

A Rather Brief
Briefing on
**ROOSEVELT
ISLAND**

October 1995

Roosevelt Island

in Future Focus

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RIFF's Mission

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) has invited you to brainstorm together for an entire day on weighty business — helping determine the future of this admirable and precedent-shattering community whose first pioneers moved in 20 years ago. Armed with a map of the island, this compendium of facts and figures, and your own experience and ingenuity, invigorated by the companionship of peers from many diverse and even unexpected fields, you are being asked to help us in crucial ways. We need your advice and insights on what our fundamental policies for the future should be. And we need your ideas for deals that will fulfill those policies. In other words, we hope that from this Investment Workshop will emerge both sound strategy and innovative tactics on these questions:

- 1** Should the master plan — particularly the goal of some 2,000 additional apartments and a park at the south end — remain our blueprint for the future?
- 2** What can we do with the several buildings/facilities that are either empty or unacceptably underused?
- 3** How can the island, which is receiving this year a state operating subsidy of \$1.1 million, become self-sustaining?

These fundamental questions cannot be considered in the abstract nor in isolation. Practicality is all — and the answers as well as the questions must relate to one another. Building more apartments makes sense only if we can figure out how to put together deals irresistible to developers, and if this would indeed be the best and most cost-effective use of our vacant land.

RIOC does not have the power to issue bonds, and it seems likely that few governmental subsidies will be available. So we can afford visions only if they are hard-nosed. We need to find new sources of operating revenue — whether direct (e.g. ground rents) or indirect (e.g. locating a facility here that will increase tram and garage revenues) or a combination of the two. Proposals should also respect and better the existing community. Ideally, of course, you will be able to craft schemes that will have it all — esthetically, socially, profitably.

Approximately one-third of the island remains undeveloped. Although we do have plans for most of this land, everything is on the table. Even the most worthy of our plans could give way to an excellent project that promises to be truly feasible.

Good hunting.

The Basics

Vital Statistics

Shaped like an elongated kayak, Roosevelt Island is 2 miles long, 800 feet at its widest point, 147 acres. That is about 1/100 the size of Manhattan, but 2 1/2 times larger than the Ile de la Cité in Paris, site of the Cathedral of Notre Dame. RI is in the East River, equidistant — about 300 yards each way — from the shores of Manhattan (flanking the Upper East Side from about 46th to 86th Streets) and Queens (its northern tip looks out on Astoria, its southern tip Long Island City).

According to the 1990 Census, 8,190 people live here in more than 3,200 apartments in 5 complexes. The first apartment building of the RI development opened in 1985.

The island is linked to Manhattan by an aerial tramway and the subway and to Queens by the subway and by the Roosevelt Island Bridge leading to 36th Avenue, Long Island City. The 2-level Queensboro Bridge flies over but does not land.

The island is not related in any way to Wards Island or Randalls Island or Governors Island or Ellis Island, with all of which it is sometimes confused by strangers and inattentive New Yorkers alike.

Public Services



RI is under the political jurisdiction of Manhattan and Community Board 8, but receives its police, sanitation, and fire services from Queens. The 2 public hospitals on the island, emergency and nursing facilities, do not provide either general or emergency care. Emergency cases are usually taken to Elmhurst Hospital in Queens. Cornell Medical Center on the Upper East Side provides free transportation from the island.

The island

is not related in any way to **Wards Island**
or **Randalls Island**
or **Governors Island**
or **Ellis Island.**

RIOC, a state-chartered public benefit corporation, manages the island, supplementing many city of New York services with its own and centralizing planning and development in a one-stop does-it-all office.

"New York's other island"

RIOC controls the island's zoning, which is exempt from the ULURP review process. Unlike its predecessor, the state Urban Development Corporation (UDC), RIOC cannot issue bonds.

The state has a 99-year lease on the island, which will expire in 2068. Ownership will then revert to the city. This ownership refers only to the land. The apartment complexes are privately owned and operated; their owners hold long term subleases on the land.

Misconceptions about RI

- X It's a luxury development. (It's a mixed income community with about 20% low income, 20% moderate income, 55% middle income, and 25% upper income.)
- X It's a low income housing project. (Nope. See above.)
- X The tram trip takes 30 minutes. (Minutes 30 seconds.)
- X You can't get here from there if you're afraid of heights. (There's also a subway stop.)
- X RI is where they warehoused immigrants not so long ago. (That was Ellis Island.)
- X Jails abound. (No, that's Rikers Island. The last jail left RI in 1935.)
- X There are several streets on the island. (Main Street is the main and only street.)
- X The apartments are owned by the government/RIOC. (All the housing is privately owned and operated.)
- X Residents regard unknown visitors from off-island as unwelcome invaders. (Far from it. The natives are truly friendly, and moreover recognize that visitors bring social and economic benefits, such as supporting The Tram and public events.)

Unusual Attributes



■ Mixed incomes, races, nationalities. ~~46% of the residents, at all income levels, ethnicities~~ African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, a mix that has lived together peaceably for 20 years. Many residents work for the United Nations.

■ Largely car-free.

■ Continuous waterfront promenades.

■ Icon: the Swiss-made bright red gondolas of **THE TRAM**. The only one on this continent to be used for mass transit. 5,100 ft. span. Has carried more than 20 million passengers since its 1976 opening. Each cabin accommodates 125 people, as well as bikes, wheelchairs, baby strollers, rollerbladers. A tourist attraction. Cinematic fame: appeared in Billy Crystal's "City Slickers" and in Sylvester Stallone's "Nighthawks."

Theme park fame: one of the rides at Universal Studio's park in Orlando shows King Kong attacking the RI tram. The ride is called Kongfrontation.

■ One main street called — surprise! — **MAIN STREET**

■ State-of-the-art garbage disposal for all the apartments. AVAC (Automated Vacuum Collection System), similar to one in Disney World, transports refuse at 55 mph through underground tunnels to a building where it is compacted to one-fifth its size, sealed in containers, and carted away by NYC's Sanitation Department. No other large-scale residential complex in the nation has such a system.

■ No pets allowed in apartments except for medical reasons (the owner's not the pet's). Visiting dogs allowed outside on the streets only if leashed. No dogs permitted in parks, buses, The Tram, the **MOTORGATE GARAGE**. Cats - ever wily - ignore these restrictions and roam wild, although not in town.

■ ~~Everything is wheelchair accessible.~~ (This commitment predates the guarantees now in place throughout the nation.)

■ There are 300 flowering cherry trees on the island along Cherry Tree Walk just south of the Queensboro Bridge tower. This is nearly 4 times as many as in the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens' famed Cherry Tree Esplanade.

■ The island has its own ~~25 person unarmed public safety force, managed by RIOC and paid for by RIOC and the housing management companies.~~ This force is on duty around-the-clock, 7 days a week. A Civilian Population officer from the 114th Police Precinct in Queens is also on duty. The civilian force responds to more than 5,400 calls each year from residents. These calls usually involve such problems as loud music, a stuck elevator, a squirrel in the hallway, help needed for heavy lifting, lost keys. Rape and murder are not feared, but there have been several robberies and burglaries. When the Senior Center recently had its VCR stolen, one of the RI officers replaced it on his own. "There are lots of relationships," says the director of public safety, a retired police sergeant.

Criminal mischief and trespasses by teen-agers are common complaints. Examples range from hanging out in a hallway to putting firecrackers in the parking machines.

■ Illegal parking is a major concern. A narrow street that must be kept clear for emergency vehicles, Main Street permits only short term (very short term) parking. To prevent meter-feeding, Main Street uses computerized parking

● Signifies a challenge and opportunity, and will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter of the same name (but pluralized).

machines — allowing 40 minutes of parking for 50 cents — rather than parking meters. Motorgate, the only garage on the island, has nearly 2,000 parking spaces, but Main Street has only 70 spaces.

■ There are no red light/green light traffic signals anywhere on the island, but plain strawberry boulevard stop signs are as widespread as confetti on New Year's Eve — 57 in all: 21 put up by the city Transportation Department, 36 by RIOC.

■ All parks and open space are open to the general public. This includes parks attached to residential complexes.

■ All outdoor recreational facilities are open to the public. RIOC accepts applications from anyone for the outdoor tennis courts and for the ballfields. The Garden Club handles applications for the garden plots, which are given to off-islanders as well as locals. Permits are required in order to make reservations for the sports facilities but, if the facility is not occupied, it can be used on a first come-first served basis.

Demographics

Census 1990	Roosevelt Island	New York City
Age:		
under 5	4%	7%
under 18	18%	23%
18-65	62%	64%
over 65	20%	13%
Sex:		
Female	4339 (53%)	3,884,877 (53%)
Male	3851 (47%)	3,437,687 (47%)
Family Structure:		
Married couples with children	17%	18%
Married couples without children	19%	21%
Male-headed households with related and unrelated children	3%	6%
Female-headed households with related and unrelated children	16%	18%
Total family households	55%	62%
Female-headed households	NA	18%
Two or more person non-family household	9%	6%
One person households	36%	33%
Total non-family households	45%	39%
Color and Ethnicity:		
White non-Hispanic	43%	43%
Black non-Hispanic	25%	25%
Hispanic	18%	24%
Asian and Pacific Islander	6%	7%
Other	1%	1%
Income:		
Less than \$35,000	43%	57%
\$35,001-\$99,999	46%	37%
Over \$100,000	11%	6%
Median Income	\$44,518	\$29,523
Female Employment:		
Women working	93%	54%
Women with children under 6 working	56%	7%
Women with children under 18 working	71%	24%
Density:		
Persons per acre	11	36
Dwelling units per acre	4	15

Employment

The 19 mom-and-pop stores on Main Street, a large super-

The housing management companies have staffs. But

"The island nobody knows"

far and away the major employers are the 2 hospitals. Goldwater Hospital has a full-time staff of 1,625. Twenty-eight of them live on the island. Coler has about 1,500 employees, of whom approximately 30 live here.

Existing Resources

Housing

There are more than 2,200 apartments in 3 complexes in Northtown north of the subway and train stations. Every complex has community space. All except Eastwood have guarded entrances. Phase I — during which the UDC built 4 complexes — lasted from 1969-1976. The so-called Phase II consists of just one complex, Manhattan Park, completed

The large time gap between the 2 phases helps account for the differing design approaches. Phase I apartments have irregular site plans, and buildings are placed at an angle to the river, effectively taking advantage of the views. The site plan of Manhattan Park is more formal and symmetrical.

Early settlers,
stout-hearted
people,
pitched in
enthusiastically
to organize whatever
needed organizing.

Manhattan Park, opened in 1989. 1,107 rental apartments on a 8.5-acre site.

- ~~Five 21-story buildings. Low income residents are all in one double building. Market rate buildings are on the park.~~
- 94 low income apartments reserved for the elderly and physically challenged.
- Large auditorium, fitness center, riverfront park, nursery school. Outdoor pool is open to any island resident with a membership. Clubhouse.
- An estimated 30%-40% of the residents in the market rate buildings work at the United Nations, mostly on 1-2 year contracts.
- Waiting list for 3 BR. ~~For low income housing, 8-10 years for larger~~ ~~apartments~~ for the elderly and physically challenged.
- L-shaped buildings step down to the water.
- Formal plan sited around park.
- 2-story arched street facade.
- Apartment layouts are convertible for an additional room.
- Some apartments have terraces.

Type	No.	%	S.F. Range	Rental Range	Av. Rent
1 BR	320	36	560-600	\$1,250-\$1,625	\$1,350
1 BR conv	160	18	755-768	\$1,495-\$1,995	\$1,595
2 BR	196	22	842	\$1,695-\$2,300	\$1,795
2 BR conv.	120	14	1,000-1,064	\$1,945-\$2,800	\$2,200
3 BR	88	10	1,263-1,336	\$2,645-\$3,300	\$2,900

Financing: Tax-exempt bonds issued by NYC Housing Development Corporation; 80% market/20% low income may earn up to 80% median income; FHA Insured; payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT). Low income units subsidized under US Housing Act 1937, Section 8 Tax credits sold to NYNEX.

Market rate profile: 884 rental units - unregulated.
 Section 8 profile: 223 rental units — 128 family units; 94 elderly units; low income tenants pay 30% of income toward rent; Federal government pays the rest.

Eastwood, 510-580 Main Street, opened in 1976, 1,003 rental apartments including 283 specially designed for the elderly and physically challenged.

