

## **GREENPOINT 197-A COMMITTEE**

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Approved by:

### **BROOKLYN COMMUNITY BOARD ONE**

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# **GREENPOINT 197-A PLAN**

*Note: This draft is based on the Greenpoint 197-a Plan (“newspaper”). While it is identical to the newspaper in content, sections are arranged to follow the order typical of planning documents. In comparison to the newspaper, the names of a few sections have been changed and the “invitation” to the June 24, 1998 public forum has been deleted. Any additions in the original document are shown in Italics.*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
Overview .....	3
Greenpoint 197-a Plan and Community Vision.....	6
Study Area.....	8
Greenpoint Planning Process .....	8
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT: CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES	14
EXISTING CONDITIONS.....	16
Population Characteristics .....	16
Age and Gender Distribution .....	16
Diversity and Population Growth.....	17
Immigration in the 1990's.....	18
Educational Attainment.....	18
Zoning and Land Use.....	20
Greenpoint Terminal Market .....	25
Environmental Conditions .....	26
Housing .....	33
Businesses and Jobs.....	35
Community Facilities .....	36
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	38
Summary of Recommendations.....	40
Detailed Recommendations.....	43
Zoning .....	43
Environmental Protection.....	46
Waterfront Access and Open Space .....	50
Housing and Historic Preservation .....	55
Economic Development and Quality of Life.....	56
Community Facilities .....	57
Transportation and Infrastructure.....	58
Agency Service Statements.....	60
IMPLEMENTATION PROSPECTS:.....	61
Short Term Strategies .....	61
Long Range Strategies .....	62
City-wide and Regional Strategies.....	63
Potential Funding Sources.....	64
CREDITS.....	66
KEYWORDS.....	72
APPENDICES.....	74

<i>APPENDIX A: REZONING SUBAREA PROFILES</i> .....	74
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> .....	75
<i>REZONING SUBAREA 1</i> .....	77
<i>Characteristics of the area</i> .....	77
<i>Major issues and opportunities</i> .....	80
<i>Industrial profile</i> .....	80
<i>REZONING SUBAREA 2</i> .....	83
<i>Characteristics of the area</i> .....	83
<i>Major issues and opportunities</i> .....	83
<i>Industrial profile</i> .....	85
<i>REZONING SUBAREA 3</i> .....	87
<i>Characteristics of the area</i> .....	87
<i>Major issues and opportunities</i> .....	89
<i>Industrial profile</i> .....	89
<i>REZONING SUBAREA 4</i> .....	92
<i>Characteristics of the area</i> .....	92
<i>Major issues and opportunities</i> .....	92
<i>Industrial profile</i> .....	94
<i>REZONING SUBAREA 5</i> .....	95
<i>Characteristics of the area</i> .....	95
<i>Major issues and opportunities</i> .....	95
<i>REZONING SUBAREA 6</i> .....	98
<i>Characteristics of the area</i> .....	98
<i>Major issues and opportunities</i> .....	98
<i>Industrial profile</i> .....	98
<i>REZONING SUBAREA 15</i> .....	101
<i>Characteristics of the area</i> .....	101
<i>Major issues and opportunities</i> .....	102
<i>Industrial profile</i> .....	102
<i>GREENPOINT REZONING SUBAREA INDUSTRIAL PROFILE: SUMMARY CHART</i> .....	105
<i>APPENDIX B: SIC / INDUSTRY GROUP IN ZIP CODE 11222</i> .....	106
<i>APPENDIX C: GREENPOINT REZONING SUBAREA INDUSTRIAL PROFILE DATABASE</i> .....	109
<i>APPENDIX D: TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION</i> .....	137
<i>I. GREENPOINT COMMUNITY'S WATERFRONT/COMPREHENSIVE 197A-PLAN</i> .....	138
<i>II. TRAFFIC IMPACTS OF CITY USE OF TRANSFER STATIONS IN GREENPOINT</i> .....	145
<i>APPENDIX E: GREENPOINT SEWER PROBLEMS</i> .....	147
<i>APPENDIX F: LETTERS DELIVERED TO GOVERNMENT AGENCIES</i> .....	150

