



STUDY AREA

# HOW CAN WE REVITALIZE THE WATERFRONT’S PAST?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The East River waterfront has developed over the past 350 years as a central place in the history of New York. The City began here, and as it has grown and developed, the island has expanded into the river. In 1613 the Dutch established trading posts on Manhattan Island and subsequently developed the colony of New Amsterdam. The present location of Pearl Street in Lower Manhattan is the historic shoreline of the east side of the island. With the growth of trade in the City, additional commercial space was needed to meet the demands of the expanding maritime trade.

By the late 1600’s the City began a process of landfill to extend the island into the East River. By 1730, the eastern edge of Lower Manhattan reached Water Street and by 1780 the island extended to Front Street. South Street was the next and last extension of the infill in 1800. As the island was expanded, the shoreline “hardened” and was used as waterfront lots where the city promoted their infill in order to expand the island. This infill has resulted in the current location of the shoreline more than 3 city blocks from the original shore. As the city’s position as the premier port for trade on the east coast grew, so did the need for new piers to service the vessels coming and going out of the port. At its peak in the 1950’s there were over 40 piers in this 2-mile stretch of waterfront, today there are less than 10 remaining piers on the East River Waterfront. The introduction of steamships greatly affected the East River Waterfront by prompting the relocation of shipping piers to the deeper waters of the Hudson River.

In 1954, The FDR Drive viaduct was constructed along the East River, over South Street in order to more efficiently move traffic around the island. The placement of the viaduct above the street allowed for the efficient movement of goods underneath the highway from the piers to the City streets. By the post-war period, the only major maritime related use remaining on these piers was the Fulton Fish Market.

The East River Waterfront was soon forgotten as a place of everyday life in the City as trade moved to containerized ports in the deeper waters. The City focused on redevelopment and urban renewal projects and the East River Waterfront in Lower Manhattan became a major redevelopment site for numerous master plans over the next 45 years.



1920 - EAST RIVER - EDWIN LEVICK

# HOW CAN WE STOP PUTTING PLANS FOR THE EAST RIVER ON THE SHELF?

## 45 YEARS OF PLANNING

This 2-mile stretch of the East River Waterfront has bred a fertile ground of inventive possibilities, yet none have gone past the image board to implementation.

### *Battery Park Urban Renewal Area*

In 1959, Robert Moses proposed a 7-block urban renewal area on the east side of Lower Manhattan from Whitehall Street to Coenties Slip. This plan called for three 24-story residential buildings with over 1,200 apartments. The area was later planned as the new location for the New York Stock Exchange. The plan called for the City to use powers of Urban Renewal to acquire the properties, consolidate them by eliminating cross streets, and sell the final product to the Exchange. The owner of the property argued that the Urban Renewal designation was unnecessary given their willingness to redevelop the site for them. The court dissolved the Renewal Area under the condition that landowner develop the site according to the City's plans. When the Exchange backed out, the developer was free to use the land at will. The result is four large office buildings, built on two super-blocks, the first of which constructed was One New York Plaza.

### *World Trade Center*

In 1960, the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Association released a plan for a mixed-use office and hotel complex called the World Trade Center. The Center was sited on the East River Waterfront, bound by Fulton Street, Water Street, South Street and Old Slip. The plan called for an office and hotel structure of 50-70 stories with a 6 story international trade mart and exhibition hall and a securities exchange building. This complex was intended to diversify the Lower Manhattan market by creating a center for global commerce which would complement the increasingly global stock exchanges and banks in the area. The plan was also to create new office space without competing with the existing buildings in Lower

Manhattan. By 1962, the project was under the control of the Port Authority and the site was relocated to the west side of Lower Manhattan. The new site allowed for the project to be integrated with the Hudson & Manhattan Railroad, which the Port Authority had recently agreed to take over.

### *The Lower Manhattan Plan*

The City Planning Commission released the City's vision for Lower Manhattan in 1965 which looked to the year 2000. This plan envisioned landfill extending Lower Manhattan into both the Hudson and East Rivers in addition to the extension of streets and plazas to the waterfront. These plazas and open waterfront parks were conceived of as "windows on the water" filled with activities. The coves extended the tradition of open spaces and slips in Lower Manhattan, with apartment towers rising over bands of low-scale housing.