- 10 buildings, all interconnected by corridors which function as indoor streets. 20 entrances. Reflects the design imperatives of the more optimistic 1970s, which emphasized a sense of community. In the 1990s, security concerns produced proposals to erect internal barriers. Put to a residents' vote, these proposals were defeated. The physically challenged in particular liked the convenience of being able to get around within the complex without venturing outside.
- Cost: \$46.7 million, not including infrastructure.
- Enclosed shopping arcade.
- Irregularly U-shaped buildings with public courtyards, stepped down to the water.
- Walkways from Main Street allowing access to the courtyards and waterfront.
- Skip-stop elevator allows all apartments to be split-level floor throughs.
- Single-loaded corridors create internal streets.

Type	No.	%	S.F.	Base Rent	Max. Income
0 BR	143	14.3	410	\$447	\$23,040
1 BR	337	33.6	580	\$658	\$32,208
2 BR	265	26.4	826	\$820	\$40,224
3 BR	189	18.8	1,071	\$996	\$48,336
4 BR	69	6.9	1,305	\$1,118	\$54,048

Financing: UDC bonds subject to NYS Mitchell-Lama regulations; limited profit; tax-exempt financing; 40-year, 95% mortgage; payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT); Federal Housing Act Section 236 mortgage interest reduction subsidy to 1%; 40% of units subject to Federal rent supplement program similar to Section 8; i.e. low income tenants pay 30% of income.

Apartment profile: 1,003 rental units regulated pursuant to state Mitchell-Lama law. 60% of tenants pay greater of base rent or 30% of income; 40% of tenants under rent supplement program pay 30% of income; 283 units, including all studios reserved for seniors and the disabled.

Rivercross, 531 Main Street, opened in 1976, cooped in 1977, 377 coops.

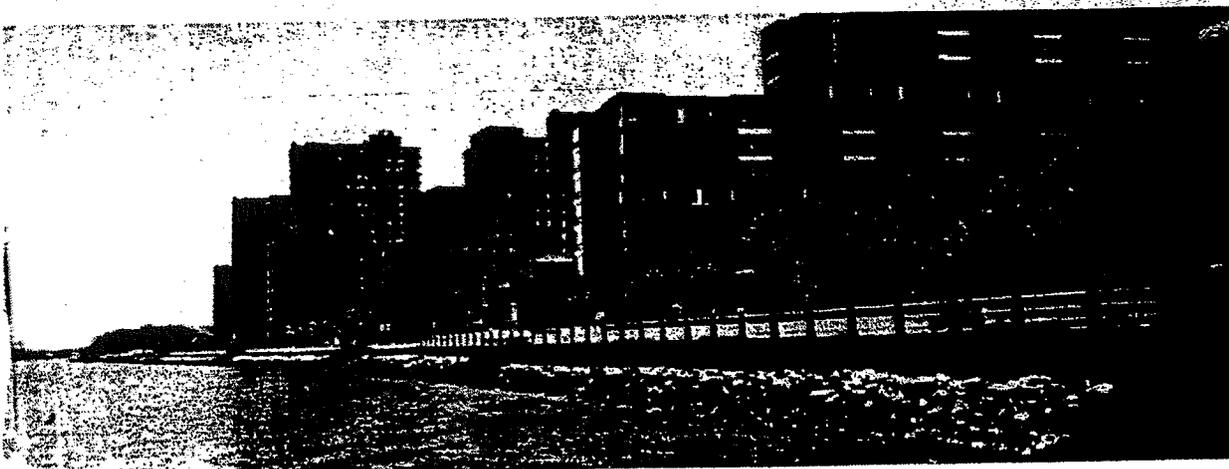
- Indoor swimming pool reserved for Rivercross residents. No membership fee.
- Cost: \$32.6 million.
- Waiting list: "from here to China," according to the manager. Lotteries held in 1986, 1991 just to set up sequential numbers. For one BR have reached the 1991 list. For 2 and 3 BR still on the 1986 list.
- Storefronts not parallel to Main Street.
- Irregularly U-shaped buildings with public courtyards, stepped down to the water.
- Contains some duplex apartments.
- Contains some apartments with terraces.

Type	No.	%	Typ. S.F., Excl. Bth, Clsts	Monthly Maintenance	Min. Entry Income*
0 BR	35	9.3	670	\$647-725	\$31,075
1 BR	95	25.2	750-790	\$850-995	\$40,815
2 BR	125	33.2	1000-1120	\$1,068-1,227	\$51,251
3 BR	114	30.2	1280	\$1,425-1,575	\$68,411
4 BR	8	2.1	1350	\$1,657-2,058	\$79,542

*Up to 7/8 x maintenance, depending on family size.

Financing: UDC bonds subject to NYS Mitchell-Lama regulations; tax-exempt financing; 40 year, 95% mortgage; payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT); limited equity co-op.

Apartment profile: 377 unit cooperative regulated pursuant to state Mitchell-Lama law. Restrictions on resale price.



Looking North: Westview (foreground) & Manhattan Park

Photo Credit: RIOG

Existing Resources

Westview, 595-625 Main Street, opened in 1976, 361 rental apartments.

- Indoor pool open to all island residents on payment of membership fee.
- Cost: \$21.7 million.
- Enclosed shopping arcade.
- Irregularly U-shaped buildings with public courtyards, stepped down to the water.
- Contains some duplex apartments.

Type	No.	%	S.F.	Rent Range	Min. Entry Income *
0 BR	13	3.6	636	\$659 - 700	\$26,250
1 BR	97	26.87	713	\$925 - 975	\$37,800
2 BR	167	46.26	1,054	\$1,225 - 1,300	\$48,000
3 BR	84	23.27	1,332	\$1,550 - 1,800	\$65,100

*Up to 7/8 x rent, depending on family size.

Financing: UDC Bonds subject to NYS Mitchell-Lama regulations; limited profit; tax-exempt financing; 40 year, 95% mortgage; payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT).

Apartment profile: 361 rental units regulated pursuant to state Mitchell-Lama law.



Looking North: Rivercross & Island House (left); Eastwood (right)

Photo Credit: RIOC

Island House, 551-575 Main Street, opened in 1975 (the first to open), 400 rentals.

- Cost: \$24.2 million.
- Indoor swimming pool closed for lack of demand.
- Storefronts not parallel to Main Street.
- Irregularly U-shaped buildings with public courtyards, stepped down to the water.
- Contains some duplex apartments with terraces.

Type	No.	%	S.F.	Rent Range	Min. Entry Income*
0 BR	34	3.6	494	\$659 - 700	\$26,250
1 BR	92	23	684	\$925 - 975	\$37,800
2 BR	154	38.5	1,029	\$1,225 - 1,300	\$48,000
3 BR	108	27	1,261	\$1,550 - 1,625	\$65,100
4 BR	12	3	1,305	\$1,800 - 1,850	\$75,600

*Up to 7/8 x rent, depending on family size.

Financing: UDC bonds subject to NYS Mitchell-Lama regulations; limited profit; tax-exempt financing; 40 year, 95% mortgage; payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT).

Apartment profile: 400 rental units regulated pursuant to state Mitchell-Lama law.

Hospitals

Hold-overs from the days when this was Welfare Island are 2 very large city-owned hospitals providing chronic and long term nursing care. Located on the site of the Blackwell Island Penitentiary south of The Tram station, Goldwater Hospital (1939) has 986 beds, of which 442 are for chronic care patients and 544 for nursing patients. The hospital has 7 connected buildings on its 9.9 acres. At the northern end of the island, the 14 acre site of Bird S. Coler Memorial Hospital (1951) contains what they call a 3-in-1 complex of 750,000 sf: 2 patient residences of 5 stories each connected to a 6-story administration building. Coler is the largest long-term nursing facility in the city's public system. Of its 1,025 beds, 775 are in the nursing facility and 250 in the hospital.

■ Octagon Park. (15 acres, of which 9 acres are completed.)

Once a barren construction site, this park was created in 1992 for \$5 million. It is the newest, largest, and most completely programmed park on RI. Regulation-size soccer/sports field, 200 garden plots for the community, 6 all-weather tennis courts, baseball diamond, picnic and barbecue areas with wheelchair-access tables. The process of developing the design was ingenious. Faced with what the park's landscape architect, Lee Weintraub, describes as 35 acres of program for a 15-acre site, RIOC and Weintraub decided to sidestep conventional procedures. Instead of holding the usual community meetings in which each person speaks up — sometimes loudly — for his or her own particular interest, the developers asked 12 constituencies to appoint representatives to a single committee. There, after everyone heard everyone else's pitch, a rational consensus was hammered out.

Beyond the fence is construction access to New York's Third Water Tunnel. When the city finishes its work, this 3-acre site will be fully restored and landscaped. The last 3 of the 15 acres — the land immediately adjacent to the remains of the landmark Octagon Tower — will also be converted into parkland. RIOC expects to begin work in 1996.

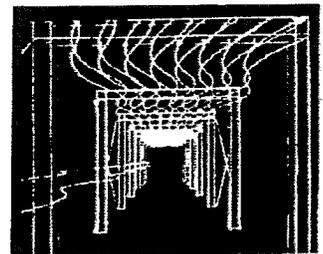
■ Lighthouse Park. (2.8 acres.)

So-called because of the decommissioned 50 ft-high Gothic-style lighthouse built from gray granite quarried on the island. The lighthouse was restored in 1976. A favorite fishing spot and site of this year's Bass Blitz, a fly-fishing day. Barbecue and picnic grounds. Panoramic views. Used quite heavily by off-islanders.

■ Northtown Park (2.6 acres.)

Baseball/softball field. Basketball, handball, paddle tennis courts.

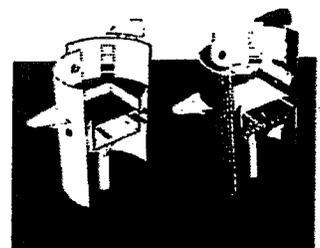
5 Major Parks



Entry pergola, Octagon Park
Credit: Weintraub & di Domenico



Comfort station, Octagon Park
Credit: Weintraub & di Domenico



Octagon Park barbecues
Credit: Weintraub & di Domenico

Sports facilities

■ Blackwell Park (3 acres.)

Master Plan calls for 6 acres. Basketball court, playground, "tot lot." Blackwell Park West consists of the Meditation Steps, which has spectacular views of Manhattan. From a nearby pier, photographers shoot their hearts out. The adjacent East River Walk connects to the waterfront

"Perhaps the city's strangest piece of real estate" promenade around the island's

perimeter — a promenade that will eventually encircle the entire island. Unlike most promenades, RI's is purposely varied — sometimes wide, sometimes narrow; sometimes paved with stone, sometimes planted with grass. A "fitness" trail for joggers has stations with sports equipment.

■ The Park at Manhattan Park. (1.3 acres.)

The park of the Manhattan Park housing complex. A tranquil spot with trees, lawn, paths.

■ Roosevelt Island Racquet Club, 281 Main Street.

12 green clay regulation courts, clubhouse, locker rooms, cafe, baby-sitting service in 2 year-round heated and air conditioned bubbles.

Discount for RI residents. More than 80% of the 600 members live off-island. Frequent players include former mayor David Dinkins, NBC correspondent Elizabeth Vargas, Channel 7 weatherman Bill Evans, former Manhattan borough president Andrew Stein. Built in 1991 by private entrepreneurs, who have a 16 year lease. Architect: David Specter & Associates, NY, who designed the National Tennis Center in Flushing.

■ SPORTSPARK

Heated pool (almost Olympic size), 2 squash courts, 8,000 sf gym with NBA-size basketball court, weight rooms, lounge and locker rooms. Built by the UDC in 1977. Used by the Youth Center, private schools, adult basketball leagues, summer camps. Is available for parties and special sporting events or to a long-term tenant.

■ 3 of the 5 residential complexes have indoor swimming pools

One is closed for lack of demand and a fourth has an outdoor swimming pool. Several have exercise rooms.

Early settlers, stout-hearted people, pitched in enthusiastically to organize whatever needed organizing. Pioneers say that this gung-ho spirit has waned considerably with the passage of time and the tight pressures of today's workplace. Maybe so. But there are still 53 organizations listed by the Roosevelt Island Council of Organizations, Inc. Many can be found anywhere and everywhere in the US: the Boy and Girl Scouts, the Youth Soccer League, a merchants' association, hospital auxiliaries, an African Society, a Historical Society, 2 senior associations, a Photographic Society. But there is also the Quranic Group for Muslims, Friends of Bill W. (Alcoholics Anonymous), the Tree Board, Toastmasters, the Disabled Association, the RI Adult Social Association, the Committee for After School Tutoring, an Artist Association, and Concerned Residents of RI. And many more.