## **SCHEDULE OF MAPS**

<i>MAP 1: GREENPOINT CONTEXT MAP</i> .....	2
<i>MAP 2: BROOKLYN WATERFRONT 197-A PLANS</i> .....	4
<i>MAP 3: STUDY AREA</i> .....	9
<i>MAP 4: CENSUS TRACTS</i> .....	10
<i>MAP 5: ZIP CODE 11222</i> .....	11
<i>MAP 6: LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME</i> .....	19
<i>MAP 7: EXISTING ZONING</i> .....	21
<i>MAP 8: EXISTING LAND USE</i> .....	23
<i>MAP 9: FACTORIES AND WAREHOUSES</i> .....	24
<i>MAP 10: ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE SITES</i> .....	27
<i>MAP 11: WASTE TRANSFER STATIONS</i> .....	29
<i>MAP 12: TRUCK ROUTES</i> .....	30
<i>MAP 13: VEHICLES PER HOUR (AM PEAK 8-9 AM)</i> .....	31
<i>MAP 14: HOUSING UNIT DENSITY</i> .....	34
<i>MAP 15: COMMUNITY FACILITIES</i> .....	37
<i>MAP 16: GREENPOINT PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS</i> .....	39
<i>MAP 17: DCP REZONING SUBAREAS</i> .....	44
<i>MAP 18: PARKS WITH 1/4 MILE SERVICE RADII</i> .....	51
<i>MAP 19: HOUSING DEVELOPMENT TO THE WEST OF GREENPOINT</i> .....	52
<i>MAP 20: VIEW CORRIDORS</i> .....	52
<i>MAP 21: EXISTING TRANSPORTATION</i> .....	59
<i>MAP 22: REZONING SUBAREAS LAND USE</i> .....	76
<i>MAP 23: GREENPOINT PLAN - SUBAREAS 1, 2</i> .....	78
<i>MAP 24: GREENPOINT PLAN - SUBAREA 3</i> .....	88
<i>MAP 25: GREENPOINT PLAN - SUBAREAS 4 AND 5</i> .....	93
<i>MAP 26: GREENPOINT PLAN - SUBAREAS 6 AND 15</i> .....	99

## INTRODUCTION



Manhattan Avenue Looking South Towards St. Anthony's Church

Greenpoint, located in the northernmost portion of Brooklyn, earned its name from the lush greenery covering its expanse before early nineteenth century development. It lies on a peninsula jutting northwest into the East River towards Manhattan, and is bounded on the north and east by Newtown Creek, which separates Brooklyn from Queens. Greenpoint, only a short distance from the central business districts of Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan, has always maintained a distinctive small town identity. It has a history of neighbors knowing neighbors and a sense of mutual caring often not associated with communities in big cities.

Greenpoint has a variety of neighborhoods tied together by a sense of community identity and a common future. They share a vibrant and active commercial strip that reflects the diversity of Greenpoint's ethnic populations. The Manhattan Avenue commercial strip has a wide range of commercial and retail activity. Along the Avenue there are numerous places with striking views of the architectural landmarks that are dispersed throughout

the community. A thriving Historic District located at the core of the community links Greenpoint's commercial hub with its East River waterfront. Manhattan's commanding skyline can be viewed from numerous places – both from Manhattan Avenue as well as from the streets that lead from the Avenue to the river. These same streets are the finest examples of urban street development that one can find in the country. They harmoniously blend together townhouse and institutional architecture and are reminiscent of an age when design and quality were a major determinant of development. Other commercial strips, such as Nassau Avenue with its growing number of shops also add vitality to the community. Monsignor McGolrick Park, on the National Registry of Historic Places, lies in the eastern portion of Greenpoint, and with its monument to the sailors of the ironclad *Monitor*, anchors a wonderfully scaled and beautifully designed residential quarter of the community. It is intensely used and its design is reminiscent of the squares and commons of London and other world class communities. McCarren Park with its active recreational facilities and historic structures, provides a solid base for the southern boundary of the community.

