reality that we had all feared became clear: we were forced to make the decision between simplifying the design and/or scope or to leave the job half-completed and allow the following year's Design Workshop to continue what we had started.

As one of the summer staff, this was a possibility that was on my mind for a long time. After construction had been delayed over two weeks, it became clear that it was time to present this to the team and allow them to weigh in. The response was unexpected: they recognized how important the project was to the community and, though disappointed, knew that the most socially responsible act was to allow the project to continue past their graduation in lieu of a massive simplification.

4. What do you consider to be the the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

The most successful part of the project was the new relationship fostered between the NYC parks department and Parsons Design Workshop. "Splash House" was the first project within what has now been a four year relationship between the two institutions. This mutually beneficial relationship provided an avenue for the Parsons students to continue the tradition of pro-bono work while in the high profile setting of NYC and provided the Parks department with low cost design and construction for projects that would otherwise be out of their budget.

The academic design-build course provides a unique setting where students are given the opportunity to see a project from the initial idea to the last detail. This creates a relationship where the designers and builders have much more than a monetary investment in the project. The success in "Splash House" is a direct result of this. Because of their deep sense of ownership over the project and their strong sense of compassion for the client and the community, the end product was enriched in a way that could not have been produced through a typical Architect - client relationship.

Ironically, the reason for the most successful part of the project is also the cause of the least successful attribute: the fact that this is primarily a student-run operation with little experience outside of the studio. Often with The Design Workshop, the biggest challenges arise out this general lack of experience.

In the case of "Splash House", the least successful aspect of the project is the specification of the exterior finishes. Now after the project has stood complete for nearly two years, the effect of weathering is beginning to show. Multiple species of wood were used for different components, all with different exterior finishes. While some of the marine-grade plywood "Ribs" remain the original color, the glulam beams and western red cedar have greyed considerably.



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

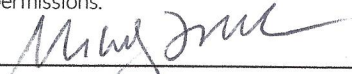
Name Mindy Fullilove, MD Title Professor, Clinical Psychiatry and Sociomedical Sciences

Organization NY Psychiatric Institute Telephone (212) 305-4850

Address 722 W. 168th Street City/State/ZIP NY NY 10032

Fax () none E-mail mf29@columbia.edu

The undersigned grants the Bruner Foundation permission to use, reproduce, or make available for reproduction or use by others, for any purpose whatsoever, the materials submitted. The applicant warrants that the applicant has full power and authority to submit the application and all attached materials and to grant these rights and permissions.

Signature  Date December 9, 2014

1. What role did you play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

I am a co-founder of an organization called CLIMB – City Life in Moving Bodies. CLIMB has the mission of increasing physical, social and civic activity in the communities of Northern Manhattan. These poor, minority communities have suffered greatly from civic disinvestment, followed by the violence epidemic of the 1990s. Among other outcomes was that the parks deteriorated and people ceased using them. We have been advocating for the revitalization of the eastern escarpment parks of Northern Manhattan. Highbridge Park has been a focus of our work because it is very large and beautiful, but in dire need of investment. Our annual “Hike the Heights” event brings upwards of a 1,000 people to the area of The Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center. Our advocacy for the parks – and our annual invitation to parks’ leaders to participate in Hike th Heights – has helped to create a groundswell of demand for improvement. The Parks Department has responded with many projects, including this outstanding project to improve the Recreation Center.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

CLIMB is concerned with increasing activity in the neighborhoods. We believe that Highbridge, as an edge park, needs to offer the public a series of exceptional destinations, aligned along Amsterdam Avenue. The recreation center is the only building in the park and occupies a commanding position overlooking Amsterdam Avenue and the Tower Terrace. It was actively used, especially in summer, but its organization and condition undermined its potential appeal and limited its strategic potential to activate the park. The Rec Center project has been exceptional because it pivots on the site’s power to energize people and excite them about their park. The number of users of the park space around the rec center has shot up since the project was inaugurated. It also gives a community pride to have a high design rec center replacing one that was worn and pathetic. It is an exciting project – the way warm sun excites molecules to move more quickly – and it energizes people to play and socialize. Its health benefits are extraordinary, because it is exciting, in this molecular sense.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

The trade offs were minor. There was some lose of use of parts of the facility during construction, which is to be expected. The gains in attractiveness, useable space and new uses for space far space far outweigh the inconvenience. I did not participate in the process.

4. What do you consider to be the the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

CLIMB is a consensus group of 50 organizations in Northern Manhattan. Our partners were uniformly thrilled with the great work of the Parsons team. CLIMB is interested in promoting health by increasing physical, social and civic activity. We want to see the whole of Highbridge Park activated. While the park as a whole can be seen as a "green gym," the Rec Center is its "agora." This dominant and imposing building needed to be a place of welcome, but its forbidding aspect and poor condition in no way supported that. The transformation of the space – the replacement of pathos with joyous clean design – puts the Rec Center on the path to host the agora. This will have a major impact on community recreation and other community activities on a year-round basis.

