



The Newtown Creek Nature Walk

Designed to evoke the rich, continually evolving environmental, industrial and cultural histories of this fascinating area.

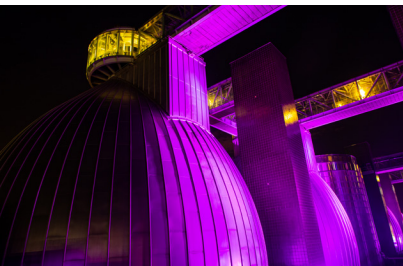


The Newtown Creek Nature Walk is a site-specific environmental artwork by George Trakas. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) commissioned the project through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs' Percent for Art Program in conjunction with the Newtown Creek Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) upgrade.

The Nature Walk wraps the waterfront edge of the wastewater facility, fronting Newtown Creek and crossing Whale Creek, forming a half-mile public esplanade. DEP completed the first phase in 2007 and later expanded the Nature Walk across Whale Creek to Kingsland Avenue. The expanded Nature Walk opened in 2021.

The Nature Walk delves deeply into the history of the creek and the surrounding Greenpoint neighborhood and explores the centrality of water to life on earth. The Nature Walk celebrates the waterway in all its forms, showcasing the intersection of nature and industry against the backdrop of the City's largest wastewater resource recovery facility, where DEP works to safeguard the environment.

Visitors can enter from the corner of Provost Street and Paidge Avenue or at the end of Kingsland Avenue. The entire Nature Walk is handicap accessible. It is open to the public daily, from sunrise to sunset, weather permitting.



Newtown Creek Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility

The Newtown Creek Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF), managed by DEP, is the largest of New York City's 14 treatment facilities. Newtown Creek WRRF serves approximately one million residents in a drainage area of more than 15,000 acres (25 square miles). It began operation in 1967 and currently treats 18 percent of the City's wastewater at a capacity of 310 million gallons per day during dry weather flow. Upgrades to the facility were completed in the early 2000s and included the Nature Walk and a Visitor Center.



George Trakas

George Trakas is an environmental sculptor with a rich vision of history and unique sense of place. His work has been shown in galleries throughout the world, including the Guggenheim and Brooklyn Museums in New York, the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy, the Louisiana Museum in Denmark, as well as documenta 6 and 8. He has received numerous awards, including two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, in 1979 and 1989, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts grant in 2017, and a Merit Medal for Sculpture from the American Academy for Arts and Letters that honored Trakas as a "master-builder and poet-guide."

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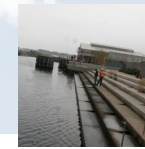
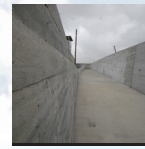
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The Newtown Creek Nature Walk



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- ⑰ Navigational Star Seats
- ⑱ Circular Shelter and Metamorphic Rock

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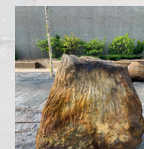
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1-Boulders at Provost Street and Paidge Avenue

When entering from Provost Street and Paidge Avenue, you will discover two large boulders at the corner. The granite stone was found a few blocks away during a street reconstruction, though it first arrived in Greenpoint during the last Ice Age. The second stone has a similar history, though it was discovered near Whitestone, Queens. Many of the stones, trees, and plants along the Nature Walk were selected to tell the story of Greenpoint's rich environmental, industrial, and cultural histories.

2-Trash "Barrels"

Throughout the Nature Walk, you will notice barrel-shaped trash receptacles designed to represent the cooperages (barrel-making shops) that flourished in this neighborhood nearly a century ago. Please be sure to dispose of all trash in these barrels to keep the Nature Walk clean and beautiful for all to enjoy.

3-Entry Gates and Fence

The nine-foot-tall entry gates are made of stainless steel and constructed in a wave shape to mimic the movement of water. It's a fitting design for a waterfront walk near a wastewater resource recovery facility that plays a key role in the journey of New York City's water – from source, to tap, to wastewater treatment, and then to the city's iconic harbor and waterways.

4-Fragrance Garden and Bridge

As you walk through the gate at the Provost Street and Paidge Avenue entrance, the path diverges: take the stairs or ramp up to the bridge or follow a small, fieldstone course beneath the bridge and discover the fragrance garden.