Each residential complex elects representatives to the RI Residents Association, whose president is traditionally appointed to the board of RIOC.

Volunteers began and continue to raise funds, and largely staff essential institutions:

■ The Library.

Opened in 1979 with books donated by residents. It now has 30,000 volumes and is supported by dues collected from more than 800 members paying \$5 or \$10 depending on age. The library, whose paid staff consists of a part-time director and 2 part-time assistants, is open to all. The library is now trying to become part of the city library system.

■ The Main Street Wire.

The free local newspaper which comes out every 2 weeks, "usually on Friday," according to the editor. Circulation is about 4,000. Advertising from local and Queens merchants defrays some costs and pays the only salaried staff: the editor and the production people. "It is certainly not a profit-making enterprise," says the editor, astonished at the very thought. The publisher is a local resident who stepped into the breach to back up the volunteers who sprang up about 15 years ago after an earlier newspaper gave up the ghost.

■ Cultural Center, 548 Main Street.

Created by public purpose funds secured by RIOC, and finished in 1993 with sweat equity. Supports itself by charging rents. Home to the Main Street Theater and Dance Alliance, kung fu and karate classes, off-island rentals for theatrical and dance rehearsals. Black box theater, sprung floor dance studio, assembly space, and practice/rehearsal rooms. 12,000 sf.

After 10 years of worshipping first in one place and then another, the RI Jewish congregation — tired of being “wandering Jews” — settled in here. (Christians and Muslims worship in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.)

■ Sculpture Center at RI. Opened in 1993.

Raises money every year for rotating shows of emerging artists, 6 of whom are given an exhibition from May to November. Entries come from across the country. The public art venue of the Sculpture Center on the Upper East Side, Manhattan's non-profit gallery.

(One million dollars in public purpose funds have been set aside to leverage private funds for the island's community/social service programs,

"A cross between a quiet waterside village and a high-rise 1960's version of Futureworld"

which need professionalization. Some of the principal is being used to develop the fund-raising capacity

of the island's volunteer organizations. Requests for more than \$1 million in grants have been made by the Roosevelt Island Council of Organizations to corporations and foundations.

Major groups survive through grants, user fees, third party payments, and fund-raising events. The housing companies contribute space and, in the case of the Youth Center, an estimated \$125,000 annually.

An additional income stream estimated at \$300,000 annually would secure a newly developing social services referral program, youth center, and other community programs now struggling to survive.)

For Children

■ PS/IS 217, 645 Main Street.

Opened in 1992, replacing **5 MINI-SCHOOLS**. Enrollment of about 570 in K-8th grade. Capacity: 862. 14 languages spoken aside from English, including Nepali, Swahili, and Malay. Cafeteria has waterfront view. Is part of the citywide Counseling in the School, a social services support program.

Nearly 350 students, most of high school age, attend 34 different off-island schools — public, private, and parochial. More than one-third — about 130 — attend public elementary and high schools, but the single school with the largest number of islanders in attendance — 61 — is the UN International School. Four students go against the flow by coming to PS/S 217 from off-island.

■ **R.I. Day Nursery**

Two locations. Opened in 1975, formally established in 1979. Capacity 90, current enrollment 85. Non-profit. Used by about half the families with pre-school age children. Nursery school for 3-to-6 year olds runs from 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Fees are middle-range by Manhattan standards. About 15 children receive partial scholarships from the nursery, which holds fund-raising events such as an annual circus. Six other children benefit from a citywide voucher program for low income families. This program, which has a citywide waiting list of some 7,000, paid for as many as 20 scholarships in past years. Rarely used by full-time working mothers. An experiment to extend the hours for such working women aroused the interest of only 8 families.

■ **Island Kids.**

Started in 1981 “to provide enrichment and socialization opportunity for young children.” 150 children attend 12-week long sessions. Parents and sitters stay in the school with the under-5’s.

■ **Youth Program.**

Founded in 1980. After-school and summer programs for some 500 5-to-20 year olds. Daily attendance about one-quarter of that. Athletics, baseball, softball, swimming, tennis, arts and crafts, help with homework. Housed in the Youth Center in Eastwood housing, uses Sportspark, school, and the pool in Island House. Housing companies contribute from one-third to one-half of the budget. The remainder comes from grants and camp fees.

■ **Roosevelt Island Senior Association (RISA)**

One full time program director and one part-time case worker. The Senior Center, 546 Main Street, serves daily subsidized lunches, helps locate and pay for home-care and housekeeping services, arranges medical transportation, fare subsidies.

■ **RIASA.**

A volunteer unstaffed senior organization.

For Seniors

Landmarks

The 6 landmarks represent a spectrum of preservation strategies: restoration, adaptive re-use, stabilization. The most innovative involves the stabilization of ruins, which are regarded by RIOC as evocative fragments, as worthy of survival in their own right as all those European and Asian ruins.

Three of the landmarks were renovated by RIOC's predecessor, the UDC. Plans have been drawn up for the remaining 3 but, until funding is obtained, they remain off-limits to the public. Once completed, the sextet will comprise a tourist destination. All the landmarks have been designated by city, state, and Federal panels.

- 1 **JAMES BLACKWELL HOUSE** (between 1796 - 1804).
Clapboard farmhouse, the oldest building on the island. Renovated in 1973.
Status: Will be vacated shortly. RIOC is looking for a tenant or a new use.
- 2 **CHAPEL OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD**, 543 Main Street (1888-89, Frederick Clarke Withers, the same British architect who designed the Jefferson Market Courthouse on 6th Avenue, Manhattan).
~~late Victorian Gothic chapel was intended for use by inmates of the nearby city institutions, which is why it has 2 entrance porches, one for men, the other for women.~~ The chapel bell now in the red brick plaza used to be rung each morning to wake the poor sleeping on their straw mattresses in the almshouses.
Status: Although the plaza has become a place to hang out — to see and be seen — the chapel remains unused for most of the week.
- 3 Lighthouse (1872, James Renwick Jr., designer of St. Patrick's Cathedral, supervising architect).
The 50-ft-tall octagonal lighthouse was built by island convicts from stone they quarried on the island.
Status: Park with picnic tables. Used by people who fish. (Fisherpeople?)
- 4 Octagon Tower, formerly the NYC Lunatic Asylum (1835-39, A.J. Davis; alterations 1879, Joseph Dunn).
The 5-story rotunda with a cast iron spiral staircase is all that remains of what was once a vast asylum, the city's first, where 1,700 inmates — twice the building's capacity — were supervised by convicts from the nearby penitentiary. Charles Dickens stopped by in 1841. Contemporary writer E. L. Doctorow called it "this beautifully designed snake pit." Vandals torched the Victorian dome in 1982 — 27 years after its abandonment. In 1994, RIOC commissioned an architectural and engineering examination of the ruin. Calling it "a beautiful remnant of a rich architectural past," the consultants urged preserving and stabilizing the ruin.

Outlines of the destroyed wings would be traced in a park. Such a project — creating a landscaped whole that transcends architectural history — would be unique in landmark preservation.

Status: \$6 million is needed to complete the project, of which more than \$3 million has been raised. The ruin itself remains closed to the public, but 9 of the surrounding 15 acres have already been finished as a park. Three acres around the tower will be landscaped when the tower project is in hand. The remaining 3 acres are the construction site for the Third Water Tunnel, and will be redone when that work is completed. Temporary stabilizations by RIOC took place in 1990-1992.

5 Smallpox Hospital a.k.a. the Renwick Ruin (1854-56, James Renwick, Jr; south wing, 1903-04, York & Sawyer; north wing, 1904-05, Renwick, Aspinwall & Owen).

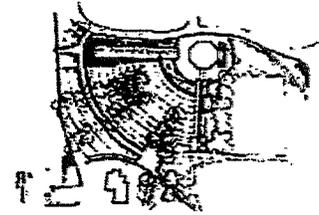
Convict labor is said to have built the Gothic Revival stone hospital that replaced the riverside wooden shacks to which smallpox patients were banished. In 1875, the hospital was converted into a nurses' residence, which was abandoned in the early 1950s.

Status: During the seawall work that will be done over the next few years, the building will be stabilized, which will allow its eventual integration into a park. The ruin is now being illuminated nightly with temporary lighting, creating an unearthly, riveting spectacle for drivers on the FDR Drive and Upper East Side residents. The outdoor lights now being used were salvaged from the hockey rink demolished to make way for the Racquet Club. This effective but makeshift arrangement will change next year; the lighting designer for the Statue of Liberty has been hired to create a permanent lighting scheme.

6 STRECKER LABORATORY (1892, Withers & Dickson; third floor, 1905, William Flanagan).

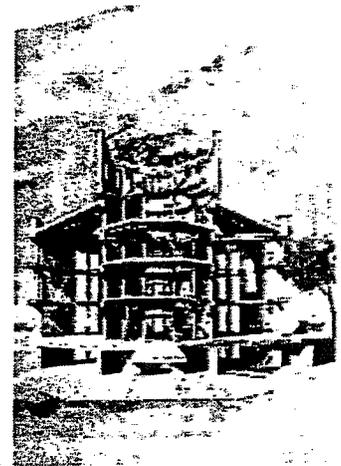
Romanesque Revival gray-stone-and-orange-brick building, originally a pathology laboratory for the nearby Charity Hospital.

Status: Closed to the public. Must be stabilized. May be restored and adaptively reused by the Transit Authority as a substation.



Octagon ruin: landscape & structure

Credit: Tanner Leddy Maytum Stacy
Margaret Helfand in association



Octagon ruin

Credit: Tanner Leddy Maytum Stacy
Margaret Helfand in association

The 6 landmarks

represent a spectrum of preservation strategies:

**restoration, adaptive
re-use, stabilization.**

RIOC

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation

RIOOC, a quasi-governmental organization, succeeded the NY state Urban Development Corporation in 1986 as the entity responsible for maintaining and developing RI. Unlike UDC, it does not have bonding authority and must rely for its ability to get things done on earned income, outside grants, and a state operating subsidy.

In FY 1995-96, RIOOC's annual operating expenditures were \$8.8 million. It will raise an estimated \$7.7 million, leaving a gap of \$1.1 million which is covered by a state appropriation. Eliminating this operating subsidy is an urgent priority.

There is a dearth of funds for capital projects. The state capital budget is only able to fund health- and safety-related projects such as the seawall. RIOOC must raise the money for everything else, including parks and landmarks. An independent organization, Friends of the RI Landmarks, Inc., raises money from foundations, tourists, and other sources. These funds are used not only for the landmarks but for their surroundings as well.

Under its long-term lease with the City of New York, RIOOC is exempt from sales taxes. The Manhattan Park developers, who benefited from

"When I was growing up in the 1980's the whole thing was like a jungle gym" this exemption, contributed \$2.7 million to a public purpose fund. \$1.7 million was

spent on capital improvements, including Blackwell Playground, Octagon Park, the Cultural Center, and the Youth Center. The remaining \$1 million has been set aside to support the island's community/social service programs.

The **Master Plan**
is only 5 pages long, and the
island is
exempt from zoning
and **ULURP.**

Operating income comes mainly from:

- Residential ground rents from Manhattan Park (ground rents from the 4 earlier apartment complexes are pledged to UDC bonds) — ~~\$2.55 million~~
- Commercial rents, including the RI Racquet Club — ~~\$1.0 million~~
- Motorgate — ~~\$1.5 million~~
- Public safety (the housing companies pay half the total costs) — ~~\$900,000~~
- The Tram — ~~\$1.4 million~~
- Red bus — ~~\$250,000~~
- Parking permits — ~~\$150,000~~

RIOC is responsible for:

- Maintaining 4 of the 5 major parks. (The park at Manhattan Park and housing courtyards are maintained by the management companies of the individual buildings.)
- Maintaining all sports facilities, except for the Racquet Club.
- Maintaining Motorgate and supervising its private manager. The structure is co-owned by RIOC and the Manhattan Park management.
- Maintaining the outdoor lights along the seawalls, in the parks, and along certain parts of Main Street. (The city and housing managements are responsible for most of Main Street's lighting.)
- Taking care of the unusual Z-bricks on some sidewalks. (The city Department of Transportation and RIOC share responsibility for non-Z brick sidewalks.)
- Running The Tram.
- Running the red buses.
- Maintaining the bus garage and AVAC.
- Providing a round-the clock public safety force and enforcing traffic regulations.
- Operating the short-term parking machines.
- Leasing out commercial spaces and Blackwell House.
- Designing, implementing, and raising the funds for capital projects.
- Figuring out what to do with the island's vacant land, which involves deciding whether to stick with the Master Plan or seek changes.
- Finding creative re-uses for underutilized structures.