PARSONS AND PARKS: HIGHBRIDGE REIMAGINED

Washington Heights, New York City



Site Description

Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center

Built in 1936 through President FDR's Works Progress Administration and commissioned by Robert Moses, the Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center is located in Washington Heights (pop. 190,000) in northern Manhattan.



Center exterior prior to renovation. Aside from the addition of a breezeway in 1982, it had only received minor upgrades until the three-year partnership between Parsons and Parks began in 2011.



The Center is very popular during the summer, attracting close to 150,000 patrons during each three month season



The nearby High Bridge, which has been closed for 40 years, will reopen in 2015, giving Bronx residents direct access to the new Highbridge Park facility.

Phase 1: Splash House

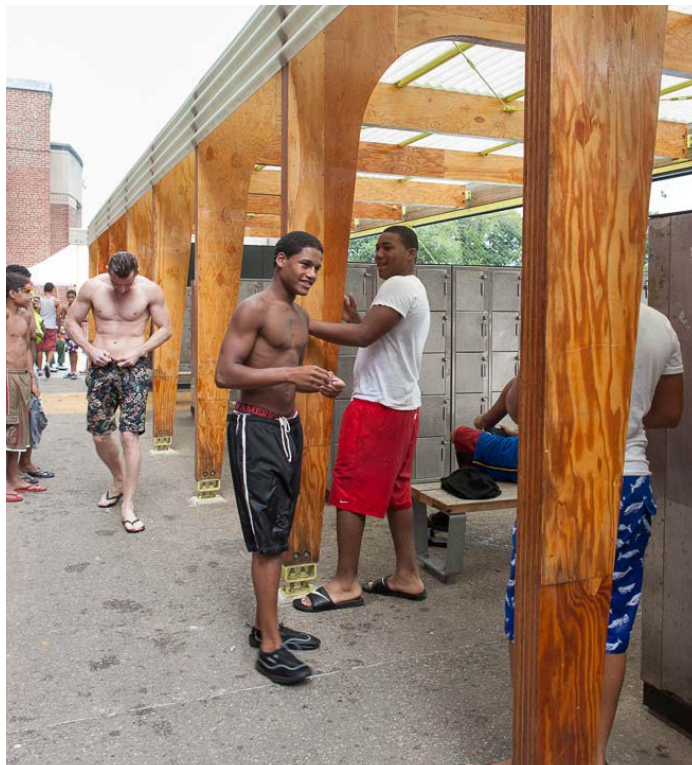
Summer 2011

Accommodating Year-Round Use

For the first phase of the project, the students completed “Splash House,” the changing pavilions that make it possible to operate the full community center year-round, instead of converting the gym to locker rooms during pool season.



The pavilions complement the Landmark features, adding a new dimension to a historic site.



There are 2 changing pavilions, one for men and one for women, both with family changing rooms



The structure is made from reclaimed cedar, plywood and translucent corrugation

PARSONS AND PARKS



When the pool is at capacity, sliding doors can close off the locker room, creating additional changing rooms when in need.