### *Manhattan Landing*

1972 saw the announcement by Mayor Lindsay and David Rockefeller of Manhattan Landing, a mile long 1.2 billion dollar development built over the East River. The proposed development included 6 million square feet of office space, 9,500 units of market-rate housing, a 1,000-car garage, and 400-room hotel. Substantial new open space and a park roughly the size of Washington Square were included in the plan which expanded Lower Manhattan by 88 acres of new platforms over the river. The complex financing system for the project developed by Rockefeller never materialized and the project did not go forward.

### *East River Landing*

In 1984, the City established a task force to study the potential use for the land under the East River in Lower Manhattan. The area under study called East River Landing was between the newly opened South Street Seaport and the northern extent

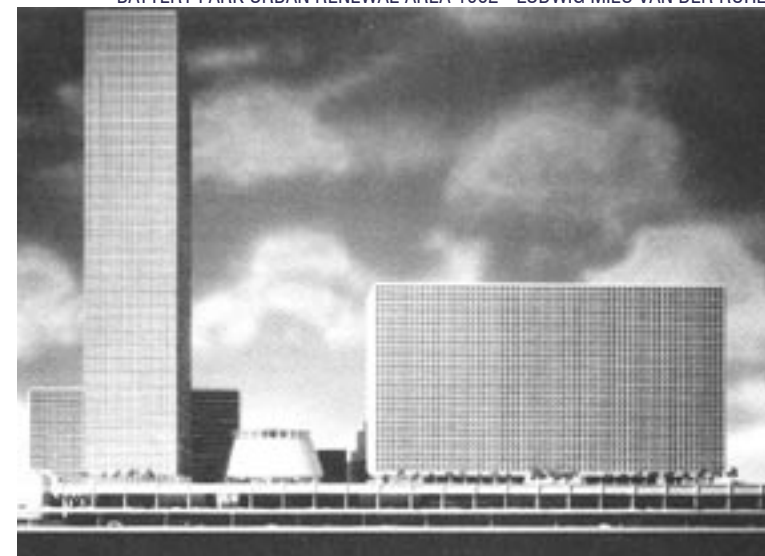
of the Downtown Heliport. The development site consisted of approximately 23 acres over the water. In 1987, the project was developed as a scaled down version of the Manhattan Landing Project. Due to the timing of the development in the late 1980's and the downturn in the financial and New York real estate markets, the plan was never realized.



BATTERY PARK URBAN RENEWAL AREA 1962 - LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE



THE LOWER MANHATTAN PLAN 1966 - WALLACE, McHARG, ROBERTS AND TODD



WORLD TRADE CENTER 1961 - RICHARD M. ADLER



## CURRENT HARBOR INITIATIVES

### Harbor District

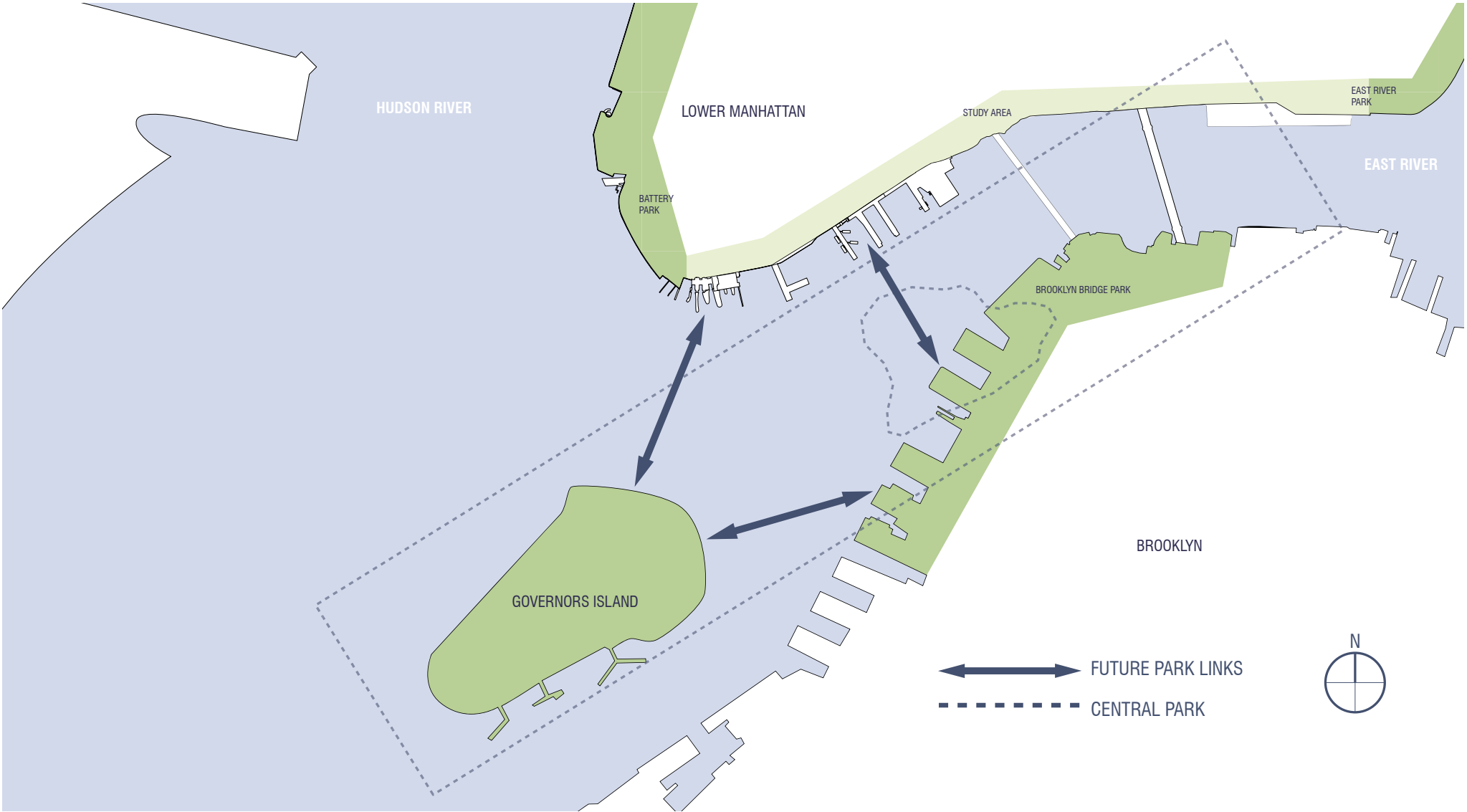
The historic position of New York Harbor, as the heart of the City, is being reinterpreted with current redevelopment efforts planned around an emerging “Harbor District” on the Lower East River. The East River Waterfront, in concert with two other major planning initiatives in the harbor; Brooklyn Bridge Park and the Governors Island Framework create a triumvirate of projects, framing the Lower East River and radically reshaping the perception of New Yorker’s image of this historic waterfront. These projects represent the State and City’s investment in creating new amenities for New York’s growing population and interest in expanding recreational and cultural opportunities on the waterfront. In addition, the Harbor District projects are being developed in an environmentally sensitive manner. The parks will not only enhance people’s enjoyment of the waterfront, but also will create sustainable developments which improve habitat, link communities and adaptively reuse and preserve resources for future generations of New Yorkers.

### Brooklyn Bridge Park

The park will be an 80-acre, waterfront park stretching 1.3-miles along the East River from the Manhattan Bridge to Atlantic Avenue. The park will reconnect Brooklyn residents to their waterfront by replacing abandoned piers, parking lots and storage sheds with a great public space with spectacular views of the New York Harbor and Lower Manhattan. The Park will offer the public unparalleled access to water, making innovative use of boardwalks, floating bridges and canals that wind throughout the water’s edge. It will also contain rolling hills, marshland, and abundant recreational opportunities. By increasing the water’s edge from 2.4 miles to 4 miles, the park’s pathways provide optimal connections to both the water and the full range of Park experiences.

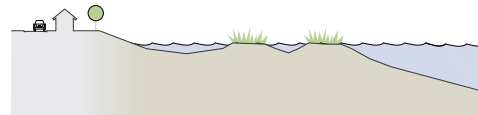
### Governors Island

The Governors Island Development Framework produced by the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (GIPEC) outlines an initial program for the reuse and development of 172 acre island in New York Harbor. The framework calls for the preservation of the 92-acre historic district, which includes over 1.5 million square feet of historic 19th century buildings. Other land use requirements include; 40 acres for public parkland, 20 acres for educational uses, 30 acres for other broadly defined public benefit uses, 22 acres as the Governor’s Island National Monument and 16 acres for a perimeter esplanade.