"An enclave like Hong Kong"

CHRONOLOGY

Early History

X 1637: The Dutch governor buys Minnahannock, translated as Long Island or "Wah-tic-to-Row" (the island), depending on your source, from the ~~English~~ ~~native~~ ~~Americans~~. Because the Dutch raise ~~beaver~~ ~~becomes~~ known as ~~Long~~ ~~Island~~ — the least euphonious of its several subsequent changes of name.

X 1666: Captain John Manning, a British officer, gets the island. Five years later he moves in. There are at least 2 versions of these events. In one version, Manning slinks off in disgrace to the island, which he has paid for himself, because he had surrendered New York to the Dutch. (Not to worry. The Brits took NY back in short order.) In the second version, Manning receives the island as a reward for his services during the Revolution. (Why worry that the Revolution took place in 1776?) In this version, Manning also disgraces himself, this time by taking bribes as sheriff of Manhattan; he is then banished to the island he had received as a gift.

X 1686: Title passes to Manning's son-in-law, Robert Blackwell, who gives it his name ~~for more than 2 centuries~~.

X 1796: Blackwell House is built.

X 1828: The ~~Blackwell family~~ ~~gives~~ ~~up~~ ~~the~~ ~~island~~ ~~to~~ ~~the~~ ~~city~~ ~~for~~ ~~\$52,000~~ ~~so~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~city~~ ~~can~~ ~~use~~ ~~it~~ ~~for~~ ~~various~~ ~~purposes~~ ~~including~~ ~~hospitals~~ ~~work-~~ ~~shops~~ ~~for~~ ~~wayward~~ ~~girls~~ ~~prisons~~ ~~and~~ ~~homes~~ ~~for~~ ~~the~~ ~~aged~~ ~~and~~ ~~a~~ ~~lunatic~~ ~~asylum~~ — all the institutions from which luckier and more prosperous people tend to avert their eyes. At least 8 asylums and hospitals are built. (One version has 26 institutions co-existing in the 1800s.)

X 1839: NYC Lunatic Asylum opens, taking in patients from the overcrowded wards of Bellevue Hospital and also, from time to time, perfectly normal immigrants from Ellis Island who were categorized as crazy because they spoke particularly unusual languages. Convicts guard the patients.

X 1859: ~~Manhattan~~ Hospital opens.



Renwick Ruin

Photo Credit: Landmarks Preservation Commission

X 1872: Lighthouse built at northern tip.

X 1873: William "Boss" Tweed serves time for graft in the Island of Welfare.

X 1889: Chapel of the Good Shepherd opens.

X 1921: Renamed Welfare Island to fit its role as a repository for housing the criminal, and the outcast.

X 1927: Mae West spends 10 days in the RI jail for her role in the subtly titled play, "Sex."

X 1935: With the opening of a penitentiary on Rikers Island, Welfare Island loses its last convicts.

X 1939: Goldwater Memorial Hospital opens. A chronic care and nursing facility.

X 1952: Bird S. Coler Hospital opens — another chronic care and nursing facility.

X 1955: Metropolitan Hospital — which replaced the Lunatic Asylum — moves to Manhattan, and its building is abandoned.

X 1955: The Roosevelt Island Bridge, then known as the Welfare Island Bridge, opens, becoming the new link to Queens. Up to then, pedestrians and cars stopped midway on the Queensboro Bridge where an elevator transferred them to the firm ground of Welfare Island. The elevator was closed down when the Welfare Island Bridge opened, and was finally demolished in 1970.

X 1968: The ill-fated Delacorte Fountain, paid for by a wealthy publisher, opens, a 250 ft-high plume that was hit by a tugboat and clogged by flotsam and jetsam. When the wind rose, its polluted salt spray killed trees and vegetation. In the mid-1980s, it was shut down as a health hazard — a gift horse that could not make the urban scene.

Modern History

~~X 1968~~, Jan. 1: Mayor John V. Lindsay appoints a committee to come up with a grand plan for rescuing Welfare Island from its decrepitude. Occupied only by 2 hospitals and Fire Department training facilities, the city-owned island has been largely ignored. When anyone does pay attention, they come up with varied suggestions — some more astonishing than others: reserve the south end for a nuclear power plant, build a world center for urban development or a center for industrial research or a domed stadium, sell it to the highest private bidder. The committee recommends building a residential community.

X 1969: Within 18 months, the Urban Development Corporation, a new state superagency headed by Edward Logue, agrees to take on the job and is granted a 99-year lease from the city. In addition, Architects Philip Johnson (a member of the Lindsay committee) and John Burgee devise a master plan for the new town, which is to have 20,000 people living in 5,000 apartments in 2 high-density neighborhoods, as well as a town center, and commercial/office space. There are no acquisition problems because the land is owned by the city, no political problems because no one lives in the neighborhood except long-term hospital patients, and anyway UDC has been liberated from all approval processes.

X 1973: ~~Named Roosevelt Island after the war-time president.~~

X 1975: Island House, the first residential complex, opens.

X 1976: Three other housing complexes open, bringing the total number of apartments to 2,141 and completing what became known as Phase I. UDC's and the city's fiscal crises cast a pall on citywide construction and halt additional work on RI for nearly 15 years.

X 1976: The Tram begins operating as a "temporary" measure pending the arrival of a subway stop on the island.

X 1984: The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation is created by the state legislature as a state public benefit corporation charged with responsibilities for the island's maintenance and originally carried out by the RIOC. A 9-member board of trustees is appointed by the governor including the Commissioner of the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal as its first chairman.

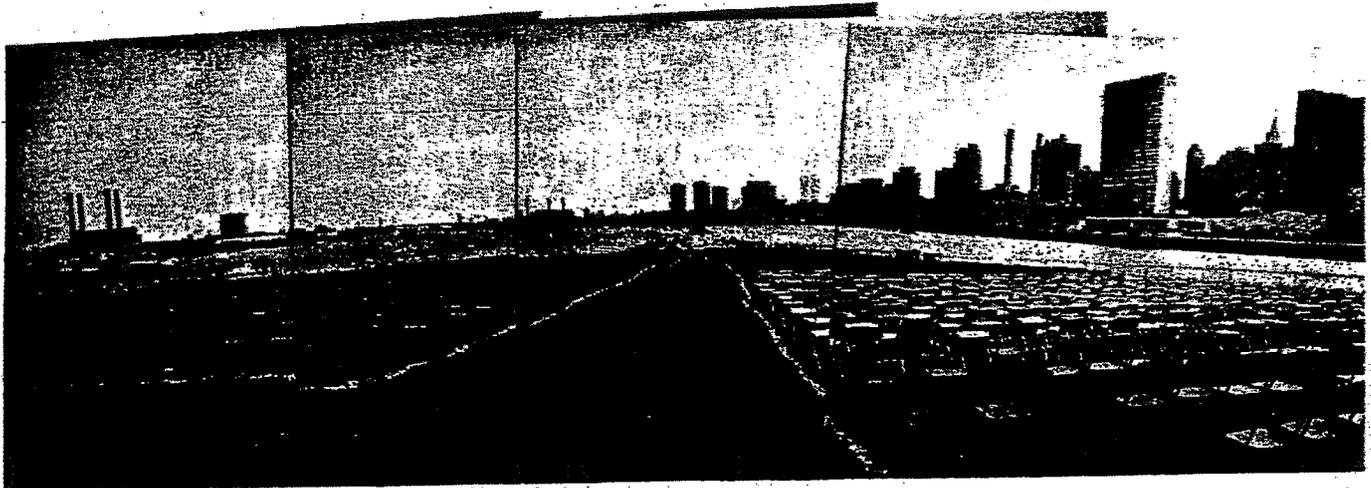
X 1989: The island's new transit system is completed.

X 1989: The so-called Phase II housing is completed: Manhattan Park with 1,107 apartments, most at market rate.

X 1989: A plan for Southtown — which somewhat revises the 1969 Master Plan — is produced, calling for 2,000 new, mixed income apartments. RIOC issues a Request for Proposals, but no developer responds.

X 1990-1995: More than \$6 million in private and other funds is raised and spent on creating Octagon Park and renovating the Cultural Center and Blackwell Playground. In addition, miles of the promenade and seawall are completed. So are designs for additional seawall. The 20-year-old Tram is updated. Motorgate and AVAC are repaired. A new public/intermediate school opens.

X 1995: RIOC sponsors RIFF — Roosevelt Island in Future Focus: Investment Workshop, charged with coming up with innovative, feasible ideas for increasing revenues and with deciding whether revisions, great or small, are in order for the Master Plan.



Southpoint set-up for July 4th Fireworks Feast
Photo Credit: Jonathan Sinagub

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Framework

The Challenges & Opportunities posed to this workshop consist of land and buildings that are either less full than they should be or completely empty. Figuring out how to proceed is comparable to renovating a large and complicated mansion. Because there is already a physical and social structure in place and particularly because RI is really a small island, there is not a clean slate. And very little can be done in isolation. Almost every design element affects what's already there, and what can be done elsewhere. Even what seems to be a discrete challenge can have reverberations: e.g. you can come up with an inspired use for one vacant minischool, but that removes it from what could have been a 5-unit complex of labs, or whatever. At the same time, you can also choose to separate out certain challenges, if that makes sense to you.

Although the island is now quite unprecedented — is there any other self-contained urban bedroom community in the nation? — it can fulfill

**"Like no other place in New York City
and like few others anywhere"** its potential only by adding another dimension. Not only enough new people — whether

residents or workers — to create the famous critical mass, but also enough visitors to make the island a Destination. (Three stars — "worth the trip" — would be best, but we would settle for 2 stars, "worth a detour.") In recent years, RIOC has created or imported enough special, profit-making events to feel confident about this course of action.

Some events:

- July 4th, 1995 at **SOUTHPOINT**, the vacant tip of the island, overlooking the Macy's fireworks-launching barges. This event was so successful, attracting 2,500 people at \$10 each, that there were scalpers outside the gate. The crowd ate hamburgers and hot dogs prepared by dedicated, if not exactly famous, chefs: RIOC's executive vice president for operations and a consultant architect. Friends and relatives of RIOC staff also pitched in as unpaid volunteers.
- In 1995, we rented the empty **SOUTHTOWN** site for one week to a fair, which drew 18,000 people. The fair offered a 110-foot ferris wheel, more than 20 rides, 2 funhouses, a Grand Carousel, and a midway with the "tiniest lady in the world" — all for a \$2 admission, \$1 for kids. Rides were extra.
- In 1994, dancer Meredith Monk and her company choreographed performances for Lighthouse Park and the Renwick Ruin.
- In 1995, we invited fishermen, fisherwomen, and fisherchildren to a fly casting day at Lighthouse Park. We called it the Bass Blitz because the bass were running. Orvis sponsored. Free.

■ In 1995, the Urban Professional Volleyball League held a day-long volleyball tournament on 20 courts set up all over the island. In attendance: 1,000 people.

■ The NY Road Runners Club races around the island 4 times a year.

The framework for this workshop, as it has been for the island itself, is the Master Plan issued in 1969 and amended 3 times since. At this workshop, the plan is up for grabs. But it is a legal document incorporated into the Master Lease with the city of New York, and any revision might have to be approved by the city. The precise procedure remains to be determined now that the Board of Estimate is history. Departing from the plan's specific provisions would also trigger an environmental impact statement. But the plan is only 5 pages long, surprisingly flexible, and the island is exempt from zoning and the review process known as ULURP.

There is a certain amount of confusion attached to the Master Plan, primarily because it was preceded by but does not totally reflect the Johnson-Burgee plan. In addition, many of the provisions of both plans remain uncompleted or ignored. But, in a transfixing number of ways, the built environment of today incorporates the essentials of the 1969 approach. It is true that no one envisaged the sort of Main Street now in place, but such essentials as a truly multi-income and ethnically mixed community, a largely car-free environment, only one garage, a mini-transit system, waterfront promenades, and much parkland and shared facilities are alive and well.

Here is a comparison between the original, official Master Plan and what is now in place. Please note that some of the provisions of the original plan have been amended so that the rules governing current development are different and more relaxed than those in place in 1969.

At this **workshop,**
the **Master**
plan
is up for grabs.