As captivating as the physical environment is, Greenpoint's history, traditions, folklore and culture compete with it for attention. Few neighborhoods have contributed more to their country and their city. Long a site of shipbuilding and waterborne commerce, the neighborhood's dockyards harbored the construction of the U.S.S. Monitor -- the Union's ironclad fighting ship that turned the tide of the Civil War. Greenpoint's shipbuilding, printing, pottery, glass, iron, and other industries were staffed by generation after generation of hard-working immigrants and provided the city with one of its strongest anchors of manufacturing.



Monument to the Monitor, Monsignor

MAP 1: GREENPOINT CONTEXT MAP

Greenpoint has many families that have lived there for three or more generations. Those families sustain Greenpoint's tradition and folklore. They speak passionately about the street life. Vividly describing the many games played in the streets of Greenpoint – stickball, Johnny-on the pony, “stoop ball” and of the nights hanging out on the “stoop” or in front of the “inkies”. Tradition, culture and history are important to Greenpoint. It is the foundation upon which the community is able to integrate change and to adapt and position itself for the future. The 197-a plan builds upon Greenpoint's assets – its architecture and urban fabric, its people, its spirit and spirituality – to address the challenges and opportunities that the community faces as we enter the next Millennium.

## Overview



*Community Meeting on the Greenpoint Plan held on February 1, 1998.*

The Greenpoint “197-a Plan” emerged from over a decade of community activism in Greenpoint. It is a plan to address the future of this community, to build upon its strengths, and to eliminate the impediments to the growth of a healthy and viable community. In part, it is also a response to a series of ill-considered public and private actions. From the late fifties to today public policies have led Greenpoint's eastern sector to become a “dumping ground” for burdensome facilities. The Newtown Creek area became fair game for unplanned and ad hoc siting decisions. Such facilities as waste transfer stations began to proliferate. Outraged, energetic and determined activists from the neighborhood began filing petitions, testifying at hearings, and joining working groups and advisory committees. Residents worked to improve Greenpoint as they “adopted” decaying piers on the illegally fenced-off East River waterfront, wrote and circulated local newsletters throughout the neighborhood, and organized countless community meetings -- all for the purpose of protecting and revitalizing their community.

Ultimately, Greenpoint residents, local community organizations, business leaders, and Community Board One members began working together to devise a plan that would guide the community's future. The outcome of their efforts is a plan that recognizes the community's historic role, and its unique identity and multicultural contribution to the city, as well as the aspirations of those that live and work there.

The Plan is a blueprint for the present and future -- one that will inform, monitor, and guide city agencies about how Greenpoint can best be developed, how its problems can be redressed and its promise achieved. The plan is an invitation to the city to join with Greenpoint residents in a dialogue about how to help the community achieve its goals and how neighborhood's development can serve as a role model to other communities.

MAP 2: BROOKLYN WATERFRONT 197-A PLANS

The Greenpoint 197-a Plan offers recommendations for the entire Greenpoint community, which includes the East River, Bushwick Inlet, McCarren Park, and Newtown Creek. It includes residential areas, industrial zones and commercial strips. The Plan addresses all major aspects of Greenpoint life. It focuses on the areas demographics and labor force, housing, industrial and commercial uses, its environment, land use and zoning, its parks and open space, and the facilities, services and infrastructure it offers to the people who live and work there.

The Plan outlines the many opportunities that exist to preserve and enhance what is good and to revitalize what is weak. The major objectives listed below are aimed at strengthening and diversifying Greenpoint's economic, social, historic, and cultural base and integrating Greenpoint into the broader New York City community. They are:



*Views of the Manhattan Skyline*

- Revitalize and make publicly accessible Greenpoint's historic waterfront with its breathtaking views of Manhattan.
- Develop the natural connection between the East River waterfront and the Manhattan Avenue shopping district. This can be achieved, in part, by maintaining and enhancing the east-west streets with their magnificent view corridors that link Manhattan Avenue to the East River Waterfront.
- Clean and renew Greenpoint's environment through monitoring existing industries, eliminating the negative effects of their byproducts, and greening the neighborhood through tree planting and development of parkland and open space.
- Build upon Greenpoint's historic mixed-use character by reusing vacant buildings and land to create a mixture of residential, commercial, workshops, high performance businesses, studios and parks and open spaces.
- Foster a renaissance in Greenpoint through historic preservation and the creation of additional cultural and educational facilities. The goal is to build upon the many cultural facilities and events that serve Greenpoint's Polish, Latino, Asian and other immigrant and native born residents.
- Provide for needed senior citizen, youth and community services.
- Maintain and improve mass transit in the area and establish a transit line linking the revitalized waterfront community to existing mass transit connections in Brooklyn and Queens.
- Minimize uses that attract high volume of automobile and truck traffic, restrict, and regulate truck traffic on residential blocks.
- Re-establish the historic connection with neighborhoods to the north by rebuilding the Manhattan Avenue or "Penny Bridge" linking Long Island City to Greenpoint.

- Ensure that the Department of City Planning immediately begins the process of rezoning the six proposed Rezoning Study Areas in Greenpoint in order to achieve the objectives proposed in the Greenpoint 197-a Plan.

## *Greenpoint 197-a Plan and Community Vision*

### *Greenpoint*



*Today*

*Courtesy: Janice Lauletta*



*Tomorrow*

*Courtesy: Janice Lauletta*

When residents of Greenpoint and Williamsburg shared ideas for their waterfront in numerous workshops organized by local community groups and Community Board One over the last 10 years, they saw their neighborhoods as forming a tapestry, and a mosaic. The 197-a Plan makes active use of these ideas, and builds upon Greenpoint's enormous potential to use its community assets, such as its diverse population, location and proximity to centers of employment and culture in ways that will benefit the neighborhood and New York City.

- *A Blueprint for Action*

The Greenpoint 197-a Plan provides a blueprint for community and city action and a policy guide for the actions of city agencies in the neighborhood. It gives Greenpoint citizens a means of monitoring how closely actual developments match their vision of the community.

- *A Vision for the future*

The community envisions Greenpoint as a neighborhood with a continuous publicly accessible waterfront, restored housing stock, and revitalized commercial streets, a radically improved environment, and a high quality of life. For Greenpoint residents and those who work there, the 197-a Plan embodies a positive "vision" -- one that builds upon the community's strengths, promotes change, and helps the Greenpoint community to address and resolve problems, as well as serve as a role model for other neighborhoods.

- *A Consensus Built Within the Community*

The Greenpoint 197-a Plan identifies planning and development strategies that respond to the needs of the Greenpoint community and build on its assets. The Greenpoint Waterfront Committee, working together with local community groups and organizations, prepared the plan which reflects a consensus of different neighborhood interests. Through public forums, workshops, discussions, petitions, and local newspapers, collaboration between community-based groups, merchants, residents, manufacturers, new and old immigrants, and the young and the old began to revitalize the community by means of this local planning process. This is their plan.

To date, the benefits of the 197-a process in other parts of the City have been difficult to evaluate in part because the process is a new one. There is also a general reluctance by government to raise expectations where and when resources are limited. The Greenpoint Plan acknowledges these obstacles, but it also recognizes the enormous opportunities that can be built upon if these recommendations are implemented. The benefits are both social and economic, and result in the reduction of traffic congestion and pollution, increased productivity, increased real estate values and an enhanced quality of life.



*Polish Community Activities on the Streets of Greenpoint*



*Grassroots Initiatives: Parks Cleanup of the Greenpoint Park. Courtesy: Hispanos Unidos de Greenpoint*

In order to address the opportunities outlined here, the Greenpoint 197-a Plan has been drafted in the belief that “planning matters.” It recognizes that participatory processes build a civil society that can and will hold government accountable. Therefore, the plan will be submitted as part of the official 197-a process. But, it will also be a guideline for future community change in Greenpoint; it will complement other actions and activities of the residents of Greenpoint. It will be the basis upon which Greenpoint residents will petition the Community Board under Section 2707 of the City Charter to request that each agency prepare a statement outlining how they intend to implement the plan. We believe that in conjunction with Charter Section 2707, the 197-a Plan will be a far more potent tool, particularly with the support of the vast majority of area residents. In that context, planning will matter.