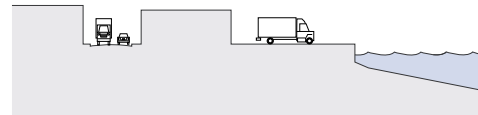


CONNECTION OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN THE EAST RIVER WATERFRONT, BROOKLYN BRIDGE PARK AND GOVERNORS ISLAND

A

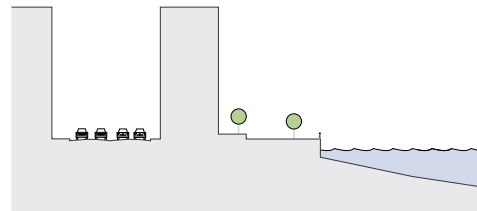


SALT MARSH + BEACH + SIDESTREETS  
JAMAICA BAY

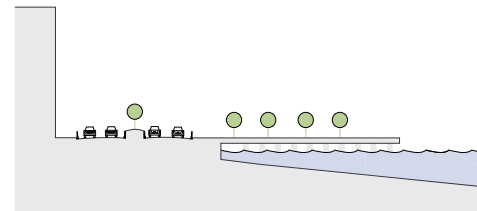


INDUSTRY + BUILDINGS + SIDESTREETS  
RED HOOK / BROOKLYN NAVY YARD / HUNTER'S POINT

B

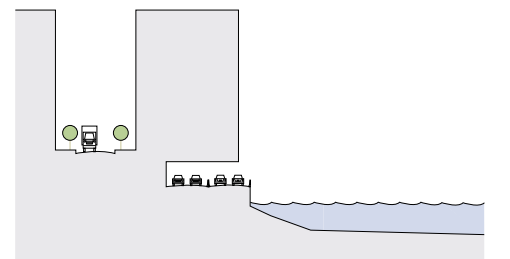


ESPLANADE + BUILDINGS + HIGHWAY AT GRADE  
BATTERY PARK CITY

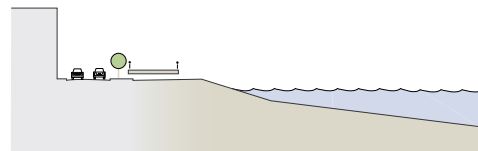


PIER + ESPLANADE + HIGHWAY AT GRADE  
HUDSON RIVER PARK

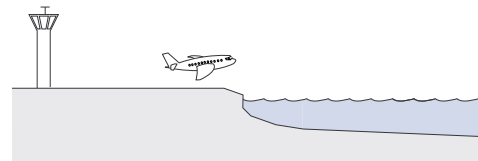
C



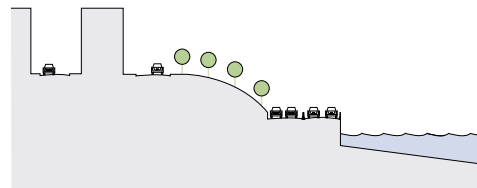
HIGHWAY + BUILDINGS ABOVE + SIDESTREETS  
UPPER EAST SIDE



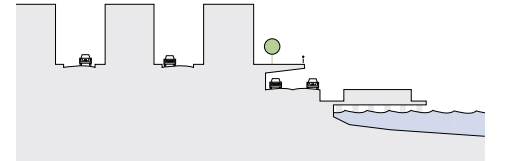
BEACH + BOARDWALK + SIDESTREETS  
CONEY ISLAND / ROCKAWAY BEACH



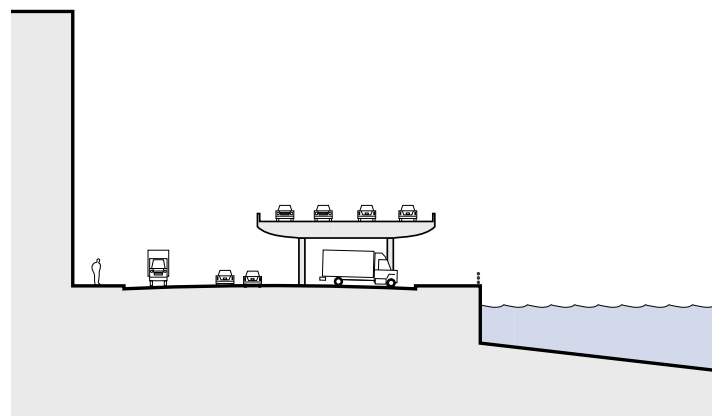
BULKHEAD + INFRASTRUCTURE  
JFK AIRPORT / LAGUARDIA AIRPORT



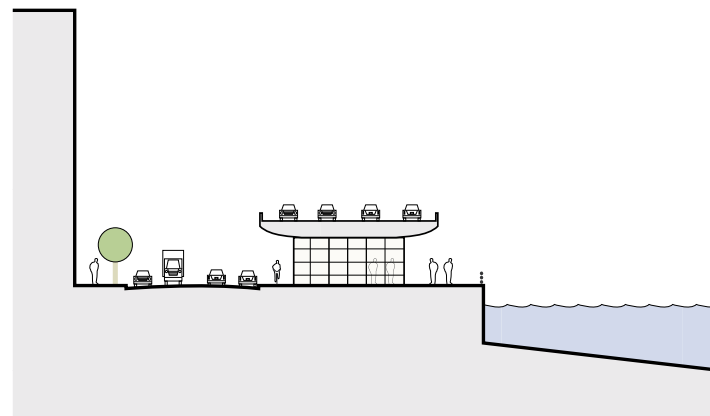
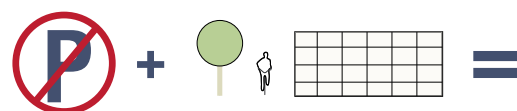
HIGHWAY + PARK + SIDESTREETS  
RIVERSIDE PARK / LIEF ERICKSON DRIVE



INDUSTRY + HIGHWAY + ESPLANADE ABOVE  
BROOKLYN HEIGHTS



EXISTING SOUTH STREET SECTION



NEW SOUTH STREET SECTION

## WATERFRONT TYPES

The density of New York provides a wide variety of waterfront types each with its own unique characteristics. Coney Island gives New York a boardwalk and beach, Battery Park City provides an esplanade along the water, Hudson River Park provides an esplanade along the water and reuses existing piers for park land. The East River Waterfront has its own unique set of criteria that separate it from the given examples due to the FDR Drive and width of the esplanade. It is a mixture of urban infrastructure, maritime activities and waterfront views. Removing some of the current blockages under the FDR Drive will open this site up and turn into another exciting waterfront type mixing old with the new.



## STUDY AREA



## LOWER MANHATTAN PLANNING INITIATIVES



LOWER MANHATTAN INITIATIVES

*Mayor’s Vision for Lower Manhattan*

New York City’s Vision for Lower Manhattan, released in December 2002, outlined a series of improvements that the public sector should make in order to revitalize Lower Manhattan. Three types of investments were identified (1) connect Lower Manhattan to the world around it; (2) build new neighborhoods; and (3) create public spaces that make Lower Manhattan one of the most appealing places in the world. The Vision document became a blueprint for a series for planning initiatives undertaken by the city and state to enhance and improve Lower Manhattan.

*Fulton Street*