Master Plan

Then & Now

Original 1969 Master Plan	What is now in place
20,000 people	About 8,000
5,000 apartments, with a 12-story height limit	About 3,300. The tallest building has 21 stories. (The current height limit is 27 stories.)
30% low income and elderly 25% moderate income 20% middle income 25% market rate	20% low income 20% moderate income 35% middle income 25% market rate
"New Community in 2 areas: a South Town Area and a North Town Area, with a Town Center in the South Town Area"	Northtown built, Southtown still open space. No real town center, although Good Shepherd plaza approximates one sometimes.
Town harbor, glass-enclosed shopping arcade	No harbor, but 2 piers being rebuilt. Glass-enclosed shopping arcade on Main Street.
200,000 sf of office space 100,000 sf of shopping	7,500 sf (RIOC offices). 71,000 sf including post office, restaurants, bank, promised but not yet begun expansion of supermarket. 60,800 sf yield rent, 5,900 sf is occupied by community groups, 4,300 sf is vacant.
2,500-car garage	1,989-car garage
Mini-transit system	In operation
4 specified parks totalling 44 acres, including 10 acres at Southpoint	5 major parks encompassing 18.7 acres. A minimum of 9 more acres will be built, not including extensive parkland that will certainly be created when the vacant land in Southtown and Southpoint is developed.

Original 1969 Master Plan	What is now in place
School, day care center, sports facility, swimming pools, fire and police stations	K-8 grade school, 2 nursery schools, 2 sports facilities (one with swimming pool), 3 other swimming pools in apartment buildings and one outdoor pool open only to residents, no fire or police stations but 35 unarmed peace officers in a public safety force
Waterfront promenades	Three-quarters in place
Subway stop	In place
Modern garbage disposal facility	AVAC
Access for pedestrians from the Queensboro Bridge by new passenger elevators descending into the Sportspark, if such new elevators are built	The Tram took over the function of the elevators, which were demolished in 1970.

Additional facility unthought-of by the 1969ers:
The Tram

Post-1969 amendments establish the following rules for what can be built now:
Height limit; 27 stories
Office space: 20,000 sf

Vacant Land

SOUTHTOWN — 19.3 acres north of The Tram

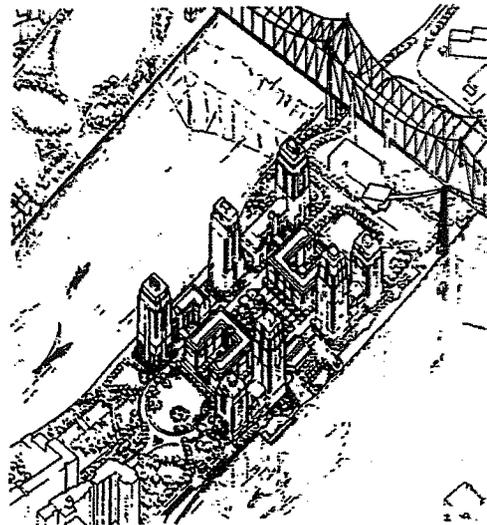
Challenge

The conventional wisdom is that RI needs additional housing in order to get the additional thousands of residents needed to support better and more varied stores and to maintain the island's services without a state subsidy. It has always been taken for granted that this housing would be located on the so-called Southtown site — as the very name, invented in 1969 by architects Philip Johnson and John Burgee for an unbounded site, makes clear. In all likelihood, this conventional wisdom is correct. However, we recognize that more people can arrive in other guises than as residents. So we would certainly consider any scheme that would bring thousands of new people to the island every day — whether to go to work or to see something as yet unimagined.

In 1989, RIOC worked out a detailed Request for Proposals for a 2,000-apartment complex in Southtown. This proposal failed to attract any developer. On the assumption that history is instructive, the components of the 1989 proposal are given below. It is also possible that times have changed enough so that the 1989 proposal could become viable — with or without revisions. Your choice. Or you may formulate a scheme that would necessitate changing the Master Plan, which however would cost a certain amount of time and money in waiting for the amendments to be approved and for the EIS to be prepared and accepted.

In sum, the Southtown decision crossroads has 4 forks:

- 1 You could decide to adopt the specifics of the 1989 proposal outlined below, which is only one of many permutations consonant with the plan.
- 2 You could work out a different, better, more financially feasible housing-based proposal that adheres to the Master Plan.
- 3 You could recommend a housing-based solution requiring amendments to the plan.
- 4 You could envisage a practical solution that would not rely on new housing to achieve a critical mass. Such a solution would also entail amending the plan.



1989 Southtown proposal
Credit: Raquel Ramati Associates

"A tiny principality (that) remains a mystery to most New Yorkers"

Figuring out how to finance the public improvements vital to any development is a critical sticking point. To give you maximum flexibility in working on this, we have broken down the public improvements provided in the 1989 proposal into 1) fixed costs; 2) variable costs; and 3) Motorgate-related costs. All in 1989 dollars.

Fixed Costs

Demolition of nurses' residence	\$ 3,000,000
Extending AVAC	2,600,000
Infrastructure (sewer, water, etc.)	6,000,000
Streetscape (210,000 sf.)	5,175,000
Total	\$ 16,775,000

Variable Costs (80,000 sf.)

Private open space (325,000 sf.)	\$ 4,125,000
Public open space (30,000 sf.)	8,600,000
Town square	1,600,000
Total	\$ 14,325,000

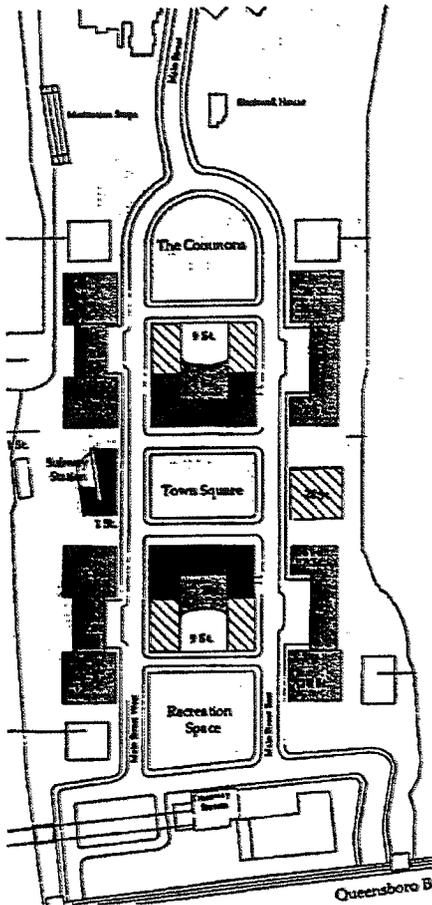
Motorgate

Phase III (600 spaces on 8 floors)	\$ 8,700,000
Bus garage (lower level of Motorgate)	2,800,000
Total	\$ 11,500,000
9th floor @ Phase III (116 spaces)	\$ 1,700,000
9th floor on Phase I (210 spaces)	3,045,000

Specifics of 1989 Southtown Proposal

- 2,000 apartments with 4,400 new residents, bringing the island's population to 11,850 — 59% of the total projected in the original Master Plan.
- 7 towers ranging from 16 - 28 stories along the waterfront flanked by 2 structures of 7 stories each.
- Mixed income: 50% at market rate, the rest — low, moderate, and middle income —subsidized in a variety of ways.
- Looped road interior to site.
- Day care center, retail space, 3 playgrounds, community flower garden, 600 new trees.
- About 45% of the site (8.2 acres) dedicated to open space and recreation.
- ~~Approximately \$90 million in public improvements, to be paid by the developer.~~

Several reasons have been given for the proposal's failure to attract any developer interest:



1989 Southtown proposal
Credit: Raquel Ramati Associates

- 1 Developers were not willing or able to finance \$50 million in public improvements (the entire cost of infrastructure, public open space, and a Motorgate addition) along with the 2,000 apartments.
- 2 The residential market was languishing.
- 3 It was bid as one or 2 large sites, which made it too large a burden for all but a small number of well-capitalized developers to execute and for all but a small number of institutions to finance.
- 4 The design did not facilitate phasing: i.e. to produce a town square, you need 4 completed sides.
- 5 The lack of flexibility in phasing deprived the developer of the ability to respond to market demand over time.
- 6 Because RIOC hoped to obtain Federal subsidies for low income units, which require building standards incompatible with market rate housing, all lower-income apartments were segregated in 2 buildings in the town center. Neither developers nor segregatees like this.
- 7 The underlying — and mistaken — assumption was that the real estate boom of the 1980s would continue into the 1990s, allowing developers to charge high enough rents to cover the \$50 million in public improvements and to help subsidize affordable housing.

Considerations

- Remember that the land is free. Developers will not have to pay anything for their sites until financing is in place and construction is ready to start.

- Our best estimate for future ground rent is \$1.2 million a year —

"A Little Apple" enough to cover RIOC's projected operating deficit, allowance being made for the larger revenues and increased expenses generated by new development.

- The \$50 million in public improvements is not written in concrete. The largest item is for building out Motorgate.

- The income mix can be changed. However, doing so would trigger changing the Master Plan. Giving up low income housing means forfeiting tax credit financing.
- Some of the building restriction requirements that drove the 1989 Southtown proposal no longer exist. Recent discussions with HUD open up the possibility of waiving maximum building requirements for low income housing. **"A little utopia"** However, it is unlikely that Federal subsidies for new low income housing will be made available to anyone. In that case, market rate rents would have to be priced high enough to carry the cost of subsidizing any affordable units.
- The bottom lines for many in the community are: open space, leave space between Northtown and Southtown, enlarge Blackwell Park, leave a clear view of the Queensboro Bridge, avoid casting any shadows on Meditation Steps, provide guarded doors.
- Remote possibilities: Island House and Westview are considering whether to become Mitchell-Lama coops. Rivercross is considering whether to become market rate coops.
- An abandoned central nurses' dormitory remains to be demolished at considerable cost. The good news: it is asbestos free.

Possibilities: Promising and Far Fetched

- A campus.
- If a large business were located here, the employees could live nearby, taking advantage of the parks and sports facilities. If a large business were located elsewhere on the island, Southtown housing could accommodate employees.
- A temporary sports stadium using Sportspark as a clubhouse.
- A harbor (would have to be carved out because strong tides are an impediment).
- A tailgate antiques fair.
- A temporary ice rink.



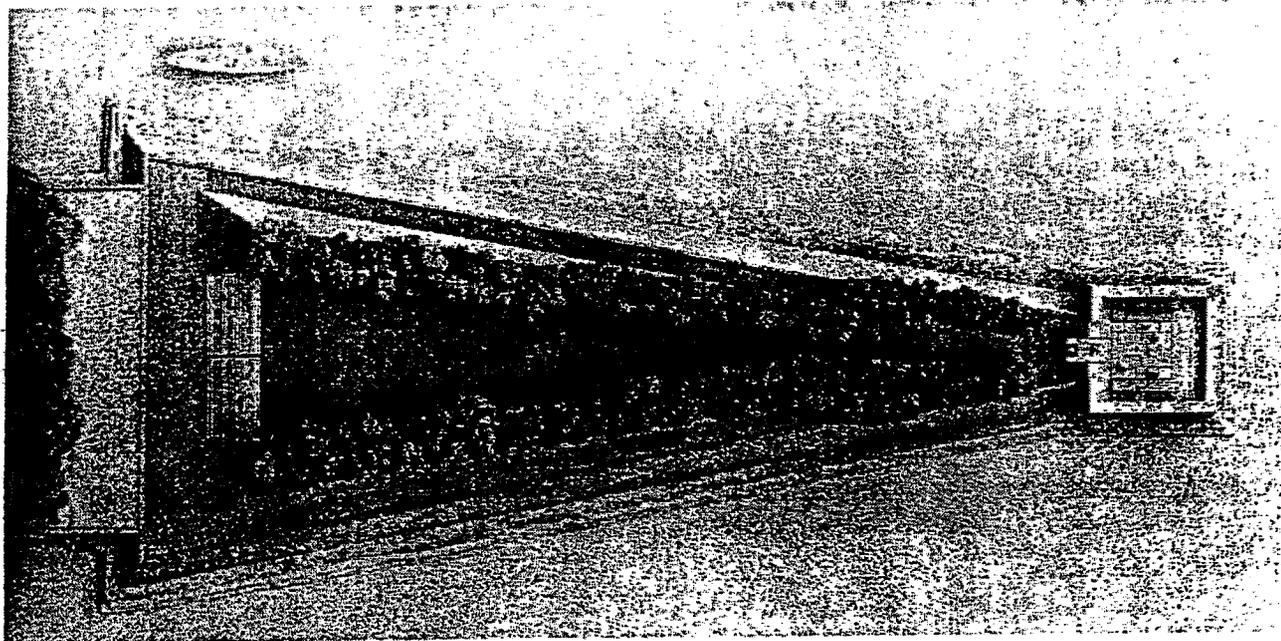
Johnson & Burgee's 1969 town harbor proposal
Credit: RIOC

SOUTHPOINT —
11.9 acres south of
The Tram

Challenge

At the very tip of the island, across from the United Nations, is Southpoint. It is occupied only by 2 landmarked ruins: the semi-stabilized Renwick Ruin (Smallpox Hospital) and the erstwhile Strecker Laboratory, patiently awaiting its turn. Standing there, you feel isolated and suspended — surrounded by water and the ever-changing river traffic, within a stone's throw of the Queens and Manhattan shorelines, with even Brooklyn visible. RIOC has commissioned engineering reports on the ruins. Based on those, RIOC has decided to retain the Renwick Ruin as an irreplaceable, atmospheric historical artifact. The future of the Strecker Lab ruin — whether to restore or stabilize it — is open to suggestions.

