

GREENPOINT & WILLIAMSBURG 197-a PLAN AND PROJECT SYNOPSIS

April 21, 2002

The Greenpoint and Williamsburg 197-a plans constitute years of research and consensus by community members on the future of the waterfront. While the plans stop short of holding legal authority, once passed by the City Planning Commission and adopted by City Council (as they were this past January), city agencies and private developers are required to consult the plans and the community when proposing projects within the boundaries of the plans.

The plans began as a single waterfront plan for Williamsburg and Greenpoint. In 1996, the Greenpoint community chose to extend recommendations to a larger area of the neighborhood. The Williamsburg Plan covers the East River waterfront from Division Avenue to North 14th Street. The Greenpoint Plan covers all of Greenpoint, from North 12th Street, as far east as the Newtown Creek, including some areas east of Meeker Avenue and west of Metropolitan Avenue. Symbolically, the plans converge at the Bushwick Inlet, where the entire Greenpoint/Williamsburg community is waging a major battle against a proposed 1,100 MW electric generating facility. Community proposals for this area have included a marina and wetlands, and a museum dedicated to the history of the Civil War battleship the USS Monitor, which was built and launched along the north side of the Inlet.

The plans' primary focus is to propose appropriate re-zoning and development of the waterfront to allow for increased public access and open space. The current M-3 zoning designation allows only heavy industry and noxious uses. The plans articulate that any built development should be of moderate density and of mixed uses, such as affordable residential and commercial space. The retention of clean, light industry is advocated in appropriate inland areas. The plans also make recommendations for better transportation to and along the waterfront, including subway, bus, pedestrian and bicycle access; increased community facilities, such as schools to accommodate new residential development; centers for youth and the elderly, a bank, library and post office; an analysis of environmental remediation; suggestions for historic preservation; and specific recommendations on plan implementation. Although almost all the waterfront land is owned privately, standard waterfront zoning requires developers of residential and light industrial facilities to provide public access to the waterfront. The plans' ultimate goal is a fully accessible waterfront promenade along the entire East River linked to adjacent areas in Brooklyn and Queens that would become a significant piece of a major New York City greenway. The Greenpoint plan recommends point access within the heavy industrial area along Newtown Creek. These plans also fit within the scope of proposals to incorporate certain sites in the community for the 2012 Summer Olympics.

Several projects which constitute the first steps in this vision are already underway: the development of the NYU/State Park on the Northside between N. 7th and N. 9th Streets on the waterfront at Kent Avenue; and a pier and promenade to be built by the New York City Economic Development Corporation in Greenpoint at West Street between Kent and Java Streets. On April 20, Governor Pataki came to this site to announce the commencement of work on this project. Both projects are expected to be open to the public within in the next two to three years. Another project for a small park at the northern end of Manhattan Avenue, overlooking Queens at the Newtown Creek, is in the final design phase. It should be completed within two years, under the supervision of the Department of Transportation and the Department of Design and Construction.

Related projects in the planning phase with various city agencies include the reconstruction of Kent Avenue and Franklin Street. DOT has initially sought the community's input on this project that should begin by 2004. The Department of City Planning, Transportation Division, and the Brooklyn Borough President's office are working on three projects, one funded, and the other two at the grant-seeking stage, which will complement this project and have the ability to implement many recommendations of the 197-a plans.

Finally, after many years of study and analysis, and spurred by the adoption of the 197-a plans, the New York City Department of City Planning has begun consulting with the community as it contemplates major re-zoning actions within the areas covered by the 197-a plans. Land uses have changed dramatically as a sharply increasing residential population has been drawn to Greenpoint-Williamsburg. The community faces a challenge as it seeks to accommodate this new population and related development pressures. Through the principles of the 197-a plans, the goal is to maintain its historic balance as an ethnically vibrant, low rise, mixed- use, mixed-income community, while creating maximum access to public open space and its spectacular waterfront.