The Fulton street revitalization plan is being developed to bring vitality back to this historic connection across Lower Manhattan. With the reintroduction of Fulton Street to the World Trade Center site, an historic opportunity exists to reintegrate the WTC site with the rest of Lower Manhattan. Other, important improvements along the corridor will create key gateways, making Fulton Street the primary entrance to Lower Manhattan. The new PATH terminal, in concert with the Fulton Street Transit Center alone represent over 2.5 billion dollars in critical transportation infrastructure improvements. These terminals will create a key inter-modal hub in the center of Lower Manhattan on Fulton Street. This hub will be complemented by a series of other cultural and open space destinations, creating a river to river corridor across the tip of the island.

*Greenwich Street*

With the introduction of Greenwich Street through the World Trade Center site, the neighborhood just south of Liberty Street will have renewed connectivity to the rest of Lower Manhattan. This neighborhood, a diverse collection of historic and contemporary structures is the location of one of Lower Manhattan’s major transportation links to the region. Unfortunately, the ramps to the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel also divide the neighborhood and block key connections both north south and east west through the site. The Greenwich South neighborhood study envisions a redevelopment of the 8 acre site and the creation of new residential, retail and parking amenities. New streets are planned which will more fully integrate the Greenwich South neighborhood with Battery Park City to the west, the financial district to the east and the Battery to the south.

*Financial District Streetscape*

The Financial District Streetscape and Security Project creates a more secure district for the New York Stock Exchange, while also providing a much friendlier street environment for visitors to the area. Specifically, the project targets seven intersections around Lower Manhattan for installing vehicle interdiction devices and equipment to protect the area from unwanted vehicular traffic. At the same time, the project creates a distinctive pedestrian plaza on Broad Street in front of the New York Stock Exchange, and energizes it by the placement of furniture. Long term plans will upgrade the streetscape within the Financial District by adding more distinctive paving, lighting, and street furniture. Other elements will be constructed that provide dual roles in providing both security and a public amenity such as a new fountain on Broad Street.