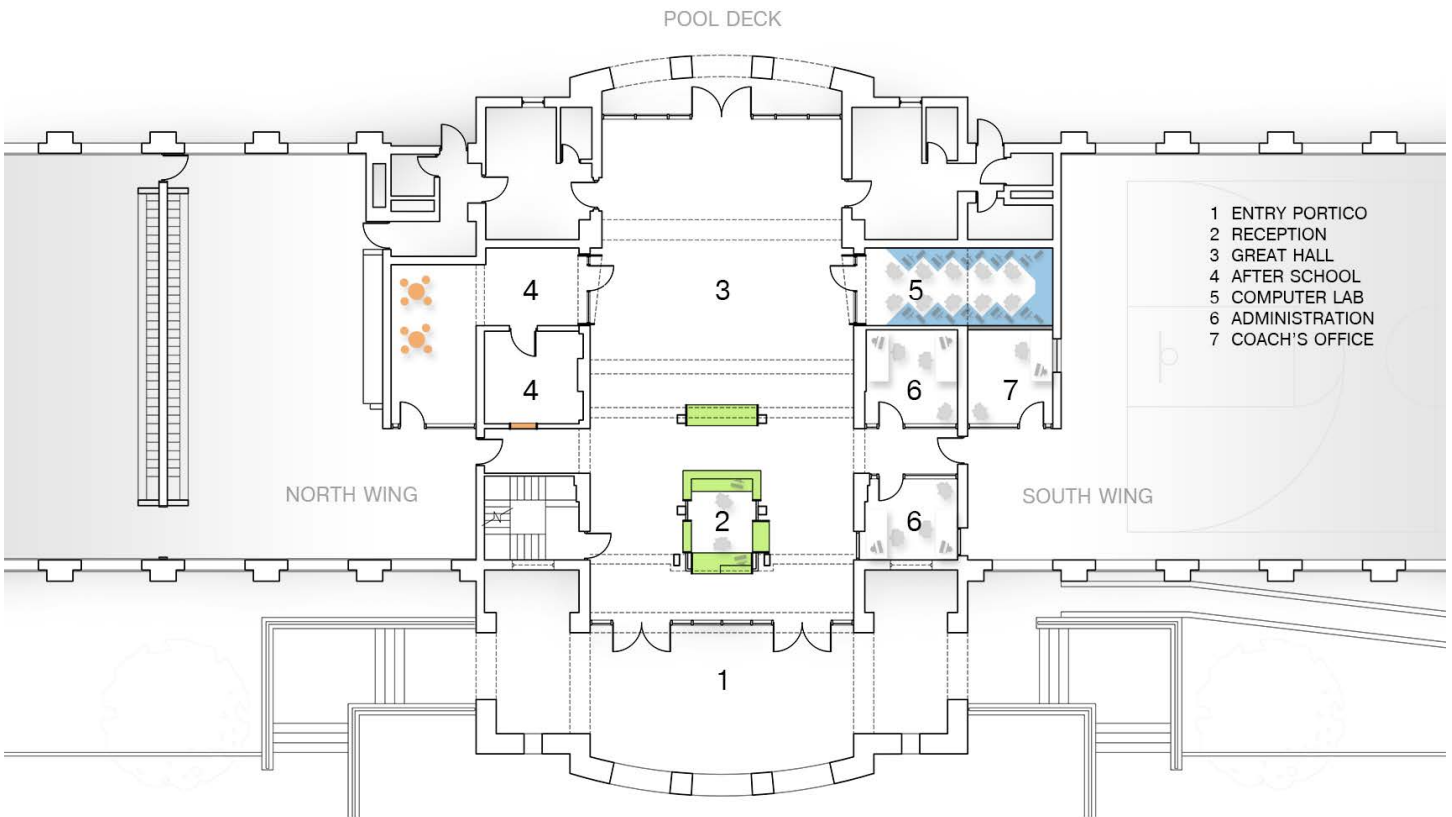
Another dual feature is the water curtain, which acts as both a shower for rinsing, but also an water fun feature for children to play under.

Creating New Uses for Old Spaces

Phase 2: Interior Renovation

Summers 2012-2013

For the second phase of the project, the students enclosed the breezeway between the two wings of the building, which provided an additional 2,500 square feet of usable space where neighborhood residents can meet in an informal setting. Subsequent renovations included a new fitness room and lockers, and upgraded flooring, lighting, and doors.



Partial First Floor Plan



East-West Section through Great Hall looking North towards After School room

PARSONS AND PARKS



Main entryway prior to renovation



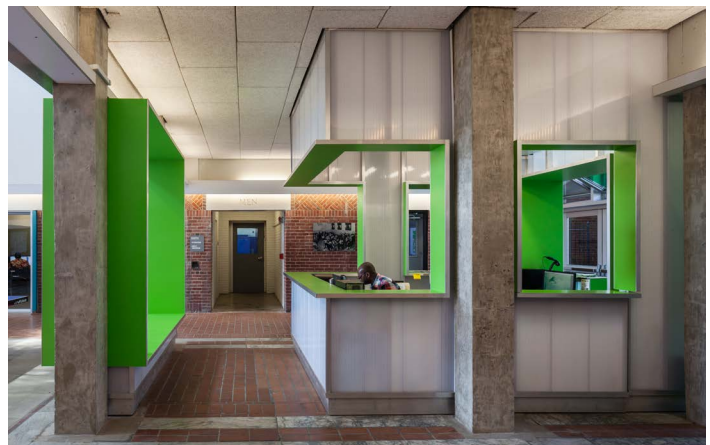
Rendering of proposed entryway with new storefront installation



Completed storefront installation with NYCParks logo



Opposite view of Great Hall looking toward reception desk and storefront installation behind