5-The "Vessel"

The 170-foot "vessel" has bowed walls that are orientated to mimic the way boats were built along the shore of the East River in Greenpoint during the 19th Century. These boats were nearly twice the size of this "vessel" and were built from lumber floated to Whale Creek from Nova Scotia and milled where portions of the Newtown Creek Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility currently sit.

6-The Turret

Proceeding from the "vessel" to the base of the large turret, you can turn north and catch a glimpse of Newtown Creek. Turn west and you can see an equally spectacular view: the apex of the Empire State building.

7-Seven Stone Circles

Where the path widens along Newtown Creek, pause to take in the spectacular panorama. At the edge of the creek, the artist arranged seven granite circles, in the shape of a "blooming lily," around a Honey Locust tree. On each circle, look for the etched place names used by the Lenape people, indigenous to the area. Each name is etched at a different angle, so you can see the place it identifies. The artist intended for these etchings to encourage "a meditative dance of reflection and respect for our origins."

8-Granite Steps

This set of granite slabs ascending from Newtown Creek reflect the common origin of life in the water and the sea. Scientific names are etched in the steps to trace the evolution of the Earth through geologic and biologic eras that include forms of life native to Newtown Creek and Greenpoint.

9-Watershed Bollard

Centered between two Weeping Willow trees, this 1400-pound granite table is shaped to resemble a shipping bollard, the posts used to secure ships in port. Atop the table is an etched map of Newtown Creek's watershed, before it was reshaped by landfill. Notice the small brass pin that indicates your position on the map. Pour water over the etching to see how it travels through the creek to the East River.

10-Whale Creek

As an inlet of Newtown Creek, Whale Creek is an important access point used by DEP vessels, including skimmers and sludge boats. The path along Whale Creek is richly planted with native shrubs and trees, including Swamp White Oak, Sweet Gum, Eastern Red Cedar, Sawtooth Oak and Pitch Pine. From here, you can appreciate the contrast between the tugboats, barges, and industrial sites that dot the creek, and the birds, aquatic fowl, and fish that depend on its waters.

11-Native Plants

Free-standing plaques identify indigenous plants and describe their historic, industrial, and medicinal uses. Selected for their unique characteristics, color, fragrance, and fruit, the plants also attract wildlife.

12-Whale Creek "Vessels"

These three 60-foot steel hulled "vessels," lined with locust wood planks, offer a passageway over Whale Creek. Each vessel has words etched into its gunwales (or upper edge). Vessel 1 covers four billion years of history, beginning with forms of energy and the periodic elements that make life on Earth possible, and ending with early human life. Vessel 2 continues from hunters and gatherers through the 19th Century until the development of electricity, automobiles, and airplanes. Vessel 3 features the modern era, using terms inspired by sea exploration, sources of pollution, wastewater treatment, and themes of unity.

13-Whale Creek Turret

This turret at the end of Whale Creek provides a seat for visitors to rest and reflect, while observing currents and activity in the creek, including DEP's own fleet of marine vessels.

14-The Monitor Table

Under a boat-shaped shelter you will find a large granite table with an etched plan of the U.S.S. Monitor battleship. The Monitor was built at the Continental Iron Works shipyard in Greenpoint, Brooklyn in 1862, and successfully held off the Confederate battleship, C.S.S. Virginia, in the Civil War.

15-Rain Garden

This large planted area captures stormwater runoff and uses the collected water to nurture surrounding trees and plants. Rain gardens are a type of green infrastructure designed and constructed to support natural drainage of rainwater in areas with mostly impermeable (hard, non-absorbent) surfaces.

16-Tree Fossils

Among a grove of Ginkgo trees, the artist placed five boulder-size fossils of ancient tree stumps to connect the ecological and geological history of New York State to the engineering marvel of New York City's reservoir and water distribution system. Excavated during the reconstruction of the Gilboa Dam, part of the Catskill Watershed, the fossils are 385 million years old and considered evidence of the world's oldest forest.

17-Navigational Star Seats

Near to the Kingsland Avenue entrance, you will find 12 solar-powered, circular seats that light up at night. Etched in the top of these seats are the names of navigational stars.

18-Circular Shelter and Metamorphic Rock

This large shelter features a lantern oculus, or circular window, in the roof that allows light in. In the center, you will discover a drinking fountain carved out of metamorphic rock called gneiss, the oldest quarried rock. This sample is 3.4 billion years old from Morton, MN.