Two world-famous architects have completed plans for projects to soothe body and soul: Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava of Paris, who won the competition to complete NY's Cathedral of St. John the Divine, has done schematic drawings for a waterfront pavilion facing Manhattan — a 4,000 sf restaurant with outdoor terraces on top of a comfort station/visitors center. And, shortly before his death in 1974, Louis Kahn completed his commission for a memorial park on 3 acres at the southernmost tip. Kahn designed a serene, meditative refuge that pays homage to the inspiration and hope given to his compatriots and indeed the world by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Originally estimated to cost \$4 million, the price tag is now about \$13 million. If it could be built, it would be the only Kahn work in NYC.



Proposed Memorial Park, Southpoint

Photo Credit: Louis I. Kahn Collection, UPenn

Vacant Land

About 4 acres of land north of the memorial site and east of the pavilion site remain unprogrammed.

There are 5 challenges, whose solutions could be made mutually supportive:

- 1 What to do with the unprogrammed 4 acres.
- 2 How to get the restaurant-pavilion built. The wonderfully strange design — a glass dome with gigantic movable wings as sunscreens — is complete. Funding for the shell and comfort station has been identified. What is needed is a restaurateur who will complete the design of the interior and launch the restaurant on its glorious site.
- 3 How to get the memorial park built. If that is inconceivable, what is feasible? Specifically?
- 4 What to do with the Strecker Lab ruin.
- 5 What to do in the meantime: how to bring in temporary uses that will take advantage of Southpoint's bucolic ambiance and spectacular views.

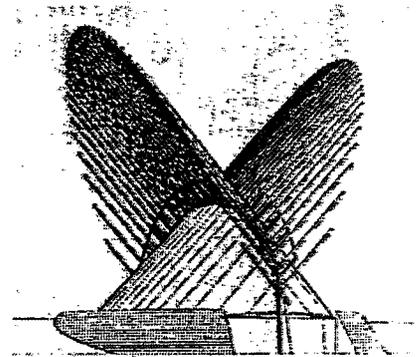
Southpoint represents the island's best chance to position a magnet that will attract off-island people, whether as occasional or constant visitors.

Current Status

Although the entire area is behind a locked chain-link fence, it is in good enough condition so that it can be used to great effect for temporary events so long as 2 constraints are respected: 1) The designated space must be at least 30 ft from the Renwick and Strecker ruins; 2) Visitors have to be confined within established boundaries.

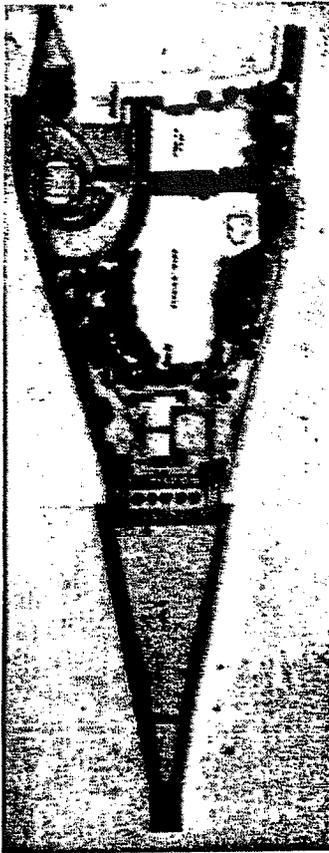
Efforts to raise private funds to build the memorial have not gotten off the ground. However, with the help of Kitty Carlisle Hart, chairperson of the State Council of the Arts, and designer Arnold Scaasi, all of the \$200,000 needed to illuminate the Renwick Ruin at night has been raised from a combination of grants and private funds. And the Transit Authority is seriously considering restoring the facade of the Strecker Laboratory Ruin and putting a substation inside.

Plans are in hand to extend the seawall by 4,000 ft around the southern tip to protect the island from erosion by storms and the unruly East River, to extend the waterfront promenade, and to restore the ferry pier facing Queens that is on the opposite shore from the pavilion site. Seawall work may begin as early as 1997 as state capital budget funds become available.



Proposed Southpoint pavilion

Credit: Santiago Calatrava Valls



Proposed seawall, promenade, pavilion & pier with vacant land

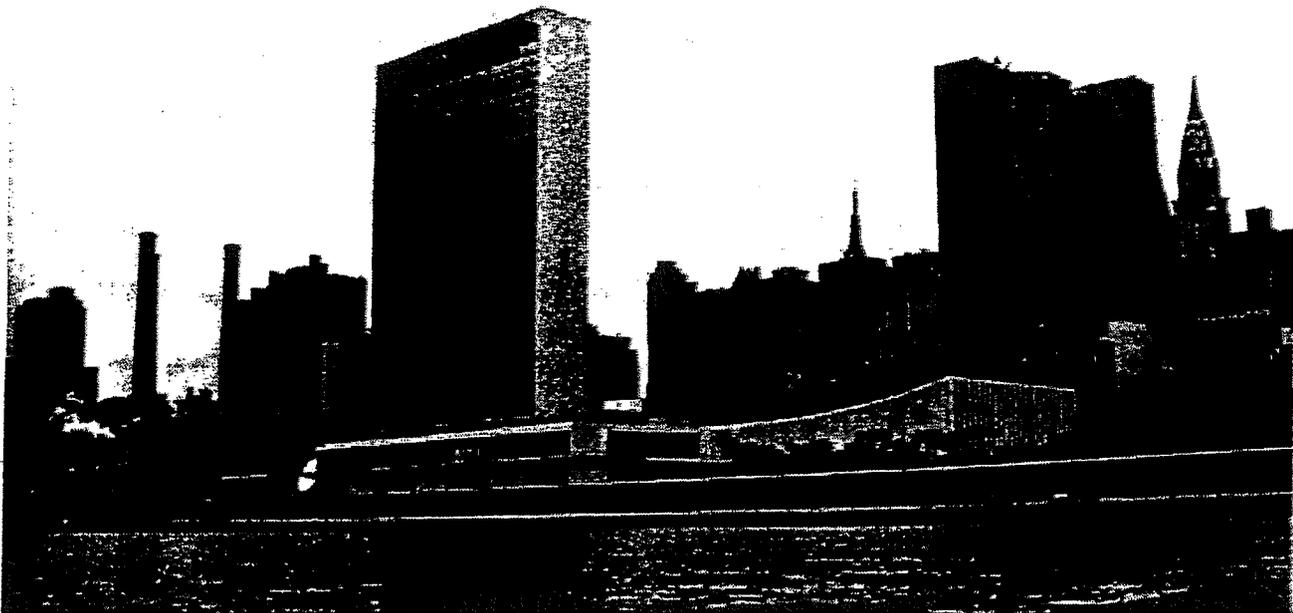
Credit: Langan Engineering & Environmental Services
Sasaki Associates

Considerations

- The unprogrammed 4-acre site could be approached either as a whole or as a one-acre site for an economic development/commercial building set in a park. The building could go as high as the 27-story limit in the Master Plan, but it must be surrounded by 3 acres of parkland, which would have to be included in the development cost.
- Infrastructure costs to service a building of up to 27 stories are estimated at \$1.5 million in 1989 dollars. This covers extending water, sewer, electricity, gas, and telephone lines.
- A study some years ago with the UN Development Corporation of the pros and cons of using Southpoint for apartments found the cons predominant. The more centrally located Southtown site was considered much more cost-effective and convenient.
- Uses necessitating heavy truck traffic, which would have to travel through the center of Northtown on Main Street, cannot be considered.
- Since the pier will be rebuilt as part of the seawall work, a new ferry service to Queens will become feasible. A private ferry operator is needed to launch the service. Would it be feasible to bring vehicles by such a ferry?
- Hospital-related parking empties out at night, releasing several hundred spaces for off-island visitors attending a Southpoint event.
- Presented with an irresistible, profitable counter-proposal for the memorial site, RIOC would have to consider it seriously despite its profound desire to create such an oasis. However, the Kahn design itself and RIOC's commitment to the design of the restaurant-pavilion are not negotiable. Both have been too carefully worked out to be compatible with their surroundings — now and in the future — and are too prodigious in totally different ways to be discarded.
- If the site is to be used for corporate picnics, weddings, and similar events, the fee would have to cover clean-up and other real costs — in the same way the city Parks Department tallies up its extra costs when it rents out the Sheep Meadow.
- Excessively loud outdoor events could be a problem because of the proximity of apartment houses on the Manhattan shore.
- The seawall construction schedule can be adjusted to fit in with any upland construction.

Possibilities: Promising and Far Fetched

- A tower on one acre of the unprogrammed 4 acres could become a: hotel, conference center, casino, bio-research campus, high-rise mausoleum (Forest Lawn-like), corporate headquarters.
- Used as a whole, the same site could become a gated amphitheater for sports events or artistic performances, using the illuminated castle-like Renwick Ruin as a backdrop. ("Gated" should be emphasized. RIOC needs the income.)
- Such temporary uses as a jazz festival, a UN outdoor theater series, symphony concerts.
- A harbor (no easy job but still



View of NY skyline and UN from Southpoint

Photo Credit: RIOC

Vacant Facilities

5 MINI-SCHOOLS

Challenge

Built more than 15 years ago, the 5 mini-schools became passé in 1992 when the new grammar-intermediate school opened. They total 65,000 sf and are highly flexible because they were designed as open classrooms with few interior partitions. However, an investment of \$.5 - \$1 million is needed to bring each shell and system up to the standards of the city building code and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Existing conditions surveys are available. If no feasible reuses can be found, RIOC would consider demolition.

Current Status

- 1 Blackwell House Mini-school, 14,400 sf on 2 floors.**
Roof terraces, elevator, full commercial kitchen.

Adjacent to 3-acre Blackwell Park and Main Street.

- 2 Eastwood Mini, 13,000 sf on 2 floors.**
Roof terraces, elevator, 10 ft ceilings, warming kitchen.

Main Street service access and courtyard loading dock area.

- 3 Rivercross Mini, 8,300 sf on 1 floor.**
Waterfront promenade with views of Manhattan.

Roof terrace, column-free space, 13 ft ceilings, warming kitchen.

- 4 Westview Mini, 15,000 sf on 1 floor.**
On waterfront.

Internal outdoor courtyard, column free, 10 ft ceilings, warming kitchen.

- 5 Island House Mini, 13,600 sf on 1 floor.**
On waterfront.

Outdoor courtyard.

Column-free, 10 ft ceilings, warming kitchen.

Considerations

- The community would like to take over one or 2 but is having difficulty raising the money needed for retrofitting and funding future operational costs. RIOC would like to reserve one mini for the community, and would welcome suggestions as to how to fund the renovation. The community feels it needs: a medical and social service center, a permanent youth center, space for a larger library. No single use would require an entire mini, but how to combine uses is not an easy call.
- Future uses for the other schools would have to be compatible with housing: no loud noises, no heavy truck traffic.

Possibilities: Promising and Far-Fetched

- If Southtown were built, more classroom space might be needed.
- Conceivably, the spaces could be used for a private school or a specialized high school. Many RI children attend off-island schools. The downside to locating an upper school on the island is that high-energy teenagers are already a problem on the one street available to them.
- A rural private college looked at the minis with the idea of using one of them for the equivalent of a junior year in Italy — a junior year in New York — but the college ultimately decided it could not afford the capital investment but could be a renter.
- Biotech incubators.
- Small TV studios.
- Post-production space with movie-filming space at Sportspark.
- Feeder firms which used to live off large corporate parks have now downsized. Such feeder firms need to be closer to the city, but have personal attachments to the suburbs, making RI a promising compromise, one would hope.
- An office condominium — separate offices with shared support services.
- Dorms for a sports team, with the training center located at Sportspark.
- The minis could be converted to congregate housing, which would make them candidates for an Elderhostel, a nursing home, or a continuing care or rehabilitation center.