Reception desk

PARSONS AND PARKS



Interior breezeway prior to renovation



Rendering of proposed interior common area



Completed Great Hall looking towards the reception desk and mezzanine



Rendering of Great Hall and pool beyond from mezzanine level



Overhead lighting installation in progress

Design and Construction

2011-2013

Collaborating Toward Change

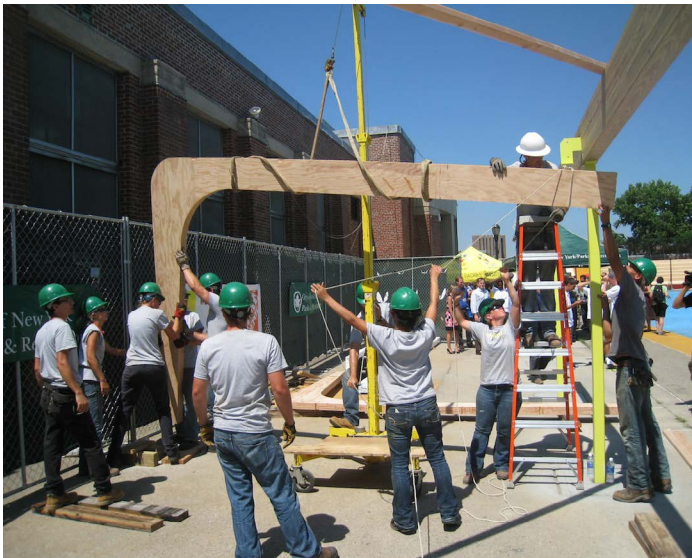
With faculty guidance, students completed the design and construction of both phases of the project, from schematics to punch list. Through the process, they were exposed to all the challenges of actualizing an adaptive reuse from start to finish, including all regulatory hurdles and the challenges related to project finance.



Cutting cedar cladding for exterior changing pavilions



Installation of support structure for mezzanine level



Installation of plywood ribs for exterior changing pavilions



Installation of Duo-Gard sheeting around the reception desk

PARSONS AND PARKS



Design Workshop studio session at Parsons



Studio review with Parks representatives



Community Board presentation



Meeting with the Landmarks Preservation Commission

KICKSTARTER Discover Start Search Projects

SPLASH HOUSE

by Design Workshop 2011 (Tara Mrowka)

232 backers
\$16,493 pledged of \$15,000 goal
0 seconds to go

Funded!
This project was successfully funded on June 1, 2011.

Kickstarter campaign



Constructing support structure for mezzanine level



Installing pop-out threshold framing with lighting cove above



Design Workshop team on site

Post-Renovation Programming

2014-ongoing

Highbridge Today

Since the reopening in May 2014, the Center is on track to having increased attendance tenfold and to reaching 40,000 visitors a year. It hosts a full schedule of adult, youth, and children's programs throughout the year.



Youth Recreation: Table Tennis and Board Games in the After School room



Open pool hours

PARSONS AND PARKS



View of flexible, multi-purpose Great Hall with entrance to After School room on the right



Another view of the Great Hall and pool from the mezzanine

PARSONS AND PARKS



Children's Instructional Basketball class. Prior to the renovation, a neighborhood where over a quarter of the population is under 17 did not have access to the Center's court for three months every year.



Dance Studio with new flooring. During the school year, the Center is able to accommodate up to 150 afterschool children daily from the immediate neighborhood and the two large schools nearby.

Highbridge Recreation Center Adult Schedule (November 10th – December 27th)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9:00am – 3:00 pm Adult Open Basketball <u>Gymnasium</u>	9:00am – 3:00 pm Adult Open Basketball <u>Gymnasium</u>	9:00am – 3:00 pm Adult Open Basketball <u>Gymnasium</u>	9:00am - 3:00 pm Adult Open Basketball <u>Gymnasium</u>	9:00am – 3:00 pm Adult Open Basketball <u>Gymnasium</u>	9:00am – 12:00 pm Adult Open Basketball <u>Gymnasium</u>
1:00pm - 3:00 pm *Resume Help and Job Search (Bilingual) <u>CRC</u>	10:00am-11:00am *Shape UP NYC: Bilingual Yoga <u>Dance Room</u>	10:00am-11:00am Senior Fitness <u>Dance Room</u>	9:00am-10:00am Small Group Personal Training <u>Fitness Center</u>	10:00am-11:00am Senior Salsa <u>Dance Room</u>	11:00am-12:00pm Shape & Tone <u>Dance Room</u>
6:30pm-8:30pm Parent and Child Instructional Capoeira <u>Dance Room</u> (ages 11 and over)	6:00pm-7:00pm Shape & Tone <u>Dance Room</u>	6:00pm-7:00pm Women's Cardio Boxing <u>Dance Room</u>	10:00am-11:00am Senior Fitness <u>Dance Room</u>	11:00am-12:00pm Adult & Senior Instructional Pickleball <u>Gymnasium</u>	<p>MEMBERSHIP 18 – 24:\$25/year 25 – 61:\$50/months \$100/year 62+: \$25/year</p> <p>* Membership not Required for Shape UP NYC classes</p>
7:00pm-8:00pm Small Group Personal Training <u>Fitness Center</u>	6:00pm - 9:00 pm Adult 5v5 Basketball League <u>Gymnasium</u>	7:00pm-8:00pm Shape & Tone <u>Dance Room</u>	11:00am-12:00pm Small Group Personal Training <u>Fitness Center</u>		
7:00pm – 9:00 pm Adult Open Basketball <u>Gymnasium</u>	7:00pm-8:00pm Women's Cardio Boxing <u>Dance Room</u>	6:00pm – 9:00 pm Adult Open Basketball <u>Gymnasium</u>	6:30pm-7:30pm & 7:30pm-8:30pm *Shape UP NYC: Zumba <u>Dance Room</u> (ages 14 and over)		
			7:00pm - 9:00 pm Adult Open Basketball <u>Gymnasium</u>		