*Chinatown Connections*

The events of 9/11 had a major impact on the Chinatown community located less than a mile from Ground Zero. These impacts have been felt in the local businesses and tourist-related business which are the backbone of the neighborhood’s economy. The closure of Park Row in particular has had a major impact on the connectivity of Chinatown to the rest of Lower Manhattan. The Chinatown circulation study and Brooklyn Bridge anchorage study were undertaken by the LMDC to develop solutions which would increase the connections between Chinatown and Lower Manhattan. The plan envisions a reopening of Park Row to city buses which terminate at City Hall Park and provide key connections between Chinatown and the Civic Center. In addition, new pedestrian amenities such as a new ramp will connect the elevated plaza behind the Municipal building and will provide much needed, direct connections between the civic center and the heart of Chinatown, Chatham Square. Other transportation improvements planned in the study include a reconfiguration of Chatham Square to improve traffic and relieve congestion. In addition, a partial widening of St. James Place will accommodate additional volume to Water Street and the east side of Lower Manhattan.

*West Street*

The main arterial on the west side of Lower Manhattan, West Street, otherwise known as route 9A provides major vehicular connections between Lower Manhattan and the rest of Manhattan. A major corridor connecting the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel with the west side of Manhattan, West Street is vital to the region’s transportation network. Unfortunately, as a vehicular route that accommodates up to 2000 vehicles at the peak hours, West Street poses difficult urban design problems. The volume of traffic which the street must accommodate makes pedestrian crossings difficult and occasionally unsafe. The New York State Department of Transportation is undertaking an effort to improve the traffic, pedestrian and urban design of West Street. New plantings, safer crosswalks and slightly redirected traffic will all work to increase the connectivity of Battery Park City and the Waterfront to the west, with the rest of Lower Manhattan east of West Street.



MAYOR’S VISION FOR LOWER MANHATTAN

HOW CAN WE LINK THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO THE WATER?

BROKEN LINKS

The study area is defined by two distinct locations at its north and south – The Battery Maritime Building at the tip of Lower Manhattan and East River Park to the northeast. The current East River Esplanade has a narrow and severely compromised connection for pedestrians, cyclists and others to move easily and safely around the island and between these significant locations. The area in front of the Battery Maritime Building is designed for swift vehicular movement between the Battery Park Underpass and the FDR Drive. While this infrastructure is important and must be maintained, it restricts pedestrian connections from the Battery to the East River Waterfront. The entrance to East River Park is similarly narrow and inadequately designed to allow for the safe movement of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists into the Park.



EXISTING CONDITION - THE BATTERY MARITIME BUILDING



EXISTING CONDITION - UNDER THE FDR

BLOCKAGES

Currently the predominant land use along this portion of the East River is parking. Buses, cars and trucks all park under the FDR Drive and block access to the waterfront for pedestrians. Access to the waterfront from the upland is directly tied to its usability, safety and degree of amenity provided to the community. Without direct access to the waterfront, it is not usable. Given the industrial legacy of much of this waterfront, access for pedestrians was not promoted. A severe homeless problem in the 1980's prompted the city to cordon off portions of the waterfront beneath the FDR Drive with fences and concrete barriers. Outside of the fences, South Street is also used as a parking area during the day for commuter and tour buses much to the dismay of the local community.

LACK OF AMENITIES

Currently, much of the open space is used for car and bus parking. Pier 17 serves as the only attraction along the 2-mile study zone to draw people to the City's edge. Since the river was never a place for people to linger or spend time, there are no amenities which would allow for a more leisurely stay at the river's edge. Today, the east river waterfront is largely a legacy of the City's industrial past. Containerization and mechanization have largely displaced all of the City's port activities to larger, more industrialized areas of the region. As a result, there are many dilapidated, defunct piers along this waterfront. Furthermore, with the relocation of the Fulton Fish Market to a modern, and centralized facility in the Bronx, the last major industrial use will leave this waterfront.



EXISTING CONDITION - PECK SLIP



EXISTING CONDITION - PIER 42

UNDER-UTILIZED WATERFRONT

Parking, jersey barriers and trash today occupy large parts of the waterfront. Similarly, City services were placed here at the water's edge, the Department of Sanitation, Department of Transportation, Emergency Medical Services and the Fire Department of New York's facilities now occupy large areas of piers 35, 36 and 42. The site shows traces of use through its industrial past but most of these areas are not open to the public and remain un-used. Since this was an area of trade, commerce and other maritime activities, pedestrian access and open space has not been a priority in its development.





BROKEN AND ESTABLISHED LINKS BETWEEN CITY AND WATERFRONT