- One resident suggested creating a Tanglewood in the city with music and dance studios/classes and performances taking place at Southpoint, the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, the Cultural Center, or other island venues.
- Many artistic people live on RI who need studio space and print shops. So far, no one has figured out a way to meet this need without draining the RIOC treasury. But perhaps there is a way?

Truth in briefing
demands this
admission:
the structure never
actually served as a
boathouse.

Challenge

Built in 1924 as a chapel and rectory for the chaplain of Metropolitan Hospital, this structure on the northwest shore remained the chaplain's home until a few years ago even though the hospital moved off-island in 1955. Despite its current neglected state in an overgrown garden, it exudes charm and potential. The one-story chapel of 2,400 sf has a vaulted ceiling and stained glass windows. Attached is the 2-story 2,200 sf rectory. Aside from the stained glass, the building's best feature is the steep slate roof over the chapel.

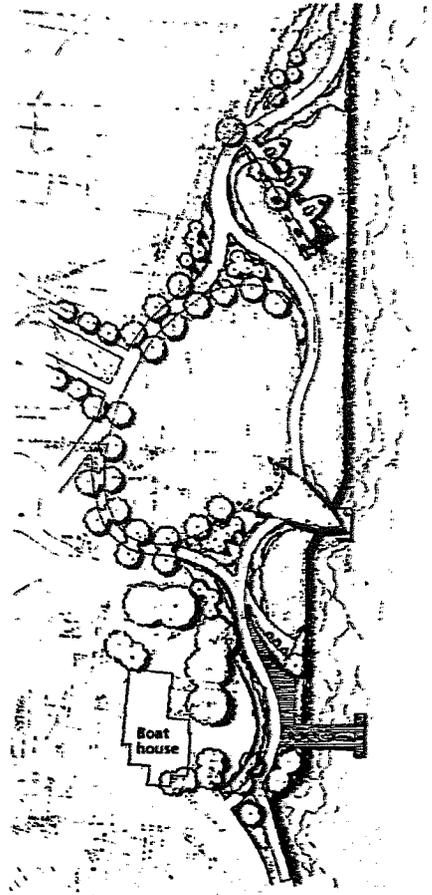
Truth in briefing demands this admission: the structure never actually served as a boathouse. It received its new name only recently, but for good and sufficient reasons:

- 1 It is located at a spot where the Manhattan ferry docked until the mid1950s.
- 2 A pier is being built in front of it to accommodate a Manhattan ferry.
- 3 It could become a boathouse in the future, given inauguration of ferry service — the subject of continuing thought and negotiations.
- 4 RIOC wanted to avoid confusion with the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Current Status

The building, surrounded by a locked chain link fence, is immediately adjacent to the staging area for the Third Water Tunnel. The waterfront promenade and pier in front of the boathouse will be finished next year. The pier will be able to take a front-end loading ferry.

BOATHOUSE



Under construction, seawall, promenade & ferry pier at boathouse, Octagon Park

Credit: Langan Engineering & Environmental Services



Boathouse

Considerations & Possibilities

- An engineering assessment commissioned by RIOC in 1993 estimated renovation costs at \$765,000.
- The boathouse's setting makes it an obvious choice for a restaurant-banquet facility. Although about 100 seats could be placed in the chapel with toilets located in the rectory, that would not leave enough space for a full-sized commercial kitchen and 250 seats are probably the minimum capacity needed. An extension could be built at the northeast corner of the building large enough for the kitchen. An addition to the west, where the views are best, could be used to enlarge the seating capacity and accommodate banquets. The plot is half an acre.
- If ferry service becomes a reality, the boathouse could become one of its recreational stops.

BLACKWELL HOUSE



Blackwell House

Photo credit: RIOC

Challenge

A 3-year-long battle to evict a non-paying commercial tenant in this landmarked structure is drawing to a successful conclusion, and RIOC is now seeking a responsible tenant. The Blackwell House, completed in 1804, is the oldest building on the island. The clapboard farmhouse has 2 stories and 2,200 sf, plus another 800 sf of basement storage space.

Status

The house sits in a 3-acre park within an easy walk of both the tramway and the subway. The interior was renovated and the exterior restored in 1973.

Considerations

- The surrounding park includes a basketball court and a toddlers' playground.

- The house and park should be considered in relationship to any Southtown proposal.

- Attempts to rent the house out for events have not been successful; the house is too small for a wedding or even a small conference.

- The community tried to maintain a historical society there, but could not generate enough revenue to meet maintenance costs.

- Has a commercial certificate of occupancy.

Possibilities — Promising and Far-Fetched

- A bed and breakfast (very small and intimate indeed).
- Private residence.
- Architect's or interior designer's office.
- A mini office condominium.
- A rural college's farmhouse in the city.

Challenge

According to the Johnson-Burgee plan, the concept of an enormous garage that would immediately swallow any cars arriving from the mainland is patterned on the Piazzale Roma outside Venice, the transfer exchange for visitors to the city built on 118 islands. But Motorgate, although a profit center, was built for a population 2 1/2 times larger than today's, and is markedly underutilized. Of its 1,989 spaces, about 600 remain empty.

The Master Plan contemplates adding a fourth quadrant. The cost of doing that and of adding a floor to the existing structure is covered in the Challenge section of the Southtown discussion.

The flip side of the underutilization is that there is always parking available there for special events.

Current Status

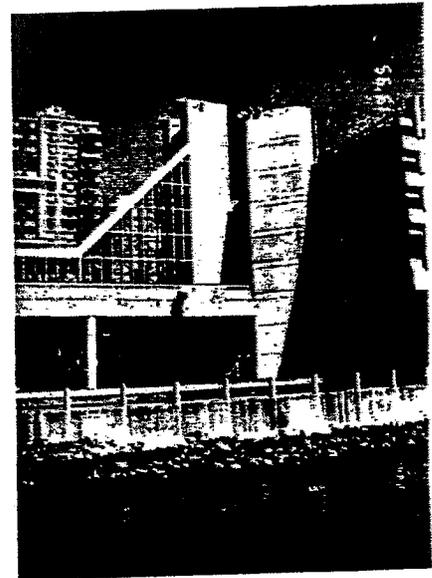
Motorgate, jointly owned by RIOC (two-thirds) and Manhattan Park (one-third) and managed by Edison, is a major money-maker, netting RIOC \$795,000 on Motorgate's annual revenues of \$1.515 million. The 576,000 sf facility has 8 levels. Its footprint is 72,000 sf — 50,000 sf in 2 quadrants, 22,000 sf in the third quadrant.

Considerations

- Regular attempts are made to market it as a long-term parking facility to car-owners in adjacent Manhattan zip codes, but takers have been few and far between.
- Buses must now park outside on the site of the potential fourth quadrant. If this quadrant is built, it must incorporate parking for the buses and a maintenance facility.
- An ice skating rink is not a possibility because the movement of the building would crack the ice.

Underutilized Facilities

MOTORGATE



Motorgate garage

Photo credit: RIOC

- One way to increase usage would be to generate more events attractive to off-islanders.
- If a new facility brought in too many off-islanders, additional security would probably be necessary.
- The first 2 quadrants could bear the weight of another floor. Structurally, the unbuilt quadrant could be as high as anyone wants. If part of the new space were put to another use than as a garage, it might run into the Master Plan limitations of commercial space (100,000 sf, with some 78,500 sf already built).
- RIOC has no independent way of financing construction of a fourth quadrant. The 1989 Southtown proposal that failed assumed that the developer would pay for the fourth quadrant. This is not a given for future development. However, any future developer would be expected to analyze whether additional parking spaces would prove necessary once the new project is built.
- If Southtown were built, that would presumably fill up the garage but might create a slight shortage for the new residents and for visitors.
- Parking rates vary: e.g. every subsidized apartment can get subsidized parking on the roof. The monthly rates are as follows:

Employees	\$ 34
On roof for subsidized tenants	82
Unreserved parking	140
Reserved parking	180
Off islanders	142

Possibilities: Promising or Far Fetched

- An unexplored idea is to market the unused space for mini-storage units.
- Another unexplored idea is to build out and over Motorgate and use that new structure for something like a factory outlet or a warehouse-sized store — something that needs humongous space with lots of parking. A fourth quadrant could also be used that way.

Challenge

From the beginning, the promise of Sportspark has proved to be unfulfillable. Too large. Too splendidly equipped. Too small a resident population. Too much competition. Perhaps even too far from Northtown. Four of the 5 residential complexes have their own pools, so the demand for Sportspark's large pool —almost Olympic size — has proved minimal. What to do with a 2-level, 51,000 sf facility with everything anyone could want in a sports club: besides the pool, 2 squash courts, an 8,000 sf gym with an NBA-sized basketball court, weight rooms, a lounge, locker rooms. And adjacent to The Tram and subway stations as well.

Is there a way to market Sportspark to off-islanders more or less as is? If not, is there a different use that would make the building a revenue-generator? Can a case be made for straddling the building with an additional floor to allow for some as yet unthought-of new use? Demolition is an unwanted fall-back.

Current Status

Sportspark brings in about \$65,000 a year, but costs almost twice that to maintain. It is used from time to time by the Youth Center and is rented occasionally by private schools, private day camps, caterers, and corporate leagues, but all that adds up to its being empty 80% of the time despite reasonable fees: e.g. \$125 an hour for the pool and \$75 an hour for the other facilities.

Considerations

- An RFP was sent out 2 years ago inviting a private operator to take it over or transform it, but responses were minimal. Preparatory to issuing a new RFP, we have hired a consultant to do pre-marketing and to identify potential uses.
- Goldwater Hospital wanted to use the facility but was not willing to pay for it.
- Sportspark does not work as a health club because exercise enthusiasts apparently like to have their equipment and classes very close to either their workplaces or their homes.

Possibilities: Promising and Far-Fetched

Conceivable synergies:

- If a corporate/brainstorming team building/conference center were built, Sportspark and the outdoor fields could be used for sports events.
- If the island became a sort of sports incubator and Southpoint or another island site became the temporary home of a minor league baseball or soccer stadium or even an ice rink bubble, Sportspark would prove useful as a clubhouse or a training facility. It might also be used for "sports fantasy" weekends.

- If it could be sold as a film studio — it has high ceilings, is column-free, and has locker rooms that could be used as dressing rooms — then the minischools could be used as production spaces.
- If a new medical facility were established or in conjunction with the 2 hospitals or a branch of an off-island hospital, Sportspark could become a sports rehabilitation center.

Sportspark
brings in about
\$65,000 a year,
but costs almost twice
that to maintain.

**Underutilized
Resource**

THE TRAM

Challenge

The lovable and iconic tramway does everything right but it is still used less than it should be in an ideal world. It does far better than most public transit: its fares pay for 70% of the operating costs, as compared to the 25% - 60% raised by other mass transit. But RIOC would still like to reduce or, even better, eliminate the annual deficit of about \$600,000 a year. What is needed to fill its excess capacity is a consistent marketing/advertising campaign, particularly one that will bring in more tourists and off-islanders.

Current Status

The Tram ride remains one of the great experiences of NY. Stations at both end are slated for upgrading with new elevators, and a new visitors' kiosk is projected for the RI end. The Tram is managed by a private firm under contract to RIOC.

Considerations

- The Tram's \$1.40 fare is \$.15 more than the subway's, but a recently revised franchise agreement with the city provides that, when the subway fare reaches \$1.40, the fare for The Tram will be entitled to maintain parity with that fare. Translation: while RIOC must now maintain the \$1.40 fare, it will no longer be required to be more expensive once the subway fare reaches \$1.40. By the same token (sorry), if the subway goes to \$1.50, so can The Tram fare.

■ The physically challenged and elderly find The Tram much more user-friendly than the subway. Late at night, The Tram appeals to almost all islanders and to off-islanders who come to the island for special events. In that sense, it is the equivalent of the bus alternative available to mainland communities.