NYC Parks

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday – Friday:
9:00am – 9:00pm
Saturday:
9:00am – 5:00pm

LOCATION

2031 Amsterdam Ave corner of
173rd Street

TRANSPORTATION

A, C, and 1, to 168th Street and
walk over to 173rd and Amsterdam

CONTACT US

Telephone:
212-927-2012

Highbridge Recreation Center Youth Schedule (November 10th – December 27th)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
10:00 am - 11:30 am TODDLER IMAGINATION RECREATION <u>MULTI PURPOSE ROOM</u>	10:00 am - 11:30 am TODDLER IMAGINATION RECREATION <u>MULTI PURPOSE ROOM</u>	10:00 am - 11:30 am TODDLER IMAGINATION RECREATION <u>MULTI PURPOSE ROOM</u>	3:00 pm - 4:00 pm ARTS AND CRAFT <u>MULTI PURPOSE ROOM</u>	3:00 pm - 6:00 pm YOUTH RECREATION TABLE TENNIS / BOARD GAMES <u>LOBBY</u>	9:00 am - 4:00 pm YOUTH RECREATION TABLE TENNIS / BOARD GAMES <u>LOBBY</u>
3:00 pm - 6:00 pm YOUTH RECREATION TABLE TENNIS / BOARD GAMES <u>LOBBY</u>	3:00 pm - 4:00 pm ARTS AND CRAFT <u>MULTI PURPOSE ROOM</u>	3:00 pm - 6:00 pm YOUTH RECREATION TABLE TENNIS / BOARD GAMES <u>LOBBY</u>	3:00 pm - 6:00 pm YOUTH RECREATION TABLE TENNIS / BOARD GAMES <u>LOBBY</u>	3:00 pm - 6:00 pm YOUTH BASKETBALL LEAGUE <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	9:30 am – 10:30 pm YOUTH ATHLETIC CONDITIONING <u>LOBBY</u>
3:00 pm - 5:00 pm YOUTH OPEN BASKETBALL <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	3:00 pm - 6:00 pm YOUTH RECREATION TABLE TENNIS / BOARD GAMES <u>LOBBY</u>	3:00 pm - 4:30 pm CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTIONAL SOCCER CLINIC <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	3:00 pm - 5:00 pm CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTIONAL BASKETBALL CLINIC <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm YOUTH OPEN BASKETBALL <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm CHILDREN'S OPEN GYM <u>GYMNASIUM</u>
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm 5-5 TOURNAMENT PRACTICE <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	3:00 pm - 4:00 pm CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM HANDBALL CLINIC (14 YRS AND UNDER) <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm KIDS IN ACTION <u>DANCE ROOM</u>	5:00 pm - 7:00 pm TEEN GIRL'S OPEN VOLLEYBALL <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	1:00 pm - 2:00 pm CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTIONAL TENNIS CLINIC <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm YOUTH SMALL GROUP BASKETBALL TRAINING <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	4:00 pm – 5:00 pm KIDS IN ACTION <u>DANCE ROOM</u>	4:30 pm - 6:00 pm CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTIONAL FLOOR HOCKEY CLINIC <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	6:30 pm - 7:30 pm *SHAPE UP NYC: ZUMBA* 14+ YEARS OLD <u>DANCE ROOM</u>	2:00 pm – 5:00 pm YOUTH OPEN BASKETBALL <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm PARENT AND CHILD INSTRUCTIONAL CAPOEIRA <u>DANCE ROOM</u> (AGES 11 AND OVER)	4:00 pm - 5:00 pm CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTIONAL FLAG FOOTBALL CLINIC (14 YRS AND UNDER) <u>GYMNASIUM</u>	5:00 pm – 6:00 pm TEEN SHAPE & TONE <u>DANCE ROOM</u>	7:30 pm - 8:30 pm *SHAPE UP NYC: ZUMBA* 14+ YEARS OLD <u>DANCE ROOM</u>	<p align="center"><u>Membership Category</u></p> <p align="center">Youth – 13 year old – 17 year old Child – 6 year old – 12 year old</p>	
	5:00 pm - 6:00 pm CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTIONAL ULTIMATE FRISBEE (14 YRS AND UNDER) <u>GYMNASIUM</u>				



HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday – Friday:
9:00am – 9:00pm
Saturday:
9:00am – 5:00pm

LOCATION

2031 Amsterdam Ave corner of
173rd Street

TRANSPORTATION

A, C, and 1, to 168th Street and
walk over to 173rd and Amsterdam

CONTACT US

Telephone:
212-927-2012

Jun 5, 2012

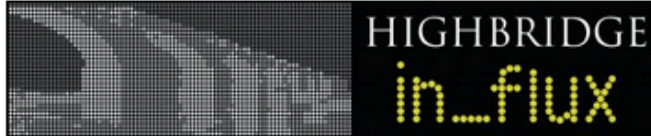
Point of View

08:00 AM

THE METROPOLIS BLOG

Community Involvement

aObonaga



We spent a semester designing—and redesigning—our project for the Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center, located in the Washington Heights neighborhood of upper Manhattan. Now we're ready to build it. The only thing that remains is...more designing. We now know that making architecture requires a perpetual zoom in and zoom out of our work, in a constant dance of reexamining the relevance of each move, from several perspectives. It is at this fine-tuning stage that the design team finds itself hovering over plans and computer screens debating a handrail, among other things. This attention to detail is crucial. We know that it will pay off in the end. This summer the Parsons Design Workshop, a group of 7 grad students and 1 undergrad enrolled in The New School's architecture programs, under the leadership of director Alfred Zollinger and instructor Joel Stoer, is working on enclosing the lobby at the historic Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center. The project is part of the school's ongoing pro bono architectural and construction services to nonprofit organizations. In the process we get hands-on experience with how buildings are made and with designing a real project for a community. In this instance, we worked with the NYC Parks & Recreation Department and the City Parks Foundation to design and construct [Highbridge in flux](#). Currently the recreation center has an open-air portico. During the cold months, this requires the children in the afternoon program to put on their coats to move from one part of the facility to the other. What's more, the existing configuration of the recreation center only allows for limited programming in winter. [Splash House](#), last year's Design Workshop project, the first at the Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center, moved summer pool goers' locker rooms and changing spaces onto the pool deck. The design pulled circulation to the north and south edges of the exterior of the building. This solution allows the center's front entrance to function autonomously of the pool, and permits uninterrupted activity inside the facility. The intent of [in_flux](#) is to enclose this center space and enable year-round access to the historic center. The new space will unify the structure, breathing new life into a year-round community recreation center. This "living room" will also be the heart of the Highbridge community. Currently the recreation center has an open-air portico. During the cold months, this requires the children in the afternoon program to put on their coats to move from one part of the facility to the other. What's more, the existing configuration of the recreation center only allows for limited programming in winter. [Splash House](#), last year's Design Workshop project, the first at the Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center, moved summer pool goers' locker rooms and changing spaces onto the pool deck. The design pulled circulation to the north and south edges of the exterior of the building. This solution allows the center's front entrance to function autonomously of the pool, and permits uninterrupted activity inside the facility. The intent of [in_flux](#) is to enclose this center space and enable year-round access to the historic center. The new space will unify the structure, breathing new life into a year-round community recreation center. This "living room" will also be the heart of the Highbridge community. This past week, two students in the Design Workshop presented the project to Community Board 12, which is responsible for connecting the interests of Washington Heights' residents with municipal operations. Our design received their praise and support and unanimous approval. All along the design's fitness for the community has been paramount. We are pleased that we got this far, though a few hurdles remain. But with the Community Board's and the [Landmarks and Preservation Commission's approval](#), we are enthusiastic about embarking on the second phase of our project. In the meantime, we are [fundraising](#) for it, and letting the community know what lies ahead for the center. [Stay tuned!](#)

Amy Obonaga is enrolled in the Parson's School of Constructed Environments MArch program. She was an intern at the Van Alen Institute in New York City where she learned about architecture designed to serve the public. In the long term, she intends to fashion a career that will allow her to create architecture that successfully addresses some of the struggles that lie ahead for humanity, particularly those that relate to the future allocation of our dwindling resources.

NYC Parks and Parsons unveil new community space in NYC



Margaret Badore (@mbadore)
Design / Green Architecture
May 6, 2014

Share on Facebook



© Margaret Badore

Highbridge Park runs along the Harlem River, providing the Washington Heights neighborhood with greenery, open space and a place to exercise. The Highbridge Pool and Recreation Center was built in 1936, and aside from the addition of a breezeway in 1983, has only received minor upgrades until now.