## ***Study Area***

The Greenpoint 197-a Plan study area encompasses almost the entire Greenpoint neighborhood, located in the northern section of Brooklyn. The Greenpoint neighborhood study area is bounded on the south by North 12th Street, Bayard Street, the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, and Lombardy Street, on the north and east by Newtown Creek, and on the west by the East River. For the purpose of demographic analysis, the study area was defined as per Census Tracts 499, 559, 563, 565, 567, 569, 571, 573 575, 577 579, 589, 591 and 593, which comprise most of the neighborhood planning area. In addition, a seventeen block area east of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway was added in order to make the area coterminous with Zip Code 11222, at the request of community participants and to include the Department of City Planning Rezoning Subarea 15. Where appropriate and needed, the maps were modified to reflect this change (*See Maps 3, 4 and 5*)

## ***Greenpoint Planning Process***

*For several years the Community Board One's Waterfront Committee has been working toward a comprehensive plan for the Greenpoint and Williamsburg waterfront. Community participation on the Greenpoint/Williamsburg waterfront plan began in 1989 with five open meetings facilitated by a planning firm hired by the Community Board.*

*As the Williamsburg 197 A Plan points out,*

*"These sessions informed designs for the former Brooklyn Eastern District Terminal and the Greenpoint Terminal Warehouse, the two largest underutilized waterfront sites in the district. Upon completion of the architects' plans, however, there were calls for broader community participation.*

*In February 1993, a community group, Williamsburg/Greenpoint Organized for an Open Process (WOOP) hosted a daylong workshop to further explore what people would like to see on the waterfront. This workshop served as a model for additional workshops held in South Williamsburg, The Southside, the Northside, and Greenpoint in 1995. The Department of Urban Affairs and Planning at Hunter College ran a graduate-planning studio on the waterfront concurrent with these workshops".*

*In early in 1997, for reasons cited in detail below, participants from Greenpoint decided to undertake a separate 197-a plan for their entire neighborhood. Greenpoint's 197-a plan was refined and completed over the past year with the technical assistance and resources from the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development (PICCED) and with the energy, commitment and sustained participation of members of Greenpoint's 197a Committee coordinated by Janice Lauletta . In addition to numerous meetings of the Greenpoint 197a Committee three major public forums were held between the summer of 1997 and the summer of 1998. In addition there were two meetings held with the business community hosted by the Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center and organized with the assistance of the North Brooklyn Community Development Corporation. Presentations were also made on two separate occasions at open meetings of Community Board One prior to the adoption of the recommendations by the Community Board. In addition, over 9,000 copies of the Newspaper edition [a 12 page New York Times Format] of the proposed 197a Plan were distributed door to door throughout the Greenpoint Community, in essence distributing almost one copy per household to Greenpoint residents and businesses.*

MAP 3: STUDY AREA

MAP 4: CENSUS TRACTS

MAP 5: ZIP CODE 11222

**November 10, 1997, Polish National Alliance**

*The forum was advertised in local newspapers. About 70 residents attended the forum.*

*The overview of recommendations compiled by the Greenpoint 197-a Plan Coordinator was distributed at the forum. The forum started with a brief introduction by the Coordinator and a slide show by the consultant team from the PICCED. Questions and answers followed. Issues and question brought up included: concerns over industrial areas that were zoned M3-1 for heavy industry; the need for implementation of the “fair share” siting criteria to address environmental reclamation; the need to rezone the East River waterfront for residential use; the need to strengthen existing retail corridors and promote higher quality retail; some residents brought up complaints regarding the purported lack of support by the community board.*

**February 1, 1998, Cyril and Methodius School**

*The forum was advertised in local newspapers and about 500 flyers in English, Spanish and Polish were distributed throughout the neighborhood. About 120 residents participated. The aim of the outreach was to involve the diverse groups of Greenpoint in the participatory process. A summary of recommendations in English, Spanish and Polish were distributed.*