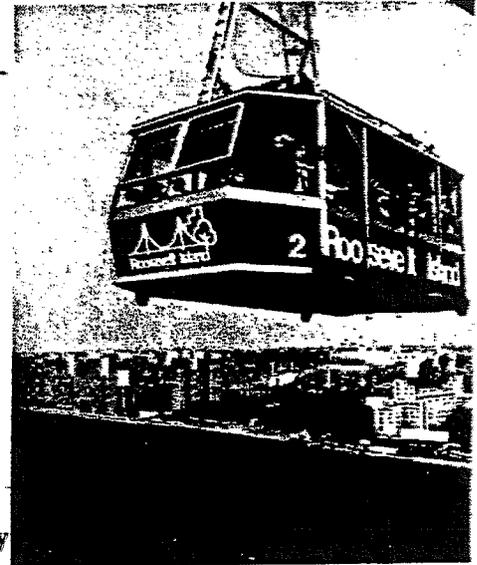
■ Fixed operating costs mean that every additional passenger is worth his/her weight in gold (well, not quite).

■ If 2,000 additional apartments were built, The Tram would become profitable.

■ The Tram is heavily used by RI Racquet Club players, many from the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

Possibility

Could a market be located or created consisting of people interested only in riding The Tram — who would use it for the sheer joy of it, without debarking on the island? This is the Just Along for the Ride strategy, a supplement to the more conventional tactics of trying to build up the traffic by generating events and generating new development.



The Tram over East River

Photo Credit: RIOG

The lovable and iconic

tramway

does everything right but it

is still used less

than it should be.

MAIN STREET & the Retail Scene

Challenge

There are now 19 stores and restaurants on Main Street — almost all but the bank and post office run by moms and pops — as well as a large and expanding supermarket. In all, about 61,000 sf of rent-paying space. Another 17,700 sf does not produce any hard cash: 4,300 sf is vacant; 5,900 sf is occupied by community groups, and RIOC has offices in 7,500 sf. Grand total: 78,500 sf. What joins everyone together is that almost everybody complains. The merchants complain that they are just barely making a living. Residents complain about a lack of choice and variety and too-high prices. Many residents shop in Manhattan to take advantage of the specialty stores near their workplaces or drive to Queens to save money.

Main Street is the only street on the island. It has a street life — this is where teen-agers and others hang out for lack of any other street corner anywhere on the island — but its shops are not well-frequented. The reason is all too clear. With only 8,000 or so residents, there is simply not a large enough base market for anything but convenience shopping. An additional 3,100 people work at the 2 hospitals, but these hospitals have their own eating facilities. And tourists are unlikely to buy anything except for a souvenir tee shirt and food with a view.

Main Street's location — far enough away from the subway and Tram stations so that many residents catch the red bus rather than walk — does not help. Finally, at least in part, design seems to be responsible. Unlike European arcades, Main Street's are glassed-in on the street side, so that reflections hide the stores from drivers and pedestrians on the other side of the street. The columns are so large they create a wall. Generic, impersonal "function" signs on the east side of Main Street — "Cocktail Lounge," "General Store," "Nail Salon" — reduce what should be a feeling of small town intimacy to a blank anonymity. And the prevailing combed concrete is forbidding.



Main Street retail strip, Eastwood building

Photo Credit: RIOC

There are two overriding issues: How can the existing retail outlets become more vital? Does the future of RI lie in creating a town center elsewhere? And there are a host of questions we hope you can help us with: How large a market is needed to vivify Main Street? How should the existing retail space be managed? What rental policies should be pursued? What changes in design would make a difference? What should the merchants be doing differently?

Current Status

Although Main Street lacks a candlestick maker (as do all other American Main Streets of course), it does have the usual modern-day equivalent of a butcher and a baker. It also has pretty much one of everything else: a pizzeria, a liquor store, a bank, a post office, a hardware store, an Italian restaurant, a Chinese restaurant, a cleaner, a cobbler, a sports bar, a Greek diner, a fish store, a general store with a video section, and a manicurist.

Sloan's, 686 Main Street, the one supermarket, is located in Motorgate. It is planning to add 9,600 sf to the 12,000 sf it has now. A 1994 survey, which had a response rate of 10% of the 1,865 questionnaires sent out, found that most respondents shop at Sloan's at least once a week. But while 53% go to Sloan's for groceries and 69% for dairy products and frozen foods, a large majority shop off-island for fresh meat, fruits and vegetables, and delicatessen items. People asked for a deli, a bakery, organic produce, and lower prices.

Considerations

- When UDC laid out the street, it carved out relatively large spaces for each shop in the expectation that the resident population would be 20,000 people rather than the 8,000 now on the island. It has been argued that these "too large" spaces have produced rents higher than the merchants can comfortably live with. The counter argument: since the merchants remain, the rents are obviously priced appropriately. (See Adam Smith.) Whatever the case, RIOC does not have the capital funds to subdivide the spaces.
- RIOC nets about \$600,000 on its retail operations, if you set aside revenues from the private Racquet Club and Motorgate.
- Although the presumption has always been that more residents would markedly improve the retail scene, the 2,600 affluent people who have moved into Manhattan Park since it opened in 1989 have had no noticeable impact on local trade.

- It is possible that islanders are more given to jogging than walking: e.g. the cobbler reports that when the bus stop that had been directly in front of his shop moved a mere 20 ft away, his business dropped off considerably.
- When residents do stroll, they tend to walk along the riverfront rather than on Main Street.
- One developer known for his bluntness advised RIOC to bomb the entire street. Presumably he was kidding. For our part, we are looking for small interventions. At the same time, we are prepared to consider long-term plans that offer the promise of concentrating retail establishments in a new town square closer to the subway and The Tram, while turning Main Street into a non-retail thoroughfare. Less drastically, could the problem be solved if Southtown's new buildings were placed closer to Main Street than envisaged in the 1989 proposal?
- RIOC goes to great pains to make certain that there is one of everything. In response to recent surveys of residents, RIOC sought out and signed up a bakery and a fish store. But only one is thriving.
- The supermarket aside, rents range from \$6.50 to \$25 psf.

Does the
future of
RI
 lie in creating a
town center
elsewhere?

Challenge

Strategically located in the heart of Main Street, this 1888-89 landmark structure, owned by RIOC and operated by the not for profit Good Shepherd Corporation, which raises about one-third the operating cost, was renovated in 1979 as a ~~commercial~~ house of worship and a community center. It is in regular use only 2 or 3 days out of 7, mostly on Sunday, when Protestants meet there at 10 a.m. and Catholics at 11 a.m. (This has led to the local joke that the Chapel should be renamed Our Lady of the Spinning Altar.) On Fridays, Muslims worship in the small downstairs room. On occasions, community and other groups also meet there.

What can be done to make this a vital part of the community and of Main Street? How can enough revenue be generated to relieve RIOC of an annual \$30,000 operating cost?

Current Status

The building needs \$1.075 million in capital improvements.

There are 2 levels: the chapel is upstairs and 2 meeting rooms are downstairs. The 2,270 sf chapel can hold 245 people. The 1,700 sf meeting room can hold 115 people. The 620 sf oval room has a capacity of 74 people.

Considerations

- A classical music series was held recently in the chapel, with donations at the door.
- RIOC uses the building for its monthly public board meetings. Two fund-raisers for landmark work were held there by RIOC and the Friends of RI Landmarks.

Possibilities: Promising and Far Fetched

- For weddings, with the receptions held at the Boathouse.
- For fund-raisers.
- Lease it to one of the church denominations.



Chapel of The Good Shepherd & plaza

Photo Credit: Joel Weltman

Current Status

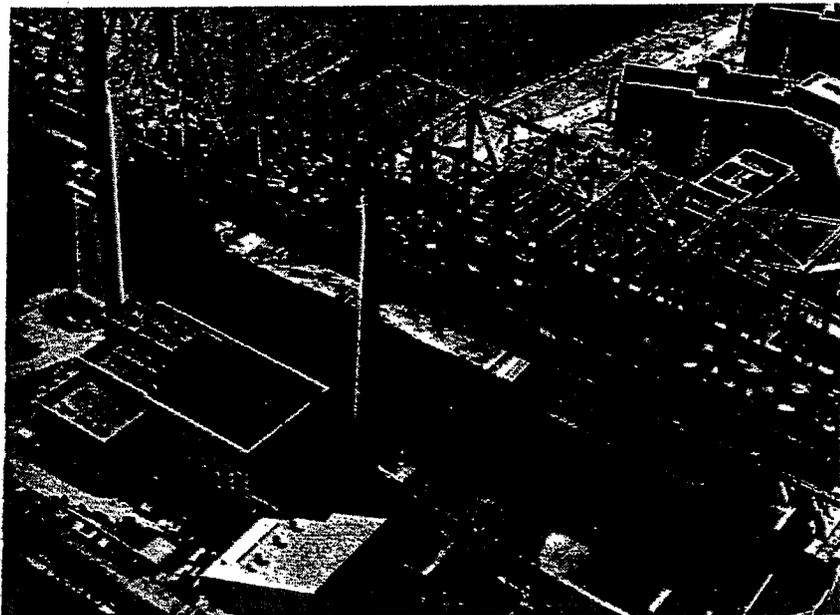
Operates at only 60% of capacity. It is used almost exclusively by the city Health and Hospitals Corporation for the 2 hospitals on the island. Phase I apartment houses have electric resistance heating, which is neither very efficient nor cheap. Manhattan Park uses electric heat pumps, which is both efficient and economical.

Possibility

RIOC is now preparing an RFP to find a private investor to upgrade the plant to make it more efficient, extend its use to Phase I apartment houses, and/or convert it to a co-generation facility with off-island as well as local users.

Note

Team members do not have to worry about the future of the steam plant. However, we wanted you to know that the island may be in a position to provide plentiful and inexpensive energy to future housing and commercial development



Steampant
Photo Credit: RIOC

**Renwick drew here.
And so did.....**

- X Alexander Jackson Davis** drew the Octagon, and **Hirsch/Danois** drew its temporary stabilization.
- X James Renwick Jr.** drew the Lighthouse, and **Giorgio Cavaglieri** redrew it. Renwick drew Smallpox Hospital.
- X Withers & Dickson** drew Strecker Laboratory.
- X Frederick Clarke Withers** drew the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, and **Giorgio Cavaglieri** redrew it.
- X James Blackwell** drew Blackwell House, and **Giorgio Cavaglieri** redrew it.
- X Johnson & Burgee** drew the original Master Plan.
- X Johansen & Bhavnani** drew the Phase I apartment houses, Rivercross and Island House.
- X Sert, Jackson & Associates** drew the Phase I apartment houses, Eastwood and Westview.
- X Zion & Breen Associates** drew the seawall promenades of Northtown's Phase I.
- X Dan Kily & Partners** drew Blackwell Park.
- X Nicholas Quennell Associates** drew Lighthouse Park and Northtown Park.
- X Prentice & Chan, Ohlhausen** drew Sportspark and The Tram stations.
- X Kallmann & McKinnel** drew Motorgate, AVAC, and the Fire Department facility.
- X Louis I. Kahn with David Wisdom and Mitchell/Giurgola** drew the design for Memorial Park.
- X Samton Gruzen & Steinglass** drew Manhattan Park, the Phase II apartment complex.
- X Quennell Rothschild Associates** drew the landscaping for Manhattan Park.
- X Raquel Ramati Associates** drew the 1989 Southtown proposal.
- X The Schnadelbach Partnership** drew the rehabilitation of Blackwell Playground.
- X Weintraub & di Domenico** drew Octagon Park and the seawall, with accessions by artist Tom Otterness.
- X Martin Holub** drew the Cultural Center.
- X David Specter & Associates** drew the Racquet Club.
- X Michael Fieldman & Partners** drew the school, PS/IS 217.
- X Tanner Leddy Maytum Stacy and Margaret Helfand** are drawing the stabilization of Octagon Tower, with accessions by artist David Ireland.
- X Weintraub and di Domenico** is drawing the east promenade, with accessions by artists Agnes Dennis, Jodi Pinto, Albert Paley, and Robert Morris.
- X Vollmer Associates** is drawing the east seawall.
- X Karahan/Schwarting** is drawing the rehabilitation of The Tram stations.
- X John Milner Associates** is drawing the stabilization of the Renwick Ruin.
- X Langan Engineering & Environmental Services** is drawing the Southpoint seawall.
- X Sasaki Associates** is drawing the Southpoint promenades.
- X Santiago Calatrava Valls and FTL Happold** are drawing the Southpoint pavilion.

Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation/State of New York
George E. Pataki, Governor
Joseph H. Holland, Chair, Commissioner, State Division of
Housing and Community Renewal
Jan Lerman, President
Barry Chafetz, Vice President
Alyce M. Russo, Director of Planning and Development

Workshop Coordinators
Alexander Garvin
Bethami Prebst
Project Consultant
Jonathan Sinagub
Members
Team Design