Yesterday, a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrated the completion of renovations at the Highbridge Recreation Center. The work was done by a collaboration between NYC Parks and architecture students at Parsons over the course of the past three years. Parsons' *Design Workshop* offers free work to non-profit organizations, while giving students hands-on experience. The Highbridge Park project cost \$1.65 million, which came from both public and private funding.

Google Custom Search SEARCH

MOST POPULAR RIGHT NOW

1. Antibacterial soap ingredient triclosan now linked to liver fibrosis
2. Toyota Mirai hydrogen fuel cell vehicle: We test-drive the future!
3. Brilliant floating greenhouse sustains itself with sun & harvested rainwater (Video)
4. This micro camper sleeps two adults and can be towed by bicycle
5. This prefab sauna is absolutely extraordinary on so many levels.
6. 'Black sea devil' anglerfish filmed in its habitat for 1st time ever (video)
7. SkySMART could be a pedal powered game-changing personal rapid transit system
8. When it comes to zoning bylaws, what's a family? Does it matter?
9. We can still win the war against the single-use paper coffee cup
10. How 2 students changed the way we think about cardboard boxes



DNAinfo.com
manhattan local news

Josephine's Spa



Uptown's Only Spa Offering
4 Hands-Massage!



Gift Certificates Available | 10% off on Valentine's Day Spa Packages | Mention DNAinfo.com for Discount!

NEIGHBORHOODS TOPICS SWEEPSTAKES DEALS NYC KIDS WELLNESS MONTH

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS & INWOOD

See more: Alfred ZoMatt Besler, Bill Castro, Brad Davis, Chris Heck, Chris Wondolowski, Don Garber, Elizabeth Loris Ritter, Heath Pearce, Jack Jewsbury, Omar Bravo, Omar Cummings, Sean Franklin, Tim Ream, Ydania Rodriguez, 2301 Amsterdam Avenue, Amsterdam Avenue, Highbridge Park, Highbridge Pool, Home Depot, Major League Soccer, Parsons The New School for Design

Volunteers Build New Splash House Pavilion at Highbridge Pool

July 26, 2011 8:50pm

1 comment share print RECOMMEND

SEE MORE PHOTOS



click to see all pictures (4 photos)

SEE MORE PHOTOS

By Kareem Johnson and Carla Zanoni

DNAinfo Staff

Highbridge Pool is one step closer to having a year-round recreation center, thanks to a team of volunteers who worked in the blazing sun raising a pavilion changing area that will free up indoor space during the summer for non-pool related use.

The pool was closed until 4 p.m. Tuesday while volunteers from the community, Parsons School of Design, Home Depot and the Major League Soccer All-Stars painted, glued and stapled the wooden beams, called ribs, that will make up the Splash House, a pool-side changing area.

Members of Manchester United, Red Bull and various other Major League Soccer (MLS) players pitched in to



help drill the structure into place.

See next article in Washington Heights & Inwood

Get the BEST
THE HEIGHTS/ INWOOD
Neighborhood Newsletter! SIGN UP NOW!

Email Address Zip Code SUBMIT

I understand and agree that subscription and registration on this site constitutes agreement to the site's Terms of Use and Privacy Policy.

THE NORTHERN MANHATTAN ARTS ALLIANCE
TO CULTIVATE SUPPORT



Expanding Architecture Beyond Form and Function

How Parsons The New School for Design is redesigning its curriculum and practices to prepare students for complex design challenges of the future

BY WILLIAM R. MORRISH

Climate change, sustainability, global recession, high-speed communication, urbanization, digital technology, and social responsibility are just a few of the issues facing architects today. Preparing students to become active and engaged "citizen designers" is a common challenge for architecture schools around the world, and Parsons and its university, The New School, are no exception. We are redesigning our institutional structure, research agenda, and curriculum to focus on educating students who can produce the new knowledge necessary to shape our global urban future.

Architecture practice today is a complex set of challenges. We have a unique role to play in bringing about change in communities, and at the heart of this change is an emerging realization that the traditional design stream of form and function has been radically altered by new social and ecological demands. Architecture needs to be not just figured

outprints on a city map, but critical actors in urban systems. It needs to define and generate new values and knowledge and become a catalyst in the making of creative civil society.

Architects have never worked in isolation, but we need to get better at what we do by understanding these interconnections more deeply. The School of Constructed Environments at Parsons brings together programs in architecture, interior design, lighting design, and product design, while explicitly utilizing resources from the larger art and design school and the entire university. Students interact with fine artists, interactive designers, service designers, urban policy analysts, community organizers, anthropologists, performing artists, and many other specialists. The educational challenge is to find ways to capture the information generated through interaction, and translate it into new knowledge that will improve our capacity to solve future complex design problems.