*The forum included an introduction by the Coordinator, brief statements in Spanish and Polish by neighborhood leaders, a slide show by the PICCED’s Director, a questions and answers session, and a brief workshop with the Hispanic and the Polish groups held in their native languages. All recommendations brought up by the residents were included in the plan. Main concerns included the need for affordable housing (including affordable home ownership) and social services, in particular day care centers; the need for a space for community events organized by a local Hispanic organization; the need for a theater or a multi-purpose entertainment center for youth; improvements in quality of life in particular regarding public safety concerns related to truck traffic in the neighborhood; the need for access to the water, including recreational activities such as kayaking and small boat sailing, the need for youth programs, etc.*

**June 24, 1998, Greenpoint Saving Bank**

*Over 9,000 copies of the “newspaper edition of the plan” were distributed throughout the neighborhood. The forum attracted about 150 participants.*

*The forum started with a brief introduction by the Coordinator and a slide show by PICCED’s Director and comments by other members of the Greenpoint 197a Committee. Questions and answers followed. Major issues included the need to include “17 blocks” of Greenpoint south of the BQE (although still within the 11222 zip code area) that were initially not included in the draft Greenpoint 197-a Plan; the need to provide affordable housing; the need for youth and daycare and other community facilities, reclaiming McCarren Park pool; public transportation improvements; and environmental monitoring programs. In general, the group expressed a great deal of support for the document with the major issue being expansion of the boundaries of Greenpoint. This was resolved in part by including the remainder of the area in the Greenpoint postal zip-code. However, subsequent to this meeting others have questioned why their area was excluded from the plan. The 197a Committee felt that different people had different notions of how to draw the boundaries of Greenpoint. The Committee felt that it was*

*rational to expand the boundaries to include the remainder of Greenpoint's postal zip-code and while it did not address everyone's vision of what constituted Greenpoint it was rational, and based on sound precedent.*

***Significant Meetings:***

- 08.20.97 Met with Area Businesses at Greenpoint Manufacturing Design Center*
- 10.21.97 Greenpoint Steering Committee Meeting*
- 11.10.97 Public Meeting at the Greenpoint Polish National Alliance*
- 12.18.97 Greenpoint Steering Committee Meeting*
- 01.25.98 Hispanos Unidos de Greenpoint*
- 02.03.98 Met with Area Businesses at Greenpoint Manufacturing Design Center*
- 06.04.98 Greenpoint 197a Meeting w/ Greenpoint Coalition*
- 06.24.98 Public Meeting at Greenpoint Savings Bank*
- 08.04.98 Greenpoint Steering Committee w/ Greenpoint Coalition*
- 08.12.98 Greenpoint Steering Committee w/ Greenpoint Coalition*
- 09.03.98 Greenpoint Steering Committee w/ Greenpoint Coalition*
- 09.16.98 Presentation of Greenpoint 197a Proposal to Community One*
- 10.07.98 Community Board Follow-up Meeting*
- 10.14.98 Community Board One Approves Greenpoint 197a Plan for Submission to City Planning Department*
- 10.20.98 Waterfront Tour with City and Council Officials*
- 12.29.98 Greenpoint Steering Committee Meeting*

*Meetings with government agencies have begun in February 1999 and are scheduled through March as follows:*

- 02.22.99 Meeting with Department of City Planning, Brooklyn Office*
- 02.22.99 Meeting with Department of Parks and Recreation*
- 03.02.99 Meeting with Metropolitan Transit Authority*
- 03.04.99 Meeting with New York City Housing Preservation and Development.*
- 03.17.99 Meeting with the Department of Environmental Protection*
- 03.18.99 Meeting with the Department of Transportation*

*In addition, the Greenpoint 197a held numerous work sessions and informal meetings with area residents, community organizations and other community-based efforts in the preparation of this plan including the advisory committee for the redesign of the Greenpoint Water Pollution Control Plant.*

*The Greenpoint 197-a Plan considered in its preparation applicable policy documents, including the Ten-Year Capital Strategy, the Zoning and Planning Report, the New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, the Brooklyn borough and mayoral Strategic Policy Statements and the draft of the 197-a Plan for the Williamsburg Waterfront. Letters along with a draft of the plan were sent to all concerned government agencies for their review and comments last July, and are attached. (See Appendix F)*