In the coming years, Parsons will be rolling out new curricular enhancements that will reflect this philosophy. New schematics will bring together a number of disciplines to tackle complex problems like sustainability, bringing to light the many facets of the issue, from data-driven science to the impact of human behavior. We are seeking to train architects to become social entrepreneurs and to design building systems that have a larger impact on communities.

Real-world impact

One of our most successful recent examples of this interplay was the Parsons entry for the 2011 Solar Decathlon. Parsons partnered with its sister school, the Milano School for International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy at The New School, and Stevens Institute of Technology, to create a new model for sustainable, affordable housing. From the outset, we determined that the house we designed for the competition would not only be an exhibition model displayed on the National Mall in Washington, DC, but real housing for urban communities that could be replicable and scalable. (See *Design*, Spring 2011: "It Takes More Than a Village.")

Our goals were embraced by the Washington, DC, government and the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity. We won the affordability award at the competition, and the house is now home for two families in Washington. It is the first Passive House in the district, set to change environmental policies on the local and, we hope, national level. This spring we will begin another sustainability

project that focuses on wood construction, working with the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity in Philadelphia.

led by Laura Briggs, former chair of Sustainable Architecture at Parsons and founding partner of BriggsKnowles Architecture+Design, and an interdisciplinary faculty team, the Solar Decathlon project is extraordinary not only for its real-world impact, but also as a carefully orchestrated interplay among a wide range of disciplines. It brought together students and faculty in engineering, architecture, urban policy, communication design, product design, interactive design, lighting design, and fashion design - often in the same room and around the same table. It required our students to rethink their approach to design; for example, while architecture and interior design students designed elements of the house, engineering students showed them the environmental impact of their choices.

Problem-solving through partnerships

Community-focused design is nothing new at Parsons. Over a decade ago we established the Parsons Design Workshop, a design-build program for non-profit organizations. It has become a signature studio of our Master of Architecture program, and is led by Alfred Zollinger, an assistant professor at Parsons and co-principal of Mazer Practice. Students spend the spring semester collaborating on design concepts to prevent to climate, and narrowing the choices down to a final design; the summer is spent in the field, constructing the projects. The past two years we have worked with New York City Parks & Recreation to improve a recreation center and pool in Highbridge Park in Washington Heights. The primary goal of the project is to enable year-round recreation activities at the park. Previously the recreation center had to shut down in summer to provide changing and locker room facilities for pool visitors. Students designed a new locker and changing facility called "Splash House" and also renovated the recreation center.

To foster these types of partnerships, we will make community design a strong theme in our undergraduate Architectural Design and Interior Design curricula. A current example is an Interior Design studio led the past three years by architect and urbanist Gabriela Rodwin, *Titled Housing the Social*. Re-adapting Vacant Spaces, the studio aims to position interior design as a practice significant not only within the architecture realm, but also in responding to social, economic, and political issues in the city. Students focus on the



habilitation of underutilized and vacant properties and the development of new working and living spaces for low-income families, exploring alternative housing models and community spaces.

The evolution of our curriculum will also play out on our physical campus. In addition to The New School's new University Center by Madeline Orange & Merrill (see pg. 36), we are also finding ways of creating more interactive workspaces in our existing facilities, with shared resources across the disciplines. We want our physical spaces to become places of constant interaction, and are digging deep to make this goal an integral part of our teaching and practice.

William R. Morrish is a professor of Urban Ecology and former dean of the School of Constructed Environments at Parsons The New School for Design. He is a nationally recognized urban designer whose practice encompasses interdisciplinary research and educational programs exploring integrated design.

above left: The Parsons Design Workshop designed and constructed "Splash House," a new pavilion for the Highbridge Park and Recreation Center, a WPA-era building in Washington Heights.

above right: An interdisciplinary Interior Design studio, Housing the Social, reworking vacant spaces, instead of transferring a vacant building in Parkside, Queens, into a residential unit and creating space with permanent and temporary housing for homeless mothers and their children.

KICKSTARTER

Discover great projects

Start your project



BLOG HELP SIGN UP LOGIN

SPLASH HOUSE

A Design project in Washington Heights, NY by Design Workshop 2011 • send message

PROJECT HOME

UPDATES 9

BACKERS 232

COMMENTS 2



Like Chelsea Crisafulli, John Loercher and 443 others like this.



http://kck.st/b5e2T

232 BACKERS
\$16,493
PLEGGED OF \$15,000 GOAL
0 SECONDS TO GO

FUNDING SUCCESSFUL
This project successfully raised its funding goal on June 1, 2011.

PLEDGE \$1 OR MORE
21 BACKERS

MAKE A SPLASH. Every dollar counts. Be a part of making this project a reality for the Washington Heights community. Come see it yourself and take a swim!

PLEDGE \$25 OR MORE